



ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

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GOSPEL POVERTY IN A TANKING ECONOMY
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INTRODUCTION

Bishop Tom Gumbleton

I am very happy to introduce Fr. Mike Crosby who is our speaker today. Michael comes to us from Wisconsin where he grew up and entered the Midwest Province of the Capuchin community, a Franciscan religious order, who are very active, of course, here in Detroit, and who have their monastery very close by and provide the soup kitchen, which is so well known as the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. Mike comes to us well prepared academically. He has a Master's Degree in Economics, a Licentiate degree in Sacred Theology and a Doctorate in Sacred Theology also. He was ordained in the 1960's and was active as a priest in Milwaukee during that time when there was terrible race problems in that city, and many other cities across our country. He marched and spoke often with Father Jim Groppi, whom I'm sure many of you remember, who was a leader in efforts to bring the Catholic Church into a position of true justice for the African Americans in our midst. He also was engaged in anti-war activities at that time, the anti-Vietnam war.

But Michael also has been very active over the years in ministry, and still among the poor in Milwaukee; but also he considers himself a minister to the privileged of our country, to the first world, and he spends much of his time speaking, as he is doing here today, about questions of economic justice, questions of peace. And he is also a prolific writer; and I'm sure when you leave today, you will be so enthusiastic about his message that you'll want to follow up. And so I mention just a few of the books that he has written: *The Dysfunctional Church*, that might surprise you (laughter) that there could be such a thing, and that it might have problems with justice, but Michael deals with that question very well. He also has written much on spirituality. He has a book called *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*. He also has a book on *The Lord's Prayer*, the prayer that Jesus taught us – a challenging book where Jesus asks the question "Do you love me?" Jesus questions the Church.

And then, finally, he has been deeply engaged in the process for the canonization of Fr. Solonus Casey, a Capuchin priest from the monastery here in Detroit. And he has a book that has been published on Fr. Casey. So I hope that after you hear him today, you'll continue to follow him in his work and act on what we hear from this prophet, Fr. Mike Crosby. (Applause)

Gospel Poverty in a Tanking Economy

Fr. Michael Crosby, OFM Cap.

I was impressed with the gospel reading when I found out it was going to be the gospel of the day (Mark 4:21-25), because this gospel passage was formative in my life. I was in a parish in Milwaukee that went from white to black while I was there. We lost a thousand families the first three years I was there. I came in '68, and by '71, we had lost a thousand white families as the blacks were moving in, and there was tremendous disruption. And our Province in '71 had started becoming more aware, as we were serving people in Detroit at the soup kitchen and our other ministries around the Province, a lot with non-white people that we needed to work in the area of social justice, and somehow I got on the board of our New Center for Social Justice that we started in '71. And as a board member, somehow I ended up at a meeting of CICOP – remember CICOP? Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program – and it was when the North and South churches were trying to talk to each other about how they could work in greater collaboration; and I found myself in Dallas.

And at that time Allende was in power in Chili and his ambassador to the United States or the U.N. – I can't remember which one, but his name was Romero Tomich – gave a talk and did a social analysis of the rich and the poor; and all of a sudden, I was finding my parish where I was at, was a microcosm of the universe, I mean, of the world. – that all of the global reality was working its way out in our little parish, in terms of race issues, colonial issues, rich poor issues; and the only thing I remember after the social analysis was him saying, "The only scripture passage to the victims, to the marginalized, to the poor that makes any sense to their reality is the one that ended with what we had today: to those who have, more will be given; from those who have the little, even that will be taken." And I remember at that meeting, I made my own little vow to myself that from that day forward, my life was going to be bringing good news to the poor rather than more of the same.

And so I was really appreciative that you took the gospel of the day, Joe (Fr. Joe Dailey), and with that I'd like to begin my remarks.

I want to give you an outline of what I'm going to be talking about and how I will be approaching the subject. I think the gospels have to be proclaimed in a tanking economy; I think we have that one clear. What we're going to do is social analysis. And the Social Analysis will be from the lens of what the Wall Street Journal has called *Capitalism's Crises of Confidence*. And then, we're going to move into seeing this as an opportunity, or a teachable moment, or a moment of grace, to address some of the underlying obstacles that are contained in the mythology and ideology that has kept many of us who are ministers of the gospel from being able to proclaim it, because the gospel of Americanism and Unfettered Capitalism have captured the imaginations of our people.

And one of the reasons why I was very happy to do this was that, when I was asked to come to the Elephants, it came out of an experience in November, when I gave a parish retreat in a wealthy suburb of a city in Ohio. And usually, those of you who have had me do parish retreats at your place, know that we try to do a Eucharist, reflect on the four forms of the Eucharist, and then end up actually celebrating it as participatively as we can. We had a wonderful one at your place, when I was with Joe (Fr. Joe Dailey and Christ the Redeemer, Lake Orion), and probably the most inclusive we've ever been able to do. So I was going to be doing this on the fourth night, and it was quite a progressive, well educated parish; and so I was going to do the four forms of the Eucharist, and then share on it and celebrate it. Well, about eleven in the morning, the DRE came to me and said, "I've been talking with the pastor and our people really are very well versed in the four forms of the Real Presence: in the community, in the minister, in the word and in the deed substantially and permanently in the species. Well, I've never heard anybody say that the parish was that formed in the four forms of the Real Presence, which would make quite a difference in the way we celebrate Eucharist, if that was the case; but they said, so our people are very well formed in it, and we think it much more important for you to say, "How do you celebrate the Eucharist in the current economic crises? How do you do it honestly?" And I said, "Do you really want me to talk on that?" And they said, "Yes."

It was the first time in my life as a priest, outside of regular people who are kind of thinking the way you are, that I was able to proclaim the gospel, because the average Catholic has not been open to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, because we're going to see, there's been other gospels that have captured their imagination. This is a critical moment for us to seize the opportunity! So out of the social analysis I'm then going to do a theological reflection on the Economic Trinity and the gospel of the kingdom, or kingdom of Trinitarian relationships, and then what is the pastoral call for us? So that's my outline of what I'm going to do.

Social Analysis

So we're going to begin with Social Analysis. Now in my ministry of socially responsible investing – Mary Ellen Gondek is here, one of my co-workers in New York – I get the Wall Street Journal; so everything I am going to be giving you is coming, not from the *New York Times*, unless it's Robert Brooks. I'm only going to give you conservative columnists and writers so you can see that there's not going to be able to have any argument with the positions we're going to be taking. So the worst crises with September 18th, *Stock Investors Lose Faith; The Weekend the Wall Street Died*, it was a whole background on what happened with Lehman Brothers. Then *Losing Faith: the Consumer-Confidence*

Index, this was January 5; just yesterday's *U. S. A. Today*, it's now dropped to 37.8, the lowest in the history of this nation. Now if you look at the words "crises, losing faith," the conclusion that's going to be off-the-wall is "Ours is a faith-based, and *has been* a faith-based, economics; and I think it's very important to remember that word. Our economy has been faith-based. It has contained images around it of salvation and redemption, confidence, expectation. They were considered rational and uncritiqueable, and because of that reality, we were unable to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ; because we're going to see that gospel was what our people had their ultimate faith in. And it has proven to be bogus. And this is the most dramatic moment I think in 40 years for preaching the gospel and to take the message of Jesus seriously.

So when we look at the reality – this was actually the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*: *Capitalism's Crises of Confidence* – and if you look at the figure they chose it's the muse from the Monopoly Board, and he's on the psychiatrists couch.

Everything about this story that has been told has proven to be bankrupt, without grounds. And so this brings us into the crises we're in, where the *CBS*, *New York Times* poll earlier this month asked, "Generally, would you say things are going better today, worst today, or about the same today as they were going five years ago?" Better in 1986 had 44, worse was 31. January 11-15, 5 percent of the people think things are better; 83 percent, it's worse; nobody challenging the reality of the data.

Now when we come to Detroit, you look at the crises as it comes to Detroit. There is a powerful article I read in *U. S. A. Today* some weeks ago: "It's easy to vilify Motor City, but maybe the problem just isn't Detroit. Perhaps the entire system needs the makeover." Those of us who have been working in social justice couldn't have said it better, but now the *Wall Street Journal* is saying it; *U. S. A. Today* is saying it: "The sad irony of the debate," it went on to say, "over the Big Three, is that it not only misdiagnoses the source of the competitive problem, it fails to credit the U. S. companies for the progress they are making. Not only are they getting world-class quality awards, but the cars they are making in other parts of the world are enormously popular." But here in the United States the votes are already in and Detroit doesn't matter anymore. And so this is what we're about – about the reality of being in the belly of the very reality that is symptomatic here, of a lot of bigger reality everywhere.

And so what we need to do now is to use this, in my mind, as a teachable moment in terms of unmasking the mythology, and ultimately the idolatry. We're going to see it has been an idolatrous reality that has been proclaimed in this country, both in terms of its political, cultural reality called America, and its economic reality of its specific form of capitalism.

Now when we look at the idolatry of Americanism, David Gelernter is a conservative columnist. This was something I ran across in *Commentary*, which is a neo-conservative magazine, a couple of years ago, and he was talking about how Americanism is actually a religion. He began, again under the Bush administration – where things were very, very much more clearly anti-American than hopefully our future is going to be – but he talked about the fact that the way anti-Americanism is articulated, it almost is done out of religious caricatures. But in that way of characterizing the United States by others and using the notion of religion, he said, "This fact tells us something about Americanism itself," and he goes on to say it has been a religion. By Americanism, I mean, the set of beliefs that have thought to constitute America's essence, and to set it apart;" – remember Ronald Reagan's, "The city set on a hill," civil religion, George Washington being, you know, replicated by Abraham, and Abraham Lincoln being replicated by Moses leading the people apart – "the beliefs that make Americans positive that their nation is superior to everybody else, morally superior, closer to God;" that's what Americanism is: that there is something special about this country, chosen by God. Now when you look at then, how this transcribes in terms of the issue of rich and poor, the belief that somehow we are chosen specially, and that the sign of that choosiness is economic prosperity, was articulated in the 2000 election.

Time Magazine had a very fascinating poll that was taken of the people in the United States about whether or not they thought they were in the top one percent of income holders. I don't know how many people are here, but I would say maybe what 300? let's say there were 300. Okay, so we have 300; one percent of 300, if you would stand, would stand up, and if you would stand up and if you would stand up.

This is one percent of 300 people. Now in the United States somehow one percent isn't one percent in terms of reality, because everything is perception. What the poll discovered was that according to, again, David Brooks, who's a conservative Republican columnist in the *New York Times*, 19% of people in the United States believe they were in the richest one percent (laughter) and then another 20% thought they were going to be in the top one percent. Now I thought one percent is one percent. But you see what we're dealing with in terms of perception, and how you create public policy. What happens when you've got: 19% and 20% makes 39%, when only one percent is really up there? You're going to have 38% of the people supporting policies that are in the interest of the top one percent; and they're going to be the ones in the pews, that if you ever would have challenged, even two years ago, corporate capitalism, they would have said you're unpatriotic. And we have found out a whole lot of unpatriotic people in this country. To those who had, more was given, and from those who had the little, that was taken. That's idolatry when you make God support your land arrangements; and that's what we had done; and that was Israel's great sin.

And so you have the idolatry of that, and the beliefs that come through that, and therefore the issue then of U. S. capitalism. David Wessel in the *Wall Street Journal*, back in September, had "In Turmoil, Capitalism in the U.S. sets a new Course." The first time, I think, I'd ever seen the word *capitalism*; it was called *business* before. It was called "Business's Week" not "Capitalism's Week." Now, more and more, we are starting to talk not about business, but about capitalism, the nature of the economic system. And they are starting to distinguish U. S. capitalism from other kinds of capitalism. But see, we were so brainwashed, we thought U. S. capitalism was capitalism itself. It was our unique form of capitalism, and any other form was bogus and had no merit and no value.

And so what happened is that if you really got down to the reality this article in the Belief Section of the *New York Times*, by Peter Steinfelds, was one of the most powerful I read. How did we get from sin being called sin, and now being called good and grace? The notion basically came from our capital underlying sin; a sin of the world called greed. That greed by the name of maximization of utility, became what the economists talked about the essence of the system. When you looked at greed, it followed issues around power, possessions or property themselves, and image, or prestige; but all of a sudden, we didn't talk about those three areas; but we talked about self-interest, and enlightened self-interest, and that everybody on the Monopoly Board was equal. But if ever you played Monopoly, you know whoever gets Pacific, and Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, and Boardwalk, and Park Place, plus the four railroads, is going to win; and there's no regulation; and they can set the rules – who has the power, makes the rules.

So the rules in the nation supported the reality of those who were the owners of the top one percent. Economics has given us a lot of better words, Steinfelds says, from self interest, to incentive, to profit – in other words: for greed. But he said, "They don't mean the same thing as greed; but they've displaced it, and they obscured it, and certainly demoted it from being a deadly sin." And we've seen now the deadly consequences. But it's all of us.

I was very impressed with this article in the *New York Times*, March 1st, three years ago, 2005, by Robert Reich. Robert Reich was the Labor Secretary under Bill Clinton. Robert Reich hit me right where my righteousness was, because I don't go to Walmart. And he said, "So what! Look at what else you do, Mike." You might not go to Walmart, but this whole article is all of us, as consumers, are looking for the cheapest, the best deal – and that's what we look for, and that's our form of greed. And we aren't asking the question, "Who made it? How did it get here? What's the water content? What's happening to the land? Is it sustainable?" – all those other questions about personal responsibility, vis-à-vis the brother and the sister – and so I still won't go to Walmart; but I never challenge anybody who does anymore. It's just what they do, 'cause I do other stuff. It's an indictment on everything about our lifestyle that isn't based on other interest, but only self-interest. It was the one statement in Barack Obama's inaugural address that I found myself getting frustrated at, because he repeated George Bush after 911, that it's our lifestyle that is being challenged. It is our lifestyle that is being challenged, and if we aren't open to the challenge at this point, when we see the deadliness for people on the planet, I find it hard what is going to get us to be converted. So that was what Reich says.

So David Brooks, earlier this month gave his annual Sydney Awards. And the first award went to a wonderful analysis of really what happened to create the crises, and why people weren't listening to the whistle blowers. But the second Sydney Award that he gives out for good columns and articles that are written came from "The Unwisdom of the Crowds." In this "Christopher Caldwell explores the contradictions between common-sense morality," which we're going to say is, "don't hurt other people, do good, avoid evil, love your neighbor as yourself" – that's common-sense morality. But the rules of finance didn't allow those common-sense morality basics to impact the decision making. And so, ultimately, and I thought this was one of the most powerful statements, and again, getting a Sydney Award from David Brooks, who is a Republican and a conservative columnist, "Fundamentally, Caldwell is asking an uncomfortable question about the morality of capitalism."

Our gods are being unmasked. We've been in Babylon and we've been eating what is offered us without critique. And so what happens then is that we come now to theological reflection. So we've done this social analysis of the problem. Then the fact that this is reflected what we would call these myths, these stories we've received, have really been idolatrous around the nation, and around the economy; so the political economy has created a reality that we have all served; and when it started moving more and more into crises, if you follow Maslow's states of development; look at what were the images that stopped us from thinking: The first stage in Maslow, the lowest stage is what? Survival. The second lowest is security. By pushing those buttons, we were locked into fear of each other, and everybody else. And now we have a President that's moving us into the sixth and seventh stages. We got a lot of growing up to do as a people and as a nation.

Theological Reflection

Now what we are going to do now is move to the Theological Reflection from the lens of the Gospel of the Economic Trinity. Now remember, the title of this is: "Proclaiming the Gospel in a Tanking Economy." So we've talked about the tanking economy and the ideology and the mythology that has supported it, and has now been exposed as being idolatrous. That's how deep it's been wrong when we believe God wanted it this way. So now we say, "Who is God?"

And so we start with the gospel. Again, just the word *gospel* has to be understood, because we go back, some of us, to being, "A Gospel according to "Peanuts." And those of us who are old enough – and now we've been replaced by the next generation – and the book is called, "The Gospel according to The Simpsons: The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family." Look at the concepts: spirituality, animation, spirit-filled family. You've got, "The Gospel of Oprah." Somebody last night at the IHM Motherhouse said that Oprah is preaching her gospel of how to convert. One day she said, "Don't buy anything today." The second day she said, "Stop using your credit cards." The third day it was, "Don't go out to eat." Now people are listening to that gospel of Oprah.

I just came from Miami yesterday. I was having vacation. The day before *The Miami Herald* talking about the mega churches: the Kensington's, the Grace's in your area, the financial gospel. Churches are now having preachers come in to help the people know how to be stewards of their money in ways that they weren't before. I think that's a responsibility of leadership in a church. How many of our people are in crises and they need help from the churches? Are we there? I think we've got to come up with a bold hand: critique the system, and help people be saved from the systems sins.

So you then also have, "The Gospel according to Marcus Buckingham." He's the top guru in terms of motivational speaking. So then you also have, "The Gospel of Weight Loss Control." But the big one is, "The Gospel of Milton Friedman." And this is the gospel that was bought without critique. When you look at that article by Peter Steinfelds, he goes back to an interview that Phil Donahue had on his show – that's how long ago it was with Milton Friedman. And Milton Friedman gave everyone of the mantras to everyone of the social questions that Phil Donahue asked that was coming out of a perspective of care for others. He was dismissed and nobody critiqued it.

We're at another point. And so when we look at that word *gospel*, what do we really mean? We talk about gospel or living gospel values – I think it's another word that we just throw around; we don't know what it means. But when you look at the milieu, generally speaking, the word *gospel* meant good

news. It meant good news coming to people who were in some kind of straits. They would be healed of their difficulty. That they would be saved from some predator or some oppressor. And so it had some notion of salvation. But it is a generic word: *good news*. But by the time of Jesus, when those scriptures were written in first century Imperial Rome, it had come to be identified quite specifically with the proclamation in space of Rome, and Rome's ways conquering new territories; and so the gospel would be proclaimed when another far distance peoples had been brought under the control of Roman Imperial Rule and the Pax Romana that governed obeisance to that way of life. It also would be proclaimed when Caesar's wife or daughter had a male heir, or when Caesar's son's wife had a male heir – so ta da: the good news. The gospel would be proclaimed; and it had come to be highly linked with expansion in space and time, of a way of life, of a rule, of a governance, of a systemic way of capturing people's imagination through the image of Pax Romana – just don't critique it! don't question it!

Within that reality we had last Sunday's gospel. Jesus came calling for a change of loyalty, a change of heart, streffing, or metanoiaing to an alternative gospel of what he called "the Kingdom of God" and it would be done beyond time space categories but it would take place among his followers in time and space.

And so that's why, if you look at last Sunday's gospel, it has the outline of everything we're talking about. First is the *via negativa*: he proclaims the in breaking of the Kingdom, the rule, the governance, the authority, the empowerment of God, and the need to convert from any other gospel to this new gospel. Then, because it is a new vision that is going to be critiquing, especially the social systems of oppression and structure, he had to create an alternative group to sustain the vision. And so immediately after doing that, he calls Peter and Andrew, one family business; James and John, another family business. The word for business is *oikonomia*. The word family was *oikonomia* or business. "Did you not know that I must be about my father's work?" Work was the business of continuing the family project.

And so you have in last Sunday's gospel, the challenge for every parish in this country, to start proclaiming the gospel of what we're going to call the Kindom of Trinitarian Relationships and we're going to get to that, but to create the alternative *basalia*, which they're doing at Kensington around a prosperity gospel – the prosperity gospel is ultimately what is being proclaimed in most of the big mega churches; and it cannot be grounded in the scriptures; it's duplicitous. God does want us to be prosperous; but, just like greed, getting names like self-interest, maximization of utility, prosperity now means economic prosperity, and you don't find that in the scriptures. But that's how subtle the seduction is going on yet. And so now, when we look at the gospel of the Kingdom of God – so we're saying gospel is the vision for life, a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of imagining how we are to relate – so that's what we mean by gospel; and it's always the gospel of our God, is always over and against the gods we've been worshipping. So we have to unmask the idols to get to the true God.

So other words for Kingdom: commonwealth, the realm of God, the reign of God. You know, I started thinking about other words routinely, because, you know, it's a sexist word, it's a patriarchal word; and you don't like it, but the deeper I went, I said there's something much deeper than freedom from patriarchy in this notion of the Kingdom, the *basalia*.

What we're talking about is a deeper reality that came when I was reading *The New York Times*, an article about Gibraltar. I've never been there. Have any of you ever been to Gibraltar? Who's been there? What's running all around Gibraltar? Little monkeys are running all around the place. And so there was an article on Gibraltar, which is part of the Commonwealth of England; and the title of it was, "Gibraltar: Where England Reigns, but the Monkeys Rule." (Laughter)

Now what we're doing is, we're moving from a noun about kingdom to a notion of a verb. We're talking about empowerment. We're going to be talking now verb, governance; the authority, the structure; the way God is ordered in that God had the essence of God, the dynamic of God, the power, the energy, the connectedness, the relatedness. All of these are ultimately what the physicists and cosmologists are talking. How is everything going to be connected? How am I in you and you in me? How are we coming to another vision? That was words for kingdom; but the gospel, the vision of that kingdom, was of God. But traditionally, we've understood God as those of us who believe out of Nicea and Chalcedon as

Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and that has also created a lot of problems in our Church to reinforce patriarchy, and have been idolatrous in the process as well.

But we're not going to go to church reform; but this is where you would move, because, ultimately, what we have in the Trinity are Three Persons who have such a household, such a relationship, that everything that one has that says, "I am who I am," is what the other has. The only thing that is different is that one isn't the other. That is the only difference. And any time you allow any other differences than the "I am" to define any relationship you're going to be moving into sin and untrinitarian relations. And so when you look at the gospel of the kingdom of God, we will be looking at the vision that comes from our commitment to move to the governance of Trinitarian relations on earth as it is in heaven. Now when you look at Rublev's great Trinity – I have this in my little pray area – but you go up into the upper left hand corner and you see following Genesis 18, where you had Abraham and Sarah hosting, giving *housepality* to the three men.

You had the house. Now the house is a critical word. In Greek it's *oikia*. Now when you look at what created the house or the *oikia* was not the building, but it was the family, the persons in relationship: husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters. That created the household structured relations. Now when you put house and those persons and relations and resources, and you say, 'How are you going to order those relationships among those persons?'

"How are you going to share the resources? Who's going to get more? Who has less? Why do they have less? What's the ordering that makes it say that that's okay?" Whatever that is in terms of the disordered relations or the rightly ordered, the justly ordered relations in the house is called the *nomos*: the structuring.

When you put *oikia* and *nomos* together, which involve persons, relations and resources, you get economics. Economics is the ordering of the house. And so when I studied economics, the definition of economics is the way persons order their relations vis-à-vis the resources; if its capitalist, economics to meet unlimited wants, to meet socialist economics, to meet basic needs. So whether it's your *oikonomia* is socialistic in its orientation, or consequences, or more capitalist, the ultimate thing is: when we talk about the reign of God, we're talking about the household of God. And we're talking about God as the ultimate householder. God is the economist. God is the creator of the universe of all persons, all relations, all resources. Everything must be revealing its maker. So God is the *oikonomist* of all *oikonomists*.

And so the way God has been revealed to us is a triune community, a three equal persons whose structured relationships are so defined in solidarity, mutual *characterisis*, indwelling of one in the other that everything that is of one is there totally for the other. That commonwealth represents the *oikonomia* of our God; it is a Trinitarian reality. And so, when we look then at how God has made us to reveal the divine economy; when you look at the community when it was in exile and was without the land, without freedom, it was precisely in that that the Priestly school wrote what we now know as Genesis.

And in Genesis 1:26 you have the human household to reflect the divine household, as we have come to understand it now. God made them male and female persons in the divine image. And then God empowered them to relate in such a way that they would reflect. And because of the grace and presence and the ongoing empowerment of God, that God would be with them in a way that they could increase and multiply and fill the earth in a way that would reflect the commonwealth of God. So that's how we understand our theological anthropology. This is what humankind is to be about. The closer we get in all relationships, whether they are political, economic or ecclesial, to the absolute equality of every person, and relationships of absolute solidarity and mutuality in coherence, as the word is being called now vis-à-vis the resources in Church called sacraments, the closer we're getting into Trinitarian relationships. And so when we look then until the 19th century, all economics was based in the house, until you had the Industrial Revolution, when they moved out of the cottages, i.e., the house based until 1820, or whenever the Industrial Revolution is identified as beginning.

But until the 3rd Century all *ekklesia* was in the house. So it was the church that was in the *oikia*, but the *oikia* was the *ekklesia* and the *ekklesia* was the *oikonomia*. There wasn't a distinction; and everything was to reveal the new order.

Now when you get to what does this demand of disciples, there's not many scripture passages in all four gospels. The multiplication of loaves is one which is a powerful economic image. Another one is the entrance into Jerusalem as the upheaval of the system. And this is another one: the washing of the feet of Jesus. But now, if you go back and think persons, you think persons, relations and resources. In the first sentence of this passage from Matthew you have all three. While Jesus a person was in the *oikia*, another person came into relationship with him; and she had a resource, an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment; and she poured it, she didn't dribble it – abundance, generosity, images of God and the reign of God. In the midst of scarcity, her abundance was such that it took place in the *oikia*. Where? At the table. We're talking a new form of the community; a new form of table fellowship. And so, when you have the disciples seeing that they got upset – this could have been sold for a large amount and the money given to the poor. And then the famous passage that's always remembered: "The poor you always have with you; but you don't always have me."

But that's not the morale of this story. The morale of this story is what the woman did. What the woman did was in relationship to another person that she had come to encounter, who is not going to have the resource of anointing. She was abundant in her generosity, and she shared it. That is the gospel. Our gospel is a gospel of sharing and responsibility of the table needs in the *oikia*. Now we've got to come to realize that, wherever in the world the gospel is proclaimed, we've got to start holding up this woman as the ultimate model that Jesus says is what the authentic disciple is to be. And it has unbelievable ecclesial and economic consequences.

Now when you go further, "Wherever in the world the Good News is proclaimed, what she did will be told in memory of her." So when we talk about our world – wherever in the world, that's my life, my community's life, my provinces life, my church's life, my nation's life, but the life of the universe itself – and so wherever in the world, what this woman did, must impact the individual level of life, the communal, the collective, the institutional, as well as the whole ecological reality for the integrity of creation.

And so when you look at those levels in light of the four images I use of *oikia*, how am I going to get my house in order?

So my *oikia*, those of you who are Jungian psychologists, you know that the house used in dreams is all about the person; what rooms you aren't able to go into means what is unfinished business. You know at the *oikonomia* level, that's the economics of the household: husbands and wives. I'm getting money for this [presentation]. The check's being made out to the Beatitudes program; because every penny I make goes to my *oikonomia* of my brothers whom I live with. Because I have to trust them, I have to have confidence in them; and they have to have confidence in me. We have to create new communities of trust in our *oikonomia*; and then create in our parishes, at the infrastructural level, new ways people can start to entrust themselves in ways they haven't done before. We're calling for a new community, a new model and this is going to bring about the integrity of the *oikologia*.

So when you look then, the woman in the house is a model for all disciples, to create among themselves and their resources, a way that brings about conversion evermore into the Trinitarian rule and vision of God that Jesus was trying to pull off, and tried to do it with his first disciples.

And so when you look then at what our task is – if we're to bring about Trinitarian relations and do what she did. See, why did Jesus say that was so important? "Why did you trouble the woman; it is a good deed she did for me." Why is that *kola ergon* used in Greek? Because in the beginning, when God created them male and female, and God empowered them, and God said, "Increase and multiply," when God finished everything God had done to create that *oikonomia*, God said "I have done good." The woman is the vision of what Godly life is about in the household. She did good. It's the same Greek that is used of the woman in Mathew 26. It's of God's action in the universe: to bring people out of exile when

they were homeless. Genesis 1:26 was written in the exile, when they had no home. It was a vision of what a new household would be like; and it would have nothing to do with buildings, but everything to do with relationships and a new kind of community.

The Pastoral Call

So this is the theological reflection. Now given social analysis – this teachable moment – given what the theology of Trinitarian relations and the economic trinity is all about, what are we going to be about in our pastoral call?

Kathleen Parker is another conservative columnist. She wrote this on January 9th in *The Washington Post*. I didn't see it, but what I saw was the same article that Kathleen Parker was talking about. She begins by saying, "Matt Miller gives me a headache. If his name didn't ring a bell, wait until his new book called *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas* gains traction in the national debate." This began bringing things together, along with what I am going to share with you with David Brooks. She talks about, "Here is a book about *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas*, Matt Miller," and saying, "Those ideas that supported the system no longer give life and meaning." Now I read about it when I was at a baptism in my family in Dallas-Fort Worth on January 12th: *Belief in What Everybody Knows Is Dangerous*. So, in other words, you say, "Well everybody knows this is the only economic way you can do it." That's tyrannous; and we've been held captured by the idea that is bogus.

I came home the next day and the *Milwaukee Journal* had the same article, but under another name, *Rethink Core Economic Principles*; and the subsection for the first and second was, "A new book argues that a change most needed in the United States is the most difficult kind: change how we think." Isn't that kind of connected in this word *metanoia*, for *basalea*, a new vision, a new way of thinking. When God and we rethink everything; and this is a new moment and of course I can't help but say this, this is the vision of Francis, who heard the words "Go repair my *oikia*." And it wasn't just ecclesial, because he called disciples; and it was a new *oikonomia* that he created, which we are increasingly calling fraternal. And so, "Repair my house; you can see it's falling into ruin."

And so, when you look at Barack Obama's inaugural address, "We can no longer avoid indifference to suffering outside our borders." The indifference can no longer be there – "That's their problem," or "I don't care." Again, Kathleen Parker responded to this and his inaugural address, by saying that, "What he is basically saying is: that because of our greed, the universe has gotten back at us." There's a certain karmic justice. What has been reaped has now been sown. And that now we are at a point as we have bottomed out, or are bottoming out, to realize our addictiveness can only find us calling out for a higher power than those who had power over our imaginations in the past. And we come now to the rallying cry of the conservatives, which is responsibility.

And so, we now come to the need for conversion – a new reality, economically. And I love this passage attributed to Einstein, "A human being is part of the whole, called by us the universe. And we're just a little part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest." You know, how many of us still think that when we walk down the street, and we walk into a room, everybody's looking at us? That's what he's talking about. That's so myopic, so self-centered. It's a kind of an optical delusion of conscientious. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires, and to affection to just those who are closest to us. But our task must be to free ourselves of those prisons, to break through to the reign of God present in the universe, and to be at everyone of the places in the universe where God is. And that is called compassion, where we find ourselves coming to a totally new way of thinking.

Now if you look at the material I gave you, this is from David Brooks. On the table you have two articles by David Brooks, who's a Republican columnist for *The New York Times*. And in this article on "The Social Animal," it is fascinating where he has taken the concept that brought us to the crises. He traces it back to "The Conscience of a Conservative," by Barry Goldwater. Barry Goldwater came up with the notion of the highly individualistic person that was over and against anything that was social, because it was called collectivism – you control the language, you control the behavior. And so instead of social

good, it was called collectivism; it was called Communism. And it pushed the fear button; and nobody could say *au contraire*. So he said, "This is what created it;" but now he said that all the research – and if you notice the different research he's showing: he's showing what we are hearing now from science in terms of cognitive science, genetics, psychologists is: the image of the self-glorifying individual is an illusion; biology is telling us, "I cannot be except in relationship;" phenomenologists say: "To be is to be with." We've got to come up with another vision and that it hasn't worked – and so, therefore, now when you go to the next thing on the other side and I would urge you to read the last two paragraphs. You can do this in your families or other groups or in your parish groups where you really are studying how are we going to make the change.

I think David Brooks is giving us a good direction. So, later in the next month, he came up with a behavioral revolution. And in there he said there are four steps to every decision or making action. The first one is you perceive a situation – that's the old observe, you know, when you follow the Jesus model that many of us came out of in the 60's and 70's. So you analyze; you do social analysis – that's how I began this talk. Then you consider possible actions. So you observe, judge; but he said calculate which course is in your best interest: the risk analysis. So as Mary Ellen [Gondek] would say when we dialog with Exxon Mobil on global warming, or whatever else, our whole mentality for the last 20 years has been risk analysis, cost benefit ratio. That's what arguments were based on – the risk factor; and so another way of saying it would be, you judge the advantages or the disadvantages of whatever the behavior was, and then you would take action or act. And so he said in that article, all the basic actions, the decisions that were made, were economic based around risk analysis. But you know what? He then said, if you read article, go on, he said, "You got to go all the way back. Did we even have the right perception in the first place? Was our thinking skewed by our ideology, by our mindsets, by our conscience? This is the time for thinking it all over again." And that is why, I believe, the gospel of Trinitarian relationships is going to bring the Roman Church down. And they are going to raise up an economy that is going to be preached in the Catholic churches in a way that will have people saying, "I can believe in that God." It's a wonderful replacement for a patriarchal God that we've been worshipping.

And so, when we come, the question is: how do we preach conversion to the gospel of the rule, the governance, the project, the dream, the vision, the will of God revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the source of all life, the one who is the sustainer of all life, and the energizer of all life, through structures that will reflect that godly life and bring about the new creation? If anyone is in that Christ, the new order has begun. The old order is gone. We can't think the old way anymore; we've got to begin thinking anew.

And so, going back then to our morality, the question for me is, going back to this woman: Why was she the model of the disciple? What did she do, *vis-à-vis*, that one who is going to be in need of anointing? Somehow she sought out Jesus. She came to him while he was at that table, the core community. She broke the boundaries of the male privilege. She came to him; and she was uninvited. And she found Jesus, and in the touching of Jesus and the finding, she was able to re-order her resource. And in that she bought the gospel; she got it! She bought the pearl of great price. Wherever in the world we proclaim the gospel, what that woman did has to be always what we are preaching in different times and situations. How do we create the new *oikonomia* that reveals God is the one we really believe in?

A lot of us liberals have to reclaim God. We have to start believing in God again. And it's gonna have to be the faith that does the justice, not just the justice stuff. Our belief in God demands that we bring down anything that isn't Trinitarian on earth as it is in heaven. Our belief in Trinitarian relations will make us speak, not only to empire, but to our Pharisees and Scribes that are ruling in the household of our faith, from Rome and in diocesan chanceries: your God is too small; we cannot worship it; we will not adore!

And so, when we come again, you see Francis' vision of that empire he was in – well, he had two empires actually fighting each other for hegemony, and both doing unbelievable violence. He created a new household. It wasn't so much a critique; it was to create the alternative community, the fraternal economy. "Wherever any of the brothers are, let them confidently make known to each other their needs; for if a mother loves or cherishes her son according to the flesh," he wrote in our rule, "so we've got to love each other in this way.

That's our vision of our Franciscan life; it's what we call gospel. And so it's a matter of seeking, finding, selling and buying. When I have more time, I ask people how many of you think conversion is easy. And they all have a little problem. And then I say, "Who went out shopping in the last 24 hours to a mall? What were you looking for? When you found it, what were you willing to sell in order to buy it?" That's the market economy. The dynamics of the market economy are the dynamics of conversion. Our whole economy is based on changing your loyalty from this to that. The reign of God is like a merchant's search. When that merchant found a really valuable pearl rejoicing, we've got to come to a new joy and a new way of rejoicing. Remember what those magi did when they were searching? And when they found, rejoicing, they entered; and they re-ordered their whole gold, frankincense and myrrh.

And so what we have to come to is this: new moral principles to reclaim them again. And they are basically bringing about the era of responsibility that Barack Obama talked about: "Do unto others as you have them do unto you; love your neighbor as yourself." But, remembering Luke's version of that, because when the religious leaders said, "Who is my neighbor?" you know the story Jesus told: and it was the Good Samaritan. We have to break down the rules of religious purity that keep us from touching and being touched by others, whoever our marginated people are. And be able to come to the compassion because the heart was moved with compassion. We've got to have an ethic of responsibility that's ultimately an ethic of compassion for the least of the brothers and sisters.

And so, given our understanding of the economic trinity, and our worship of God the divine economist, and God's vision for humanity and all creation, and Jesus' proclamation of that gospel, we come now to Jack's [Ryan] question. You have what is called normative economics or descriptive economics about capitalism.

Those are the visions; the person is the maximizer of value. Therefore, capital is more important, market share; our identity is not in our identity as a person but as a market. I remember in the good old days, in the early 70's, when I was with a chief economist river rafting at Aspen Institute with Henry Duncombe, who is the chief economist for GM in the good days of GM. I said, "You know, Henry, when I go to New York for our meetings, I stay on the lower East Side; and I get off at the Delancy Street exit, and I have to walk through dog crap to get to the Capuchin's house. And as I'm walking through those tenements and tens of thousands of people, I say, "I wonder if any of them count in the eyes of General Motors." He said, "They can't, Mike; they're not our market." I said, "That's where you and I will always differ Henry. I follow the one who gave life that they may have life." They are not market; they are persons. They are not people to be manipulated but to find common good. And so people come before us; but what we've got to do is, if you lift that up, you see that policy is the bringing together of what is authentic description of your economic system; because, up until now, it has been based on false promises. And so you bring together what is real and what is possible with the dream, which is Catholic Social Teaching; and so that is what creates policy. And when you create that, we bring about the order envisioned.

And we come to do this in the Eucharist. What we are trying to pull off is the source and summit of all life. And we call it the Eucharist. But when it's ideally celebrated, everyone eats, and everyone gets enough of that resource of the bread of life, and no one is turned away from that table. And all will eat. And even in a world where women and children still don't count as equals, when we break that bread everyone, every person is treated the same. And so the Eucharist becomes the vision of the new creation and the new order. God the economist is the one who's presiding. None of us priests are ultimately the presider. God is calling us and inviting us into this house to be able to get the nourishment that we need equally with everyone else to create the new community, and the new community of hope. And we will know the cosmic Christ if we break bread this way. And if we create the community that brings about the mystery of this faith, so all will eat and all will be satisfied. So, thank you. (Applause)

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