



J/P ALERT

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE



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Remembering César Chávez

by Archbishop José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles

The César Chávez we remember was not only a labor leader who helped improve the lives of millions of farm workers (although, of course, this is absolutely true, and we give thanks for his heroic defense of human

dignity). Yet at the same time we remember that he was a Mexican-American Catholic who testified to Christ and a model of faithful citizenship who worked for social justice.

I never had the honor of meeting César Chávez. Many who worked with him believed he was a saint. And his life has an iconic quality and heroic spirituality that reminds me of the lives of the saints. There is also something truly American about his story.



Born March 31, 1927 in Yuma, Ariz., his family lost its land during the Great Depression and was forced into migrant farm labor. By age 11, Chávez and his family were working full-time in the fields of California. They endured racism, poverty and brutal conditions. These years left a deep mark. At a young age he vowed to work to change the system that "treats farm workers ... as if they are not important human beings." Chávez had no formal education beyond eighth grade. But he had a thirst for knowledge and a hunger for God. He taught himself economics, philosophy and history. He studied St. Francis of Assisi, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and Mohandas

Gandhi. All this informed his founding of the United Farm Workers.

Yet his vision was deeply Catholic at heart. He learned his prayers and popular Mexican devotions from his mother. Good priests instructed him in the labor encyclicals of the popes and the Church's rich social teaching tradition. Throughout his life, he went to Mass almost every day and he also spent an hour daily in prayer. He chose to live in voluntary poverty,

and he practiced what he preached -- the simple joys of serving his brothers and sisters in Christian love. He placed his life and his work under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. All his major initiatives began with the celebration of the Eucharist.

When I read his words and the accounts of his life, I find a man who took Jesus Christ to be the model for how he lived. His absolute commitment to non-violence was rooted in the spirit of the Beatitudes. Chávez preached the Gospel in his words and actions. In everything, he declared that life is sacred and that the human person has a dignity as a child of God that no one can take away. I am still moved by the eulogy he delivered for 19 farm workers killed in a bus crash: "They are important because of the love they gave to their husbands, their children, their wives, their parents -- all those who were close to them and who needed them. ... They are important because of the work they do.... They are important because God made them, gave them life, and cares for them in life and in death."

César Chávez was striving not only for social justice, but also for the holiness of the saints. We should be striving for these same things, too. His witness reminds us that we can never separate our work to build a better society from the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Jesus said that he was the vine and we are the branches. César Chávez knew this powerful truth. He knew that apart from Christ and his Church he could do nothing -- but that abiding in faith, his work would bear much fruit (John 15: 5). This is a good lesson. We need to always keep our witness as citizens rooted in Christ and in the Church's mission of salvation.

César Chávez wrote a beautiful prayer that included these lines:

Free me to pray for others
For You are present in every person.
Help me take responsibility for my life.
So that I can be free at last.
Grant me courage to serve others;
For in service there is true life....
Let the Spirit flourish and grow;
So that we will never tire of the struggle....
Help us love even those who hate us;
So we can change the world. Amen.

The Universal Church as Defender of the Rights of Migrants (excerpts)

by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick

[Delivered at the March 21, 2011, conference on Immigration and the Church sponsored by the [Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies](#) at the Catholic University of America. You can find the [complete text of Cardinal McCarrick's talk](#). This article was published in the Common Good Forum of [Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good](#). To receive weekly future editions of the Common Good Forum, email subscribe@catholicsinalliance.org]

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Today's discussion of the church and migration is of special importance to me, as I have myself witnessed the migration phenomenon in all its forms during the long years of my own ministry. Even when visiting a country to discuss political affairs, or to observe responses to poverty, or to visit the local church, migration has always been part of the conversation and always must be considered as leaders seek just solutions to mankind's failures.

...

Although some are not aware of this, migration is a central theme of both the Old and New Testaments. In Exodus, we see the flight of the Israelites, who escape the oppression of

Egypt and wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the Lord leads them to a new home, Israel. This experience leads to the Lord's admonishment to the Israelites in Leviticus: "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. 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 once aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34). There is no equivocation in that statement.

In the New Testament, exile and homelessness mark the life of Christ as well. In Matthew, the child Jesus and the Holy Family flee as refugees to Egypt to escape the threat of Herod. As an adult, Jesus is an itinerant preacher who travels throughout Galilee and Judea to spread his message: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His Head." (Mt 8-20) As the Lord came to share humanity with us in everything but sin, so, too, he came to share our experiences and challenges, including the problems and dangers of the migrant experience. There is not just coincidence here—Christ lived as a migrant and a refugee for a reason: in order to live with his people in solidarity, to provide example to all generations, even to this day, and to give witness to the Kingdom of God.

...

Thus, the Universal Church's role as a defender of the person on the move locally and globally is grounded in our faith and in our belief in Jesus Christ our Savior, who, as both God and man, embodied all that is Divine. This includes every human being, from the Iraqi refugee fleeing war to the Latin American migrant searching for a job.

...

Given these ethical considerations in the context of globalization, the Church is compelled to defend the human person in this new economic global rubric, including those who are subject to its economic forces. This is one primary reason for the Church's support for comprehensive immigration reform, which seeks to restore basic rights to persons who come to the United States to work and feed their families. As the U.S. and Mexican bishops state in their landmark pastoral letter, [*Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*](#), globalization is a new factor which impacts the migrant: "'It is now time to harmonize policies on the movement of people, particularly in a way that respects the human dignity of the migrant and recognizes the social consequences of globalization' (n. 57). The effects of globalization on the human person, particularly the migrant worker, will be one of the most challenging moral issues of the twenty-first century. It will be left to the Church to lift this issue up and call upon nations to address it."

...

As Christ Himself was a refugee fleeing the terror of Herod in the Gospel of Matthew, so, too, are millions of our fellow human beings across the globe. They deserve our attention and life-saving support, and, as I have outlined, the universal church does what it can to give it to them. We provide it to them regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or religion. As the late Cardinal Hickey, my great predecessor in Washington, always said, "We serve persons not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic."

...

In closing, then, why is the Catholic Church at the forefront of defending the migrant, the refugee, the trafficking victim, and others who are on the move?

In his encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI gives us the simple answer: "Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance" (n. 62). And as the gentle Servant of God, Cardinal Terence Cooke, used to say: "We are all brothers and sisters in God's one human family."

This is the principle and the message, simple but powerful, that the Church and her members can deliver effectively.

As the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States stated in *Strangers No Longer*: "We

judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us" (n. 6). I would like to encourage you to continue your efforts to help persons on the move. If you are new to this mission, I pray that this conference will inspire you to get involved, whether it be on a service, advocacy, or pastoral level. As we offer these works of solidarity, however small, the Lord Jesus sees them and sends the Holy Spirit to help us, so that our work helps unify all His people. It is those here today and Catholics throughout the world who must be able to convince the powerful to heed this principle, and to realize in our own lives that Christ is still present in the life of the stranger and still rewards those who take Him in!

Archbishop Romero as Preacher and Teacher (excerpts)

[Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, gave the following address at Notre Dame University on 25 March 2011, in honor of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated while celebrating Mass on 24 March 1980. The complete text is [available here.](#)]

Last November my very first trip to Latin America took me to El Salvador to address CELAM's fifth Continental Meeting on Human Rights. After many hours of flying and the long ride from the airport up to the city, I found myself at the Ayagualo Center, contemplating the surrounding volcanic mountains covered in lush green, the abundant tropical flowers and trees, the song of the birds, humming of insects, forest creatures calling out to each other: yes, I felt "*como de mi casa*," just like at home. Let me tell you what I discovered there.

...

As you probably know, in the New Testament, when Jesus speaks about the Good Shepherd, he is actually speaking about himself. So when Archbishop Romero takes up this self-portrait of Jesus, he is unconsciously sketching his own self-portrait, too. Thus the homily provides us with an opportunity to get to know him from within his ministry. "Every homage paid to me," he says, "is really a homage to Christ the Good Shepherd and to your own faith."



...

During each homily, Archbishop Romero would "dedicate as much time as was needed to narrate the most important events that had taken place that week. In that 'spoken Sunday newspaper,' he reported what the national media -- controlled and censored by an authoritarian and repressive State -- could not report. And his message was broadcast through the Church's own means of mass communication, the Catholic weekly *Orientación* and, especially, the radio station YSAX, both of which were dynamited on many occasions by death squads and paramilitary groups."

...

A week before his murder, Archbishop Romero described the conflict surrounding his pastoral ministry: "Those who think that my preaching is political and incites people to violence and who believe that I am the cause of all the evils in our country have forgotten that the Church's word does not invent the evils of the world. Rather it casts a light on them. The light shows what is there, it does not create it. The great evil is already there and God's Word wants to eliminate those evils. It points them out, as it must, so that people might return to the right path." But instead of listening to the word, they attacked the one who spoke it -- as they did to Jesus.

A Christian political leader elaborated further: "Romero testified that the Church must be the voice of the voiceless and the incessant defender of life. The Church must passionately pursue justice, but without identifying itself with any one particular party or any one particular ideology."

...

As if in explanation, Archbishop Romero had said, "It is the Church's historical duty to lend its voice to Christ so that He may speak, its feet so that He may walk in today's world, its hands to build the kingdom, and to offer all its members 'to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ.'"

Last December, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. The purpose of the Day is

- to honor the memory of victims of gross and systematic human rights violations and promote the importance of the right to truth and justice;
- to pay tribute to those who have devoted their lives to, and lost their lives in, the struggle to promote and protect human rights for all;
- to recognize, in particular, the important work and values of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, of El Salvador, who was assassinated on 24 March 1980, after denouncing violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable populations and defending the principles of protecting lives, promoting human dignity and opposition to all forms of violence.

...

Each Sunday, then, Romero would spend more than an hour on theological themes, interpreting the readings from that week's liturgy, and delivering a message of reconciliation to a society bloodied and divided by violence. Fidelity to the Word of God, fidelity to the Church and her social and theological teaching, fidelity to his ministry in the name of the Good Shepherd, never failed Romero but brought him to the end. "The Word remains and this is great comfort for the one who preaches," he prophesied. "My voice may disappear, but my word, which is Christ, will remain in the hearts of those who want to keep it."

...

For me, drawing near to Archbishop Romero and meditating on his sermon about the Good Shepherd, I feel encouraged in my role as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and a close co-worker of the Holy Father. Romero was a good Shepherd who led from ahead and from behind, who prayed and reflected and taught, who lamented and denounced and dialogued, who encouraged the weak and pleaded with the powerful.... As he made his own the social approach developed by the Church since the time of Pope Leo XIII, I humbly suggest that you also make it your own in your Christian life and in all the departments of this great Catholic University. For this purpose, please listen to the three steps again:

- "to analyze your situation with objectivity," with the best of the human and social sciences
- "to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words," whose "inspiration, enriched by the living experience of Christian tradition over the centuries, remains ever new for converting men and for advancing the life of society"

- "to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church."

Let us pray that God, who called Oscar Arnulfo Romero to be a good Shepherd in his Church and guided his feet along the difficult path of justice and reconciliation, may make the living memory of this Martyr Bishop fruitful in our own lives as Church and as University.

Pax Christi USA Official Statement on Change and Conflict in North Africa and the Middle East

[Read this statement and leave comments on the Pax Christi website.](#)

Just before Lent began, we heard Jesus bless peacemakers and urge us to make nonviolence and reconciliation our own. As Lent began, protesters demanded change in Libya but the country slid into civil war very quickly; now the opposition forces are relying on a no fly zone and multilateral military assistance which escalates the violence there even further. Pax Christi USA is saddened by the fighting in Libya, and regrets that the U.S. and other Western governments intervened militarily, adding to the violence.

We take hope from the successful nonviolent movements in Libya's neighbors, Egypt and Tunisia. Whatever the eventual outcomes of the movements for change across these three North African states, Pax Christi notes the growing desire for representative government and guaranteed human rights across North Africa and the Middle East and urges all national governments and multinational actors to support nonviolent action in preference to military options.

Egyptians and Tunisians studied nonviolent action and engaged in years-long efforts to train themselves and others with international support. This did not happen in Libya, where initially peaceful protests quickly devolved into armed conflict. Long-term preparation for nonviolent action has powered nonviolent change in many circumstances, but leaders conditioned to view military intervention as the best way to defend human rights and spread democracy do not understand nonviolence easily, nor does nonviolent action lend itself to sensationalist news coverage. Outcomes in Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan and Syria remain unclear, although the steadfast nonviolence of demonstrators in Bahrain and Yemen witnesses to the viability of nonviolent training and action as a means to redress injustice.

From a policy perspective, the U.S. intervention in Libya is risky and inconsistent, despite the justifications offered by our political leaders. While intervening in Libya, the U.S. and its NATO allies sit on the sidelines watching the King of Bahrain, assisted by the King of Saudi Arabia, violently suppress nonviolent demonstrations; similar situations in Syria continue to play out without significant U.S. involvement. Now, CIA officers are operating in the shadows in Libya, but no one seems to know what the Libyan rebels actually want for the future of their nation.

The demonstrators in nations across North Africa and the Middle East prove there is a hunger for change in favor of human rights and more responsive governments, but how well do Western leaders understand these movements? And how prepared are they to risk instability in nations which possess most of the world's oil reserves? No one yet knows what sort of government or society will result from a revolution born in violence and assisted by foreign powers. Reality is more complex than the simple narratives constructed to promote wars, and real problems require complex solutions and grass roots initiatives.

As people of faith, hope and charity, Pax Christi USA supports the movements for human rights and democracy spreading across the Arab world and stands ready to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Libya and other countries in the region. Pax Christi USA urges all people of faith to advocate for, practice and promote nonviolent action in these and similar circumstances, and to abjure the superficially easy solution of military intervention.

Resources and Links for Discussion of the National Budget

www.CBPP.org

Be sure to check out the policy basics section, as well. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=155>

A helpful report on what's driving the deficit. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3036>

This report outlines potential changes to Medicare and Medicaid. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3429>

Report on the responsiveness of social safety net programs. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3361>

Talking points from the Coalition on Human Needs which translates cuts into human impacts <http://chn.org/pdf/2011/KeyPointsonBudgetPlans.pdf>

Center for Tax Justice
www.CTJ.org

If you are the head of a national, state or local organization and would like to sign-on to the SAVE (Strengthening America's Values and Economy) for All Campaign, click here: http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/125/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=5703

The SAVE for All Campaign page is very helpful and includes a link to the developing human needs story board: <http://www.chn.org/save4all/index.html#toolkit>

Bread for the World's National Gathering 2011



Join me in changing the politics of hunger as we convene [Bread for the World's National Gathering 2011](#). During this biennial gathering of Bread activists and supporters, we will worship, learn, network, and-on the final day-act by meeting with our members of Congress.

National Gathering 2011 will be held June 11-14, 2011, at the campus of American University in Washington, DC. [Download the latest schedule](#).

On January 11-12, we will **worship**, led by renowned preachers such as Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas and Rev. Gabriel Salguero. We will **learn** about foreign aid reform, effective advocacy, and other topics during the many plenary sessions and workshops.

As we expand our **network** of friends, we will join 150 experts from around the world on June 13 to discuss how simple interventions can effectively reduce maternal and child malnutrition.

On June 14, we will **advocate** for hungry and poor people as we visit our members of Congress.

I invite you to [register now](#) so you can benefit from early bird registration (\$225 for an individual, \$150 for a student, and \$450 for a family of four). This special offer, which covers all materials and meals, expires at midnight on April 30. You can also book your rooms at American University using this site.

David Beckmann

President, Bread for the World

CMSM



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8808 Cameron St., Silver Spring, MD 20910-4152
Tel: 301-588-4030 • Fax: 301-587-4575 • www.cmsm.org

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