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**A Call to Acompañamiento: How U.S. Hispanic/Latino (a)
Theology Informs Praxis Formation with Unaccompanied Minors
Crossing U.S. Borders**

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A CALL TO *ACOMPAÑAMIENTO*:
HOW U.S. HISPANIC/LATINO(A) THEOLOGY INFORMS PRAXIS FORMATION
WITH UNACCOMPANIED MINORS CROSSING U.S. BORDERS

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DEDICATION

To the Dominican Women of Sinsinawa
in thanksgiving for the communal search for God

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INTRODUCTION

As a nation, we have become aware of a growing humanitarian tragedy involving thousands of our youthful neighbors, the unaccompanied children, crossing our Southern U.S. borders. Unaccompanied minors have been defined by the Secretary-General's office of the United Nations as persons who are:

...under a country's legal age or majority, are separated from both parents, and are not with or being cared for by a guardian or other adult who by law or custom is responsible for them. This includes minors who are without adult care, minors who are entirely on their own, minors who are with minor siblings but whom, as a group, are unsupported by any adult responsible for them, and minors who are with informal foster families.¹

These children come to the United States, hungry and thirsty for both sustenance and justice. They come with no papers, no VISA. Some come alone, some come with siblings or relatives, and some come with neighbors, or adults other than their parents. In the bureaucratic jargon of the government of the United States, an unaccompanied minor is known as an "UAC."²

The majority of the unaccompanied children entering the United States at our Southern borders come from what is referred to today as the Central American Northern Triangle – Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. They also come from certain states in Mexico, such as Tamaulipas, Sonora, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Guanajuato, and Michoacán, which are currently given special considerations under U.S. laws because of terrible violence.³ Long plagued by

¹ United Nations Commission for Refugees. "Questions Relating to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons and Humanitarian Questions: Assistance to Unaccompanied Refugee Minors." Washington, D.C.: GPO, August 7, 1997. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-273.htm>.

² Department of Homeland Security. "Unaccompanied Children at Southwest Borders," Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 11, 2014. <http://www.dhs.gov/unaccompanied-children-southwest-borderprocess>.

³ Ian Gordon, "70,000 Kids Will Show Up Alone at Our Border This Year. What Happens to Them?" *Mother Jones* (July/August 2014). <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/06/child-migrants-surge-unaccompanied-central-america>. The information on where and why the unaccompanied children are coming to our borders today comes from Gordon's extensive research in this article.

instability and unrest, these countries, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, have grown especially dangerous in recent years: military coups, devastatingly high crime rates, drug cartels, gang violence, human trafficking, and a shattering economic insecurity, which is due in large part to the business deals for petroleum initiated by United States companies. It has been reported that some youth are fleeing situations of personal discrimination in their countries, while other children are crossing the border in the hopes of being reunited with family members already in the United States.⁴

Examining the numbers of unaccompanied children arriving in this country over these past years indicates the severity of this crisis. From 2009 through 2011, minors entering this country alone averaged below 7,000 each year. In 2012, the number of unaccompanied children arriving began to rise dramatically, with 13,000 young people crossing our Southern borders. By 2013, the numbers exceeded 24,000. The most alarming increase took place at the beginning of 2014. In June, 2014 the number of unaccompanied children coming across U.S. borders had already surpassed 52,000. Statistics propose that the 2014 numbers reached as high as 74,000.⁵ “That’s equivalent to every single student in Dallas’ 81 public middle and high schools getting up and walking across the border in a single year.”⁶ Most of the unaccompanied children are turning themselves in to the Department of Homeland Security when reaching our borders. These minors are processed by various governmental agencies and sent to relatives living in the United States to await a court hearing.

⁴ Ibid. The Mother Jones article specifically featured a young homosexual teen fleeing his country from discrimination.

⁵ All the numbers given in this paragraph come from the excellent reports from the USCCB’s Migrant and Refugee Division. Kevin Appleby, Editor. “Unaccompanied Children Backgrounder,” *USCCB*, Washington, D.C. July, 2014. <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/upload/UAC-Backgrounder.pdf>.

⁶ Ian Gordon, “70,000 Kids...”

An August, 2014 article in the *Washington Post* reported that in the previous month of July, the number of unaccompanied children crossing the borders had begun to decrease. This decrease was realized after much effort by the Obama Administration to deter the migration of unaccompanied youth.⁷ Another news report in December, 2014 reiterated the reasons for recent decreasing numbers: “U.S. officials declared the mass migration an ‘urgent humanitarian crisis’ in June, when President Obama went on television to plead with Central American parents: ‘Do not send your children to the borders.’”⁸ In September, 2014, the head of the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Jeh Johnson, announced a decline of forty-two percent in the number of children crossing our southern borders alone. “This decline began around mid-June. In July the numbers of unaccompanied children were about half of what they were in June. August was even lower— lower than August 2013 and the lowest since February 2013.”⁹

Presenting the Context/Naming the Treasure

I have been a vowed member of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin for thirty-two years. My Dominican vocation is the most essential fount of identity for me. I believe I have come to a deep-rooted relationship with God, with self, and with others through the pillars of Dominican life: study, prayer, community living, and preaching. I have ministered

⁷David Nakamura, “Number of Unaccompanied Children Crossing Texas Border Dropped Sharply in July, Obama Administration says,” *Washington Post Blog*, 8 August, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/08/07/number-of-unaccompanied-children-crossing-texas-border-dropped-sharply-in-july-obama-administration-says/>. Nakamura, a White House correspondent, reports that numbers fell from 16, 330 in June to 7, 410 in July. That is still a lot of children!

⁸ Melvin Felix and Mike Clary, “The Uncertain Future of Undocumented Children,” *Sun Sentinel* December 14, 2014. <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/interactive/sfl-the-uncertain-future-of-undocumented-children-htmlstory.html>

⁹ Department of Homeland Security, “Statement by Secretary Johnson About the Situation Along the Southwest Border,” Washington, D.C.: GPO, September 8, 2014. <http://www.dhs.gov/news/2014/09/08/statement-secretary-johnson-about-situation-along-southwest-border>.

with various Spanish-speaking populations in secondary education and social work, including eight years in the country of Bolivia.

My undergraduate education in Urban Economics from Rosary College and my Master's Degree in Social Work from the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago prepared me to study the political, economic, and social issues surrounding the unaccompanied minors.

My years of ministry in both secondary education and social work with at-risk youth have helped to shape my interpretative lens in this research. I move into this project with a strong awareness of my own white privilege and social responsibility. I approach all of life with a keen awareness of my "outsider" status as a white, middle-class woman, whose native language is English. I am aware of the gift and richness of diversity in our Hispanic/Latino(a) brothers and sisters. Also, living and ministering for many years with the Guaraní Indians in an isolated area of Southern Bolivia opened up for me a profound understanding of the mutual relationship of *acompañamiento*, born in walking with or alongside another.

During my theology studies at Barry University, in the spring of 2014, I journeyed to Waukegan, Illinois to meet with Sister Kathleen Long, OP, director of the Gary Graf Center for Immigrants, Father Jacque Beltran, pastor of the parish of La Santísima Trinidad (Most Blessed Trinity), and the business manager, Chuck Ryan. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of me joining the staff of this vital faith community, which serves a large Hispanic/Latino(a) immigrant population. That day, Sr. Kathleen and I also broached the subject of fulfilling a dream-come-true for the two of us – beginning a local community of Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa in an impoverished neighborhood of the parish of La Santísima Trinidad.

In this meeting, both Sr. Kathleen and Fr. Jacque discussed attending a conference where they heard about a group of approximately 40 – 100 newly-arrived, unaccompanied children, who had made their way to Waukegan and the surrounding areas of Lake County, Illinois, and whose needs were currently unmet. It was assumed that the majority of these minors had been placed with relatives by government officials and had court hearings scheduled, but even this fact had not been confirmed. This became the epiphany moment that unveiled for me what my thesis-project would be! I wanted to address how the U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) *teología de acompañamiento*, theology of accompaniment, could inform the needs of this vulnerable population - the unaccompanied children.¹⁰ I identified this opportunity as an avenue to widen my own understanding and experience of God's preferential option for the poor. I wanted to investigate how a parish and a community of Dominican Sisters could reach out to this newly arrived and imperceptible group of children with so many unmet needs. As I made the hour drive back to my home in Milwaukee that day, I began to plan this thesis-project.

The parish of La Santísima Trinidad is located in Waukegan, Illinois, which is found in Lake County, the most northern region of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Waukegan, located on the western shore of Lake Michigan, is eight miles from the border of Wisconsin, and fifty miles from the city of Chicago. This city is the ninth largest metropolis in Illinois, with a population of 88,826. This economically blighted municipality is home to a predominately Hispanic/Latino/a population, whose estimated per capita income in 2012 was \$18,547.00.¹¹

¹⁰ Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Theology of Accompaniment*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995). Goizueta has written numerous articles and another book that goes into great detail about this theology.

¹¹ The historical and statistical information regarding Waukegan and surrounding Illinois cities is taken from a city data website. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Waukegan-Illinois.html>.

La Santísima Trinidad serves this marginalized population of Waukegan, as well as the surrounding cities of Zion, Antioch, North Chicago, Grayslake, Gurnee, and Round Lake. The majority of the registered 7,200 parishioners in this faith community live at or below the poverty level for the state of Illinois. The church members are predominantly Spanish-speaking. This is the largest Hispanic/Latino(a) parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago.¹²

The mission statement of the parish of La Santísima Trinidad is: “*Serving the People of God, with a preferential option for the poor.*”¹³ To realize this mission statement, the parish is home to a food pantry, a soup kitchen, a domestic violence shelter, multiple youth group programs, sacramental ministries, the Padre Gary Graf Center for Immigration Reform, and the Blessed Trinity Academy, which offers education from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The parish has three locations: Holy Family Church, Immaculate Conception Church, and the Queen of Peace Church, which are promoted as “three sites, one parish.”¹⁴ Each Sunday, in these three locations of the parish, there are twelve masses. Four of the Masses are in English, and eight are in Spanish.

A group of two Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin will begin a community of the Holy Preaching in June, 2015. It is our profound hope that at least two more sisters and two volunteers will join us in 2016. We will live in the convent at the Holy Family site, next door to the food pantry and the soup kitchen. Our community will be centered on the ideals of Dominican life: prayer, study, community, and ministry. We will minister in the parish, serving in the Father Gary Graf Center and the food pantry.

¹² <http://www.mostblessedtrinityparish.org>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin is located about three hours from this Waukegan parish. In 1870, our Sisters were called by the church of Chicago to serve this faith community of newly arrived Irish and German immigrants by opening a grade school at the Immaculate Conception site. This school served a predominately white, middle-class population until 1975. Five years ago, in 2010, a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa, Sister Erica Jordan, OP, became principal of the Most Blessed Trinity Academy, the current parish school, which now serves a Hispanic/Latino and African-American low-income population. Sister Kathleen Long, OP, became director of the Gary Graf Center for Immigrant Reform in 2014.

The Central Ministerial Concern

My central ministerial concern is to assess and understand the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the unaccompanied minors in Waukegan, Illinois and surrounding Lake County cities of Zion, Antioch, North Chicago, Grayslake, Gurnee, and Round Lake. In my study, I will search for how God is present and active in this marginalized group, and how our liberation is bound together. My thesis-project also explores how the parish of La Santísima Trinidad and the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin could address the ministerial concerns for these children.

In Dialogue with U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) Theologians

I chose the *la teología de acompañamiento*, the theology of accompaniment, as the theological perspective that grounds this thesis-project. The real truth is – the theology of accompaniment chose me. I was first introduced to this theological paradigm when, while still ministering in Bolivia, I read a talk given by one of our Dominican brothers, an amazing

missionary, Jim Barnett, OP.¹⁵ In this talk, he highlights a book that opened up for him the transformational power of the preferential option for the poor while ministering as a pastor in El Salvador. That book was, of course, *Caminemos Con Jesús* by Roberto Goizueta. I knew when I began reading this book that I wanted to come home from Bolivia and study.

Acompañamiento is the human action that imitates the “liberating power of a God-who-walks-with-us,” by living one’s life with a preferential option for the poor.¹⁶ This means, Goizueta informs us, that one joins the poor in their daily, hope-filled struggle for survival. “If one takes seriously the concreteness and particularity of human praxis, and if one wants to walk with the poor, he or she must be willing to walk where the poor persons walk.”¹⁷

Goizueta’s approach to accompaniment is deeply rooted in his United States Hispanic/Latino experience. This process of accompaniment, according to Goizueta, is rooted in the organic worldview of Latino Popular Catholicism, “which he defines as the *locus theologicus* of U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) religion.”¹⁸ Wherever the people strive to find meaning in life and in death, wherever believers struggle to connect with the Divine, and relate religion to everyday life, there God accompanies.¹⁹ Another condition of accompaniment, also rooted in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) experience, is authentic pluralism.²⁰ All of life is intersubjective. Goizueta, in outlining the U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) idea of community, calls each individual and all of life related. “For U.S. Hispanics, the entire cosmos – including the earth below and the heavens

¹⁵ Jim Barnett, OP, “Accompaniment from El Salvador On...” *Speech*. Just Living: Accompaniment as Preaching Conference. Racine, Wisconsin. 25 September, 1998.

¹⁶ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, ix.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xi.

above – is an intrinsically relational reality where, as in an organism, each member is related to every other member.”²¹ A preferential option for the poor assumes that the good of the whole is never pitted against the good of the individual. What is good for the privileged individual, Goizueta says, must also be good for the poor.²² Where there is accompaniment, there is equality, understanding, tolerance, and universal dialogue.

I will study the following theological constructs that shape Goizueta’s *teología de acompañamiento*: Latino Popular Catholicism, an organic holistic worldview, and authentic pluralism. I will also explore how his theological and anthropological approach to who God is and who we are informs my own praxis of accompaniment.

As I began to examine the theology of Roberto Goizueta’s *teología de acompañamiento*, I was introduced to the book, *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty*. As I read Cecilia González-Andrieu’s work, I was captivated by her connection between the preferential option for the poor and her study of the theology of aesthetics. Using popular art, theatre, music, and literature, this scholar connects theology and beauty in new ways. González-Andrieu is convinced that beauty, any creative work, makes us aware of the mystery of God in our midst. “We are caught in its midst, and wonder is the only appropriate attitude...The wonder before such signs should lead us to compassion.”²³ Beauty or art, González-Andrieu reveals, leads believers to act with justice, open themselves up to the other, and question any action that fails to bring about God’s kingdom. “Because of this, theological aesthetics constitutes a deeply liberative and community-making practice.”²⁴ González-Andrieu complements Goizueta’s

²¹ Ibid., 50. Goizueta points out that this is Paul’s theological concept of the Body of Christ.

²² Ibid., 174.

²³ Cecilia González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 27.

²⁴ Ibid., 165.

theme of aesthetical praxis as a search for justice by including the theme of bridge-building among communities in the act of accompaniment.

Engaging the Dominican Tradition

How I live out this call to *acompañamiento*, to engage in a preferential option for the poor, begs to be rooted in my Dominican tradition. Dominic de Guzmán (1170-1221), known for his joy and compassion, founded the Order at the beginning of the thirteenth-century. What made this new religious congregation unique was its ministry of preaching, which up until that period had been an exclusive responsibility of the local bishop

For the first time a religious Order incorporated, as an integral part of its religious life, a ministry sharing in the bishop's fundamental duty to preach the word of God. The Order of Preachers seeks to place at the service of the bishops a body of educated and trained preachers prepared to assist them in the laborious duty of preaching. The fourth Lateran Council (1215) called on bishops to appoint just such co-operators with themselves to remedy the long-standing need of the Church for regular and competent preaching, especially in the towns and cities. While the preaching ministry was, in time, opened to other Orders, it has remained the vocation of the Order of Preachers to be concerned that the preaching needs of the Church be met.²⁵

Saint Dominic patterned his preaching to address the signs of the times. The nuns, sisters, and friars would learn to acclimate their preaching in order to relate to the culture in which they lived and ministered.

The Holy Preaching, as the followers of Dominic say, began in the south of France in the first decade of the thirteenth century. Saint Dominic started a community of women in 1206, at Prouille, in the south of France. A year later, the men were organized in neighboring Toulouse. In 1216, Pope Honorius III gave the official approval for the Order of Preachers. These communities fulfilled St. Dominic's vision of a community life, sustained by prayer and study,

²⁵ Viviano Boland, "The Order of Preachers: Beginnings," *Irish Dominicans*. Dublin, Ireland. January, 2013. <http://www.dominicans.ie/order-of-preachers>.

which nurtured the preaching of the gospel. Today, more than eight centuries later, this same ideal of community offers our broken world a pattern of communal living of study, prayer, and service to those most marginalized by our society.

The Holy Preaching began dedicated to a life of poverty. St. Dominic realized that the preaching of the community could only be effective if each preacher imitated a gospel life of poverty, the *vita apostolica*. “It is a school of detachment that opens the human spirit to the possession of God. The option for poverty and the option for the poor was something far deeper than a moral choice for Dominic. It was a revelation to him of the true face of the Church and of preaching.”²⁶ A life dedicated to poverty must always move the preacher to see the suffering of the other. This lifestyle must be rooted in *acompañamiento*, the accompaniment of those made poor by society. The essentials of our charism as Dominicans, the Holy Preaching, and a life dedicated to poverty, “provide a framework for building a more just and humane world.”²⁷

The Holy Preaching is given a contemporary context by the Dominican theologian, Mary Catherine Hilkert. Preaching is naming grace, Hilkert outlines, because it has the power to offer “freedom, wholeness, reconciliation, and human flourishing that overflows in joy and praise.”²⁸ This preaching, this graced proclamation, can be in word and in deed, allowing the preacher to announce the good news in her own historical context and cultural reality.

²⁶ Paul Murray, “Light for the Church,” *Speech*. Meeting of the International Commission of the Dominican Order, Prouilhe, France. April 2006.

²⁷ Toni Harris, OP, “Caritas et Veritas: A Dominican Framework for Building a Just World,” in *Exploring the Meaning of Our Motto for Our Mission*. Edited by Mary Paynter, OP. Caritas Veritas Symposium, Dominican University, June 2010, 39.

²⁸ Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1997), 44.

The Research Methodology

To approach this research and response by a parish and community of Sisters, I engaged the practical theological methodology of Richard Osmer. Osmer's methodology is designed to guide and interpret situational patterns and dynamics in a theological context, as well foster good practice formation. The four tasks of Osmer's practical theology answer the question, what has God called the church to be and do? The methodology is intended to guide a group of believers in their service to Christ's body in our world. I chose Osmer because of his emphasis on the local context of a parish and his focus on planning new ministerial programs.

This methodology begins with the descriptive-empirical task. In this stage, the question is asked, "What is going on?"²⁹ Here the context, or episodes and situations, as Osmer defines them, are explored. The second task of Osmer's methodology is called the interpretive task. The social sciences are engaged to answer the question, "Why is this going on?" After considering the historical data and social inquiry, Osmer introduces the normative task. During this stage, a theological analysis is undertaken to answer the question, "What ought to be going on?" Osmer's final and fourth step is the pragmatic task. He asks, "How might we respond?" Strategies and actions are designed, based on all that has been listened to in this process, in order to influence events toward a desirable outcome.

A Map to Accompaniment

I have compared *la teología de acompañamiento*, the theology of accompaniment, to the discovery of a treasure that informs and inspires my prayer and my service, indeed my very life as a Dominican sister. I want to write about *los pasos*, the steps, which have led me to this theological paradigm.

²⁹ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4. Subsequent questions can be found on same page.

In Chapter One, I will describe in more detail the research methodology of Osmer, with which I have engaged in order to guide my ministerial concern with the hope of producing a strategic plan for effective ministry with the youth. I will present the questions with which I will conduct my research. I will describe my research methodologies. I conclude this chapter with both the investigations and findings of this research.

My study proposed a purposive sampling of service providers in the city of Waukegan and surrounding cities. I conducted individual interviews with the service providers, probing their expertise in regard to what services were most beneficial for this unserved population. I also conducted focus groups or individual interviews with the unaccompanied minors. In the focus groups, I utilized a snowball sampling with unaccompanied youth. These samples investigated the needs and hopes of this vulnerable population. Individual interviews were offered to any child who preferred to share one-on-one, as opposed to the group sharing. These unaccompanied minors live with relatives in Waukegan or surrounding cities, and await trial.

In Chapter Two, I will continue with what Osmer refers to as the interpretive task. Here I engage with the social sciences to answer Osmer's second question: "Why is this going on?" In this chapter, I will explore the economic, political, and social issues that make up the reality of the unaccompanied minors. What are the broader issues that need to be investigated in order to understand the basic needs and struggles of this vulnerable population?

I will also examine our Judeo-Christian narrative of migration. I will explore the Old and New Testaments in order to discern how God was believed to relate to the migrants of the ancient world. I will also review the papal teaching of the post-Vatican II church on

immigration, as well as the 2003 pastoral letter concerning migration by the bishops of the United States and Mexico, entitled "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope."³⁰

In chapter Three, I will continue what Osmer calls the normative task. In this chapter, I continue the theological analysis of the basic needs of the unaccompanied youth. Osmer tells us that during the normative task, the question is answered, "What ought to be going on?" To answer this question, I search for the theological insights of U.S. Hispanic/Latino/a theologians, Goizueta and González-Andrieu. I define Goizueta's theology of *acompañamiento*. I outline how González-Andrieu's theology of aesthetics informs believers how the wonder we experience in the arts can move us to experience God's presence and seek out justice. I analyze the Dominican tradition and study how contemplation calls us to pray and act as neighbor. I give special consideration to the contemporary theology of Dominican scholar, Mary Catherine Hilbert. In light of this research, I will draw out the implications for constructing theological norms that lead to good practice.

In the final chapter, Chapter Four, I present the strategic planning initiatives. The pragmatic rejoinders I design in this chapter answer the question, "How might we respond?"³¹ I plan initiatives influenced by the research compiled, the social sciences investigated, and the theologians studied. I create initiatives that represent a commitment to each step of the process.

I have designed initiatives that include program design and planning recommendations. Each strategic initiative was envisioned in order to allow the unaccompanied minor to be the subject of the change proposed. These action plans reflect the voice of the unaccompanied

³⁰ USCCB and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope," Washington, D.C. January 22, 2003. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>.

³¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

minor. Of the eight proposed strategic initiatives, each one stresses the importance of access and accompaniment for the unaccompanied minor.

Each word written throughout this research has allowed me to put a name on the face of human tragedy. I have come face-to-face with the Crucified Christ in our midst. Through González-Andrieu, I have learned to value the gift of Mystery in new ways and have struggled to seek beauty even in the midst of an ugly reality that treats the other without dignity. I have been invited to witness God's accompaniment and offered the opportunity to learn, in a deeper way, how compassion and justice bring about God's dream for our world. The theology of accompaniment invites each of us to let go of fears and barriers that separate us from others in order to be neighbor and friend. Goizueta says that the other, whom-the world calls "nobody," is for us the "bearers of Life."³² In the joining together to seek God's vision of love in this world, in the accompaniment, we find our common transformation.

³² Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 211.

CHAPTER ONE

“ELLOS Y ELLAS TRAEN MUCHOS VALORES TAMBIÉN/THEY BRING MANY GIFTS AS WELL.”¹

In this chapter, I present my research findings on the basic needs of the unaccompanied minors who have made their way to Waukegan, Illinois and surrounding cities of Zion, Antioch, North Chicago, Grayslake, Gurnee, and Round Lake. Integral to this research is the defining of strengths and hopes offered by the unaccompanied minors, as well as necessities to be addressed. As the title indicates, these young people are a gift to the parish and community of Dominican Sisters.

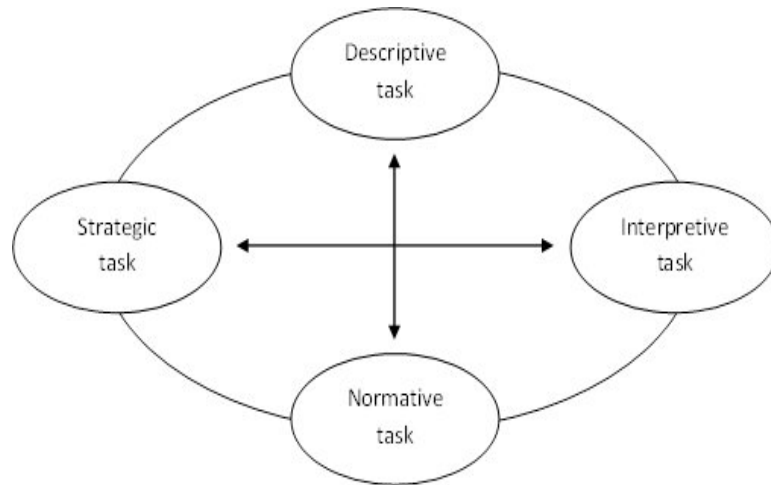
Since I use Richard Osmer’s practical theology method to guide my research, I will begin by outlining the four basic tasks of his methodology. Osmer grounds his practical theology in the groundbreaking contributions of theologians Don Browning, Chuck Gerkin, and Hans van der Ven. Inspired by these colleagues, Osmer designs a reflective practice guide with four main tasks to approach any ministerial challenge. The goal of Osmer’s practical theology is to arrive at a new way of thinking that honors the interconnectedness of the various disciplines employed.

In Chapter One, I will also explain the empirical research methodologies I used that include interviews and focus groups. I describe the two types of samplings used: the purposive and snowball samplings. Finally, I will present the results that I have compiled from these methodologies. I divide the research into two parts, the interviews with the service providers and the focus groups or interviews with the unaccompanied youth.

¹ Carbajal, Yuri. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal interview, Waukegan, IL, 12/08/14.

The Theological Methodology of Richard Osmer

1.1 The Four Tasks of Practical Theology by Richard Osmer²



An Overview

The hermeneutical circle of Richard Osmer has four tasks: descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and strategic. Each task helps lead us to a practical theological interpretation for good practice. “Good ministry is never merely a matter of solving problems; it is a mystery to be ventured and explored.”³ The descriptive task discovers the what of a situation. The interpretive task asks why. At this stage, the social sciences are the primary tool employed to understand the situation of these young people. The third task, the normative task, searches for insights from our Christian tradition and Scripture. A study of theological insights provides guides and norms to discover what ought to be going on. Finally, in the fourth stage, strategic action plans are designed.

² Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008), 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

The Descriptive-Empirical Task

During this descriptive-empirical task, the question is answered, “What is going on?”⁴ Information is gathered in order to identify and define patterns and dynamics. Osmer believes that there are four key elements of interpretation that take place during this task: “1) the purpose of the project, 2) the strategies of inquiry, 3) the research plan, and 4) a reflection on the meta-theoretical assumptions.”⁵ Interviews and focus groups are two methods of empirical research cited by Osmer. All the information gathered must be grounded in a “spirituality of presence.” Osmer challenges the researcher to adapt a habit of “openness, attentiveness, and prayerfulness.”⁶ “It is a matter of being attentive to what is going on in the lives of individuals, families, and congregations.”⁷

To research the basic needs of the unaccompanied minors requires deep listening, openness, and a compassionate heart. This deep, compassionate listening continuously led me to “hear” and “see” the bigger picture of each child’s life. For example, as I reflected upon where the children are now in Waukegan and the surrounding cities, I was drawn to consider where they are no longer living as well. They are far from home, in a totally different *ambiente* from where they grew up. In most cases, even the family members with whom they now live are included in this new equation. Although they may be sitting at the dinner table each night with a parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, or neighbor from their native village, these children are in an entirely

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid., 47-8.

⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁷ Ibid., 34-5.

new reality. As one child said when discussing feeling at home, “All I have to do is look out the window and see the snow on the ground to remind myself that I am in a strange, new place.”⁸

In the gathering of the descriptive-empirical information, an emphasis is placed on the setting and historical context in which the person’s life story unfolds. For example, many service providers I interviewed talked about the differences between the school system of the United States and the educational institutions of the minors’ countries of origin. These differences require specific considerations when addressing the academic needs of each potential student and family with whom the student lives.

In the deep listening to the historical context of each minor, one strong message that unfolded is that these children are not only needy. As Yuri Carbajal, the outreach worker from Padre Gary Graf Center, said, “*Ellos y ellas traen muchos valores también.*”⁹ Yuri emphasized that it is not enough for us to simply ask these children what they need. We must recognize the gifts they bring to serve our church and community.

The Research Methodologies

This study of the basic needs of the unaccompanied children utilizes two forms of empirical research: a purposive sampling of service providers in Lake County, and a snowball sampling of unaccompanied children who are now living with family members in Waukegan and the surrounding cities of Zion, Antioch, North Chicago, Grayslake, Gurnee, and Round Lake. A purposive sampling is selected based on specific characteristics. I relied upon the expertise of Sr. Kathleen Long, OP, director of the Gary Graf Center, and her staff members to help me define the needed characteristics and choose the service providers.

⁸ I did all my research with the unaccompanied minors anonymously to protect their identity. Therefore, any quotes will simply list the type of interview and date. Focus Group, 2/8/15.

⁹ They also bring many gifts. (trans.by author) Carbajal, Yuri. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal interview, Waukegan, IL, 12/08/14.

A snowball sampling works when current study subjects recruit new subjects, creating an ever-increasing snowball effect. In the case of this particular research project, the service providers whom I interviewed recruited their colleagues to invite the unaccompanied minors to the focus group. In turn, the unaccompanied minors suggested other unaccompanied youth who could be recruited.¹⁰ As I explain in detail later on in this chapter, I had a surprisingly difficult time finding unaccompanied minors to invite to participate in this thesis-project.

Service Providers

The purposive sampling of the service providers was completed between December 7, 2014 and January 13, 2015. My Dominican sister, Kathleen Long, OP, Director of the Padre Gary Graf Center at the parish of La Santísima Trinidad, provided me with a list of service providers. I also attended two meetings of a coalition of service providers in Lake County, called the Immigration Integration Network of Lake County (I.I.N.).

The following seventeen service providers were interviewed:

- 1) Sr. Kathleen Long, OP – Director/Padre Gary Graf Center for Immigration/La Santísima Trinidad
- 2) Yuridia Carbajal – Outreach Worker/Padre Gary Graf Center for Immigration/La Santísima Trinidad
- 3) Gabby Lara/Case Manager/ Padre Gary Graf Center for Immigration
- 4) Maria Dominguez/ Case Manager/ Padre Gary Graf Center for Immigration
- 5) Padre Jacque Beltran – Pastor/Parish of La Santísima Trinidad
- 6) Jessica Abarca – Youth Group and Religious Education Director/ Parish of La Santísima Trinidad
- 7) Pastor Justo Espinoza/Sagrado Corazon Iglesia Luterana/Sacred Heart Lutheran Church
- 8) Maria Elena Jonas/Director/HACES
- 9) Jim Dippold/Campus Minister/Cristo Rey-San Martin de Porres High School

¹⁰ I relied heavily upon the hands-on book by Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 82-84.

- 10) Carmen Patlan/Director of Hispanic Services/Waukegan Public Library
- 11) Tatiana Alonso/Outreach Worker/Waukegan Public Library
- 12) Tim Kirschner/School Social Worker/Waukegan Public School System
- 13) Rafael Mendez/Social Worker for Homeless Students/Waukegan Public School System
- 14) Cynthia Vargas/Communication's Director/State's Attorney Office of Lake County
- 15) Megan McKenna Mejia/Director/MANO A MANO
- 16) Melissa Albach/Outreach Worker/Erie Family Health Center
- 17) Lara Rios/Director/Waukegan 2 College Program

These service providers represent a variety of programs in Lake County, including educational, medical, legal, social, and spiritual or church services. Two programs in particular need an introduction. MANO A MANO is a small social service agency in Round Lake, the Western edge of Lake County. It is a family resource center that offers a number of education and employment services. HACES, a relatively new program in Waukegan, began in 2005, and offers legal assistance to immigrants.

I set up interviews with the service providers at the I.I.N. meetings, by email, or with a telephone call. In each interview, I asked the following questions regarding the unaccompanied youth:

- 1) Are you aware of unaccompanied children in the city of Waukegan or surrounding areas?
- 2) If yes, how many, and what can you tell me about them?
- 3) What do you believe their basic needs might be?
- 4) What other concerns do you believe they would have?
- 5) What pastoral needs do they have?

Unaccompanied Minors

As explained previously, I utilized a snowball sampling with the unaccompanied youth. I limited my recruitment to unaccompanied, newly arrived youth, who were detained by INS and

turned over to the Department of Health and Human Services for legal proceedings. These unaccompanied minors are living with relatives, awaiting trial, and therefore, have already disclosed their immigration status to the government. I asked the service providers interviewed to pass out flyers. Any unaccompanied child not interested in attending a focus group could request an individual interview. I usually began the focus groups or interviews by collecting pertinent information: age, country of origin, familial information, when the youth left home, and when the youth arrived in Illinois. I let the unaccompanied minors take the lead in these focus groups and interviews. My main emphasis was on their future now that they have arrived here. If the youth initiated conversation about their lives before arriving or the journey to Illinois, I continued the conversation. The groups and interviews lasted from 55 minutes to two hours. Both the focus groups and individual interviews addressed the following questions:

- 1) How do you feel here? What is the most different experience for you? What do you like? What do you not like?
- 2) What is daily life like here? Are you in school? Are you working?
- 3) What are your needs?
- 4) What are your hopes?
- 5) What do you envision for your future here?

I organized and led 3 focus groups with a total of 13 participants. Two of the focus groups were held at the Gary Graf Center. One group was held at the Lutheran Church, Sagrado Corazón. I also held two face-to-face interviews with two unaccompanied minors. The face-to-face interviews were predominately held in individual's homes. These groups and interviews took place between February 8 and February 25, 2015. The unaccompanied minors used pseudonyms in the interviews.

The Research Findings

The Interviews with Service Providers

The opportunity to interview this group of seventeen highly trained and dedicated individuals was a privilege. I was especially aware of each one's commitment to the Latino community of Waukegan and surrounding cities. These seventeen service providers represent ten different service sites, which offer legal, medical, and educational services, as well as services designed to meet basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Two of these service sites, the parish of La Santísima Trinidad and the Sagrado Corazón Lutheran Church, offer spiritual and pastoral services. The information obtained in the interviews allowed me to focus my research on the basic needs of the unaccompanied youth. The responses to my questions led me to further questions and insights into the social location of the unaccompanied youth. Here is a compilation of the results of this research.

- 1) Are you aware of unaccompanied children in the city of Waukegan or surrounding areas?

Interestingly, only ten out of the seventeen service providers had actually encountered unaccompanied youth that had made their way to Waukegan, or the following surrounding cities in Illinois, Zion, Antioch, North Chicago, Grayslake, Gurnee, and Round Lake. Kathy Long, OP, Father Jacque Beltran, both from the parish of La Santísima Trinidad, Pastor Justo Espinoza from Sagrado Corazón Lutheran Church, Megan McKenna, director of MANO A MANO, the two staff members at the Waukegan Public Library, Carmen Patlan and Tatiana Alonso, and the school social worker, Rafael Mendez, had met either the unaccompanied minors or the families with whom they lived.

Megan McKenna, director of MANO A MANO, explained that these young people or their families do not walk into your office and introduce themselves as unaccompanied.¹¹ Carmen Patlan, from the Waukegan Public Library, reported that the problem with the word “unaccompanied” is that in most cases, the youth are now with family members. “They are no longer unaccompanied when they come to our service sites.”¹² Gabby Lara, case manager for the parish, La Santísima Trinidad, insisted that “[you] only find out about the unaccompanied minors when you start to hear about their journey to this country, and that does not happen right away. We have probably met several unaccompanied youth here at our center without yet knowing it.”¹³ Gabby’s co-worker, Yuri Carbajal, reiterated this difficulty in locating and identifying the unaccompanied youth: “You do not see them on the streets or outside of church asking for money or for help.”¹⁴ Laura Ríos, director of the Waukegan 2 College Program emphasizes, “No one is going to ask you on an application if you are an unaccompanied minor.”¹⁵

One strong perception mentioned by all seventeen service providers was that the journey and story of these children arriving in our country unaccompanied are-not new. María Elena Jonas, director of HACES, the non-for-profit legal service organization claims, “*Siempre había*. These children are coming right now in huge numbers, but the truth is they have always been

¹¹ McKenna, Megan. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 12, 2015.

¹² Patlan, Carmen. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 15, 2014.

¹³ Lara, Gabby. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

¹⁴ Carbajal, Yuri. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

¹⁵ Rios, Lara. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 13, 2015.

coming.”¹⁶ Tatiana Alonso, outreach worker for the Waukegan Public Library says, “This is nothing new, except that, for right now the numbers coming are huge.”¹⁷

2) If yes, how many, and what can you tell me about them?

Kathy Long, OP reported that two families from El Salvador have come to the Padre Gary Graf Center seeking legal help for unaccompanied minors who are now living with them. The pastor of the parish, La Santísima Trinidad, Father Jacque Beltran, has also been contacted by the same families needing assistance with basic needs for these newly arrived youth who traveled from their countries alone.

The pastor of Sagrado Corazón Lutheran Church, Justo Espinoza, was approached by a single mom whose two sons recently arrived from Honduras. This mother needed help in several areas – basic needs, advice about school, and legal counseling. Pastor Justo also mentioned that the boys were “disoriented.”¹⁸ “The mother works, had more children after coming to this country, and these two boys hardly know their mother.”¹⁹ These two boys decided upon arrival that they wanted to work instead of going to school. Pastor Justo has been encouraging the boys to come to the church youth group. “It is very hard...the boys say that the kids speak too much English, their work schedules interfere, and their only experience of church has been Pentecostal from a small town in Honduras. Unfortunately, church here is just one more hurdle of difference for these boys to jump.”²⁰

¹⁶ Jonas, María Elena. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

¹⁷ Alonso, Tatiana. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 8, 2015.

¹⁸ Espinoza, Justo. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 9, 2014.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

The library staff ran into two unaccompanied youth who have come to take advantage of their GED program. “The young man coming,” explained Carmen Patlan, “is very angry at his mom, even after being reunited with her, because he felt abandoned by his mother for many years. This is a typical reaction. Children arrive here full of emotions about being left behind. The mother is also asking for help and guidance with her son.”²¹ Tatiana Alonso told me the story of a young woman who came to the library for GED classes. She started going crazy over a young man and eventually ran away with him. “Doors have opened for this young woman, she is safe now, away from the threatening environment in Honduras, and she is acting blown away. These young people need mentorship...They are all like babies learning to walk...o.k., you made it here but that does not mean that you can do whatever you want.”²²

Megan McKenna has heard of several local families with children who have recently arrived. She suspects that a number of these children arrived here unaccompanied. She also discovered that the families with unaccompanied minors have stated that they are afraid to go to court with the youth. “If these parents or relatives or neighbors with whom they live are undocumented themselves, they do not want to accompany them to court. It is a problem.”²³

The Response Table on the following page represents the answers to questions 3 – 5 asked in the service provider interviews:

- 3) What do you believe their basic needs might be?
- 4) What other concerns do you believe they would have?
- 5) What pastoral needs do they have?

²¹ Patlan, Carmen. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 15, 2014.

²² Alonso, Tatiana. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 8, 2015.

²³ McKenna, Megan. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 12, 2015.

Each service provider insisted that the needs of the unaccompanied minors are consistent with the majority of newly arrived, undocumented immigrants. “We know what they need, even if we have not met them,” insists Tim Kirschner, “because we know what their family members needed before them.”²⁴

1.2 The Unaccompanied Minors Responses to Questions

Number of Interviewers	Responses to Questions
17	Need to welcome them and make them feel at home among us
15	Need for basic services: clothing, food, shelter
15	Need for access to and accompaniment with English classes
13	Need for access to and accompaniment with educational services
11	Need for access to bi-lingual psychological services
4	Need for access to legal services
3	Need for advocacy work on their behalf

Need to Welcome Them and Make Them Feel at Home Among Us:

The service providers claimed that the most vital and immediate assistance to be offered is a welcoming hand to the newly arrived, unaccompanied youth. As Father Jacque Beltran, pastor of La Santísima Trinidad said, “Our church should be a welcoming church, like a home. In this community, *La iglesia es nuestra madre* (The church is our mother.)”²⁵ This welcoming

²⁴ Kirschner, Tim. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

²⁵ Beltran, Jacque. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

spirit was meant to invite and encourage the youth to not just feel at home, but feel that they belong. María Elena Jonas, the Director of HACES, made it clear from the very beginning of her interview that each person who walks through the door of the legal services agency should feel deeply listened to. “*Primero, hay que escuchar...poco a poco.*” (First, we must listen...bit by bit.)²⁶ Laura Rios, who runs the Waukegan 2 College Program, a tutoring and educational service for grade and high school students who are college-bound, emphasized that each service provider needs to assure the youth to “not be afraid. We must embrace them.”²⁷ Rafael Mendez, school social worker for homeless students, believes that each institution serving these youth must be a place where they find a “safe refuge.”²⁸ Both Father Jacque Beltran, Pastor of La Santísima Trinidad, and Pastor Justo Espinoza, from Sagrado Corazón Lutheran Church, believe that visiting the newcomers frequently is crucial, because “contact with people is so important.”²⁹

An essential task to make the unaccompanied youth feel at home, mentioned by several service providers, is to invite them to visit the various sites and get to know what services are available to them. This involves making sure that directions and transportation are available when necessary. Some families with newly arrived youth do not know where all the service sites are located. Tim Kirschner, school social worker, reported, “When we can get a family to visit us, they become familiar with where we are and what services we offer. It is then that they start

²⁶ Jonas, María Elena. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

²⁷Rios, Lara. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 13, 2015.

²⁸ Mendez, Rafael. Interview with M.Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, January 12, 2015.

²⁹ Espinoza, Justo. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 9, 2014.

to feel at home and in charge of what they want and need.”³⁰ Jim Dippold, campus minister at Cristo Rey/San Martín de Porres High School, remarked that the school community must make sure that all newcomers are welcomed. “Whether a new family member is going to enroll here or not, still requires us to extend a hand of welcome and support to the family in whatever way we can.”³¹

Jessica Abarca, the Director of Youth Groups and Religious Education Program at La Santísima Trinidad, emphasized that more than anything, the church must offer these unaccompanied minors community. “They have been so alone, maybe the relatives they are with do not know them very well...it is up to us to make a place for them to be known...like a second home.”³² Yuri Carbajal, outreach worker for the Padre Gary Graf Center, summarizes: “we must become their brothers and sisters.”³³

Need For Basic Services

Another basic aspiration of the service providers is to make sure that these youth have their basic needs met. The service providers knew, from past experiences, that the unaccompanied minors would be arriving without basic necessities. “They need everything – like a coat, food, clothes, even a bed.”³⁴ Overwhelmingly, the service providers are just as

³⁰ Kirschner, Tim. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

³¹ Dippold, Jim. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 15, 2014.

³² Abarca, Jessica. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL. December 9, 2014.

³³ Carbajal, Yuri. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

³⁴ Ibid.

concerned for the families where the youth now live. “We must make sure we attend to the basic needs of the families that took them in.”³⁵

Fifteen service providers explained the referral services available at their agencies. This means that they refer clients to other basic services available to them. Carmen Patlan, from the Waukegan Public Library, which offers a variety of bi-lingual educational opportunities, made it very clear: “You cannot begin to talk to a family about learning English until you make sure their basic needs are taken care of.”³⁶

The majority of these service providers emphasized the importance of the soup kitchen and food pantry at the Parish of La Santísima Trinidad. María Dominguez and Gabby Lara, the two case managers at the Padre Gary Graf Center, explained how the soup kitchen did not keep government records, and therefore, was a safe place for anyone without legal status in this country. Also, the parish Food Pantry did not require identification, and had both food and furniture available.

Another predominant theme among the service providers is the need to accompany these youth and the families with whom they live with whatever needs arise. “It is imperative that we are available for emergencies with these families,” insisted Megan McKenna, director of MANO A MANO, “because the children are so new.”³⁷ An emergency, according to the majority of service providers, could include an illness, an issue a school, or help with some legal concerns. Medical help for newly arrived youth comes in many forms. Rafael Mendez reported that the school system works to get immunizations and medical records up-to-date immediately after

³⁵ Jonas, María Elena. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

³⁶ Patlan, Carmen. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 15, 2014.

³⁷ McKenna, Megan. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 12, 2015.

enrollment. Melissa Albach, outreach worker for Erie Family Health Center, explained that many do not know about the All Kids Program, which gives undocumented children access to health care. “These are state funds,” explains Melissa, “procured for undocumented children.”

Need For Access to and Accompaniment with English Classes

Tatiana Alonso, an outreach worker for the Waukegan Public Library, stressed the importance of encouraging each newcomer to learn English. “I know, from listening to my mother and aunts who arrived in this country not knowing a word of English, the importance of making learning the language a priority.”³⁸ An overwhelming number of the service providers interviewed concur with Tatiana’s statement. Out of the ten different service sites interviewed, six offered ESL classes. All of these ESL programs have both day and evening classes available.

Fifteen of the seventeen service providers in this research study insisted on the need for accessible English as a Second Language services. Accessibility concerns include time, availability of place, and the kind of encouragement offered by ESL teachers. “Our English as a Second Language classes must be a place of hope and inspiration. We are constantly talking about this as a staff...how can we continue to be a place where learners want to return and keep trying.”³⁹

Need for Access to and Accompaniment with Educational Services

A significant necessity identified by thirteen of the seventeen service providers interviewed was access to educational opportunities. In addition to recognizing the need to help

³⁸ Albach, Melissa. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL. January 8, 2015.

³⁹ Long, OP, Kathy. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

both the unaccompanied minors and their families maneuver the Waukegan Public School District, as mentioned earlier, Carmen Patlan added further that accompaniment was an essential service for newcomers to this school system. Carmen explained how she and the other staff members at the library make themselves available during the weeks of registration prior to a new school year. “We go and hang out with the folks registering so students can get into classes they really need and want. The school district knows we are there, they are very grateful for our help.”⁴⁰

Kathy Long, OP referred to registering for school as “traumatic.”⁴¹ She emphasized the importance of having a Spanish-speaking academic counselor who can help decipher previous educational backgrounds and what opportunities are available. “Students should learn about all the extra-curricular activities and pick classes they really want.”⁴²

Jessica Abarca talked at length about the important role that the parish youth groups can have on a student’s education. “As youth leaders, it is our job to make sure that the youth group is a place that promotes and supports education. We want everyone to see education as a priority for the future. With parents working two or three jobs, sometimes we are the only place for a child to get educational support.”⁴³

The Waukegan High School is not highly regarded as an educational institution. There are 4,373 high school students. The student to teacher ratio is 14.5:1. The overall reading

⁴⁰ Patlan, Carmen. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 15, 2014.

⁴¹ Long, OP, Kathy. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Abarca, Jessica. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL. December 9, 2014.

proficiency at the high school level is ranked at 58 percent. The math score rank at 57 percent.⁴⁴ The graduation rate is 76 percent. The average percentage at the state level for graduation rates is 86 percent.⁴⁵ The Waukegan High School is ranked 577 out of 670 public high schools in Illinois.⁴⁶

The two social workers I interviewed from the Waukegan Public School District, Tim Kirschner and Rafael Mendez, are impressive individuals. First of all, they are extremely dedicated to the welfare and educational opportunities of these newcomers. Secondly, they have caring, compassionate hearts that see each student as vital and important. Thirdly, they love their jobs. Each works at the Waukegan Welcome Center where newcomers and their parents and families can receive access to educational opportunities. It is at this Center, with social workers like Tim and Rafael, where the unaccompanied children are able to enroll in school, despite the fact that they lack appropriate medical records or school transcripts. This center also offers ESL classes, computer training, and a variety of other services for parents and family members. Social workers like Tim and Rafael see that the students have the tools they need at school, such as uniforms and school supplies. College preparation programs are available for any young persons who have this dream. The Welcome Center also has a referral service to help families with other needs, such as housing or food assistance.

⁴⁴ <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/illinois/districts/waukegan-cusd-60/waukegan-high-school-7062/test-scores>.

⁴⁵ http://www.wps60.org/wcusd/district_school_report_cards.

⁴⁶ <http://www.schooldigger.com/go/IL/schoolrank.aspx?level=3>.

Need for Access to Bi-lingual Psychological Services

Eleven of the seventeen service providers reported that these children carry unique traumas with them. Megan McKenna commented that it is really impossible to know the journeys they have had, even before they left their countries of origin. “Usually, we are concerned for the journeys families make to get here, but for these kids, the trauma started way before they left home.”⁴⁷ The availability of bi-lingual psychological services is especially important. The service providers were adamant that a good bi-lingual counselor needs to know more than the Spanish language.

“We need counselors who can really relate to the life stories of these children,” insisted María Dominguez, case manager at the Padre Gary Graf Center.⁴⁸ Many service providers commented on the lack of bi-lingual services available, especially psychological services. Maria Elena Jonas insisted, “Counseling is not the type of service you want someone interpreting for you, it is so private.”⁴⁹

Need or Access to Legal Services

The unaccompanied children who have made their way to the city of Waukegan and surrounding areas are all awaiting trial. The immediacy of these cases might be the reason why most service providers did not choose to mention the need for accompaniment with legal services. The majority of service providers has legal services available or does referrals in order to connect families with what they need. Maria Elena Jonas, director of HACES, a legal service

⁴⁷ Megan McKenna. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 12, 2015.

⁴⁸ Dominguez, María. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 17, 2014.

⁴⁹ Jonas, María Elena. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

for immigrants says, “We either connect families with a pro-bono lawyer or help them make ends meet through referrals to the food pantry and soup kitchen when they need to spend money on legal fees. Sometimes we find out that the family has aid available that they are not making use of, such as food stamps.”⁵⁰

Cynthia Vargas, the communication director for the State’s Attorney Office, emphasized that these cases are handled at a federal level and only criminal behavior would warrant involvement by the State’s Attorney Office. Cynthia also emphasized that good educational and spiritual accompaniment by the church keeps teens out of trouble. “We need to have good services like the youth group at church available. It makes such a difference in the lives of these children. And, if these teens can stay in school, they usually do not end up in our office.”⁵¹

Need for Advocacy Work on Their Behalf

Advocacy work involves addressing the systemic issues, such as the political and economic concerns, that are the root causes of many of problems faced by the unaccompanied minors. Three of the seventeen service providers specifically addressed the need for advocacy work in view of the humanitarian crisis facing our nation today in regard to the unaccompanied youth: The Padre Gary Graf Center, MANO A MANO, and HACES. Kathy Long, OP, director of the Gary Graf Center clarifies, “When we go to Springfield to petition lawmakers or attend policy meetings in Chicago, we are standing up for the unaccompanied children themselves. We carry them, their wants and needs, with us.”⁵² Issues regarding temporary protected status, how

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Vargas, Cynthia. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 8, 2015.

⁵² Long, OP, Kathy. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 8, 2014.

these cases with unaccompanied minors are currently being handled, and deportation concerns are major concerns for advocacy work.

Each one of the three service providers named above pointed to the need for the United States to address the violence, poverty, and crime in Central America and Mexico. Megan McKenna declared, “This country is not trying to understand the broader issues – where these kids are coming from and why they are leaving. We need to do that. We are trying to work with our peer agencies to know at a deep level the problems in these countries.”⁵³

Conclusion

I want to reiterate the great privilege I experienced interviewing such dedicated service providers. I could tell that their inspiring work is so much more than a job for each of them. Their feedback and wise insights will help shape this thesis-project. I am especially aware how each of them upholds the respect and dignity of the unaccompanied minor. As María Elena Jonas said, “The stories they live are the same as the stories of many of us offering them service today...everyone has a story...that is why I do this work...I cannot throw away the stories of newcomers...it would be throwing away my own story...*tenemos un mismo sentir*...we are in this together....”⁵⁴

⁵³ McKenna, Megan. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, January 15, 2015.

⁵⁴ Jonas, María Elena. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview, Waukegan, IL, December 11, 2014.

The Focus Groups and Interviews with the Unaccompanied Minors

The opportunity to meet and interview these young people was a profound privilege. Beginning with the very first focus group, I became intensely aware that completing this thesis-project was a spiritual experience. In each focus group and interview, I believe I was meeting [or encountering] raw courage, incredible strength, profound faith, and a tangible hope that knew no borders.

While I am keeping the anonymity of these young people sacred, I can report that the three focus groups and two interviews included seven young men between the ages of 15 – 20 and six young women between the ages of 14 – 21. Six of the youth were from Honduras, four from Mexico, two from Guatemala, and three from El Salvador.

Below is a list of common themes that surfaced during the focus groups/interviews with the unaccompanied youth:

<u>1.3 THE COMMON THEMES</u>
1) Our adjustment has been very difficult. However, after time, we feel so safe here. We have our basic needs met here. We are connected to our mothers/fathers/brothers and sisters again.
2) We want to learn English and find the support we need to do it.
3) We desire to finish school or get a GED and/or get a good job.
4) We hope to achieve citizenship here.
5) We will seek a career in this country.
6) We will take care of family back home – financially, physically, emotionally.
7) “No me separaré del lado de Dios y la Virgencita.” (I will stay close to God and the Virgin Mary.)

- 1) Our adjustment has been very difficult. However, after time, we feel so safe here. We have what we need here. We are together with our families again.

Overwhelmingly, the very first answer given by the unaccompanied minors about how they were feeling in this country was a sentiment of safety, of living without danger. Each minor talked about life back in their home countries as full of gangs, *narco-traficantes* (drug traffickers), violence, and the possibility of harm, or even death. The majority mentioned that even going to school was unsafe. Many told personal stories. More than one of the young men interviewed spoke of being required to “do bad things” for a gang.⁵⁵ The majority lived under huge threats of harm toward themselves and their families. Every single one of the young women interviewed spoke of the fear of bodily harm.

When most of the youth spoke about how they feel now, you could see the relief in their facial expressions. The two other major sentiments about being here in the United States was an awareness that they no longer live in impoverished conditions and that they are united with family members. All but two of the unaccompanied minors mentioned that they now have enough food to eat. Many of the unaccompanied minors had not lived with a mother or father or both parents for over 10 years. Many now live with siblings, including step-brothers and step-sisters, with whom they are living for the first time.

Another overwhelming sentiment by the recently arrived youth was the huge adjustment they must make here. Language, cultural practices, food, weather, and daily life in general are all so different from what they knew in their home countries. As one child said, “I never realized how much the little things in my own country, like how we celebrate Christmas, were a part of me.”⁵⁶ These focus groups and interviews took place during the coldest days of the year. Many are

⁵⁵ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 22, 2015.

⁵⁶ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 16, 2015.

experiencing snow for the first time in their lives. The change in climate was the source of both consternation and humor for these young people. The majority felt trapped indoors. As one youth explained, “In my village in Honduras, you could walk anywhere at any time of the day. We lived outside. Now, I can’t go anywhere in this weather.”⁵⁷

2) We want to learn English and find the support we need to do it.

Learning English was a huge priority for all of the unaccompanied minors. Not knowing the language is a source of fear, embarrassment, and diminishment. The majority spoke of their fear of the language and their abilities. Some believe that learning a new language, especially English, is an impossible task. Many mentioned having family members who have been in the States for years and still do not know English. More than two-thirds of the minors did not know where to begin to find available English language learning services. The other overwhelming sentiment about learning a new language was the need for support. As one young woman said, “If you do not have support at home, or among your friends, it makes it really hard to try to do this.”⁵⁸

3) We desire to finish school or get a GED and/or get a good job.

If an unaccompanied minor arrived in this country at age 17 or 18, they were most likely discouraged from trying to enter high school. This is due to the state laws that require anyone over 18 to obtain a GED rather than stay in high school.⁵⁹ Some of the unaccompanied minors that fell into this age bracket decided to find work rather than study to obtain a GED. I met three

⁵⁷ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 16, 2015.

⁵⁸ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 8, 2015.

⁵⁹ I learned this fact in the service provider interviews with the Waukegan Public School personnel and from the youth sharing their experiences of trying to register for school.

young men, between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, who are not studying at this time. One of these young men told me, “I had six months left before my high school graduation when I left Honduras, and now I work full-time.”⁶⁰ These young men worked at jobs that paid minimum wage, \$8.25/hour. They worked in factories on an assembly line job. Because of their lack of English and experience here in this country, these three young men were not even sure what machinery part they assembled each day. One thing they knew for sure – if they missed one day of work, they would lose their jobs.

Each unaccompanied child spoke of the painful adjustment to attending school, even in bi-lingual classes. All the exams in the bi-lingual classes are in English. Several students spoke of this difficulty. A number of the unaccompanied minors who are in school spoke of the limited bi-lingual curriculum available to them, in comparison to the variety of high school classes offered in their countries of origin. “In my country, I was going to take physics this year. But, it is not part of the bi-lingual curriculum.”⁶¹ Many associated the adjustment to school with what they missed most in their home countries: friends, their old way of life, the weather, living where all is familiar.

4) We hope to achieve citizenship here.

The legal situation of each of the unaccompanied minors is an intimidating and fearful reality. Every single one of these unaccompanied minors spoke of the dread of being returned to their countries of origin. The majority of children are unaware of the legal proceedings. One major impediment to the legal situation each unaccompanied youth faces is the lack of legal

⁶⁰ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 23, 2015.

⁶¹ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 8, 2015.

support and knowledge about options. And many now live in families where one or more parent is undocumented. In many cases, these young people have no one with documentation to accompany them through the legal system. They feel alone. They are unaware of what to expect. The potential financial burden for the families is overwhelming.

5) We will seek a career in this country.

The dreams and hopes for the future of each unaccompanied minor are centered upon obtaining productive, fulfilling lives in the future. All spoke of the dream of a career. Despite the obstacles, these young people want to become doctors, human rights activists, teachers, and entrepreneurs. As with most youth, their dreams are vast and full of hope. Three of the youth spoke of the obstacles in their way. One young woman said, “I know this is the land of opportunities, but only for people who have papers...without a social security card I cannot apply for grants for school...for scholarships. Any career seems far away.”⁶²

6) We will take care of family back home – financially, physically, and emotionally.

Each unaccompanied youth lamented the reality that he or she still had family back in their countries of origin who are facing both violence and poverty each day. This is a great source of worry and anxiety for these young people. Many spoke of their awareness of all that they have here in the United States, even without legal status. One said, “Every time I eat, I think of my family members who might not have a meal today, or only one meal all day.”⁶³

The situations in their countries of origin are also sources of inspiration for these young people. Many talked about why they want to work hard or study hard in order to be able to help

⁶² Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 8, 2015.

⁶³ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 23, 2015.

their families in the future. Many spoke of the dream of being reunited with those they left behind. One child said, “I dream of having a home back in Honduras someday where my grandmother and aunts and uncles can live in safety, with everything they need.”⁶⁴ The majority of young people explained that this is why they are here – to be able to provide for their families in the future.

I was so struck in these interviews and focus groups by the difference between these teenagers and the adolescents in the high school where I minister. I have never heard a child from my high school in Wisconsin speak of the desire to grow up and become successful in order to provide for his or her family. Children in the United States today are oriented toward a success that involves wealth and prestige for themselves.

7) “No me separaré del lado de Dios y la Virgencita.” (I will stay close to God and the Virgin Mary.)

Another prodigious characteristic shared by these young people is their faith. Each believes that s/he is alive today and safely here in the United States because of God’s love and the protection of the Virgin Mary. This faith, this “cleaving to God,” is too large to fit on any of these pages and too deep to captivate outside the human heart⁶⁵ (Deuteronomy 13.4). The unaccompanied minors from Mexico specifically named the Virgin Mary as *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*.

I asked each adolescent directly if they found church here in the United States a place where they felt at home. The majority said “yes.” They talked about how church offers them a place to go, the Eucharist in particular, where they can feel like they are back home in their country of origin. Some youth spoke of belonging to Pentecostal churches in their home countries. They

⁶⁴ Name withheld. Interview with M. Ryan, OP. Personal Interview. February 23, 2015.

found the Lutheran or Catholic churches here very different, but appreciated the opportunity to be around other families from their own countries. Many of the youth spoke of the desire of becoming part of *un grupo juvenil*, a youth group.

Conclusion: The Historical Context and Social Location

Calling on the expertise of the service providers and investigating the concerns of the unaccompanied minors have provided me with an empirical picture of the unaccompanied minors who have made their way to Waukegan and surrounding cities. These young people and those who would address the ministerial concerns they raise for the community of faith face stark political, social, and economic realities that I will now address in Chapter Two. In the midst of these harsh realities, the community experience witnessed in the coming pages is a great source of hope and future learning.

CHAPTER TWO

“HE SAID IT IS CALLED VIDA MEJOR – SPANISH FOR BETTER LIFE.”

The profound stories of the unaccompanied minors and the dedicated work of the service providers inspire an in-depth study of the “why” of the basic needs of these youth. Osmer calls this the interpretive task. I will examine the political, economic and social realities behind the stories of these unaccompanied children arriving at our borders. It is important to note that surveying the poverty and violence of these countries does not give the total picture. This study does not include an overview of the amazing cultures and peoples in the lands that these unaccompanied minors call home.

I will specifically look at the plight of the unaccompanied minors within the milieu of the age of migration.¹ I situate their migration story within the larger picture of migration today. I outline the political and economic push and pull factors of migration today, and relate those to this vulnerable population. I follow the journey of the unaccompanied minor to the United States. I summarize the current laws our country employs to protect children arriving here alone. I also investigate current sentiment for not protecting the unaccompanied minor. Each of these components serves to fulfill, as Osmer explains, why certain actions and patterns are taking place.

Included in Osmer’s interpretive task is a continuum of wisdom that moves along a scale of interpretation from thoughtfulness to theoretical interpretation.² “This is the grounding point

¹ Daniel Groody, “Homeward Bound: A Theology of Migration,” *Journal for Catholic Social Thought* 9, no. 2, 2012, 409-424. In this article, Groody names the age in which we live as the age of migration. In October of the same year this article was written, 2012, another article by Groody was published with a similar title in *The Ecumenical Review*.

² Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 82.

of a spirituality of sagely wisdom, what Aristotle referred to as *phronesis*.”³ The interpretive task requires discerning the “right moral ends.”⁴ To augment the theoretical interpretation performed during this second task, I have included in this chapter the beginning of the third task, the normative task. I will review our biblical foundation and magisterial teaching for beacons of light to shine on the formation of praxis with the unaccompanied youth. I will pay close attention to the Judeo-Christian narrative of migration. I will examine contemporary Catholic social teaching that guides the accompaniment of the migrant by the church. Through this study, I will draw out the implications for constructing theological norms that will guide the creation of good practice.

Migration in the Twenty-First Century

We live in an age of migration. The number of people leaving their native country seeking security and sustenance in a foreign land has doubled in the last twenty-five years. “One out of every 35 people around the world is now living away from their homelands. This is roughly the equivalent of the population of Brazil, the fifth largest country in the planet.”⁵ The migration of people around the world has global significance today, creating consequences of international proportion.

Every reason behind an immigrant’s departure from his or her native land points to a world-wide phenomenon that is both complex and controversial. Some motives are referred to as push factors. Migrants are uprooted by force. They leave seeking justice and safety from war

³ Ibid., 82-3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Daniel Groody, “Theology in the Age of Migration,” *National Catholic Reporter*. September 18, 2009. Pg 21. Groody wrote another article in 2012 that changed this figure to one in every 33 person. Daniel Groody, “Homeward Bound: A Theology of Migration for Fullness of Life, Justice, and Peace,” *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 64, No. 3, October 2012.

and violence. For example, the war in Iraq has left over two million people without a home.⁶ Some are looking for religious freedom. Others are searching for a way to feed their family. They need work. Still others want to reunite with family members who have already left.⁷

There is also what governmental reports refer to as pull factors, which “draw people towards countries like the United States to seek a better life.”⁸ Common pull factors revolve around availability of work and *per capita* income.⁹ The United States currently offers more low-skilled jobs at a pay that far exceeds what one could earn in many parts of the world. In Guatemala, for example, a worker may earn from \$150 – \$300 monthly.¹⁰ This amount could be earned each week in United States.

The social, political, and economic reasons behind migration today are passionately contested issues. These grave concerns reflect conflicts that extend way beyond struggles with geographic borders. Human rights, national security and insecurity, sovereign rights, and civil and natural laws are just a handful of topics that point to the complexities of the migration issue.¹¹

Ever since September 11, 2001, the issue of migration here in the United States has taken on a heightened sense of danger. It is possible to say that the threat of terrorism has become a

⁶ Ian Livingston and Michael O’Hanlon, “21st Century Intelligence Report: Recent Iraq Index,” <http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/middle-east-policy/iraq->.

⁷ The reasons for migrating are taken from Groody, “Theology in the Age of Migration,” and Kevin Clarke, “Compassion Without Borders,” *U.S. Catholic* 79, 4, April 2014.

⁸ One America: With Justice for All. “An Age of Migration: Root Causes for Migration,” <https://www.weareoneamerica.org/root-causes-migration-fact-sheet>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/gtm_aag.pdf.

¹¹ Groody, “Theology in the Age of Migration,” 21-2.

determining political and economic factor, shaping both governmental programs and foreign policies.

No recent event has influenced the thinking and actions of the American public and its leaders as much as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001....Since 9/11, many aspects of the U.S. immigration enforcement system have become dramatically more robust. The national security threat posed by international terrorism led to the largest reorganization of the federal government since World War II. The overhaul brought about the merger of 22 federal agencies to create the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003.¹²

The Department of Homeland Security has a current budget of 38.2 billion dollars.¹³

As of 2015, four of the world's largest refugee populations have sizeable numbers of unaccompanied and separated children: Afghans, Congolese, Eritreans, and ethnic nationalities from Burma. One-third of the 2.7 million Syrians seeking refuge in neighboring countries are children. It is estimated that 800,000 of those children are under the age of 12.¹⁴

Migration and refuge-seeking by unaccompanied minors are also long-time historic realities in this country. Research proves that the very first immigrants in line at Ellis Island on the opening day were three unaccompanied children, a teenage girl and her two younger brothers. Annie Moore, from Ireland, was 15, and one of her brothers had not yet reached his 10th birthday. Not one of the three was turned away or detained on that initial day.¹⁵

¹² Faye Hipsman and Dora Meissner, "Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon," *Migration Policy Institute*. Washington, D.C. April 16, 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform>.

¹³ <http://www.dhs.gov/publication/fy-2015-budget-brief>.

¹⁴ Kevin Appleby, Editor. "Building Capacity to Protect Unaccompanied and Separated Refugee Children," USCCB http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/upload/Durable-Solutions_URM.pdf July, 2014, 1. All the figures in this paragraph regarding the world's children are from this report.

¹⁵ Tasneen Raja, "Child Migrants Have Been Coming to America Alone since Ellis Island," *Mother Jones* <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/07/child-migrant-ellis-island-history>. As this author reports, they did not "just send them packing either."

The Unaccompanied Children Crossing Our Southern Borders

How do the unaccompanied minors arriving at our borders today fit into this bigger picture of this age of migration? These children have been compared to a river flowing north, larger than the Nile, Bighorn, and Shenandoah rivers.¹⁶ Desperate, without adult care, and in dangerous situations, these minors are flowing across our Southern borders. One mother spoke about her child leaving their native land: “If they stay, our kids will fall prey to the gangs, and if they migrate, they may die on the way...there is no way out.”¹⁷

2.1 Maps of Central America and Mexico

Central America



18

Mexico



19

The majority of the unaccompanied children entering the United States at our Southern borders come from, as identified earlier, what is referred to as the Central American Northern Triangle – Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.²⁰ As listed in the Introduction, the children

¹⁶ This beautiful imagery is from Daniel Groody, "Deporting the Heart: Unaccompanied Child Migrants and the Globalization of Indifference," *America*. September 15, 2014.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ <https://www.google.com/search?guatemala+el+salvador+and+honduras>.

¹⁹ <https://www.google.com/search?q=states+of+mexico>.

²⁰ Ian Gordon, "70,000 Kids Will Show Up Alone at Our Border This Year. What Happens to Them?" *Mother Jones* (July/August 2014), <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/06/child-migrants-surge->

also originate from six states of Mexico: Tamaulipas, Sonora, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Guanajuato, and Michoacán.²¹

Pope Francis, in a letter to the Mexican government, highlights the growing concern over the migration of unaccompanied children to the United States:

I would also like to draw attention to the tens of thousands of children who migrate alone, unaccompanied, to escape poverty and violence: This is a category of migrants from Central America and Mexico itself who cross the border with the United States under extreme conditions and in pursuit of a hope that in most cases turns out to be vain. They are increasing day by day. This humanitarian emergency requires, as a first urgent measure, these children be welcomed and protected. These measures, however, will not be sufficient, unless they are accompanied by policies that inform people about the dangers of such a journey and, above all, that promote development in their countries of origin. Finally, this challenge demands the attention of the entire international community so that new forms of legal and secure migration may be adopted.²²

Pope Francis is very clear. This migration crisis of unaccompanied minors must be investigated by the global community whose job it is to find a solution that addresses the complex situations causing children to leave their homelands.

Unfortunately, these words by Pope Francis have not been given serious attention by our government. In June, 2014 as previously noted, the number of unaccompanied children crossing

unaccompanied-central-america. The information on where and why the unaccompanied children are coming to our borders today comes from Gordon's extensive research in this article.

²¹ Ian Gordon, "Three-Quarters of Mexican Child Migrants Have Been Caught at the Border Before," *Mother Jones*, Political Mojo, August 5, 2014. <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2014/08/mexican-unaccompanied-child-migrants-map>.

²² Me urge, además, llamar la atención sobre decenas de miles de niños que emigran solos, no acompañados, para escapar a la pobreza y a las violencias: esta es una categoría de migrantes que, desde Centro America y desde México, atraviesa la frontera con los Estados Unidos de América en condiciones extremas, en busca de una esperanza que la mayoría de las veces resulta vana. Ellos aumentan día a día. Tal emergencia humanitaria reclama en primer lugar intervención urgente, que estos menores sean acogidos y protegidos. Tales medidas, sin embargo no serán suficientes, si no son acompañadas por políticas de información sobre los peligros de un viaje tal y, sobre todo, de promoción del desarrollo en sus países de origen. Finalmente, es necesario frente a este desafío, llamar la atención de toda la comunidad internacional para que puedan ser adoptadas nuevas formas de migración legal y segura. (Translation by USCCB) Pope Francis I, Líderes de la Iglesia Hablan Sobre la Crisis de los Niños Migrantes no Acompañados, USCCB. 14 July, 2014. www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/upload/Papal-Letter.pdf.

our borders had already surpassed 52,000. President Obama took to the airways in June, 2014 pleading with Central American parents to stop sending their children and warning of the dangers faced. “Do not send your children to the borders. If they do make it, they'll get sent back. More importantly, they may not make it.”²³

In Guatemala City, on June 20, 2014, Vice-President Biden made the following remarks in an address immediately following a day-long meeting with the presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Finally and critically...discourage families from sending their children on this perilous journey. Make no mistake, once an individual's case is fully heard, and if he or she does not qualify for asylum, he or she will be removed from the United States and returned home. Everyone should know that.²⁴

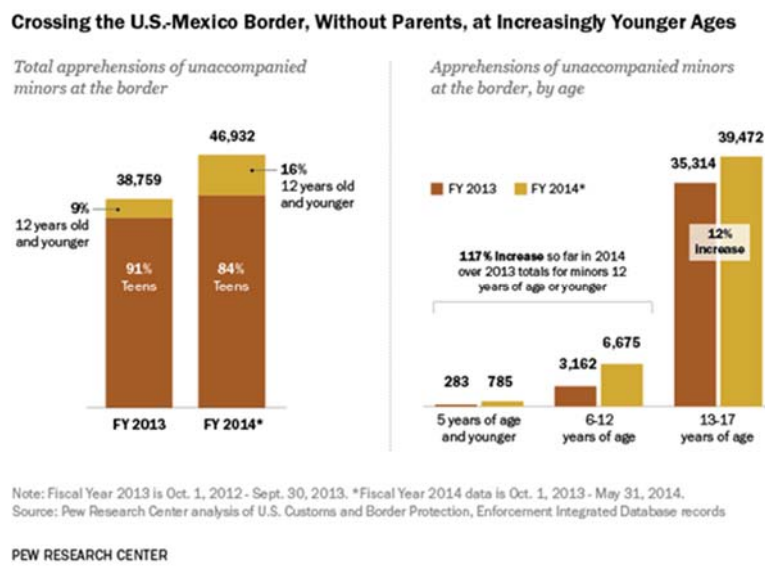
Unfortunately, this vulnerable population is not being met by “an institutional environment which is promoting its access to safety.” Sister Lidia Mara Silva de Souza, a sister from the Scalabrini Order who has worked with deportees from the US for decades, says, “The ones who are the most vulnerable are the ones who are returned to the situations they are running from.”²⁵

²³ <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/210793-obamas-stern-warning-child-migrants-will-be-sent-back-home>.

²⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/20/remarks-press-qa-vice-president-joe-biden-guatemala>.

²⁵ Jo Tuckman, “Flee or die: violence drives Central America's child migrants to US border,” *The Guardian* July 9, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/central-america-child-migrants-us-border-crisis>.

2.2 Ages of Unaccompanied Minors Crossing the U.S. Border Today



26

While statistics show that the majority of children crossing are teenagers, the ages of these children do vary. This Pew Research chart illustrates the apprehension of children at the border under the age of 12. Some reports indicate that many are surprisingly young. In a recent article in *America*, Father Daniel Groody, associate professor from the University of Notre Dame and a champion for migrants, interviewed a seven-year-old on his way to New York. “When I asked what town in New York his father lived in, he said it is called *Vida Mejor*—Spanish for “better life.”²⁷

²⁶ Jens Manuel Krogstad, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Children 12 and Under are Fastest Growing Group of Unaccompanied Minors at U.S. Border,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., July 12, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/22/children-12-and-under-are-fastest-growing-group-of-unaccompanied-minors-at-u-s-border>.

²⁷Daniel Groody, “Deporting the Heart” *America*, September 15, 2014. <http://americamagazine.org/issue/deporting-heart>.

Why Are Children Coming to the United States Alone?

Only pure desperation causes parents or guardians to allow these children to make such perilous journeys. Immigration to the United States from Mexico and Central America has long been driven by economic difficulties and violence in these home countries. Reports show that the poverty and violence, mostly drug and gang related, are increasing yearly. When putting enough food on the table is no longer a possibility and economic and political structures deteriorate, many seek to find justice and security elsewhere.

The poverty in the Central American Northern Triangle is mind-boggling. The World Bank indicates that the average yearly income of El Salvador's six million people is approximately \$3,500.00. Forty percent of Salvadorans lived on less than four dollars a day in 2010. The per capita income in Guatemala is roughly the same. Sixty-two percent of this country's sixteen million people lived on less than four dollars a day in 2006. Honduras has a population of eight million people. The average income is \$2,180.00 yearly and 53 percent of the population lived on less than four dollars a day in 2009. Mexico, with a population of 122 million people in 2013, has an average annual income of \$9,950. Twenty-three percent of the nation's population lived on less than four dollars a day in 2010.²⁸ These statistics paint a bleak picture of unemployment, high infant mortality rates, and rampant disease due to no or very poor health care options. Living in substandard housing, many people have very inadequate sewage systems or none at all.

Two principal factors that serve to continue the persistent poverty existing in these countries are the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) of 2005, both spearheaded by the United States.

²⁸ The stats on poverty are from the World Bank website.
<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/HND>.

These trade agreements allow foreign imports to drive prices of local products lower and lower each year. Unemployment and migration have significantly increased, especially in rural areas, since these two trade agreements began.²⁹ Laura Carlsen, the director of the Americas Program at the Center for International Policy explains the devastating results of NAFTA in Mexico;

As heavily subsidized U.S. corn and other staples poured into Mexico, producer prices dropped and small farmers found themselves unable to make a living. Some two million have been forced to leave their farms since NAFTA. At the same time, consumer food prices rose, notably the cost of the omnipresent tortilla.³⁰

What does a family do that cannot even provide bread for the table? Searching for newness of life and security in the United States has been one answer to this question. Those who have stayed in their countries have been forced to face the increasing violence, significantly related to the growing impoverished conditions.

The presence of gangs in the Central America Northern Triangle has driven many youth to seek a more secure life outside of their own country. In recent years, the gang violence, for example, in El Salvador and Guatemala, has become a matter of life or death. Two gangs reported as most deadly are Mara Salvatrucha and Calle 18.³¹ It has been stated that gang members were routinely deported by the United States government to countries like Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico without paying attention to the consequences.³² Adam Isacson, an aide with the Washington Office on Latin America, told reporters,

We funded civil wars, which created enormous refugee problems. We deported anyone who was in those communities that had a criminal record, which started

²⁹ The NAFTA and CAFTA information is from <http://www.naftanow.org>.

³⁰ Laura Carlsen, "Under NAFTA, Mexico Suffered, and the United States Felt Its Pain," *The New York Times*, November 24, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/11/24/what-weve-learned-from-nafta/under-nafta-mexico-suffered-and-the-united-states-felt-its-pain>.

³¹ Jo Tuckman, "Flee or Die,".

³² Ian Gordon, "70,000 Kid,".

the gang problem. And after the civil wars ended, we slashed our aid programs for almost anything besides drug war policies. To this day, you still can't significantly fund any of those priorities in Congress unless it's going through a counter-narcotics program.³³

The thousands of unaccompanied children crossing our borders today are running from situations the United States helped to create.

The gang violence continues to intensify, and corrupt officials appear to have little control over the violence. “Gang violence in El Salvador and in urban areas of Guatemala has escalated dramatically since a weak truce among rival gangs has evaporated,” said Elizabeth G. Kennedy, a Fulbright scholar studying the reasons why so many unaccompanied minors are leaving their countries today.³⁴ Kennedy has interviewed more than 400 child migrants. Children give accounts of being recruited by the gangs to be delivery boys or girls for drugs, or even worse, to carry out the gang violence on other gangs and civilians.³⁵

Alison Ramirez, who works in a violence-prevention program and makes frequent visits to Honduras and Guatemala, says, “The gang violence particularly affects youth. The gangs are in schools and neighborhoods. They're everywhere. Even if the kids don't want to be a part of it, they get caught up in the crossfire, extorted, threatened.”³⁶ Children are arriving at the border giving eyewitness accounts of family members shot to death in front of them.³⁷

³³ Roque Planas, “These Are the Real Reasons Behind Our Humanitarian Crisis at the Border,” *Huffington Post*, June 22, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/22/reasons-humanitarian-crisis-border_n_5515651.html.

³⁴ Bob Ortega, “Five Answers: Why the Surge in Migrant Children at the Border?” *The Republic* June 10, 2014. <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/immigration/2014/06/09/immigrant-children-arizona-border-answers/10246771>.

³⁵ Anderson Cooper, “Daniel’s Journey: How Thousands of Children Are Creating a Crisis in America,” *CNN*, June 19, 2014 <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/13/us/immigration-undocumented-children-explainer>.

³⁶ Bob Ortega, “Five Answers: Why the Surge in Migrant Children at the Border?”

³⁷ *Ibid.*

While poverty continues to be a factor pushing unaccompanied minors north, drug-related violence in Mexico is cited today as the number one reason these youth are leaving home. The Bureau of Diplomatic Services, a branch of the U.S. Department of State, reports the six states in Mexico from which the greatest number of unaccompanied minors is currently fleeing have high levels of drug-related violence and crime. The worst drug activity occurs in close proximity to trafficking routes and border regions. Criminal activity, including homicide, gun battles, kidnapping, carjacking and highway robbery, have been determined to be growing at increasingly alarming rates.³⁸

Murder rates for the three countries of the Central American Northern Triangle indicate the danger these youth are fleeing. “Honduras is home to the deadliest city in the world, San Pedro Sula, where 169 out of every 100,000 people are murdered. The murder rate in Guatemala is nearly as bad and getting worse. And while El Salvador has seen a slight decrease in murders, it is still ranked fifth globally, according to the latest figures available.”³⁹

Another factor in the increase of unaccompanied minors setting out for the United States is one introduced earlier – family ties. Immigration laws in the U.S. have had a reputation of separating families for years. An overwhelming number of families who migrated to the United States still have children living in these countries, whom they have not seen in years. Also, those who make a profit from migration, such as *los coyotes* (the paid guides) or criminal smuggling rings, have gotten the word out - You can get into the U.S. without fear of deportation. “The Department of Homeland Security has acknowledged that because so many minors caught in the

³⁸ The information about crime in Mexico today is from Travel Health and Safety: Mexico January, 2014. <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=14997>.

³⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/country-lost-kids>.

past few years were reunited with their families here and not immediately deported, many... were left with the perception that the United States was allowing children to stay.”⁴⁰

Mary Hodem, the regional director of Catholic Relief Services in Latin America, summarizes the forces behind the decisions families are making to send their children north. “The dramatic increase of children and teenagers arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border is a direct result of the growing desperation. The violence in these communities makes life all but impossible.”⁴¹

Daniel Groody explains further, “In the end, young people have no horizon of hope. Many have only four choices: steal to get by, join the gangs and likely die, refuse to join the gangs and be killed—or migrate.”⁴²

2.3 Train Routes Taken by Migrants in Mexico to the Border of the United States



This map from the Jesuit Migrant Service illustrates the main cargo train lines and stops. The pink line is the far shortest route to the U.S. border, which explains why south Texas has seen the vast majority of Central American migrant arrivals. 43

⁴⁰ Haeyoun Park, “Children at the Border,” *The New York Times* July 15, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/15/us/questions-about-the-border-kids.html?_r=0.

⁴¹ This report from Mary Hodem is given by Daniel Groody in “Deporting the Heart...”.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jesuit Migrant Services – Central and North America. Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/jesuit-migration-services-central-and-north-america>.

The migration routes between Central America to the United States are numerous. One such route, often followed by the minors, is called the Pipeline, which begins in Honduras, travels through El Salvador and Guatemala, and crosses into Arriaga, Mexico.⁴⁴ Once in Mexico, a step many coming from Central America do not succeed in realizing, the children who can afford it take buses that follow Highway 180 or climb aboard *La Bestia* (The Beast), which is the name given to a cargo train that runs from the state of Chiapas, Mexico to the border with the United States. At the town of Lecheria, Mexico, the migrants can choose a train route based on the desired point of entry into the United States. (See Map.) Some children walk hundreds of miles to reach the border. Traveling the Pipeline requires crossing dangerous rivers and facing numerous other challenges, such as corrupt *coyotes* (paid guides), criminals, and immigration police. Along the Pipeline there are also migrant shelters and churches that offer assistance to travelers.⁴⁵

Once the unaccompanied minors make it to the border between the United States and Mexico, they usually turn themselves into the Border Patrol. Two of the U.S. laws that have been cited as offering these unaccompanied minors distinct legal protection today are: 1) The Homeland Security Act of 2002, under which Congress is required to transfer the care and custody of unaccompanied minor immigrants from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Department of Health and Human Services, and 2) The 2008 William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.⁴⁶ This bill, one of the last signed by George

⁴⁴ Daniel Gonzalez and Bob Ortega, "Pipeline of Children: A Border Crisis," *The Arizona Republic* 14 July, 2014. <http://www.azcentral.com/longform/news/politics/immigration/2014/07/10/immigrant-children-border-kids-pipeline/12410517/>. This article also comes with powerful and graphic pictures that make this journey real.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hannah Rappleye, "Undocumented and Unaccompanied: Facts, Figures of Children at the Border. NBC NEWS 20 July, 2014. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/immigration-border-crisis/undocumented-unaccompanied-facts-figures-children-border-n152221>.

W. Bush, was named after an English politician famous for leading the struggle to abolish the slave trade.⁴⁷ The law increases the responsibilities of the Department of Health and Human Services. Children can ask for asylum or get a U-Visa as a victim of crime or a T-Visa as a victim of trafficking. They can also file for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.⁴⁸ To do so, the state court needs to determine that a child has been abused, abandoned, or neglected and consequently, that state must take custody of the child.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that 58 percent of the 400 youth recently interviewed “had suffered, been threatened, or feared serious harm” meriting international protection.⁴⁹ As outlined in an earlier section, this suffering is directly related to the violence and poverty in their home countries. Wendy Young from Kids in Need of Defense believes that the situation with the unaccompanied minors “is becoming less like an immigration issue and much more like a refugee issue. Because this really is a forced migration. This is not kids choosing voluntarily to leave.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ian Gordon, “70,000 Kids”.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

2.4 Chart That Depicts Process for Unaccompanied Minors Entering U.S. Borders



The above chart depicts the general process currently experienced by an unaccompanied minor detained at the border by Immigration and Natural Services: **Step 1:** After being detained by Immigration and Natural Services, the unaccompanied child is identified and undergoes initial health screening, and is then turned over to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). **Step 2:** Each child may be transferred to a short-term multi-agency center where the HHS provides medical check, immunizations and shelter assignment. **Step 3:** Each child travels to HHS shelter assignment. Transportation is provided by DHS. **Step 4:** The child remains in HHS shelter until a sponsor is identified on a case-by-case basis. The number of days spent in a shelter varies. Reports fluctuate between 35 to 60 days. **Step 5:** The child is placed with a

⁵¹ The chart and subsequent information on the process unaccompanied minors experience once detained by INS comes from governmental reports. 11 December, 2014. <http://www.dhs.gov/unaccompanied-children-southwest-borderprocess>.

relative or other sponsor in the U.S. pending the outcome of the immigration proceedings.

Reports claim that 85 % of the unaccompanied children are placed with relatives. The majority of children that are in Waukegan and surrounding cities today have been placed with relatives or neighbors from their home towns, and are awaiting trial. There is a smaller number of unaccompanied children who have been placed in foster care to await trial.

Opposition to Welcoming and Protecting the Unaccompanied Minors

I have already introduced the oppositional stance taken by our government's administration. Are President Obama and Vice-President Biden speaking for the majority of this nation's citizens when they declare, "Do not send your children to our borders"⁵²? A Gallup poll taken in July 2014 showed that one out of every six United States citizens claimed immigration to be the nation's number one problem.⁵³ The following Gallup poll demonstrates that in July, 2014 more U.S. citizens preferred decreasing the number of newcomers to our country.

⁵² <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/210793-obamas-stern-warning-child-migrants-will-be-sent-back-home>.

⁵³ Lydia Saad, "One in Six Say Immigration Most Important Problem," Gallup, July 2014. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/173306/one-six-say-immigration-important-problem.aspx>.

2.5 Gallup Poll on Increasing or Decreasing Immigration

In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

	Increased	Present level	Decreased	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
National adults	22	33	41	4
Republicans	14	34	50	3
Independents	23	30	43	3
Democrats	27	37	32	4

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Early on when the broadcasts of the unaccompanied minors gained national attention, the nightly news showed footage of people demonstrating anti-immigrant sentiment. I can still remember seeing a sign held by one woman that said, “Save Our Country, Close Our Borders.”⁵⁵

One significant belief which leads people to oppose immigration is the presumed economic burden our nation shoulders as a result of inviting in the newcomer. The Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform (CAIR) defines this position:

The economic and social consequences of illegal immigration... are staggering.... Illegal aliens have cost billions of taxpayer-funded dollars for medical services.... Immigration is a net drain on the economy; corporate interests reap the benefits of cheap labor, while taxpayers pay the infrastructural cost.... \$60 billion dollars are earned by illegal aliens in the U.S. each year. One of Mexico's largest revenue streams (after exports and oil sales) consists of money sent home by legal immigrants and illegal aliens working in the U.S.... This is a massive transfer of wealth from America - essentially from America's displaced working poor - to Mexico.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Lydia Saad, “More in U.S. Would Decrease Immigration Than Increase,” Gallup, July 2014. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/171962/decrease-immigration-increase.aspx>.

⁵⁵ Frank Ortega, “Signs of Racism: “Save Our Country Close Our Borders,” *Racism Review* August 24, 2014. <http://www.racismreview.com/blog/2014/08/24/signs-of-racism-to-close-borders>.

⁵⁶ “Top 10 Pros and Cons: What are the Solutions to Illegal Immigration in this Country?” Procon.org <http://immigration.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000842>. For further research on the reality of the economic burdens related to immigration, see the CAIR website. www.cairco.org. Also, the following article in

According to this anti-immigration belief, undocumented persons in this country do not earn their keep. The nation spends more supporting the undocumented worker and his or her family than they contribute to society.

As mentioned earlier, since September 11, 2001, a fear held by many United States citizens is the threat of terrorism in this country. There is a correlation made between welcoming the stranger and being vulnerable to terrorist attack:

Knowledgeable Americans have come to understand that our welcoming immigration policies are easily exploited by terrorists and that porous borders and lax immigration enforcement are no longer an option. With at least 8 million illegal aliens living in the United States and nearly one million new aliens arriving each year, the potential for terrorists entering the United States undetected is high.⁵⁷

It would be interesting to discover how many U.S. citizens fear not being able to detect a terrorist at our borders?

What does it mean for us as a nation that we would prefer to decrease immigration and consider a newcomer to be more of a terror threat than a United States citizen? We turn now to our faith tradition and scripture to examine another perspective on welcoming the immigrant.

The Biblical Story of God Welcoming the Stranger

The unprecedented number of unaccompanied children, who have crossed our borders in recent years, and are now placed with relatives or elsewhere in the United States, is a call to examine our Judeo-Christian story as a story of migration. It begins with God the Migrant

the *Washington Post* is excellent. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/low-skilled-immigrants-economic-burden-or-boon/2013>.

⁵⁷ Ibid. This is a statement from the Center for Immigration Studies, a non-for-profit organization founded in 1985.

whose Spirit is journeying over the face of the water in the Creation Story (Gn 1.2).⁵⁸ In contrast our government has decided to send back thousands of unaccompanied minors who have crossed our borders despite the dire conditions of poverty and violence in their native lands. Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez from Honduras asks the question, “How is it that nearly twenty-one centuries after Jesus Christ, we still fail to see the migrant as our neighbor?”⁵⁹

The biblical story explains how God journeys with sojourners. First, Adam and Eve are offered clothing sewn by God for the journey (Gn 3.21). Cain is marked on the forehead by God so he will not be killed as a foreigner traveling in an alien land (Gn 4.15). Some of the migrants in the Bible, like Noah, are traveling without a known destination (Gn 6.5-8.19). God sends them signs to alert the migrants along the way (Gn 8.10). And, the voice of God, as in the case of Abram and Sarai, directs their path of migration (Gn 12.1).

When the wars begin in Genesis 14, we learn that wherever there is war, there are displaced persons who need to flee and to seek refuge. The Psalmist’s words echo the migrant’s plight seeking asylum even to this day:

By the rivers of Babylon –
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remember Zion.
On the willows there
we hung our harps.
For there our captors asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
sing us one of the songs of Zion!” (Ps 137)

[The New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV]

⁵⁸ This image of God as a Migrant and subsequent descriptions of how God accompanies migrants in the Bible come from Joan M. Maruskin, “The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook,” *Church and Society* 95 (Jl-Ag 2005): 77-79.

⁵⁹ Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez, “A Witness of Hope,” in edited by Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), xi.

As the biblical narratives continue, we learn more about why people migrate and where God is in the midst of the journey. Famine motivates Isaac (Gn 26.2) and human trafficking results in Joseph's sojourn to Egypt (Gn 37-47). Baby Moses could represent all the unaccompanied minors sent away from home to have a chance at life (Ex 2.3). Today, Moses would be placed in a detention center when fetched out of the river, instead of being brought to the palace.⁶⁰ And, how many young adults could relate to Moses, who had to flee to a foreign land after being accused of committing a crime?

The biblical writers tell the story that migrants and others running to seek newness of life have known over the centuries – God accompanies the sojourner. In Exodus 13 we read,

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines...God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness of the Red Sea...The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day...and a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they could travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. (Ex 3.17-22)

God does not abandon the migrant, and provides for him or her during the journey.⁶¹

As the bible stories continue to interpret the story of the human journey on the move, we learn more about our Migrant God. One particular story from the historical books is the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, found in the Book of Ruth. Why did Ruth migrate to a foreign land, the land of her mother-in-law's birth? For many women, even today, migration is more of a necessity than a choice.

The position of this widow, be she penniless or otherwise, is difficult for she has no adult male protector. If she is childless, or to be more precise has no son(s), her position is even more serious (see Gen 38 for Tamar's story). Thus, going to a foreign country with her former mother-in-law is perhaps for Ruth preferable to staying behind in her own country. Following this line of reasoning, Ruth follows

⁶⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Naomi. And since she seems to have no financial means apart from her ability to work, she becomes a migrant worker—in the fields, for food for her and for her mother-in law.⁶²

The story of Ruth underlines the vulnerability of the migrant worker in a foreign land.

This biblical tale indicates how societies were organized in order to care for the newcomer and welcome the stranger. In Bethlehem, Boaz allows Ruth, like the other foreigners, to glean his fields and feed herself and Naomi with the crops left for those who have no way to provide for themselves or their families. “The story of Ruth and Naomi demonstrates the hope and strength for those who believe in the God of life, who may appear to be silent, yet is found in the midst of us transforming history.”⁶³

Current theological exploration analyzes the biblical writers’ theme of the “promised land.” Israel’s prophecy of a place of refuge, fulfillment, and happiness may well represent God’s desire for all humanity. The theme of “promised land” does not justify conquest or exploitation. Could this be the interiority of hope behind all people’s motivation to leave all that is familiar and venture into the unknown in order to find the “promised land?” D. Cameron Murchison writes:

For a theological approach that tries to understand the human experience, *sub specie aeternitatis*, this expands the frame for one of the Bible’s most fundamental themes, that of “promised land.” Whereas we might easily and readily think of the theme of “promised land” in the history of Israel...Israel’s vision of security, livelihood, and well-being (“promised land”) may well represent a vision that God has placed in the heart of humankind. What else than a universal, divine summons to a land in which humans might flourish explains the impulse that would lead them to venture in hope from known places to others unknown – again and again, for millennia?⁶⁴

⁶² Brenner, Athalya, “From Ruth to the Global Woman: Social and Legal Aspects,” *Interpretation* 64 (Ap 2010): 163.

⁶³ Luis Alonos Schökel, *La Biblia de Nuestro Pueblo* (Biblaio, España: Ediciones Mensajero, 2006), 862. (translation by the present author).

⁶⁴ D. Cameron Murchison, Protagonist Corner: Toward a Theology of Migration,” *Journal for Preachers* 32 (Pentecost, 2009): 39. I want to note here that Murchison, former professor and dean of Columbia Theological

This author believes that inherent in every migrant's heart is a holy dream, a prophecy waiting to be fulfilled, of God's plan for all to live with peace and with justice.

Once in the "promised land," the bible writers make another desire of God clearly known. God instructs those who have been accompanied in their migration to always open their hearts to other immigrants. Throughout the bible there is a clear mandate to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality to the foreigner. This is witnessed early on in Genesis 18.1-8. Abraham and Sarah observe three men at the entrance of their tent. Abraham washes the feet of the visitors. Abraham and Sarah offer water, bread, and a place for rest and renewal to the travelers. This is God in their midst. In the last book of the Torah, in Deuteronomy 10.17-19 we read:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the Great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The mandate is clear: love the stranger you once were. The story of the human journey throughout the rest of the Bible illuminates how this mandate is respected and also ignored by the people of God.⁶⁵

The very inbreaking of God into humanity, the Incarnation, has been referred to as a spiritual migration.⁶⁶ This migration, at the heart of our faith tradition, represents a movement toward a God who loves all life. We are never "other" with God.

Seminary in Decatur, GA also cites the theology of the Promised Land as outlined by Walter Brueggemann and Norman Habel.

⁶⁵ Maruskin, Joan, "The Bible", 83. The author connects the work of churches to this image of God teaching the people how to welcome the stranger and continue biblical hospitality.

⁶⁶ Daniel Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," in *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*. Edited by Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009). I took this idea of spiritual migration from the section entitled, "Verbum Dei: Crossing the Divine-Human Divide."

In migrating into the human race, God enters the place of otherness, the very migration that human beings fear and find so difficult to make...Another paradoxical dimension of the mystery of the incarnation is that, while migration tends toward an upward mobility and the greater realization of human dignity, divine migration tends toward a downward mobility that is even willing to undergo the worst human indignities (Phil 2.5-11).⁶⁷

How God as Spirit breaks into our world does not follow typical migratory patterns because God's love has no borders. What may look like downward mobility to us is a heavenly trajectory to God.

The story of the birth of Jesus in the New Testament reflects another migrant story. How many children today are born on the road because their parents are seeking a better job or safer place to live? Is it possible to imagine the vulnerability of Mary as she becomes aware that her time is near? Today, countless women fleeing for their lives, pregnant and close to giving birth, turn toward Mary for strength and support along the way. Mary and Joseph are traveling in order to comply with national laws (Lk 2.1-5).⁶⁸ Then, like so many today, this family flees to Egypt to avoid political persecution (Mt 2.13-15).

Were these influential early years in the life of Jesus when he called us to offer food to those who are hungry and drink to the thirsty (Mt 25.35-41)? Did Jesus learn about God's dream for the world when he heard the stories of how his parents were welcomed as strangers? Or, was Jesus just honoring the tradition of his ancestors? The countless stories of foreigners in the parables and miracle accounts indicate that Jesus manifested inclusivity in regard to nationality. "Jesus' life was a life of service to others, without regard for their origins."⁶⁹ And, the early Christians tried to imitate this openness and willingness in their lives. As the author of the Letter

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

⁶⁸ Maruskin, "The Bible", 87.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 89.

to the Hebrews says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Heb 13.2) (NRSV).

Christians today strive to imitate the life of Christ whom we come to know in the Scriptures. The Incarnation has been described as a “border crossing event...through which God empties himself of everything but love, so that he can more fully identify with others...and accompany them in a profound act of divine-human solidarity.”⁷⁰ We who receive this gift of Christ must look at how we can morally reenact it with our lives. “We need to remember basic evangelical attitudes if we are to become the migrant’s neighbor: *accompaniment, encouragement, and generosity.*”⁷¹

The Biblical Story of Welcoming the Stranger and Implications for Constructing Theological Norms for Ministry

From the first image of God in the Book of Genesis, a depiction of Creative Mystery hovering over a formless void, to the Incarnation of God into human life, referred to as a “border crossing event,” scripture offers us numerous theological guidelines for ministry with the unaccompanied minors. I believe that these theological guidelines can be divided into three parts: 1) the image of God, 2) the care of God, and 3) the call of God. Each of these divisions shows how scripture can directly influence ministry with the unaccompanied minors, both in a parish and in a community of Dominican sisters.

The Image of God

Among the characteristics of God depicted throughout the Old Testament, one leading image we come to know is a Spirit who travels with us. This image of God represents the migrant, a journeying companion who even goes into perilous situations. As I consider

⁷⁰ Groody, “Crossing the Divide”, 8.

⁷¹ Rodríguez, “Witness to Hope”, xiv.

theological norms that point to good practice, I am drawn to this image of God as one who never leaves us and always welcomes the stranger among us.

This norm requires that the community of Dominicans be open, inclusive, and available. Will the convent have an open door policy? Is there always room for one more? How would we react to a knock at the door late at night? Will our lives be so busy that sitting down to an impromptu cup of coffee when the doorbell rings will be impossible? St. Dominic was known for his joyful spirit. I imagine a welcoming spirit as a joyful spirit – a spirit of open hearts and open arms. Will our study and our prayer include the newcomer's needs? To whom will our ministerial attention go? Will our lives as preachers reflect this joyful, welcoming spirit?

Will everyone feel at home in the parish? Will the rules be ones that include everyone? Will our liturgies and sacramental programs be inclusive? Will those at the margins, those who do not have the financial resources or communication skills to be out in front be included? Who gets on the parish council? Who is included in the programming? How does a newcomer, like the unaccompanied minor, find his or her way into the parish life? The image of God as a welcoming, inclusive Spirit, a migrating God, offers the challenge to be people of open minds, arms, and hearts.

The Care of God

Throughout scripture, we see God taking care of migrants, on the journey and in their new lands. For example, migrants are clothed, removed from harm's way, and sent signs from a God who is guiding them. The Incarnation of God into human life comes to pass as a child of a family on the move. The mission of Jesus includes the newcomer, the foreigner at the table of plenty (Lk 5:27-32) (Mt 8:5-13). The scripture's depiction of God as one who cares for the migrant has enormous implications for a parish and a community of sisters. All must imitate this

care and compassion with their lives. Will the parish and the community of Dominicans keep abreast of the national and international news concerning migrants? Will their services be up-to-date regarding legal and political policies?

To act as the care of God in our world today is to be willing to love the migrant as oneself. Theologically, the parish and community of sisters must ask themselves if they are a sign of indestructible hope.

The Call of God

In each scripture story we read, once the migrants are established in a new land, God calls them to be God's presence in the lives of any newcomer they meet. Migrants may never know when they may meet God in the disguise of the needy stranger (Mt 25:31-46). We are to be for others what God has been for us. This call to inclusive hospitality, to being God's welcoming spirit, is a call to act with peace and justice. Will the parish and community of Dominicans recognize the contributions of migrants, or will the migrant always be the one in need? Will the parish and the community of sisters allow themselves to be transformed, to find God's call in the newcomer's faith?

To hear God's call in the newcomer requires humility. Do the established parishioners and parish leaders have to have all the answers? Can a newcomer make suggestions for change? Will the sisters be in a position to learn from a migrant guest? The migrant represents a call from God for all.

A Moral Response Without Borders For the Christian Believer

The vision of Christianity is embedded in the biblical roots of migration. As we have outlined, from Genesis to the letters in the New Testament, the journey of those seeking refuge plays a critical role in the biblical story. The spiritual origin of the Catholic Church was and

continues to be influenced by migration. In our efforts as a church to practice “faith seeking understanding,” the theme of migration is approached just as St. Anselm proposed in the eleventh-century, with “an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God.”⁷²

The ethical issues of migration are profuse and complicated. I want to examine current Catholic social teaching in light of the plight of the unaccompanied minors crossing our borders today. How are unaccompanied minors viewed by our church? What are their rights? Is it justifiable to call them “illegal” in the eyes of the church? Which laws protect the migrant? What are we, as God’s people, called to do in light of our Baptismal call to be neighbor?

The basic, fundamental rights of the migrant are derived from the first principle of Catholic Social Teaching, the dignity of the human person.⁷³ John XXIII, in his famous encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, claims, “It is not irrelevant to draw the attention of the world to the fact that these refugees are persons and all their rights as persons must be recognized.”⁷⁴ The basic rights of each individual, citizen or migrant, is spelled out in *Gaudium et Spes*:

All that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right to freely choose their state of life, and set up a family, the right to education, work, to their good name, to respect, to proper knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of their conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion.⁷⁵

⁷² This information on Anselm’s famous words is by Thomas Williams, *Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anselm/> (25 Sept 2007). I got the idea to frame this section in Anselm’s approach to religion from the Introduction of *And You Welcomed Me*, edited by Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschultz (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), x.

⁷³ Michael Blume, “Catholic Church Teaching and Documents Regarding Immigration: Theological Reflection on Immigration, in *Who Are My Sisters and My Brothers: Reflections on Welcoming Immigrants and Strangers*. Edited by Carleen Reck. USCCB (1996): 9. I use this source to find the subsequent quotes from the Vatican II documents.

⁷⁴ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html, 11 April, 1963, 105.

⁷⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, 66.

This far-reaching principle of human dignity and all the rights one deserves is a reminder that we are, each human being, made in “the image and likeness of God” (Gn 1.27). David Hollenbach locates our human dignity and the moral claims we make in our self-transcendence:

It is the reality of the human person – the kind of beings that they in fact are – that is at the origin of the moral claims human beings make upon one another. Human beings are not things; they possess both the self-consciousness and the capacity for self-transcendence. The self-transcendence of a person gives rise to a moral claim that he or she be treated in ways that sustain or at least do not destroy that capacity for self-transcendence.⁷⁶

Our personhood is grounded in our capacity to act with God’s grace. Each person must be regarded as God’s design, and offered a life full of graced possibility.

Pope John XXIII, in an even earlier encyclical, declares the migrant’s “right to migrate...to fulfill one’s duties for the physical, spiritual, and religious welfare of the family.”⁷⁷

John Paul II, in his Lenten Message of 1990, addresses the right of migrants to be reunited with their families and to receive a dignified occupation and just wage:

As people without a homeland, refugees seek a welcome in other countries of the world, which is our common home...the very painful experience of flight, insecurity and anxious search for an appropriate place to settle continues. Among them are children, women – some of them widows – families that often are split apart, young people whose hopes have been frustrated...they are followers of Jesus – who himself experienced the condition of a refugee – and bearers of the Good News. Christ himself...wishes to be identified and recognized in every refugee: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me... I was a stranger and you did not welcome me” (Mt 25:35, 43)... Thus it is a matter of guaranteeing to refugees the right to establish a family or to be reunited with their families: to have a stable, dignified occupation and a just wage; to live in dwellings fit for human beings; to receive adequate health care...⁷⁸

⁷⁶ David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*. Washington, D.C. (Georgetown University Press, 2003), 246. When stating the “capacity for self-transcendence,” Hollenbach is referring to Bernard Lonergan’s theological anthropology.

⁷⁷ John XXIII, “*Mater et Magistra*,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_en.html, 15 May, 1961, 45.

⁷⁸ “Message of His Holiness John Paul II for Lent 1990,” http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/lent/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19890908_lent-1990.html.

John Paul II makes it very clear: we must see in the unaccompanied minor Christ himself. We must welcome these unaccompanied children as if we were welcoming Christ in our midst. And, we must design public policies and laws that recognize their basic human rights.

In his exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II also claims, “Attention must be called to the rights of migrants and their families and to respect for their human dignity, even in cases of non-legal immigration.”⁷⁹ Ultimately, Pope John Paul II has reminded us that while border crossing without proper documentation is considered illegal, no person who attempts this should be called illegal. There is no such thing as an illegal human being, only human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

In the 2003 unprecedented joint pastoral letter from the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States, entitled “Strangers No Longer,” five principles emerge from the rich tradition of church teachings, which guide the Church's view on migration issues:

- I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.
- II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.
- III. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.
- IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.
- V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.⁸⁰

These principles must be considered and put into practice when we study how to address the ministerial concerns for the unaccompanied minors. With regard to the rights of sovereign

⁷⁹ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious, and All the Lay Faithful on the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jpii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html.

⁸⁰ “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” USCCB Washington, D.C. January 22, 2003
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>.

nations to control their borders, this same document admonishes richer countries which fail to respond to homelands struggling to provide for all their citizens.

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.⁸¹

These obligations include insuring that the unaccompanied youth are offered a home, protected with laws that seek to afford them their basic human rights, and treated with compassionate respect.

Saint Thomas Aquinas understood a law to be “an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him [or her] who has the care of the community.”⁸² This famous Dominican scholar made a distinction between the divine laws God calls us to follow, found in the Old and New Testaments, and the laws our civil authorities require us to obey. In her book *Kinship across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration*, ethicist Kristin Heyer continues the argument made by Aquinas:

Human laws are valid only according to the extent they reflect God’s external law, according to Thomas Aquinas. The impact of present laws...indicates a disconnect between certain civil laws and the natural laws. Hence the affirmation of laws for their own sake – particularly given the suffering some inflict – suggests that international borders are more deserving of protection than are the humans who cross them.⁸³

It is imperative that our nation review current immigration law and revise any that do not put the person first.

⁸¹ Ibid., 33. For more information, go to the Public Policy page on Global Migration from Catholic Relief Services. <http://www.crs.org/public-policy/cst.cfm>.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd Revised Ed., Translated by English Dominican Fathers, <http://newadvent.org/summa>, 1-2, q. 90.

⁸³ Kristin E. Heyer, *Kinship Across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 139. Two other authors who treat this imperative for just immigration laws, especially in terms of border issues, are David Hollenbach and Gioacchino Campese.

All laws, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, must promote the common good.⁸⁴ The common good is defined in *Gaudium et Spes* as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.”⁸⁵ As a church, we must also be concerned for the moral health of our economy. In 1986, the U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote that we as a nation must use our goods and services to protect the weakest among us:

We are believers called to follow our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaim his Gospel in the midst of a complex and powerful economy...Economic decisions have human consequences and moral content; they help or hurt people, strengthen or weaken family life, advance or diminish the quality of justice in our land.⁸⁶

MORALITY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING THEOLOGICAL NORMS FOR MINISTRY

When considering the implications for ministry that come from this moral preview on migration, it is important to address the underlying principle of the dignity of the human person. All of our interactions and relationships must be grounded in this principle. How I treat myself and how I treat my neighbor, a citizen or a newcomer without documentation, must embody a respect for each person’s dignity. Will the parish or the community of Dominicans correct anyone who refers to a newcomer as an "illegal alien"? The principle of the dignity of the human person means that no one can be called "illegal." A person may perform illegal actions, but our actions do not define our character. We are only defined by the dignity we possess as the children of God.

⁸⁴ David Hollenbach gives an excellent description of how Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas define the common good in *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4-6. St. Thomas calls God “the common good, since the good of all things depends on God.”

⁸⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

⁸⁶ Economic Justice for All, 1. I got the idea to use this pastoral letter from Groody, “Crossing the Divide”.

The dignity of the human person requires that each member of the parish and community of sisters see the unaccompanied minor as Christ in our midst. The soup kitchen, food pantry, domestic violence shelter, and immigration center are in the parish to address the newcomer's needs. How will the parish and community of Dominicans open their hearts to the newcomer? What would we offer Christ if he were struggling to learn our language? What would we offer Christ if he needed help making sense of a long, perilous journey that left him psychologically wounded? Each act of kindness, of encouragement, of friendship toward the unaccompanied youth is an act toward Christ (cf. Mt 25:31-54).

Do we know and uphold, as a parish and a community of sisters, the rights our church proposes for the immigrant? Are we aware of each person's right to migrate? What would we do as a parish or community of sisters if invited to meet newcomers with a sign that reads, "Save Our Country, Close Our Borders." Will anyone in the parish write a letter to the editor of the local paper denouncing such sentiment? Will the bishop be called to speak out against anti-immigrant propaganda? Will the sisters speak out when a racist or anti-immigrant joke is made? The Father Gary Graf Immigration Center addresses the needs of the newcomer. How will the parish and community of sisters allow unjust laws to change their lives? How will the need for comprehensive immigration laws change our hearts?

A final implication is the need to recognize the gospel mandate of an equal distribution of wealth in our country. Do the parish leadership and community of sisters reflect a simple lifestyle? Are parishioners called to share what they have, even their sustenance, with the newcomer? Do the lifestyles of all truly reflect the call to be neighbor?

Conclusion

The moral bottom line for us as a church is the answer to the following question: How are the unaccompanied minors doing? Do our laws protect them? Does our economy support them? Does our economy allow any migrant equal opportunity in the global economy today? The violence and poverty outlined in this chapter, push factors for migration, beg us to ask the question, “What are we doing about them?” Do I view the 15-year-old teen in San Pedro Sula, Honduras as my brother or sister? Am I living up to the Old Testament's call to welcome the stranger? Do I promote the inclusivity Jesus demonstrated so clearly in the New Testament narratives?

Currently, as explained in the Introduction, many unaccompanied minors are being sent back to their country of origin. An October, 2014 article in the *New York Times* explained, “Congressional Republicans have pushed back, saying that the border crisis is a result of President Obama’s policy problems and lax enforcement at the border. Republican lawmakers are pushing to amend the 2008 law, which currently makes it difficult to return the children quickly to their home countries.”⁸⁷ One report on what happens to children we are deporting claims that “life back home means paying off smuggling debts [what the unaccompanied minor had to pay to a guide for crossing the border], surviving increasingly violent situations, and maybe heading to the States once again.”⁸⁸ What do these facts prove about how the United States is promoting the common good?

⁸⁷ Haeyoun Park, “Children at the Border,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2014
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/15/us/questions-about-the-border-kids.html>.

⁸⁸ Ian Gordon, “What Next For the Children We Deport,” *Mother Jones Blog*, June 3, 2014
<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/06/unaccompanied-kids-immigrants-deported-guatemala>.

The responsibility of our church is to encourage the faithful to use their goods and services for charity. In his book *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*, John Coleman elaborates eight different principles to ensure a moral global economy. The seventh principle outlines three different forms of justice to practice. The second form of justice, distributive justice, calls us individuals and as a nation to participate in a just distribution of the goods and services of society. This assures that “each person enjoys a basically equal moral and legal standing apart from differences in wealth, privilege, talent, and achievements....”⁸⁹

It is ultimately in the distribution of our goods and services, in our economy, where we practice the self-giving of Christ witnessed in his Incarnation – the birth, life, death, and Resurrection – that we find justice for the immigrant. We cannot simply sit back as members of the church and say that the plight of the unaccompanied minor today is the fault of our government or our lawmakers and the unjust immigration policies. What has happened in Latin America as the result of NAFTA and CAFTA is our burden too. We must recognize that each baptized Christian is responsible for contributing to the common good. In Chapter Four, I will specifically address what can be done to promote justice for the immigrant. To conclude this chapter, I want to cite the urgent call of the bishops to each member of the faithful to open their hearts to the plight of the migrant:

The whole church is challenged to live the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (LK 24.13-24), as they are converted to be the witnesses of the Risen Lord after they welcome him as a stranger. Faith in the presence of the Christ in the migrant leads to conversion of mind and heart, which leads to a renewed spirit of communion and to the building of structures of solidarity to accompany the migrant.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ R. Kevin Seasoltz, *A Virtuous Church: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Liturgy for the 21st Century*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 42. I used Seasoltz’s extensive review of Coleman’s eight principles. It would have been possible to pick a number of the eight principles suggested by Coleman to support the migrant and common good theme.

⁹⁰ “Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope,” USCCB, 40.

As we, the church, accompany the migrant, each believer is called to work for justice and promote community.

CHAPTER THREE

“IN WHAT WE DO WE DISCOVER WHO WE ARE”¹

In this chapter, I will continue Osmer’s normative task begun in Chapter 2 by using the theology of Roberto Goizueta and Cecilia González-Andrieu as a lens to interpret the situation of the unaccompanied minors with the hope of answering the question, “What ought to be going on?”² As part of the normative task, I will explore the question: What are we to do and be as Christians in response to this immigration crisis? Osmer offers some probing questions to stimulate our theological reflection: “In light of what we know of God, how might God be acting? What are the fitting patterns of human response?”³ Also, in light of the experiences of the unaccompanied minors, what new understandings of God will we learn? The theological reflection in the normative task leads to good practice.

Using Goizueta’s theology of accompaniment and González-Andrieu’s aesthetic theology, I will construct theological norms that are relevant to the situation of the unaccompanied minors and can direct strategies of action. Goizueta presents the practice of *acompañamiento* as an epistemological tool to follow the gospel mandate of a preferential option for the poor. González-Andrieu examines the theology of aesthetics as a bridge-building methodology, which includes voices seldom heard. I will then explore relationship between the artistic and the religious to discover new ways to build community and seek justice.

I will also examine contemporary understandings of Dominican spirituality for insights into how community, prayer and contemplation, study, and our preaching mission can be lived

¹ Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 72.

² Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 2008, 4.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

out anew in response to the ministerial challenges we face as Dominican Sisters caring for the unaccompanied minors. I will draw upon the Dominican scholar Paul Murray, who examines how prayer and contemplation deepen our communal relationships with our neighbors. I will consider Dominican theologian Mary Catherine Hilker's theology of proclamation, which she characterizes as "naming grace," as a foundation for our preaching mission at La Santisima Trinidad. I will also draw out theological norms for constructing strategies for community and praxis formation.

The Theology of Roberto Goizueta: *Acompañamiento*

The act of *acompañamiento* as defined by Roberto Goizueta is the human action that mirrors the "God who walks with us."⁴ This concrete human action, named by Goizueta as an ethical-political praxis, is a living out of the preferential option for the poor. The preferential option for the poor is called an "epistemological precondition for Christian faith."⁵ Goizueta explains that to walk with Jesus is to walk with the poor. "To walk with Jesus and with the poor is to walk *where* Jesus walks and *where* the poor walk."⁶ Jesus walked where the poor walked, and he ended up walking in a different direction from the majority of his day.

In Jesus' world, everyone had his or her proper place. Justice was defined as ensuring that every person stays in the place appropriate to him or her. To accompany the poor and the outcasts was to transgress the established and accepted boundaries that separate "us" from "them." Consequently, by walking with the poor, by accompanying the outcasts, Jesus put himself in the wrong place, and he was crucified as a result. He should have stayed in his proper place. To walk with Jesus is thus to walk with the wrong persons.⁷

⁴ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus*, ix.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 191.

⁷ Ibid., 203.

Jesus demonstrates for us what walking with the poor requires: a courageous willingness to step out of line with what is defined as appropriate. We have to be willing to walk with the wrong persons, and in the United States, at this point in time, immigrants are often the "wrong persons."

In his seminal work, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, Goizueta situates *acompañamiento* within the *locus theologicus* of U.S. Hispanic religion, popular Catholicism. Wherever the people strive to find meaning in life and in death, wherever believers struggle to connect with the Divine, and relate religion to everyday life, God is there accompanying them.⁸ This description by Goizueta of a prayer during Holy Week is one example:

Having accompanied Jesus it is time to accompany Mary in her suffering, in her solitude...One by one members of the congregation who have some particularly painful or difficult experience during the previous year walk up to *la Soledad*, and, in front of the entire congregation, share their pain with her...this collective grieving, is shared by Jesus, Mary, and the entire community. There is an abiding sense that we are strengthened and given new life even in the midst of our common suffering, perhaps precisely because it is a suffering undertaken in common. When we stand alongside Mary in her pain, she is no longer *la Soledad* – and neither are any of us.⁹

The veneration of Jesus and his mother, Mary, and the communal sharing of the community embody accompaniment. In the going along together, in the commonality, we each find newness of life and strength to tackle whatever comes.

Goizueta argues that popular religion not only expresses the human praxis at the root of U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) theology, but also the liberating divine praxis. God's way of acting, God's way of being in relationship, turns the human participants into subjects, not objects.

⁸ Ibid., 25. Goizueta is quoting Sixto J. García and Orlando Espín, "Lilies of the Field: A Hispanic Theology of Providence and Human Responsibility" in *Proceeding of the Catholic Society of America* 44 (1989): 70-90.

⁹ Ibid., 37.

Goizueta offers the example of the relationship between Juan Diego and La Virgin in the Guadalupe story.

As an indigenous man, Juan Diego internalized the belittling, dehumanizing image of Amerindians promulgated by the Spaniards. The Virgin reveals a God who prefers residence among the vanquished, on the outskirts or margins of the centers of power and influence. What is thus implied in the Guadalupan narrative and fiesta is an inherently relational theological anthropology, one that grounds human freedom not in the autonomous ego but in the bonds of love and companionship.¹⁰

Goizueta thus develops the notion of human beings as subjects, not objects. The liberating praxis of accompaniment occurs where “the poor cease to be merely objects of someone else’s actions, and, instead, become historical subjects in their own right.”¹¹

Acompañamiento also flows out of the organic, communal worldview lived by the Hispanic/Latino(a) community. Goizueta explains that when two Hispanic/Latinos(as) meet each other for the first time, their first questions are most likely, “Who are your parents?” “What town is your family from?”¹² Within this communal worldview, there is no place for false individualism. “*El otro* (the other), presupposes a prior, more fundamental commonality, “*nosotros* (we others).”¹³ Any praxis formation must adapt a communal worldview with no room for individualistic thinking. This communal worldview is lived out in the everyday by “being with,” by accompanying. No one is left out. No one is alone. “To be human is to be in

¹⁰ Roberto Goizueta, “Practicing Beauty: Aesthetic Praxis, Justice, and U.S. Latino/a Popular Religion,” in, *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* by Clare Wolfteich (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 6-12.

¹¹ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 87.

¹² *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 75.

relationship with others, and to be in relationship with others is to be *acompañado*[/a] (accompanied).”¹⁴

Roberto Goizueta defines the common Hispanic/Latino(a) worldview in relationship to the particular versus the universal:

. . . as an essential, intrinsic, or organic relationship between the particular [autonomous individual] and the universal [the community]...Jesus is never just Jesus; he is always also our brother, father, co-sufferer, friend, and above all, son of Mary. Jesus is defined by his relationships, that are not merely accidental or tangential to his identity.¹⁵

This is a communal worldview – each believer is not understood as an individual, but rather as a member of the community.

The organic, communal worldview of the U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) experience is defined by Goizueta in contrast to the development of Western European anthropological values. For Europeans, it has traditionally been conquest, of self and others, that described humanity. For the native people of the Americas, interconnectedness with nature and with others marked true identity. The Western world valued argumentation and linear discourse, while the world of Latin Americans began steeped in cosmic signs and rituals. “One was a world of reason, logic, and argumentation while the other was a world of omens, dreams, myths, and rituals.”¹⁶

Another condition of *acompañamiento* is authentic pluralism. A genuine openness and dedication to just practice is essential for each worldview. A preferential option for the poor is a precondition in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) worldview that assumes that the good of the whole benefits each individual. As Goizueta explains:

¹⁴ Ibid., 205.

¹⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶ Goizueta, “Practicing Beauty”, 13.

If community is the source of the individual self, then the suffering and struggles of the poor are present in our every breath and our every action. Conversely, all that we are and do impacts the lives of the poor. The very refusal to act impacts the lives of the poor. We can never truly escape the poor.¹⁷

Goizueta is very clear about the fact that when we, as believers, refuse to listen for God among those made poor by society, or, in other words, when we try to escape the poor, we are ultimately saying that God is only found where prestige and rank exist. “To turn a deaf ear to the cries of the poor is implicitly to identify God’s voice with the status quo, and hence, the established power structures.”¹⁸

Accompanying the poor is a gospel mandate. And, according to Goizueta, this mandate defines our gospel transparency:

Every day, all of us, whether poor or wealthy, underprivileged or privileged, experience the consequences of poverty and oppression. For the privileged, those consequences take many forms: a paralyzing fear of other persons, constant anxiety about protecting one’s possessions against the threat represented by the poor, the need to enclose and seclude oneself behind high walls and expensive alarm systems, the psychological problems of broken relationships, and various forms of addiction caused by this obsessive, ever-present, stressful fear and anxiety, etc., etc. The need to enslave others inevitably produces a generalized fear and anxiety which, in the end, enslaves all.¹⁹

No one is left out of the transformation called for by the practice of accompaniment. We each have a choice: to participate in the social and personal conversion available to us in the gospel directive to accompany the poor or live behind walls of fear and anxiety and seclusion. The unaccompanied minors shared specific incidences of being treated differently or with fear by other cultures since arriving in this country. Goizueta says, “In what we do, we discover who we

¹⁷ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 180-1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

are.”²⁰ The act of opening yourself up to the transformative power available in the practice of accompaniment provides a new opportunity to learn more about you, God, and life. Being truly present and attentive to the other in accompaniment offers many blessings. In our accompaniment, we are called to be attentive to our adverse responses to the stranger in our midst. We have the opportunity of being observant in a non-judgmental way to our own afflictive emotions of fear, anxiety, resentment or aversion when interacting with the poor and marginalized in order to understand and to let go of our own resistance to accompaniment.

A preferential option for the poor, demanded by the gospel and the basis for a practice of *acompañamiento*, requires the inclusion of an authentic pluralism that fosters equality. Goizueta cites the example of the Southern plantation, which was obviously pluralistic, but failed to foster equality in its intercultural dialogue and power relationships.²¹ Where there is accompaniment, there must be equality, understanding, tolerance, and universal dialogue. Accompaniment is not rooted in a pluralism that fosters “modern liberal individualism.”²²

Acompañamiento embraces a praxis of solidarity, which specifies that “to love God is to love one’s neighbor...to know God is to do justice.”²³ Love is defined as feeling *with*, *com* – passion.²⁴ Accompaniment implies a significant connection between social transformation and compassion. Loving, feeling with my neighbor, leads me to transform the fear, greed, or indifference in my heart. I become one with my neighbor. In our solidarity, we learn a deeper understanding of God’s mysterious presence among us.

²⁰ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 72.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

Goizueta and Implications for Constructing Theological Norms for Ministry

In order to walk with the unaccompanied minors seeking protection and a life full of possibility, Goizueta's theology of *acompañamiento* suggests that the parish of the La Santísima Trinidad and the community of Dominican Sisters must recognize how these young people see life as a gift. Despite incredible danger, with very few possessions, maybe an extra change of clothing and a few water bottles, these young people ventured forth from their countries of origin with hope. Many carry a rosary, or have an image of the Sacred Heart, or of the Blessed Mother pinned to their clothing. Some stop at churches or holy shrines along the way. Once here in the United States, they continue to seek out newness of life. Goizueta says, "Perhaps, ironically, the reconciling truth of the crucified and risen Christ is revealed, above all, in the invincible faith of the victims of history, in their stubborn insistence that, in the face of all evidence, life is worth living; life is a gift."²⁵

Goizueta would encourage those who work with the unaccompanied minors to transgress the boundaries that separate the "us" and "them." The new praxis designed in light of this study cannot perpetuate a theological paradigm in which one helps and the other receives help. Accompaniment offers all involved the opportunity to give and receive. Goizueta will describe this as "a consequent inversion of the relationship between the evangelizer and evangelized."²⁶ This new praxis also changes our perspective of who God is. Our model of God as the One who helps and humanity as the ones who receive God's help is transformed. God both helps and receives our help as we participate in God's life and mission to the world. Jesus models this approach to ministry as he calls disciples to help him in his work to bring God's reign of justice and peace to our world. Transforming the "you" versus "me" mentality to a "we" mentality,

²⁵ Roberto Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 7.

²⁶ Roberto Goizueta, "Practicing Beauty," 6.

Goizueta also believes, requires that the theologian hear the cries of the poor in her midst. Do I see, do the others with whom I will live and form community see, and does the parish of La Santísima Trinidad see the suffering of the unaccompanied minor, his or her very breath and actions, as intimately connected to theirs? How will this connection inform a new praxis? How does seeing the suffering of “others” make the sisters one with them? Is there true solidarity?

Goizueta’s practice of *acompañamiento* also guides this study to a place where the unaccompanied minors are the subjects or actors/actresses of the new theological norms being designed. Goizueta uses the person of Juan Diego in the historical account of Our Lady of Guadalupe from 1531 to define this experience of dignity: “In the first part of the Guadalupan drama, Juan Diego’s words reflect the depreciation of a downtrodden, vanquished people... Yet into that affair irrupts an utterly unanticipated figure, Our Lady of Tepeyac, who identifies herself as the Virgin, the Mother of God, and calls Juan Diego ‘dearest....’²⁷ How will the unaccompanied minors be given the opportunity to have a significant power and influence in the formation of a new theological norms?

The service providers I interviewed at the parish of La Santísima Trinidad each spoke strongly about how their mission statement, “*servicing God with a preferential option for the poor,*” was more than mere words on a piece of paper. The food pantry, soup kitchen, domestic violence shelter, and Immigration Center are concrete practices through which those made poor by society are engaged. This mission statement and the current services offered by the parish will need to be reviewed in light of Goizueta’s call to allow the unaccompanied minors to be subjects and not objects of praxis formation.

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

Pope Francis says that the shepherd should have the “odour of the sheep.”²⁸ To follow Goizueta’s theology of accompaniment requires smelling like the sheep. “The locus or place of theology should not be understood in a purely metaphorical sense...To opt for the poor is thus to place ourselves there...”²⁹ This critical examination of social location is crucial to the next phase of this research, the strategic phase where a new praxis is designed. How will the responses of the parish and community of Sisters break down political, economic, and social barriers to foster a community of welcome for the youth?

Goizueta explains how his theological paradigm is dependent upon a communal worldview. The unaccompanied minor needs to be studied in light of the communal reality of the Hispanic/Latino(a) reality. In the focus groups and individual interviews, there was an emphasis on the communal characteristics of identity. The unaccompanied minor was described by service providers in light of her or his family relationships. The young people also described themselves in relationship to their countries of origin or their families. Goizueta says that the resurrection, the pivotal doctrine of the Christian faith, “is the victory of companionship over abandonment, the victory of community over estrangement.”³⁰ How will this study honor the communal worldview of the unaccompanied minors and engender a new praxis that promotes community?

Where does the unaccompanied minor experience estrangement? One common theme in the focus groups and interviews was the lack of opportunities in this country for those without proper documentation. The language barrier for the monolingual Spanish-speaking people is

²⁸ Pope Francis I. *Homily*. Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome, March 28, 2013. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html.

²⁹ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 191-2.

³⁰ Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 13.

another obstacle mentioned in the research conducted. I believe that the most difficult estrangement surfaced whenever the children spoke of their countries of origin. Some cried in remembering family members, friends, and villages left behind. For others, it was a way of life that was no longer available to them. How will praxis formation address the loneliness and isolation of this population and foster an accompaniment that leaves no room for abandonment?

Crucial to the community of Dominicans and the parish's response to the basic needs of the unaccompanied minors will be the values of equality, understanding, tolerance, and dialogue. The unaccompanied children are offering the parish and the community of sisters the opportunity to practice solidarity. The love for Jesus becomes concrete in the service to this vulnerable population.

We now turn to the theology of aesthetics, as defined by Cecilia González-Andrieu, who offers important and helpful resources to address the basic needs of the unaccompanied minors through accompaniment. Her theological reflections are especially geared to pay attention to the unheard voices among us. González-Andrieu weaves together vital themes of justice, community-building, and unity.

The Theology of Aesthetics of Cecilia González-Andrieu

All her life, since she was a child in Communist Cuba, Cecilia González-Andrieu has found beauty in the most unlikely places. During the black-outs forced upon her community in La Habana, or in the aloneness of the Christ figure in a favorite stained glass window, or in the way music could eliminate any separation between herself and her native land, González-Andrieu experienced mystery and was moved to wonder. And, in those unlikely places, it was also the experience of community and the sharing of symbols, which highlighted the beauty she might have otherwise have missed.

This gift of aesthetic sensitivity is what has inspired González-Andrieu's study of God as an U.S. Hispanic/Latina theologian. In her pivotal book, *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty*, she states,

Beauty transcends destruction... This, then, is the life that sets the contours of my theological questions. Such questions arise from this tapestry woven by the power of beauty to reveal, lift, move, sustain, and transform, and from my solidarity with persons on the margins who long to feel at home and who have stories to tell.³¹

For González-Andrieu, there has always been a relationship between the arts and the life-giving revelation of God.

González-Andrieu is devoted to interdisciplinary study and the interculturality of theology that she believes is replacing the outdated myth of an objective or universal interpretation in theology. These disciplines include U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) theology, art, architecture, music, theatre, literature, and other artistic forms of expression. Even the Golden Gate Bridge is seen as an art form. González-Andrieu goes so far as to ask each reader of her book on the theology of aesthetics to be a patient companion with her as she threads together various disciplines.³²

For González-Andrieu, a central image of Christianity is the depiction by St. Paul of the Body of Christ as consisting of many parts, and at the same time, as united (1 Cor 12.12-14).³³ No single interpretation or social location can replace or supersede the multiple understandings retrieved from a variety of interpretations.³⁴ González-Andrieu writes that she has been

³¹ Cecilia González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 6. In the footnotes where she outlines this interculturality and interdisciplinary work, González-Andrieu quotes both Goizueta and García-Rivera. These footnotes are found on pages 168-9.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 168. González-Andrieu is quoting Fernando Segovia in footnote 11.

influenced by the theology of *acompañamiento* of Goizueta, who recognizes, she claims, both our diversity and “our potential for unity.”³⁵

Aesthetics for González-Andrieu recognizes the other and calls for bridge-builders in the kingdom of God. Using the metaphor of the Golden Gate Bridge, intrinsic to her own reality as a young adult, this theologian calls us to be artists, to see God in works of beauty, to cross divides formed by society, and create communities full of beauty and justice. “The theological in the theological aesthetics proposition is precisely this – that even while on this side of the veil of eternity, we have access to revelatory experiences of truth and goodness and we can bring near the insights others have about truth and goodness.”³⁶ For González-Andrieu, there is more than one avenue to truth or goodness or beauty. Goizueta promotes a similar openness when he calls us to eliminate the separation between “*el otro*” “the other” and “*nosotros*” “the we and the other.”³⁷

Works of art build community and are helpful to the task of theology in two ways: 1) as revelation, the experiencing of the Divine, and 2) as connection, the awakening to a longing for God.³⁸ Once we experience God, we seek God more intensely. As Augustine wrote, “God is sought in order to be found more sweetly, and found in order to be sought more eagerly.”³⁹ Any act of beauty, of creativity, any work of art, according to González-Andrieu, is a witness that produces “revelatory symbols,” a term González- Andrieu borrows from Avery Cardinal Dulles.

³⁵ Ibid., 6

³⁶ Ibid, 23.

³⁷ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 75.

³⁸ González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder*, Chapters 2 and 3.

³⁹ Augustine of Hippo, De Trinitate 15.2. <http://www.newadvent.org/father/130115.htm>.

Symbols are revelatory when they “express and mediate God’s self-communication.”⁴⁰

González-Andrieu’s own experience of art has moved her from a place of radical otherness to radical interconnectedness to God, self, and others.

A revelatory symbolism is only true, González-Andrieu insists, when it is void of dualism. Leaning on the work of Alejandro García-Rivera, González-Andrieu examines how the Divine is not “there” and the profane “here.”⁴¹ Instead, life is embodied, an abundant and grace-filled gift. “We must believe that what is spiritual and what is matter shine through in one another.”⁴²

The second way in which aesthetics is helpful to theology occurs when a work of art acts as a connector.⁴³ González-Andrieu believes that works of art foster our ability to connect to redemption, to salvation, and to mystery and wonder. We are drawn into the life-giving presence of God who renews our spirit. We are moved to interiority, to examining our lives. We are encouraged to act with justice and compassion. We are also able to distinguish between what is real beauty and what, according to González-Andrieu, is simply motivated by excessive consumerism or the commercialization of beauty.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder*, 15.

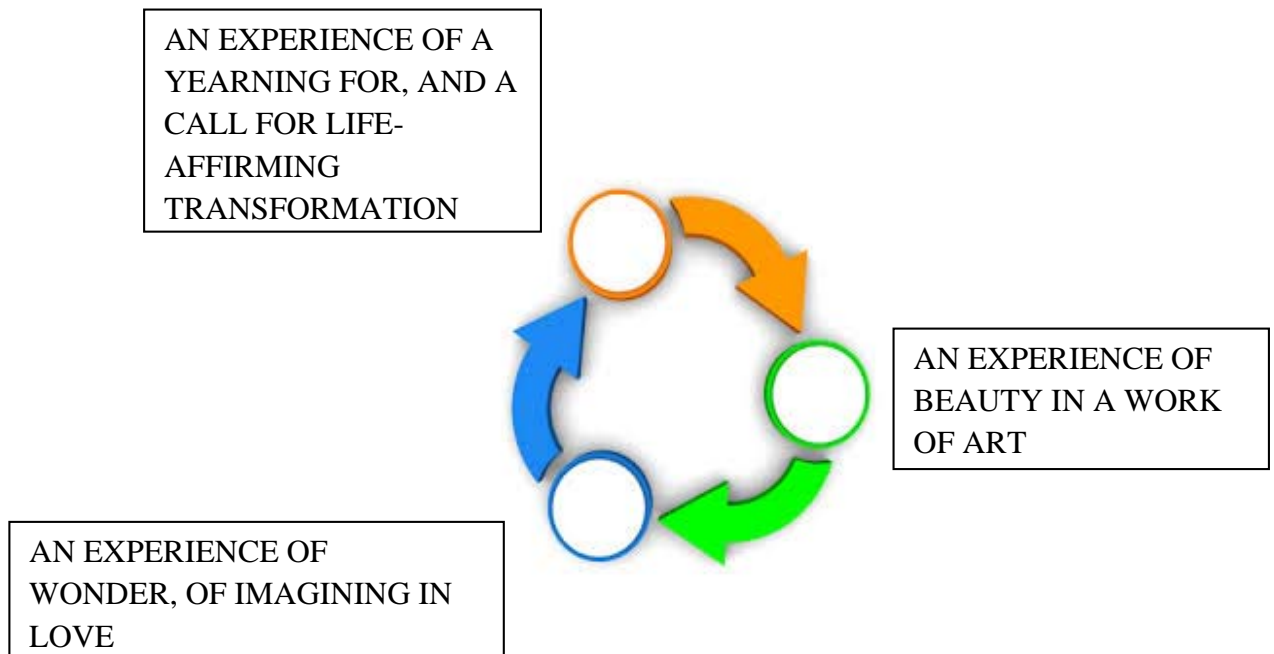
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

3.1 The Hermeneutical Circle of Cecilia González-Andrieu⁴⁵



When beauty moves us to thirst for the Divine, we are awakened to our desire for justice. Any aesthetic practice is “indeed one very effective way to forge such connections, as they engender a knowing that overcomes barriers because in the fullness that our heart experiences we are called to love more deeply.”⁴⁶ This is where González-Andrieu says that aesthetics becomes prophetic. First, the one who experiences beauty sees, and then secondly, imagines, and finally, brings a new creation into birth.⁴⁷ This is González-Andrieu’s hermeneutical circle of wonder. “We can renew our love of creation and of ourselves.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder*, 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

González-Andrieu says beauty “becomes a gospel.”⁴⁹ In our experience of beauty, and she adds, and in the silence that follows that experience, we are offered something that moves us and changes our understanding of life, of love, of God. Then, we are inspired to act out of this new place of transformation. Beauty helps theology to not “turn away from the world, but...to push the horizons of what it can see, so that in this truthfulness it may teach love.”⁵⁰

In Christ, the exquisite Prince of Peace and the despised, battered, and bleeding man are paradoxically united, constituting the deepest insight into the nature of the beautiful...In this beauty that is most fully revealed in Christ, the good and the true are woven together and made sensible, so we may want them, grasp them, inhabit them, and love them.⁵¹

González-Andrieu teaches how Christ’s resurrection, where beauty is found, becomes an opportunity for delving deeper into the mystery of God.

This scholar believes that the gift of her aesthetical sensitivity has led her to a place of experiencing both “radical otherness” and “radical interconnectedness.” She invites the reader to join her in this place of paradox. As a young woman, on location in Israel with a film crew, González-Andrieu saw in a pre-dawn seating the silhouette of a lone woman collecting water. In that moment, she experienced a deep kinship with and the complete otherness of her own life.

It is not easy to describe what I felt at that moment, but the beauty of the scene caused a mix of complete identification with her, a knowing inside of our deep and abiding kinship, of our familial ties, and at the same time a foreboding at what I suddenly realized was the radical otherness of my life. I was in danger of forgetting the wonder of greeting the dawn and the preciousness of water and the purposeful walk of someone whose “work of human hands,” to quote the Catholic liturgy, was truly needed.⁵²

⁴⁹ González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder*, 37.

⁵⁰Ibid., 38.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24.

⁵² Ibid., 153.

This experience of “radical otherness” and “radical interconnectedness” has the potential of moving each believer to a place of gratitude and intimacy with God.

González-Andrieu goes on to think about the other Latina women of Los Angeles where she now lives, who rise at dawn to clean hotel rooms and live under the constant fear of being deported. She wants these feelings of radical otherness and interconnectedness to “make her kneel before God, not in thanksgiving for my privileges, but to ask God honestly and humbly what I must do to lessen their suffering.”⁵³ This is how González-Andrieu defines *acompañamiento*. We are moved to feel love for one another, she claims, in our interconnectedness. It is this feeling of love, this gospel truth, which moves us to walk with another as neighbor and friend.

As I met and listened to the unaccompanied minors who made their way to Waukegan, I became deeply aware of the beauty of their indomitable strength, which these young people carry deep in their souls. It is born out of struggle, perseverance, and faith in God. This strength manifests itself in the hopes and dreams of these young people. And, this strength is expressed in their profound concern for those they left behind in their own countries. This strength, this beauty presented to others, is like a light held up in the darkness illuminating the path ahead.

The Implications of González-Andrieu's Aesthetics for Constructing Theological Norms for Ministry

González-Andrieu’s theology of aesthetics is a call to look at the current situation in this country with the unaccompanied minors as “beauty transcending destruction.”⁵⁴ It is easy to interrupt the situation facing our nation with the unaccompanied minors as a crisis, as a damaging circumstance. How will I allow González-Andrieu’s understanding of revelatory

⁵³ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.

symbolism, of beauty, of the arts as a place to meet the mystery of God to inform my understanding of this vulnerable population? Will her heightened sense of the aesthetical inform my praxis formation? How can the art and beauty and revelatory symbols of the unaccompanied minors be shared with others? Will the unique musical traditions of each country of origin be manifested somehow in the community events and liturgical celebrations? Will the dances unique to each country manifest the freedom and creativity of God's inimitable presence? How will the contributions of these minors manifest to our citizens the appalling suffering of leaving a homeland and experiencing the "*rechazo*" of our border police? Will their stories also give visible witness to the exceptional natural splendor of their countries?

González-Andrieu is dedicated to replacing what she sees as an obsolete universal interpretation of theology with one that is multi-faceted and thus includes a variety of interpretations. She believes that any analysis of social location is enhanced by multiple understandings. How will I allow the voices of the unaccompanied minors to influence praxis formation? How will differing opinions from other sources be considered?

For González-Andrieu, a theology of aesthetics can foster community, thus overcoming obstacles of difference, building bridges, and creating communities of hospitality and justice. How will the minors' unique social location be considered when the other ministries of the parish of the Santísima Trinidad are evaluated? This study of the ministerial concerns for the unaccompanied minors has the potential to create bridge-builders and recognize the beauty of otherness. Here González-Andrieu connects to Goizueta's *acompañamiento*: walking with the other becomes an ethical-political and an aesthetic option that invites us to explore God's presence.

This study of the basic needs of the unaccompanied minors attempts to include this aesthetic praxis. How will the radical otherness and radical interconnectedness of human beings be experienced by the unaccompanied minors and by Dominican Sisters and Parish Staff members? The accompaniment chosen by the parish and the community of Dominican sisters for the unaccompanied minors must be centered on the possibility of transformation. Let us look now at Dominican spirituality for further insights into how this transformation will take place.

The Dominican Mission: Contemplate and Share With Others the Fruit of Your Contemplation

Dominic de Guzmán (1170-1221), the joyful friar, began a new order of religious life at the beginning of the thirteenth-century, claiming preaching as its charism. The Holy Preaching, as the followers of Dominic used to say, was imbedded in a life of prayer, study, and community. Unlike other religious orders of his day which practiced the prayer of contemplation as an end in itself, Saint Dominic believed contemplation led to the Order's mission, which is rooted in God's word.

The place of contemplation in the Order of Preachers is best expressed by one of its most famous sons, Thomas Aquinas: "*contemplare et contemplata aliis trader*" or "to contemplate and give to others the fruits of contemplation."⁵⁵ Contemplation, for a Dominican, is at the heart of all relationship, with God and with the universe. Attentiveness to God is at the heart of Dominican life. Since 1206, when Saint Dominic began the contemplative order of Dominican

⁵⁵ This introduction to contemplation is taken from a talk given by Richard Wood, OP at Dominican University for the 800th Anniversary of the Order of Preachers in October, 2006. Wood explains in detail how St. Thomas Aquinas, in acknowledging St. Dominic's emphasis on contemplation as a means to an end deviates from the Christian Neoplatonic vision that had shaped theology for nearly a thousand years. The source of the quote by St. Thomas Aquinas, used by Richard Wood, is: *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 188, A. 7.

nuns, life for all members of the Order of Preachers has been centered on the Word of God. We pray with, struggle to live out, and offer to all we come in contact with this holy conversation.

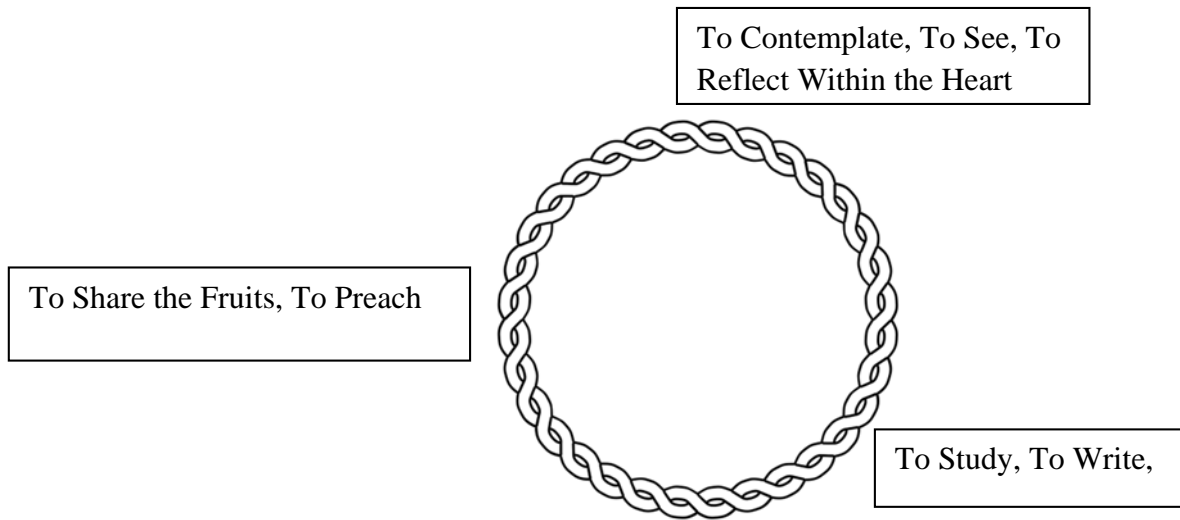
Contemplation, then, for Dominicans, takes on a deeper meaning; it is openness to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbor. The Irish Dominican scholar Paul Murray discovered an anonymous Dominican from the thirteenth century, who wrote a commentary on a passage from a large biblical commentary on The Book of Apocalypse. For centuries, this work had been attributed to Aquinas. The passage is now believed to have been composed by a Dominican *équipe* working at St Jacques in Paris, under the scholarly direction of the Dominican, Hugh of St Cher between the years 1240 to 1244:

...among the things “a man ought to see in contemplation”, and ought “to write in the book of his heart”, are “the needs of his neighbours.” He ought to see in contemplation what he would like to have done for himself, if he were in such need, and how great is the weakness of every human being...Understand from what you know about yourself the condition of your neighbour. (*Intellige ex te ipso quae sunt proximi tui.*) And what you see in Christ and in the world and in your neighbour, write that in your heart.⁵⁶

Contemplation occurs when we take the needs of our neighbors into our hearts. Murray uses expressions such as “communion with God” and “friendship with God” to describe contemplation. For Dominicans, contemplation is an openness to God’s presence and actions within ourselves and within the broader community. Saint Dominic’s hermeneutical circle achieves this understanding through contemplation, study, and preaching.

⁵⁶ Paul Murray, “Recovering the Contemplative Dimension,” (paper presented at the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers, Providence, Rhode Island, July 12, 2001).

3.2 Saint Dominic's Hermeneutical Circle for a Community of Preachers



This grace of prayer has deep roots in the person of Saint Dominic.

Dominic prays with all that he is - body and soul. He prays privately with intense and humble devotion. And, with that same deep faith and profound emotion, he prays in public the prayer of the Mass. Although the intensity of Dominic's faith and feeling may be unusual, as well as the extraordinary length of his night vigils, for the rest his prayer seems indistinguishable from that of any ordinary devout Christian man or woman. His prayer is never in any way esoteric. It is always simple, always ecclesial.⁵⁷

Contemplation for Saint Dominic called forth great passion. This passion is rooted in a desire to be one with others. Dominic was never concerned that his prayers appear erudite. Most important to Saint Dominic was the connection his prayer gave him to our church and our world.

Contemplation, Dominic teaches us, occurs when our connection to the resurrected Christ unites us to the world and to the church. It is in this connectedness that we as Dominicans find our call to share with others the fruits of our contemplation. For Dominicans, this sharing of the fruits of our contemplation is our preaching or teaching or service to another. Murray, in

⁵⁷ Ibid.

continuing to clarify the obscure text by his fellow Dominican, outlines how contemplation must always move the Dominican to preach:

We are exhorted by our author first of all to understand ourselves and be attentive to all that we see in the world around us and in our neighbour, and to reflect deep within our hearts on the things that we have observed. But then we are told to go out and preach: "First see, then write, then send...What is needed first is study, then reflection within the heart, and then preaching."⁵⁸

It becomes impossible then, for Dominicans to separate the contemplative acts of prayer and service.

Dominican preachers listen for the voice of God in scripture and the signs of the times. We believe the Word of God is spoken in the now, in the human experiences of today. In her seminal work, *Naming Grace: Preaching as Sacramental Imagination*, the Dominican scholar, Mary Catherine Hilbert, explains that "...reflection on culture, people's lives, and human experience is necessary not merely to make a homily relevant, but to hear God's word today."⁵⁹ The preacher must be "in touch with human struggle – their own and others." Ann Garrido, who teaches at the Dominican school of theology, Aquinas Institute, in St. Louis, Missouri, speaks of preaching as "the quest to come to know what is real," a quest that implies engagement in the world — coming to know through one's senses what actually exists.⁶⁰ This means, Hilbert insists, that God's healing, love, peace, and liberation are being spoken in new ways at the present time.

⁵⁸ Paul Murray, "Recovering the Contemplative Dimension"

⁵⁹ Mary Catherine Hilbert, *Naming Grace: Preaching the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 49.

⁶⁰ Ann Garrido. "On Being A Dominican School." Aquinas Institute of Theology Convocation Address, St. Louis, MO. August 2011. I found these words in "A Vision in Service of Truth: 12th Biennial Colloquium of Dominican Colleges and Universities," Dominican University, River Forest, IL, June 14, 2015.

Hilkert continues to highlight the preacher's job of hearing God's word today as the naming of grace.⁶¹ The living tradition of the Christian community, centered on the story of Jesus, is the framework of interpretation used to name ongoing revelation. "Thus when the preachers listen to human experience they are listening for a perspective; they are listening for an echo of the gospel."⁶²

For Dominicans, preaching is not confined to the pulpit on Sunday. We must become preachers of grace. We must be a living reflection of the gospels we proclaim. "From their earliest beginnings, Dominicans have been called to see what is needed and to do what is useful."⁶³ Hilkert speaks of preaching in word and deed. "Proclamation *in word* forms, but also is formed by, proclamation *in deed*...Jesus' own preaching reveals this sacramental paradigm: his words were enfolded in his actions and his very person."⁶⁴ Embodying compassion necessitates living the gospel life with fidelity and remaining open to the gifts of the Spirit received in baptism and confirmation.

Embodying our preaching requires truthful responses to the suffering in our midst. Hilkert says we can either name grace as the mystery of human life in suffering or remain silent. "Announcing the paschal mystery in midst of a world of suffering is possible only if the preachers take seriously contemporary experiences of anguish, impasse, and the absence of God."⁶⁵ The famous Dominican father of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, puts this call to

⁶¹ Hilkert, "*Naming Grace*," The whole book gives this explanation, but Chapter 3, "Preaching as the Art of Naming Grace," specifically defines this.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶³ Judy Schaefer, editor. "A Vision in Service of Truth: 12th Biennial Colloquium of Dominican Colleges and Universities," Dominican University, River Forest, IL, June 14, 2015, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 54. Italics are the authors.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

name the folly of the cross another way: “Our question today is...how do we say to the poor, ‘God loves you.’”⁶⁶

Embodying our preaching also requires being Easter people. Our preaching and our lives must proclaim resurrection. We must be the living hope the world needs to see. Hilkert writes of the Road to Emmaus journey taken by the disciples after the crucifixion. On this journey, “a stranger who listens to their pain...reshapes their story from the perspective of the promise and fidelity of God.”⁶⁷ This is what Hilkert calls the reclaiming of dangerous memories and symbols. They are dangerous because they “hold the power to re-form human imagination.”⁶⁸ “The promise of the ‘dangerous story’ of the gospel is another power, the power of love at the core of human creation...”⁶⁹ The job of the preacher is to be this power of love and also find the words to name this love in the midst of today’s world.

The Dominican Tradition and its Implications for Constructing Theological Norms for Ministry

The Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa are supporting the beginning of a new local community of three or four sisters, as well as volunteers and interns, who will live in the parish of La Santísima Trinidad. How we engage in this opportunity to share daily life and join in the joys and struggles, the deaths and resurrections, of the community where the unaccompanied minors live opens us to serious transformation. We have the chance to be preachers of grace in the midst of the world today.

⁶⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Niebuhr Medal Address,” Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL June 17, 2011. <http://www.elmhurst.edu/news/archive/63600942.html>.

⁶⁷ Hilkert, *Naming Grace*, 121-2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

As Dominicans, Sister Kathy Long and I both agreed that “contemplation is for mission.” The Dominican practice of prayer is both personal and communal. How will daily community life be stretched by a spirit of augmented hospitality and accompaniment? How will we invite others into our home and our lives? How will we live the hermeneutical circle of St. Dominic as a community? Will our study inspire us to become one with our neighbor? Will our prayer, both individual and communal, move us to strive for a simpler lifestyle? How will the community of Sisters “name grace” in the ministerial situation through word and action? Will we also take on the task of “naming dis-grace” by critically analyzing the immigration policies of our country that call out for reform and by working together for systemic change of that system?⁷⁰

Without doubt the future vision of the mission of the Sinsinawa Dominicans with the Parish of La Santísima Trinidad will be greatly fortified by the continued prayerful study of how the theology of accompaniment can be implemented in community life and ministry.

Conclusion

This chapter calls us to look at, “what ought to be going on?”⁷¹ In looking through the lenses of Goizueta, González-Andrieu, and the Dominican Tradition, we discover how *acompañamiento*, the accompaniment of the other, leads us to union with God and each other. Whether we are walking with the poor, discovering the beauty of God in everyday life, or naming the dangerous memories and symbols of the unaccompanied minors, we are joining in a mutual conversion process of becoming one with all creation and God.

⁷⁰ Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace*, 111.

⁷¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

This normative task is where Osmer says the prophetic moment takes place. “The prophetic office is the discernment of God’s word to the covenant people in a particular time and place.”⁷² We turn to Chapter Four now, which identifies new praxis for the parish and the Dominicans, allowing them to truly reflect God’s kingdom on earth.

⁷² Ibid., 133.

CHAPTER FOUR

“HOW FAR CAN WE GO?”¹

In this chapter, I implement the final task of Richard Osmer’s practical theology, the pragmatic task, which focuses on strategies and action steps. The mandate of the fourth task is the search for faithful and effective practices to address the needs of the unaccompanied youth. Throughout this task, it is important to keep the “big picture” of the parish and community of Dominican sisters in mind. I will engage a systems approach in order to relate the particular needs of the unaccompanied minors to the entire life of the congregation. In a system, each component works with the others to achieve fullness of life. In order to explore models of good practice, I must understand the events that have shaped the current situation of the unaccompanied minors, as well as what future outcomes are desired. The reality of where the unaccompanied children have come from, for example the brutality of the drug lords, the exhortations of huge sums from the gangs recruiting young natives, and the frustrations of separated families seeking to carve out a living among a poverty driven populace have major repercussions for these young immigrants resulting in feelings of panic, remoteness, and lack of protection. The physical wall that separates the Central American countries from our Southern border now becomes a psychological border immense and threatening to immigrants because of their alien status, the vast cultural differences, and the language challenges for the unaccompanied minors.

In this chapter, I deal with the changes necessary to build an effective ministerial response to the unaccompanied minor. Osmer asserts that any change during the final task of

¹ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008), 217.

practical theology must answer the question, “Change to what end and for what purpose?”² The mission statement of the parish of La Santísima Trinidad, presented in the Introduction, is: “*Serving the People of God with a preferential option for the poor.*”³ This vision gives the parish a clear working foundation. The modification that will take place during this final task will be influenced by contemporary Catholic social teaching and by the biblical vision of God’s outreach to the migrant. Goizueta’s theology of *acompañamiento* and González-Andrieu’s understanding of how beauty moves us to engage with the Mystery of God will also influence the ministerial responses. Another strong influence will be the Dominican preaching tradition and the commitment to this tradition by this particular community of sisters. Special attention is given to the contemporary theology of proclamation by the Dominican scholar, Mary Catherine Hilkert.

Each initiative of strategic planning must align with the theological norms for ministry. The most important aspect of this strategic planning is the opportunity for the unaccompanied minors to become the subjects, rather than objects, of their stories. Our strategic plan will be designed to nurture their responses to the challenges that lie ahead for them. Good practice must include a firm commitment to solidarity, to community building, and to systemic change that includes all the voices being served and offering service.

Strategic Planning Initiatives

The following initiatives are designed to address the needs surfaced by the unaccompanied minors and service providers who serve this population. These action steps

² Ibid., 183.

³ <http://www.mostblessedtrinityparish.org>.

answer the question, “How might we respond?”⁴ In each response, the desire on the part of the service providers to make the unaccompanied minors feel welcomed and included is taken into account. The key strategic actions of access and accompaniment are also considered in each initiative.

1) Bilingual, Bi-cultural Psychosocial Accompaniment:

One of the most immediate needs that surfaced from the service interviews was the lack of bilingual, bicultural counselors. Currently, an unaccompanied minor who is showing signs of needing therapy sees a therapist with the use of an interpreter. This is a current practice in the Waukegan Public School system. Not only is the language barrier an issue, but many times the counselor is unaware of the unique cultural realities of these young people.

Through the bilingual, bi-cultural psychosocial accompaniment initiative, the unaccompanied minors will have access to a bi-lingual, bi-cultural counseling program. This resource will bring to the Parish of La Santísima Trinidad bilingual, bicultural social worker interns who can offer counseling to the newly arrived unaccompanied minors. Through individual, group, and family counseling that is language-sensitive, and springs from an understanding of the reality of the individual’s past, present, and future, the unaccompanied minors can be offered a safe place to heal and grow. The group counseling could include other unaccompanied minors, as well as Hispanic/Latino(a) children of similar ages who face comparable diagnoses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder or issues with depression.

The social workers will be native Spanish-speaking, Latinas(os) interns from Dominican University’s School of Social Work. The mission statement of this school states:

⁴ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

The Graduate School of Social Work is centered in the Sinsinawa Dominican tradition, which is committed to truth and compassionate service. We prepare professional social workers for globally-focused, family-centered practice to advocate for human rights, and social and economic justice for all persons including socially excluded populations that promotes human and community well-being.⁵

These bi-lingual interns are being taught in a school dedicated to a universal viewpoint that fosters compassion and understanding.

The unaccompanied minor, as well as those with whom they are sharing daily life, will be offered such service. The individual, group, and family counseling will take place at the Gary Graf Center, where space will be made available. This center is a safe place, well-known in the community, and offers the privacy needed to assure confidentiality. The social workers are student interns, who are being supervised by a Latino(a) professor/field instructor from Dominican University. Also, members of the Immigration Integration Network of Lake County (I.I.N.) will be available for referrals and consultations; many of these members were interviewed for this thesis-project and provided key data used to design these strategic initiatives. I.I.N., as way of review, is a coalition of service providers in Lake County, which meets monthly to discuss needed services and offer support to each other in the outreach to the Latino community. This coalition model and advocacy work done by I.I.N. will be a great example to these students. The social work students can call upon a member of I.I.N. to ask about available services that might meet the needs of one of the unaccompanied minors. For example, an unaccompanied minor dealing with depression may need a physical and follow-up treatment. The Erie Health Clinic has available medical services for children without documentation.

⁵ <http://socialwork.dom.edu/admission/student-at-large>.

The most positive feature of this component of the strategic plan is that the young student counselors are Latinas(os) with shared roots of culture and language. The very fact that the majority of interns are young can also be considered helpful in that they can be role models for the young minors who aspire to a more abundant life. The lack of experience of these young social workers might be considered a weakness, but they are mentored and supervised by professionals, albeit not always Latinas(os). Another possible disadvantage may be the lack of exposure of these young counselors to the extreme hardships of the unaccompanied minors; hopefully their empathy will reach across this boundary.

2) Teen Accompaniment

One major concern voiced by the unaccompanied minors was the need for support to learn English. This initiative is designed to create a peer-based support system for the unaccompanied minors. A new program will bring together youth groups from twinning parishes and the unaccompanied minors. A twinning parish is a geographically near-by parish that has greater financial resources and can “twin” with Most Blessed Trinity Parish to meet the needs of the parishioners. There are members of the three twinning parishes connected to Most Blessed Trinity who work as volunteers at the soup kitchen, food pantry, domestic violence shelter, or Gary Graf Center for Immigration.

The youth from twinning parishes will team up to attend ESL classes with the newcomers or unaccompanied minors and act as tutors. The unaccompanied minors will attend the high school Spanish classes of the youth from twinning parishes, also becoming tutors. There will be a mutuality component in both the learning and the sharing of skill sets in this initiative.

The youth from the twinning parishes will put together a summer program that includes a variety of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking opportunities during the months of summer vacation. Some examples of these opportunities include theatre, concerts, and sports events. The families of the youth from the twinning parishes involved in this initiative will co-ordinate transportation and host dinners and parties to promote enjoyable opportunities to practice language skills.

The youth of the twinning churches and their families will attend a monthly theological reflection at the Gary Graf Center on the current issues around immigration reform. These monthly reflections will serve to address the pros and cons of immigration reform today. The purpose of these reflections will be to dispel current myths and promote an ongoing just immigration reform for the future.

The benefits of twinning teens from a more affluent parish with the Latino teens will hopefully create lasting friendships that endure well into the future and bestow mutual respect for diverse origins, cultures, and languages. It is difficult to perceive any disadvantages to twinning teens of diverse backgrounds. Some parents might have some objections precisely because of the vast differences, but hopefully these objections might be transformed with greater exposure to the rewards. The logistics may be a bit complicated and the success will require major support from school personnel.

3) Specialized Legal/Citizenship Services for Unaccompanied Minors

Current news reports estimate that approximately 60,000 unaccompanied minors are in this country awaiting legal immigration hearings to determine their legal status.⁶ The I.I.N. network of service providers in Waukegan and surrounding cities will launch a new program that is designed to provide the up-to-date, emergent legal services needed by the unaccompanied minors. The key service providers will be HACES and MANO A MANO. Both of these organizations currently provide legal services to newly arrived immigrants.

These legal services will feature pro bono law students from the University of Illinois Law School/Chicago, many of whom have taken a special interest in these cases. Bi-lingual law students, supervised by professors, will come to these agencies to provide legal aid to the unaccompanied minors. These law students will also accompany the minors to court, often a necessity for these young persons, who are potentially living with undocumented persons that fear attending legal proceedings. The I.I.N. network of service providers will invite the law students to their monthly meetings, so these students can keep abreast of the latest needs and information.

This legal services initiative is one of unparalleled importance to the minors for without it they would have very little chance of remaining in this country. The fact that the young law students are bi-lingual is of major importance and that they will offer their services on a pro bono basis is extremely significant for struggling families. It is also imperative to hone the skills of a troop of young lawyers who will advocate for the rights of immigrants. One of the difficulties for the success of this initiative is the negative attitude of some U.S. judges in regard to the

⁶ Pam Fessler, "Many Unaccompanied Minors No Longer Alone, But Still in Limbo," *NPR*. March 9, 2015. <http://www.npr.org/2015/03/09/390694404/many-unaccompanied-minors-no-longer-alone-but-still-in-limbo>.

presence of undocumented minors, who merit refugee status in the eyes of Catholic social teaching.

4) Educational/Vocational Accompaniment Services

The unaccompanied minors and service providers have expressed a need to help these families connect with services that offer educational support and career advising. The Waukegan 2 College Program will conduct a workshop for interested unaccompanied minors and family members who desire educational or career counseling. This program offers tutoring and educational counseling services to these young people. Follow-up and networking will be done by Laura Rios in the Waukegan 2 College Program, as well as Tim Kirschner and Rafael Mendez, school social workers with the Waukegan Public School district, who are willing to attend the workshop and act as advocates for these teenagers. This workshop will also assist unaccompanied minors who want to be involved in a sports or art program.

Another agency willing to participate in this workshop is the Waukegan Public Library. The library will make their English and vocational services available to all participants. Since food and beverage make any meeting more appealing, the Waukegan 2 College Program will provide snacks and drinks for this workshop.

Vocational and educational accompaniment for the young immigrants and their families creates the possibility of pairing interests with perspective career choices. It is especially beneficial to include parents in the equation since they will be the major supporters for the future of their children. A major difficulty is always getting students and parents together for a meeting of any kind, its importance notwithstanding, not because they are unwilling, but because of

varying work schedules, exhaustion, and a variety of other commitments. The willingness of service providers to accommodate the varying schedules of families is essential.

5) Advocacy Work

The I.I.N. network of service providers for Waukegan and surrounding cities will make advocacy work for the unaccompanied minors a monthly agenda item. Any agency will be allowed to bring up a need of an unaccompanied minor they want to address, and the I.I.N. members will address the issue. I.I.N. is dedicated to continue quarterly visits to the offices of the federal agencies in Chicago, Illinois in order to try to join others in systemic change work.

6) Basic Services

The I.I.N. network of service providers will also attend to the basic services needed by the unaccompanied minors on a month-by-month basis. If any agency becomes aware of a need that should be addressed, the I.I.N. members will deliberate about solutions together.

7) The Parish of La Santísima Trinidad

The Pastor of the parish has made a commitment to visit every unaccompanied minor that is currently living with a parish family. This includes 10 of the thirteen minors interviewed. The other three have already been visited by the Lutheran pastor, Justo Espinoza, from Iglesia Sagrado Corazón. These minors will be linked to any service available in the parish through follow-up by the pastor at the weekly staff meetings.

The youth groups are making a special effort to invite the newcomers to their meetings. One problem raised by the unaccompanied minors was the amount of English spoken at the youth group activities. The groups are addressing this issue. The youth groups are asking the

unaccompanied minors to give suggestions for activities in which they would especially like to participate. The youth groups will make sure that problems of transportation are resolved for the unaccompanied minors who would like to attend.

The Parish is planning a special prayer service for the Feast of Juan Diego on December 9, 2015. This prayer service will highlight the reality of the unaccompanied minors, as well as other vulnerable immigrant populations today. The unaccompanied minors will be invited to give testimonies at the prayer service. These young people will also be invited to participate in dances and skits that tell the story of their country of origin. This feast day is going to be designated as a day to unite as a community to pray for a change of heart in the United States towards immigration reform.

The parish staff and Dominican sisters will join together to create ways to foster avenues to address anti-immigrant sentiment. This focus will take place during existing parish functions, such as the liturgy and regular parish gatherings. Also, the parish bulletin will now contain a monthly message about the myths of immigration and how parishioners can dismantle these myths at home and in the workplace. Finally, the parish has recently initiated *Pastoral Migratoria*, a peer leadership program developed by the Office of Immigration Affairs and Immigration Education of the Archdiocese of Chicago. *Pastoral Migratoria* trains parishioners as leaders who welcome newly arrived immigrants in the parish and builds communion between immigrants and non-immigrants as brothers and sisters in Christ. This parish group will be organizing various activities to address anti-immigrant sentiment, such as a parish-wide lecture series on the role of the immigrant in the United States today.

8) The Community of Dominican Sisters

The Community of Dominican sisters will begin their initiatives in June of 2015 as they form their community. Two sisters will live together and minister in the immigration center and food pantry. The prayer, community life, study, preaching, and service of the sisters will be influenced by these young people. The preaching will embody the community life and ministerial activity of the sisters. The ministry will have a bearing on the daily life of the community. We must make ourselves available as sisters. What will happen if one of the unaccompanied minors cannot make it to English class? What will happen if one of these youth needs a listening ear?

The community life of the sisters has the potential of being an example of gospel love and justice for the parish of La Santísima Trinidad. The parishioners may see their own struggle for daily existence in the sisters' way of living. The sisters could challenge the "status quo" with their lifestyle. All must feel welcomed into the home of the sisters. Hospitality and accompaniment need to be present in their community life.

In an effort to foster community, the Dominican sisters will plan the following:

➤ The sisters will join the guests at the soup kitchen twice a week for supper. Standing in line and eating with those reliant upon the soup kitchen for a daily meal will enable the sisters to both practice and strengthen their commitment to accompaniment. It is also a great way to get to know those who need our services.

- Once a month the parish staff will be invited for prayer and a simple supper

Praying and breaking bread together as a staff is a great equalizer. It allows co-workers to share at a more personal level. Much of the myth of religious life, especially in the Latino community, can be dispelled by inviting co-workers into our home. This is a very effective way for the staff to get to know us and our mission.

- The sisters will each choose one liturgical ministry in order to join others in service to the parish.

By joining the parish as liturgical ministers, each of the sisters will have the opportunity to interact with more parishioners. Being a minister of the Word or Eucharist, or joining one of the parish choirs, is a great service to the parish.

- For the first year, the sisters will devote a monthly study night to the situation of the unaccompanied minor crossing our borders. The “naming of dis-grace” in our government’s immigration policies must be an integral part of this study.

In an effort to not only analyze how to accompany the unaccompanied minors, our study must address and inform us about where our government is failing to promote just immigration reform. The corporate stance on Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, which addresses the root causes of migration, will be especially helpful during this study.

- The various youth groups will be invited to an evening of theological reflection once a semester.

It is my profound hope that the youth will find our home as a place of welcome and encouragement. Inviting the youth to pray and share an evening of reflection will be an inviting way to initiate a relationship of accompaniment.

Conclusion

This consideration of the strategic task is meant to answer the question, “How might we respond?” Each strategic response must be designed to foster change. Does the change suggested in this chapter serve to address the basic needs and membership of the unaccompanied minors in the life of the parish? Does the community of Dominican sisters also seek to incorporate what these youth need in how they live and minister? Will the lives of these young people not only be improved, but also be given the chance to influence others? How will the stories of these unaccompanied minors change the parish and the community of sisters? It is in this mutual seeking and changing that all are given a chance to build the kingdom together.

One question asked by Richard Osmer is, “How far can we go?”⁷ This is the most worthy question to pose to the parish and to the community of sisters. What are we willing to forego for the sake of the mission? In what ways are we willing to join with our brothers and sisters who are waiting to be welcomed into our country? And what if they are deported? What will we do? Is the community open to civil disobedience to protest such deportations? Our accompaniment must be willing to imitate Jesus, whose self-giving love on the cross knew no boundary or border.

⁷ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 217.

CONCLUSION

The fact that unaccompanied children are crossing our U.S. borders is not a new phenomenon. This study told the story of the first unaccompanied minor who entered this country on the opening day of Ellis Island in 1892. I am confident that there were countless children who arrived even before that year. What created the “humanitarian crisis,” as President Obama named this situation in June, 2014 was the increasing high volume of traffic of unaccompanied minors coming and with them, the burdens being placed on our governmental agencies.¹

The phenomenon of children coming alone to this country is continuing. On March 27, 2015 the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, reported that the estimated numbers of unaccompanied minors crossing our borders for 2015 can be as high as 27,200 children. This is a forty percent drop from 2014 in youth making their way to the U.S. border, yet still a significant number of children.² The major push factors sending these young people north continue to be violence, poverty, family reunification, and a desire to find a future full of meaningful work. Many continue to be concerned with providing for those left behind in their countries of origin.

Whether the United States should be protecting these children and welcoming them or sending them back to face unknown futures is a topic for another study. However, the Scriptures are clear: we are called to care for the immigrant we once were. “You shall not wrong a

¹ Ian Gordon, “70,000 Kids Will Show Up Alone at Our Border This Year. What Happens to Them?” *Mother Jones* (July/August 2014). <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/06/child-migrants-surge-unaccompanied-central-america>.

² Susan Jones, “DHS Secretary: ‘Thousands’ of Unaccompanied Children Still Crossing Into U.S.,” *cnsnews.com*, Reston, VA, March 27, 2015. <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/susan-jones/dhs-secretary-thousands-unaccompanied-children-still-crossing-us>. Jones gives both the number estimated from 2015 and the percentage difference from last year.

sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21) (NSRV). And Jesus reiterated the Old Testament mandate to provide for the immigrant when he said, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

Our Catholic Tradition also calls us to treat each newcomer as a brother or sister. The three main principles of Catholic social teaching concerning immigrants are: 1) People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families; 2) A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration; and 3) A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.³ The first principle was written by Pope Pius XII in *Exsul Familia* (1952) to assure post-World War II victims that every person has the right to “sustain their lives and the lives of their families.”⁴ This is based on the biblical teaching that the earth belongs to everyone, despite the fears about scarcity or security held by individuals in welcoming nations. More recently, John Paul II wrote,

This principle is based on the fact that “the original source of all that is good is the very act of God, who created both the earth and man [and woman], and who gave the earth to man [and woman] so that [s/]he might have dominion over it by [her/]his work and enjoy its fruits (Gen 1:28-29). God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone.”⁵

We are all equal in God’s eyes and meant to share the earth as brothers and sisters.

The second principle basically states the belief that while everyone has the right to migrate, no nation is under obligation to accept all immigrants. Every country, however, is called to make any political, economic, or social decisions with the common good in mind. Each

³ Thomas Betz, “Catholic Social Teaching on Movement of Peoples,” *USCCB* Washington, D.C. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” April 2, 2004. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc.html, 171.

country should cherish the immigrant and work to make it unnecessary that anyone should be forced to make the choice to immigrate in the future.

The third principle is related to the first two principles. Whatever immigration practices a nation uses, they must reflect the dignity of each person and preserve the common good.

Even in the case of less urgent migrations, a developed nation's right to limit immigration must be based on justice, mercy, and the common good, not on self-interest. Moreover, immigration policy ought to take into account other important values such as the right of families to live together. A merciful immigration policy will not force married couples or children to live separated from their families for long periods...Finally, immigration policy that allows people to live here and contribute to society for years but refuses to offer them the opportunity to achieve legal status does not serve the common good. The presence of millions of people living without easy access to basic human rights and necessities is a great injustice.⁶

As Catholics, we must measure our treatment of immigrants against what our Catholic Tradition dictates as merciful and just. Our concern for the unaccompanied minor should match that of Pope Francis who, while discussing a trip to the United States in 2015, said, “To enter the United States from the border with Mexico would be a beautiful gesture of brotherhood[/sisterhood] and support for immigrants.”⁷

In examining how merciful and just the immigration laws of the United States are, we must also study the welcoming spirit of our Church towards immigrants. I initiated this research to investigate how a parish and a community of Dominican Sisters could reach out to this newly arrived and imperceptible group of children with so many unmet needs. I believe that the initiatives delineated in Chapter Four outline good practices for the parish and community of

⁶ Betz, “Catholic Social Teaching”.

⁷ Roque Planas, “Pope Francis: Crossing Into U.S. From Mexico Would Be A ‘Beautiful Gesture’” *Huffington Post* January 20, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/20/pope-francis-mexico_n_6508874.html.

Dominicans in order to meet the unmet needs of unaccompanied children who have made their way to Waukegan and surrounding cities.

The Parish of La Santísima Trinidad

What is most important is how the parish of La Santísima Trinidad promotes accompaniment. The parish needs to see this opening to meet the unmet needs of the unaccompanied minors as an opportunity to live out its mission to serve the people of God with a preferential option for the poor. The parish, in meeting these unmet needs, must also offer what is required to make these young people leaders of the future. The parish has the potential to see the gifts and talents they bring. The parish can go beyond finding an English class or joining a youth group. The parish can accompany these young people and help them to become future catechists, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and parish leaders.⁸

Parishes, communities of faith, are often the place that immigrants choose to go in the midst of their struggles as newcomers. It is often the parish staff that is a first responder when an immigrant is picked up by immigration officials. Here the parish can be a bridge of healing and reconciliation. It is parish staff members who can remind others that our most basic identity is not connected to a stamp in our passport, but to our identity as persons made in God's image.⁹

Another important ministry of the parish is to counteract anti-immigrant sentiment. The parish must “uphold values of dignity, compassion, and justice.”¹⁰ It is in the liturgy,

⁸ See Arturo Chavez, “Hispanic Ministry and Social Justice,” in *Hispanic Ministry in the 21st Century: Present and Past* edited by Hosffman Ospino and Rafael Luciani (Miami: Convivium Press, 2010).

⁹ The ideas in this paragraph came from Ched Meyers and Matthew Colwell, *Our God is Undocumented*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), Appendix 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

specifically in the preaching, where “dis-grace,” as Hilkert suggests, may be named.¹¹ The reality of evil, the presence of suffering, and the need for conversion must be addressed. The parish must be centered on bringing about a “deep awareness of what it means to be formed into, and to participate in, the body of Christ.”¹² The Gary Graf Center for Immigration is involved with other members of Immigrant and Newcomers Network, I.I.N., the group of social service agencies serving Waukegan and surrounding cities, in advocating for changes in immigration policy and laws.

Encouraging political and legal changes that fosters immigration reform is difficult for current immigrants who have not been offered legal status in this country. Since a large number of parishioners are undocumented, participating in the public debate on immigration is out of the question. Naming “dis-grace” for those denied legal status could result in jail and deportation. Occasionally, massive marches and protests are planned that protect individual anonymity because of the size of the event. Otherwise, the call to work for immigration must be answered by citizens and church members.

The Dominican Sisters

The community of Dominican sisters needs to map out how walking with the unaccompanied minors will offer them the possibility of transformation. A former Master General of the Order of Preachers, Damien Byrne said, “If we are not at the heart of people’s need, then we risk losing the vision and risk being irrelevant. To follow Dominic means to be

¹¹ Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum, 1997), 111.

¹² *Ibid.*, 136. Hilkert is using scholarship here by Catherine Dooley, OP, a Sinsinawa Dominican.

for our period of history and our Church what Dominic was for his.”¹³ To journey with the unaccompanied minors toward mutual transformation is a call to do what Dominic did with the needy of his day: listening to eyes and hearts of the people in the streets, speaking to the needs of people, and preaching as a community.¹⁴ Hilkert challenges the Sisters to use the individual stories of the unaccompanied minors in their preaching. “Precisely because preaching involves the art of mediating between religion and culture or of making connections between the Christian tradition and contemporary human experience, the preacher is involved in a theological act.”¹⁵

Looking into the eyes, listening to the hearts, and acting on behalf of the marginalized is to live with prophetic wisdom.¹⁶ The sisters must choose between spending all their time with administrative tasks or being available to the people. An important question for the sisters to ask each other is: “What separates us from people?”¹⁷ Another important aspect of deep listening and open hearts is being “in communion with people in their own life-situations.”¹⁸ The sisters need to make time to be with the people.

You cannot be with people if you are not “in the streets.” A good Dominican understands that preaching is not just the words we speak from the pulpit; it is any word spoken and any action performed. Where are we? With whom are we? These are the best questions a

¹³ Damien Byrne, *A Pilgrimage of Faith* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1991), 24. I got the idea to use this quote from the unpublished manuscript by Simon Roche, *Rediscovering Our Dominican Charism for Today*. I do not know the year this book was written.

¹⁴ Simon Roche, *Rediscovering Our Dominican Charism for Today*, unpublished manuscript, 52-57.

¹⁵ Hilkert, *Naming Grace*, 141.

¹⁶ Roche, *Rediscovering Our Dominican Charism for Today*, 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

Dominican can ask herself. We must make the sorrows and joys of the unaccompanied minors our own sorrows and joys.

When we find ourselves as sisters to all in the streets, we must speak to the needs of the people. Our preaching, in word and deed, has to address the questions people ask and offer the answers they seek.¹⁹ Our presence, like the presence of Jesus, must relate to the real needs and the particular situations of the unaccompanied minors. Living as one among the people is what makes the preacher.²⁰

Ongoing Accompaniment

This study of the unaccompanied minors and how a church community and group of Dominican sisters might accompany them began with a search for how theology and the social sciences can be related in order to define best practice. What is most needed from these various disciplines is an answer to how to be neighbor, as Jesus was neighbor, in our global world (Lk 10:25-37). It is necessary now to take these suggestions and put them into practice. There will be an on-going evaluation of how the unaccompanied minors are being welcomed and offered what they need to become the subjects in their own stories.

In the Dominican tradition, one of the first stories about St. Dominic concerns his time as a student in Palencia in Spain. Once Dominic witnesses the devastating famine ravishing this city, he sells all his books in order to help a destitute woman. This experience will influence St. Dominic in his understanding of ecclesiology and mission forever. The church will always be for him “the gathering-place of those who were otherwise excluded.”²¹ The mission of

¹⁹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰ Ibid., 55.

²¹ Ibid., 85-6.

preaching will continually be one that intersects prayer and gospel actions. This ongoing evaluation must be sure to measure the prayerful, gospel spirit being practiced.

Roberto Goizueta argues that accompaniment embodies a liberating praxis, and this in turn locates Christian praxis “at the very heart of the theological task.”²² In discovering the divine actions, the *theopraxis*, we are guided to human actions that reflect God’s justice and peace. Accompaniment leads to seeing who God is and who we are, and how God acts and how we must act. Accompaniment is ultimately counter-cultural, presenting God on the side of those who are rejected and unaccompanied. Any evaluation must be able to define how human action is reflecting a preferential option for the poor. Gonzáles-Andrieu declares, “As we stand side by side with our neighbors, it is they who must be protagonists in their own lives. We are called to accompany them, to learn from them, and to help them have what they need to bring about change, knowing this journey will also change us.”²³

This is the goal of *acompañamiento*; to be changed. We leave behind the false self and take on our real self. We leave behind an existence based on scarcity and take on an outlook of abundance. We leave behind competition and take on simplicity. We leave behind societal ways of selfish individualism and take on gospel attitudes of love and mercy as we work for the common good. In the end, we become more of who we are intended to be when we, like Christ, offer our very selves to the other.

²² Goizueta, Roberto, “Practicing Beauty: Aesthetical Praxis, Justice, and U.S. Latino(a) Popular Religion,” in Claire E. Wolfteich, *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 1.

²³ Cecilia González-Andrieu, *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 162.

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