

# Mary's Song of Praise

- “6 And Mary said,
  - “My soul magnifies the Lord,
    - 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
- 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
  - Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
  - 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
    - and holy is his name.
      - 50 His mercy is for those who fear him
        - from generation to generation.
      - 51 He has shown strength with his arm;
  - he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
  - 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
    - and lifted up the lowly;
    - 53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
      - and sent the rich away empty.
    - 54 He has helped his servant Israel,
      - in remembrance of his mercy,
    - 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
      - to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

# The Mountaintop



## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez.     RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

But for those who have seen Jesus through the new lens provided by liberation theology, a different picture begins to emerge.

Jesus, in sharing our humanity, did not do so as a king, or a royal potentate or as part of the ruling class of society; he did so as one who was born into, and lived among, the poor himself. He identified with the outcast because he was one of them.....

So radical and unsettling was his message that he lasted not more than 3 years on the public scene...those with power perceived him as such a threat that they did away with him through a phony trial and a judicial murder. RMB

# Three core precepts of Gutierrez liberation theology

- Jesus is God and the Bible presents God's truth.
- God provides a preferential option for the poor.
- The poor and disadvantaged should interpret the Bible for themselves.

# Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- To the eyes of Christians the incarnation is the irruption of God into human history: an incarnation of littleness and service in the midst of the power and arrogance of the mighty of this world; an irruption that smells of the stable. GG
- This is the “messianic inversion” that is a central element of the gospel message. The inversion begins with the Lord himself who, when he became one of us, intended not to be served but to serve. GG
- A process that locates us at a point at which it is impossible to separate solidarity with the poor and prayer. This means that we are disciples of Christ, who is both God and a human being. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

Theology must think critically about its own foundations. GG

The heretofore “absent from history” are making the free gift of the Father’s love their own today, creating new social relationships of a community of brothers and sisters. This is the point of departure for what we call “theology from the underside of history”. GG

## The Beatitudes

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

- The Widow’s Offering

- “ 1 HE LOOKED up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4 for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

## Jeremiah 22:

- 13 Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
  - and his upper rooms by injustice;
  - who makes his neighbors work for nothing,
  - and does not give them their wages;
- 14 who says, “I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms,”
  - and who cuts out windows for it,
  - paneling it with cedar,
  - and painting it with vermilion.
- 15 Are you a king because you compete in cedar?
  - Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness?
  - Then it was well with him.
- 16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
  - then it was well.
  - Is not this to know me? says the LORD.
- 17 But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain,
  - for shedding innocent blood,
  - and for practicing oppression and violence.



## (4<sup>th</sup>) Core precept of Gutierrez liberation theology

- The continued and growing population of poor and oppressed is due to social/economic/political structures.

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- Contemporary persons have begun to lose their naïveté as (to) the confrontation (of) the economic and sociology-cultural determinants; the deep causes of the situation in which they find themselves are becoming clearer. They realize that to attack these deep causes is the indefensible prerequisite for radical change. GG
- I cannot but ask: Does not what held for the experience of Nazism in Europe hold also for the Latin American experience of wretchedness and oppression? GG
- Latin American societies entered in to the history of the development of the universal system of interdependence as the dependent societies due to Iberian colonization. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

The old forms of imperialistic presence by means of the enclave economy (mining centers and plantations ... still exist. But currently foreign investment is gravitating to the modern sector of the economy ..... binding it ever more closely to international capitalism .....These groups are increasingly less tied to any one country and are gradually acquiring the character of great multinational corporations. GG

The liberation of these countries, social classes, and persons undermines the very foundation of the present order; it is the greatest challenge of our time. GG

Poor countries are becoming ever more clearly aware that their underdevelopment is only the by-product of the development of other countries, because of the relationship which exists between the rich and poor countries...their own development will come about only with a struggle to break the domination of the rich countries. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez.    RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- Development – approached from an economic and modernizing point of view – has been frequently promoted by international organizations closely linked to groups and governments which control the world economy..... The so-called changes were often nothing more than the new and underhanded ways of increasing the power of strong economic groups. GG



## (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) Core precepts of Gutierrez liberation theology

- For each of us, personal salvation and advancement of the Kingdom of God will only be achieved through a dual path of spirituality and social action.
- One can only help the poor by becoming equal to them.

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez.    RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- There came the insistence on the personal and conciliatory aspects of the Gospel message rather than on its political and conflictual dimensions. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- The theology of liberation offers us not so much of a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology.....It is a theology that is open – in protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of humankind, in liberating love, and the building of a new, just, and comradely society – to the gift of the Kingdom of God. GG
- What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be Church in the unknown circumstances of the future? GG
- New Christendom - Christians act under the inspiration of Christian principles but assume exclusive personal responsibility for their actions; this gives them great freedom in their political commitments.....Christians to commit themselves authentically and generously to the construction of a just society. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

The powerful and almost irresistible aspiration that persons have for liberation constitutes one of the principle signs of the times that the church has to examine and interpret in light of the gospel. GG

Today more than ever, certainly more than past centuries, we are called to serve humanity as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere the rights of the human person, and not merely those of the Catholic Church. Today's world, the needs made plain in the last fifty years, and a deeper understanding of doctrine have brought us to a new situation, as I said in my opening speech to the Council. It is not that the gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better. Those who have lived as long as I have were faced with new tasks in the social order at the start of the century; those who like me were twenty years in the east and eight in France, were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions, and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to expand the view. Pope John XXIII (1881 – 1963)



## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- Secularization poses a serious challenge to the Christian community. In the future it will have to live and celebrate its faith in a non-religious world, which the faith, itself, has helped to create. It becomes evermore urgent that it redefine the formulation of its faith, its insertion in the dynamics of history, its morality, its lifestyle, the language of its preaching, and its worship. GG

## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

- Latin Americans.....gradually are taking hold of the reins of their historical initiative .....they are freeing themselves ..... from the tutelage of an alienating religion which tends to support the status quo. GG
- The rediscovery of this single convocation to salvation has caused the crumbling of barriers erected diligently but artificially by a certain kind of theology. It reaffirms the possibility of the presence of grace – that is, of the acceptance of a personal relationship with the Lord – of all persons, be they conscious of it or not. This in turn has led to the consideration of an anonymous Christianity, in other words, of a Christianity beyond the visible frontiers of the church. GG

### III.C. Contextual Bible Study

- *This resource introduces the practice of Contextual Bible Study as originally developed by Dr. Gerald West of the Ujamaa Centre in South Africa.*
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- The Ujamaa Centre of the University of Kwazulu-Natal describes itself as an “interface between socially engaged biblical and theological scholars, organic intellectuals, and local communities of the poor, working-class, and marginalized.
- There is a downloadable manual on Contextual Bible Study:
- ([http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/RESOURCES\\_OF\\_UJAMAA/MANUAL\\_STUDIES.aspx](http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/RESOURCES_OF_UJAMAA/MANUAL_STUDIES.aspx))

# Contextual Bible Study - “Base Communities”

- **Step 1: Choosing a Theme**

- Contextual Bible Study always begins with the reality of the local community. It is always guided by the issues or **themes** that a particular local community is dealing with. Bible study groups which are already organized usually have a very good idea of the issues confronting them in their community.

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- **Step 2: Finding a Biblical Text**

- Once the theme is determined, the actual planning of the Bible study can start. Now that there is a theme, a **Biblical text** that also refers to this theme, or ‘speaks into’ it is needed. Two approaches are often used here. It is important to read the texts that the group chooses, however, it is also important to bring texts and resources which are less familiar to the group.

# Contextual Bible Study

- **Step 3: Questioning and Reading**
- Once the biblical text has been chosen, the task of constructing the Bible study itself begins. To do this, two kinds of questions are typically used. The Bible study begins and ends with **contextual questions** that provide the framework for the study. These contextual questions are also called '**community consciousness questions**', because they draw on the resources of the community. They draw on the lived experience and the embodied theologies of the participants themselves.
- Within this framework of contextual questions, we construct carefully formulated **textual questions**, which force the group to constantly engage with the biblical text. These textual questions are also called '**critical consciousness questions**', because they draw on the systematic and structured resources of biblical scholarship. The challenge for the socially engaged biblical scholar is to construct questions that open up the biblical text in such a way that it has the potential to address the context of the participants.

# Contextual Bible Study

- **Step 4: Articulating and Owning**
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- Once the questions have been designed, the Contextual Bible Study now has a life of its own! What emerges now belongs to the group. The power of the Contextual Bible Study process is that it allows participants to **articulate and own** theological understandings of their context. The combination of contextual and textual questions has the potential to establish lines of connection between the biblical text and the embodied local/contextual theologies of the participants.

# Contextual Bible Study

- **Step 5: Developing a Plan of Action**
- Contextual Bible Study always ends with action. Each small group and the larger group which they make up is required to develop an **action plan**. Contextual Bible Study is not merely about interpreting the Bible; it is about allowing the Bible to equip us to change our world so that the kingdom of God may come on earth, as it is in heaven! Because the Bible study empowers participants to articulate and own local contextual theologies, there is now increased capacity to act. Provided the group remains in control of the process, action is a necessary outcome of Contextual Bible Study.

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## Quotations:

GG – Gustavo Gutierrez. RMB – Robert McAfee Brown.

Peace is, above all, a work of justice. (Medellin, Peace, no.14)

In the final analysis, poverty means death: lack of food and housing, the inability to attend properly to health and education needs, the exploitation of workers, permanent unemployment, the lack of respect for one's dignity, and unjust limitations placed on personal freedom in the areas of self-expression, politics, and religion.....Medellin and Puebla called it "institutionalized violence". GG