

Integral Human Development: From Paternalism to Accompaniment

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Abstract

This article traces the development of Catholic treatments of integral human development from Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* to the writings of Pope Francis on accompaniment. The author argues that community organizing is an important avenue for promoting the political dimension of accompaniment as understood in the teaching of Pope Francis.

Keywords

accompaniment, advocacy, community organizing, development, Francis, integral development, paternalism, Paul VI

In the last fifty years or so, Roman Catholic social teachings have undergone a paradigm shift from a paternalistic to more egalitarian vision of what constitutes “integral human development.” By “egalitarian” I mean a normative vision that emphasizes the equal dignity of every person in a way that insists on promoting the subjective human agency of people who in the past would have been regarded as the more or less passive objects of Christian charity. In contrast to the older paternalism, Pope Paul VI spoke of people as the “artisans of their own destiny” and Pope Francis goes even further in his advocacy of an ethic of mutual accompaniment. Speaking broadly, Catholic social ethics now seeks to work for conditions which enable marginalized people to determine the direction of their own lives, to shape their own

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communities, and to be the primary protagonists of deep and lasting social change. I hope to show that what Paul VI began to appreciate has come to play a prominent role in Francis's account of accompaniment.

In this article I will proceed in five steps. First, I will examine a few of the criticisms of developmentalism to provide a context for thinking about the notion of "integral human development"; second, I will discuss Paul VI's conception of integral human development in *Populorum Progressio* and *Octogesima Adveniens*; third, I will discuss Óscar Romero's conception of accompaniment as a post-developmental strategy; fourth, I will then examine Francis's use of this term and show its importance for how we interpret "integral human development" today; and finally, I will argue that Catholic communities who endorse the emergent paradigm of accompaniment and its agency-centered conception of integral human development would do well to become engaged in grassroots religiously affiliated community organizations.

Problems with "Developmentalism"

Before discussing the thought of Paul VI, I want at least briefly to note some of the criticisms aimed at the notion of development that were dominant during his pontificate and for some time thereafter. These criticisms include the following: aid intended to promote development in the poorest countries is often mismanaged, stifles local initiatives and small businesses, retards economic growth, encourages corruption, channels more resources to administrative overhead than to the people it is meant to help, creates dependency in recipients and arrogance in donors, and generally fails to meet the real needs of the people it is intended to assist. Development economists like Amartya Sen and Jeffrey Sachs address these concerns.¹ I merely mention them here to provide a broad context for talking about how Paul VI conceived of integral human development. Two cases highlight a few prominent features of the problem.

Physician Paul Farmer's extensive experience of treating the poorest of the poor in Rwanda, Haiti, and elsewhere has led him to be highly critical of the "development approach" to the suffering of the Global South because it often exacerbates already endemic forms of structural violence. Developmentalists seek to help the poor by planning projects that they think would help poor communities and then mobilizing the resources needed to accomplish them. They intend to help the poor in ways that would enable them to become more modern and, in effect, begin to approximate a middle-class American standard of living.

Farmer uses the Péligre Dam case in central Haiti to talk about what often actually happens in such development projects.² This dam was built with extensive funding

1. See Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor, 2000) and Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 5–26.
2. See Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* (New York: Random House, 2003); Paul Farmer, *Aids and Accusations: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); and Daniel Palazuelos, Paul E. Farmer, and Joia Mukherjee, "Community

from North American economic interests. While publicly justified as a “poverty reduction program,” it largely helped the rich and hurt the poor. The construction of the dam led to massive flooding that pushed thousands of poor, rural farmers out of their homes and communities and away from fertile fields their forbears had cultivated for generations. The displaced farmers were forced either to relocate to till less arable fields or to migrate to urban areas to seek paid work. Displacement caused these people a significant increase in morbidity and mortality, especially due to tuberculosis and HIV infection. They received no compensation for the loss of their homes, land, and communities. The dam’s energy was used to supply power to foreign-owned factories, agribusinesses, and affluent residences of Port-au-Prince.³

The Péligre Dam catastrophe is just one example of a multitude of cases in which well-intended development programs have enhanced the well-being of the already well-off while increasing the deprivation of the poor. Developmentalists have often assumed that infusion of resources and technology will help the poor. Their vision presumes that economic and technical help from wealthy nations would enable poor people in the Global South to incorporate the same market principles that has already produced the ascendancy of the “developed” world.

Farmer’s criticism is complemented by a voice in Rwanda in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Emmanuel Ntezimana, then professor at the National University of Rwanda in Ruhengeri, argued that international aid intended for the poor of his country was appropriated by local elites who had no interest in the common good, let alone the least well-off: “There have been sudden transformations operating in the name of ‘development.’ ... Among the elite and people of note, the goal of life, the value of the individual and the quality of society seem henceforth reduced to the search [for] and fantastic accumulation of goods and material comforts, at the same time delicious and poisonous.” This process severely damaged social structures and allowed the “elite minority” to “monopolize the machinery of the state to manipulate and marginalize ... the popular masses.”⁴

Paul VI and Integral Human Development

In the 1960s many people in progressive academic and political leadership were quite taken with the idea of development. After World War II, the Marshall Plan helped to rebuild Europe and Japan. The rapidly expanding mass media was making the world more aware of the massive poverty of the “Third World,” as it was then called. In the late 1950s and 1960s, experts in international affairs suggested that massive assistance

Health and Equity of Outcomes: The Partners in Health Experience,” *The Lancet: Global Health* 6.5 (May 2018): e491–e493, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109x\(18\)30073-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109x(18)30073-1).

3. Kidder, *Mountains beyond Mountains*, 179–238.

4. Cited in Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 125. See also William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006) and Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1998).

could also be used to address the widespread hunger and poverty in Latin America that created such fertile ground for communist insurrection. President John F. Kennedy created the Alliance for Progress, a ten-year multi-billion dollar aid program for Latin America. Secretary U Thant declared the 1960s the “decade of development.” This was the partial context for the contribution of Paul VI to the church’s critique of developmentalism.

Populorum Progressio and Integral Human Development

In April 1967, two years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* made “integral human development” a central theme of Catholic social teachings. Unfortunately, the release of another authoritative document the following year, the “birth control” letter *Humanae Vitae*, drew the spotlight away from this social encyclical.

Earlier service as the Archbishop of Milan made the future Paul VI well acquainted with the injustices of industrial Europe. On pastoral visits to Latin America (1960), Africa (1962), and especially India (1964), the pope encountered poverty on a scale he had never seen nor even imagined possible. He wrote his first and only social encyclical as an urgent exhortation to the wealthy nations of the world to do more to help the poorest. The proper goal of aid, he said, is not only to eliminate hunger or reduce poverty, but also to build a world in which everyone can live a fully human life.⁵ Rather than simply a fact of nature, massive and chronic deprivation is the result of structural injustice, relentless exploitation, and systematic oppression of the weak by the powerful. The pope realized that economic development cannot be appropriately advanced without also promoting just distribution of whatever goods and services are produced, just administration in public and private spheres, and citizen empowerment.

In the late 1960s, the concept of “development” had been conceived mainly in terms of economic progress. It included agricultural assistance, water purification plants, installation of new wells, distribution of medicine, and a variety of other measures. Economic planners argued that the greatest poverty in Latin American countries could be alleviated by massive job creation unleashed by substantial infusion of investment capital.

Populorum Progressio was highly critical of the ways in which development had been misconceived and misapplied. The pope maintained that the point of development programs should be to give opportunities to the most vulnerable sectors of a society, not simply to raise the overall GDP of a country. True development goes hand in hand with expanding networks of solidarity, not exacerbating the gap between the rich and the poor. And it should yield robust intermediate associations, not leave the

5. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967), 47, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html (hereafter cited as *PP*).

mass of the poor at the disposal of a domineering few. Its fruits are love and generosity, not greed and arrogance.

Paul VI intended to fill out the basic lines of social concern indicated in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Gaudium et Spes*, yet from a perspective that gave much more weight to the needs of the southern hemisphere. “With *Populorum Progressio*,” journalist Peter Hebblethwaite observed, “the Church became truly Catholic, universal, and planetary.”⁶ While he adopted the notion of development as the key to the social question, he also significantly modified its meaning. He drew strongly from economist Louis Lebret’s work on development, and particularly his conviction that impoverishment of the “Third World” was the product of its exploitation by the “First World.”⁷

Paul VI’s humanism is grounded in the fundamental affirmation of each person as created in the image of God. He took as a fundamental principle that “it is the design of God” and that all persons “develop and fulfill themselves,” for “every life is a vocation.”⁸ Jacques Maritain’s “integral humanism” provided the normative perspective from which the pope could elaborate a rich and differentiated conception of authentic development.⁹ Development is “integral” when it truly enhances the whole human person. As material beings, we can only survive if we have access to the goods that enable us to sustain life—food, water, shelter, clothing, and the like. Because the world has been created to enable human beings to live decently, it is manifestly unjust to allow a few to accumulate vast amounts of wealth when masses live in poverty. No one is justified in keeping luxuries for him- or herself when others lack necessities.¹⁰ Paul would certainly not have approved of the fact that in our society the most affluent 100 households own as much wealth as all 14 million African American households, or that America’s twenty richest people own more wealth than half of the American population, or, that 1% of the world’s people owns 50% of its wealth.¹¹

Although Paul emphasized that integral human development requires material well-being, he also insisted that securing a bare subsistence level of goods is only the

6. Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1993), 483.

7. See Louis Joseph Lebret, *The Last Revolution: The Destiny of Over and Under-developed Nations*, trans. John Horgan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965); published in French as *Le Drame de Siècle* (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1960). See also François Malley, *Le Père Lebret: L’Economie au service de l’homme* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968) and Vincent Cosmao, “Louis-Joseph Lebret, O.P. 1897–1966: From Social Action to the Struggle for Development,” *New Blackfriars* 51 (1970): 62–68.

8. *PP* 15.

9. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

10. *PP* 23.

11. For the United States, see “Billionaire Bonanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us,” Institute for Policy Studies (December 1, 2015), <http://www.ips-dc.org/billionaire-bonanza/>. For global inequality, see Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report (2017), <https://www.credit-suisse.com/corporate/en/research/research-institute/global-wealth-report.html>.

first step in a teleological arch that aims at the complete human flourishing of every person and every human community. His conception adopted the Thomistic account of human nature as a nested hierarchy of needs and of inclinations to various kinds of human goods. As rational animals, our potential can only achieve a degree of actualization to the extent to which we have access to education, the arts, and other goods that ennoble us. As social animals, we only attain full development to the extent that we can act as constructive participants within family, neighborhood, and other forms of association within civil society. As moral beings, we only attain full human development to the extent that we move from leading lives focused on our private good to self-transcending love devoted to the common good. As political animals, we have the best opportunity to flourish when we function within “revitalized democracies” marked by free speech, healthy political debate, and vibrant political community. As spiritual beings, most importantly, we must have access to religion that enables us to cultivate our relation to God and to grow in faith, hope, and love. True humanism, Paul VI especially insisted, is thus theocentric rather than anthropocentric, and open to the transcendent rather than confined to what Charles Taylor calls the “immanent frame.”¹² The highest form of human development, he reminded us, is attained in union with Christ.¹³

We can highlight Paul VI’s innovation by comparing his vision to that of his nineteenth-century forbear, Leo XIII. Facing massive problems of industrial labor, the aristocratic Leo wrote *Rerum Novarum* to urge the powerful to treat the poor with charity and justice. Yet he also insisted that laborers have a right to a living wage, decent working conditions, and collective bargaining. Without the basics needed to sustain themselves, they could not fulfill their duties to their families and would therefore be susceptible to the appeal of Marxist revolutionaries. Leo’s advocacy of the rights of labor did acknowledge, if only in a timid and cautious way, that human dignity is profoundly connected to the exercise of human agency. Yet Hebblethwaite accurately characterized Leo as regarding the poor as the objects of his discourse rather than as the “agents in their own transformation.”¹⁴

Paul VI built on the tradition of social teaching begun by Leo, but appropriated it within the social vision of the Second Vatican Council, and especially *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹⁵ The council promoted a vision of the church according to which all the baptized belong to a pilgrim people to whom God sends the Spirit to serve as guide. The community of disciples are thus “led by the

12. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

13. *PP* 16.

14. Peter Hebblethwaite, “Popes and Politics: Shifting Patterns in ‘Catholic Social Doctrine,’” *Daedalus* 111 (Winter 1982): 85–99, at 87.

15. *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (hereafter cited as GS).

Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every [person].”¹⁶

Love for God generates love for neighbor, and particularly our most needy neighbors. “We do not confuse temporal progress and the Kingdom of Christ; nevertheless, the former, to the extent that it can contribute to the better ordering of human society, is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.”¹⁷ *Gaudium et Spes* thus provided the basis for the fundamental themes promoted in *Populorum Progressio*: faith in a God who wills complete well-being for every human being, a church on the move in solidarity with the human race, and an ethic of solidarity that gives special attention to the most vulnerable.

Populorum Progressio draws a special and new connection between integral human development and solidarity, which can be defined as an attitude in which one identifies with the cause of an individual or group as one’s own. Solidarity is in one sense a fact—we are all members of groups and depend on one another—but in another sense a norm, a value, and a moral aspiration—true solidarity is based on love, not merely enlightened self-interest. We flourish to the extent to which we function not only as recipients but also as *pro-active* agents of healthy solidarity.¹⁸

In its most Leo-like strains, *Populorum Progressio* reminded rich nations of the world that they have duties of solidarity, social justice, and universal charity to poor nations.¹⁹ They ought to increase their economic aid to developing countries and devote part of their production to meet the needs of underdeveloped nations.²⁰ They must pay higher prices for imports from developing countries, as well as give production guarantees and protect infant industries. The pope asked banks to revise their interest rates and reschedule their demands for loan repayments so that the burden of debt will not press too heavily on the weak economies of the developing world.

Populorum Progressio also addresses well-to-do individuals. Paul VI urged the wealthy to respond with generosity to the urgent appeal the poor make to them.²¹ He asked individual Catholics to offer their skills to solve the problems of developing nations and to be willing to pay higher tariffs and higher taxes to fund increased foreign aid.²² Wealthy citizens of poor countries ought to put their capital to work at home instead of invested or saved in “First World” institutions.

Yet while continuing the paternalistic assumption of earlier social encyclicals, *Populorum Progressio* also promoted agency “from below.” Recognizing that every person has a natural desire for happiness, it reminded the world that every person is created in order to work for his or her own betterment.²³ Here Paul VI’s position accords with what had already been taught by Leo XIII and John XXIII, particularly

16. GS 1.

17. GS 39.

18. PP 43, 62, 73.

19. PP 44.

20. PP 45, 48.

21. PP 47, 83, 32.

22. PP 81, 47.

23. PP 15, 55.

Pacem in Terris.²⁴ Paul, though, insists that our right to strive for human flourishing includes a right to share in the benefits of civilization.²⁵ He strongly lamented the oppressive external circumstances that prevent the poor from “acting on their own initiative and responsibility.”²⁶ These structures prevent people from doing what they have been created to do: cooperate with God in “completing the work of creation.”²⁷ “Every worker is, to some extent, a creator—be he [or she] artist, craftsman, executive, laborer or farmer.”²⁸

Paul VI was not a remote technocrat who conceived of poor people as the passive objects of integral human development. Rather than something done *to* people, authentic development is best advanced by creating conditions that enable people to enhance their *own potential* as agents. The pope was highly critical of any social structures—from suffocating traditional family norms to oppressive labor conditions—that stifle the agency of their participants.²⁹ He adamantly rejected the assumption that impersonal market forces ought to be allowed to dictate economic processes and he insisted that we accept our responsibility to do everything we can to ensure that economic activity is put at the service of human beings. Lay people, he wrote, “must consider it their task to improve the temporal order ... [and] have the duty of using their own initiative and taking action in this area—without waiting passively for directives and precepts from others.”³⁰ Integral human development is seen when individuals become “artisans of their own destiny” and nations act as “the architects of their own development.”³¹

This strain in *Populorum Progressio* stands some distance from the developmentalism criticized by Paul Farmer and Emmanuel Ntezimana. It is alert to the dangers of creating dependency in the poor and arrogance in donors. By conceiving of integral human development as a right, as a matter of justice, Paul VI began to move Catholic social teaching beyond the paternalistic ethic of charity. But as Alan Figueroa Deck points out, “Subsequent analyses and events ... demonstrated that there are serious limits to making integral development, even this broad, humanistic understanding of it, the principal focus of the world’s response to poverty.”³²

A Paradigm Shift to Agency in Paul VI’s Octogesima Adveniens

On August 24, 1968, Paul VI opened the landmark meeting of the Latin American bishops in Medellín, Colombia. The bishops gathered there intended to build upon

24. *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), 18–22, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

25. *PP* 5, 47, 1.

26. *PP* 9.

27. *PP* 27.

28. *PP* 28.

29. *PP* 37.

30. *PP* 81.

31. *PP* 65, 76.

32. Alan Figueroa Deck, “Commentary on *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*),” in Kenneth R. Himes, ed., *Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 305.

Paul VI's social concern, but also sensed that *Populorum Progressio* lacked the kind of political analysis that was needed to properly address the causes of suffering on their continent.³³ They understood that the poor could not become "artisans of their own destiny" without achieving liberation from the political repression imposed by their authoritarian governments. Resisting both domination from external powers and internal colonialism, the bishops committed the church to side with the poor and to encourage lay leadership in base ecclesial communities.

Agency "from below" became a prominent feature of Paul VI's 1971 landmark apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*. This document, Hebblethwaite observed, "breathed a different spirit and was like moving into a different world, where a different set of values operated. They derived not from Europe, but from Latin America."³⁴ Paul VI had come to recognize that the church does not have the competence to offer universally applicable solutions to every social question in every concrete setting. Doing so, he wrote, "is not our ambition, nor is it our mission." Instead, all Christians must "analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church."³⁵

Because there is often "a legitimate variety of possible options" about how to address social and economic problems, Paul VI wrote, each Christian should "determine, in his [or her] conscience, the actions which he [or she] is called to share in."³⁶ Every Christian bears a responsibility to develop his or her political and social conscience: "Let each one examine himself, to see what he has done up to now, and what he ought to do." This conscience ought to give rise no concrete commitments: "It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action."³⁷ *Octogesima Adveniens* thus moved decisively beyond the more general character of *Populorum Progressio*. As Liam Ryan points out, "Where previous Popes favored change from the top down, Paul looks to change from below ... For Paul, liberation demands effective political action as economics had for John XXIII replaced moral reform as the focus of strategy, so now politics replaces economics for Paul VI."³⁸

33. Deck, "Commentary on *Populorum Progressio*," 305. See also Rafael Luciani, "Medellín Fifty Years Later: From Development to Liberation," *Theological Studies* 79 (2018): 566–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563918784765>.

34. Hebblethwaite, "Popes and Politics," 577.

35. *Octogesima Adveniens* (May 14, 1971), 4, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html (hereafter cited as *OA*).

36. *OA* 49.

37. *OA* 48.

38. Liam Ryan, "The Popes as Modern Social Reformers," *Furrow* 42 (1991), 87–100, at 98–99.

The endorsement by *Octogesima Adveniens* of two other values was particularly prescient vis-à-vis human agency. As our scientific and technological progress continues unabated, Paul VI wrote, people everywhere are increasingly yearning for greater equality and civic participation, which he called two forms of human “dignity and freedom.”³⁹ These aspirations naturally seek expression in democratic forms of political community. Whereas purely economic conceptions of progress focus on the production of goods and services, and on the participation of consumers in markets, a fuller view of human flourishing also appreciates the significance of citizens’ ability actively to participate in civil society and in the cultural life of their communities. In his 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, John XXIII had already endorsed the value of unions and collective bargaining while also recognizing the value of worker participation in the running of companies: “employees are justified in wishing to participate in the activity of the industrial concern for which they work.”⁴⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* underscored the duty of citizens to exercise their right to vote for the sake of the common good.⁴¹

Octogesima Adveniens expanded the range of participation considerably beyond the rights of labor and the electoral responsibilities of citizens. Paul recognized that human flourishing, both individual and communal, consists essentially in the exercise of agency in interdependent social relationships. Kenneth R. Himes expresses this point in the language of self-giving love: “Participation is crucial for developing opportunities to be self-donative. If people are left outside the circle, not seated at the table, then they are encouraged to act irresponsibly, not altruistically. The opportunity to enter into the life of a community, to give oneself away to others in mutually supportive ways, is a marker for assessing whether a society is rightly ordered.”⁴²

Octogesima Adveniens suggested that we can assess the health and justice of a society from the extent to which ordinary citizens participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Citizen participation is also undermined by increased inequality. The United States bishops’ 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* gave the deeply social dimension of human flourishing even more prominence when it defined “basic justice” as demanding “minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.” Conversely, they wrote, the “ultimate injustice” is “for a person or group to be actively treated or passively abandoned as if they were nonmembers of the human race.”⁴³

39. *OA* 22.

40. *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961), 91, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html (hereafter cited as *MM*). See also *GS* 68.

41. *GS* 75.

42. Kenneth R. Himes, “Catholic Social Teaching, Economic Inequality, and American Society,” unpublished paper to be published, June 2019, in *Journal of Religious Ethics*.

43. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (November 1986), 77, http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf (hereafter cited as *EJA*). For important treatments of participation in Christian ethics, see David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 173–244, and Lisa

While neither a papal nor a conciliar document, the document of the 1971 Rome synod *Justitia in Mundo* also made its own unique contribution to the evolution of Catholic reflection on integral human development.⁴⁴ The bishops followed Paul's lead in stressing economic, political, and social participation of people at the grass-roots level. They strongly emphasized what Himes calls not only the "objective" but also the "subjective" component of integral human development: "a demand that persons take responsibility for their own identity and progress."⁴⁵ The subjective pole of development requires the dismantling of "systematic barriers"⁴⁶ to the exercise of agency. While many Latin American bishops and theologians had come to prefer the paradigm of liberation over the paradigm of development, representatives of the church in Africa continued to regard the language of development as appropriate to their continent. *Justitia in Mundo*'s endorsement of "liberation through development"⁴⁷ focused on the goal of constructing conditions that would enable marginalized people to play the primary role in their own liberation and proper development.

Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* recognized that if the church wants to promote integral human development it would not only have to support but also *participate in* movements working for social justice: "The church . . . has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children—the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization."⁴⁸ The arch of Paul VI's corpus thus shows a dramatic growth in appreciation for the significance of agency from below and for the church's responsibility to foster and embody it.

Óscar Romero on the "Apostolate of Accompaniment"

One could make the argument that Paul VI is the papal forbear with whose social vision Pope Francis has shown the greatest affinity. I would now like to turn to Francis's use of the language of accompaniment to describe his account of the pastoral agency of the church and his approach to integral human development.⁴⁹ The notion of

Sowle Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, and Change* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), especially 43–69 and 211–51.

44. World Synod of Catholic Bishops, "Justice in the World" (1971), <https://www.cctwin-cities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf> (Hereafter cited as *JM*), accessed December 22, 2017.
45. Kenneth R. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World)," in Kenneth R. Himes, ed., *Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 345–76, at 356.
46. *JM* 16.
47. *JM* 16.
48. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), 30, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (hereafter cited as *EN*).
49. This article focuses on the development of the notion of accompaniment in Roman Catholic pastoral practices and social ethics. The term has also been widely used in Protestant circles, as in the "Colombia Accompaniment Program" of the Presbyterian

accompaniment has been in the air some time, and, as Philip Berryman points out,⁵⁰ goes back at least as far as the 1970s when it was used in El Salvador by Rutilio Grande and Archbishop Óscar Romero.⁵¹ Romero used this term in his final pastoral letter, “The Church’s Mission amidst the National Crisis,”⁵² which the archbishop writes as an application of the Final Document of the Latin American bishops’ meeting in Puebla, Mexico. In this document, Romero attributes the origin of the concept to a comment made on an archdiocesan survey of pastoral workers: “The church, to quote one of them [lay ministers] verbatim, has to interpret for, and to *accompany*, this people as it struggles for freedom; if not, in the course of time it will be marginalized. With or without the church the changes will take place, but by its very nature its duty is to be present in the midst of these changes, which are delineating the kingdom of God.”⁵³

Romero’s pastoral letter endorses accompaniment as a paradigm of pastoral engagement with members of secular political movements. Today in El Salvador, he wrote,

Peace Fellowship, at <http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/colombia/accompaniment#.WjKdIrQ-eL8>, accessed December 13, 2017. See also the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, *Global Mission in the Twenty-first Century: A Vision of Evangelical Faithfulness in God’s Mission*, <https://docplayer.net/16436517-Global-mission-in-the-twenty-first-century.html>.

50. See Philip Berryman, *Stubborn Hope: Religion, Politics, and Revolution in Central America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 173. Romer refers to accompaniment in his fourth pastoral. See Óscar Romero, “The Church’s Mission amid the National Crisis” (August 6, 1979), <http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/sites/default/files/fourth%20pastoral%20letter.pdf> (hereafter cited as “The Church’s Mission”).
51. Thomas M. Kelly describes Rutilio Grande as the “evangelizing exemplar” for Archbishop Romero. See *Rutilio Grande, SJ: Homilies and Writings*, ed. and trans. Thomas M. Kelly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015). For another view of the relationship between Grande and Romero, see Ana Maria Pineda, *Romero & Grande: Companions on the Journey* (Hobe Sound, FL: Lectio, 2016).
52. While the term “accompaniment” dates from this time period, the pastoral focus on presence, companionship, and fidelity to which it refers was exercised by pastoral agents well before the term was coined. Something like accompaniment has been practiced, for example, within L’Arche communities, among priests and poor South Korea farm-workers (the *minjing*) in the 1980s, and among the neighbors and Trappist monks of Tibhirine, Algeria, in the 1980s and 1990s. See Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together* (New York: Paulist, 1979); James T. Bretzke, “Faith Seeking Transformation: Theology of Accompaniment in Post-Minjung Korea” (presented to the American Academy of Religion, Korean Religions Section, November 22, 2003), unpublished paper; and John W. Kiser, *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love, and Terror in Algeria* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2002). It should also note that while this term originated in Christian circles, it has also been used in extra-ecclesial contexts by medical anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer as a way of approaching the formation and implementation of health-care policies in the Global South. See Paul Farmer, “Accompaniment as Policy,” Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, <https://www.lessons-fromhaiti.org/press-and-media/transcripts/accompaniment-as-policy/>.
53. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 26; emphasis added.

we need “an apostolate of following, to accompany Christians in their political options—without the church thereby losing its identity and Christians their faith.”⁵⁴ Romero believed his archdiocese was playing an important role in communicating the church’s vision of integral human development to Salvadorans. Drawing on the teachings of Paul VI, John Paul II, and the Latin American bishops’ 1979 meeting at Puebla, Mexico, he insisted that, rather than being opposed, evangelization and integral human development are two essential and mutually complementary aspects of Catholic social teaching.⁵⁵ This acknowledgement in turn implied that refusing to take up the task of promoting the empowerment of the poor would constitute a betrayal of the church’s evangelizing mission. Personal experience taught Romero that the church can only effectively promote the integral development of the marginalized when she is effectively present in their lives: “This demands of the church a greater presence among the poor. It ought to be in solidarity with them, running the risks they run, enduring the persecution that is their fate, ready to give the greatest possible testimony to its love by defending and promoting those who were first in Jesus’ love.”⁵⁶

Romero went on to argue that the church is most true to herself when she offers to society the “service of companionship and guidance in its aspirations to be a free and liberating people.”⁵⁷ In this role, the church has a “duty to encourage and to guide Christians who have the ability to organize themselves”⁵⁸ without of course absolutizing any political organizations. The church does so when exercising an “apostolate of companionship or following”⁵⁹ that can help lay Christians involved in popular political movements form their consciences in a way that is rooted in the Gospel.⁶⁰ What is needed, Romero insisted, is not a “politicized apostolate but rather an apostolate that has to guide, in accordance with the gospel, the consciences of Christians within a politicized environment.”⁶¹

To “accompany” means to journey with a people, as YHWH did in travelling in the desert with the wayward people of Israel, or to join with companions on the move, as Jesus did with the frightened disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–35). Romero liked to remind his listeners that as the Body of Christ in history, the church is on pilgrimage in and with the Spirit of Christ.⁶² He had the fidelity and courage to embody his own deepest inspiration. In a homily, the archbishop said that as pastor he is one who “feels the joy, and at the same time the anguish, of living with his people and of walking with his people in fidelity to the will of God.”⁶³

54. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 29.

55. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 55.

56. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 56.

57. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 61.

58. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 65.

59. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 88.

60. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 92.

61. Romero, “The Church’s Mission,” 93.

62. Óscar Romero, *A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People: The Complete Homilies of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero*, trans. Joseph V. Owens, ed. Rafael Luciani, Félix Palazzi, and Julian Filochowski (New York: Continuum, 2015), vol. 1, 265–67.

63. Romero, *A Prophetic Bishop*, 358.

Accompaniment “on the ground”

The physical, social, and psychological presence that characterizes accompaniment means that it is much more demanding than either service or even solidarity as it is usually interpreted. As theologian Roberto Goizueta points out, “As a society, we are happy to help and serve the poor as long as we don’t have to walk *with* them where they walk, that is, as long as we can minister to them from our safe enclosures.” Presence implies mutual respect and cooperation, both of which can enhance effective agency. But because it is demanding, many would rather not get so involved: “The poor can then remain passive objects of our actions, rather than friends, *compañeros* and *compañeras* with whom we interact. As long as we will not have to live with them, and thus have interpersonal relationships with them ... we will try to ‘help’ the poor—but, again, only from a controllable, geographical distance.”⁶⁴

Accompaniment is neither simply a style of operating pastorally nor just a method of proceeding, but rather of way of forming and deepening community and discipleship. The concept has deep christological, sacramental, and ecclesiological valence.⁶⁵ It reflects a deep trust in the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in friendships and communities open to the influence of grace. Accompaniment is marked by the sharing of stories, articulating grievances and expressing aspirations, forming plans of action, and engaging in concrete collective action to achieve common goals. It is a form of long-term companionship advanced by physical proximity and a willingness to engage in open and honest dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect.

Accompaniment provides a valuable context from which to pursue practical, effective action. Whereas the standard model of development involves the helper “doing for” the helped, as in Paul VI’s plea for the wealthy to aid the poor, accompaniment is constituted by a reciprocal giving and taking, a mutual “doing with” one another rather than one party “doing for” the other. The language of accompaniment provides a way of talking about a deep form of fellowship found in healthy small grassroots organizations, local women’s groups, community organizations, agricultural cooperatives, base ecclesial communities, and the like.

Envisioning relationships in horizontal or circular rather than vertical or linear terms, accompaniment conceives of effective agency as partnership rather than trusteeship. We can briefly examine a few examples of the difference that accompaniment makes for social engagement. One is provided by the Lauritas Sisters of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and Saint Catherine of Siena, a community founded by Mother Laura Montoya Upegui in 1914 to enable indigenous people and Afro-Colombians to receive their “full realization” as human beings.⁶⁶ Coming mostly from peasant families in Colombia and other Latin American countries, the sisters are devoted to sharing the life

64. Roberto Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 199; emphasis in text.

65. See Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).

66. See “Santa Laura Montoya,” <https://madrelaura.org/santa-laura-montoya-/127/cod21/>. The order received papal approval in 1968.

of the poor even under the most difficult circumstances. The Lauritas describe their community in Colombia as having a special vocation to accompany female victims of the sociopolitical violence in that country. Sisters help victims who have had family members killed from small communities that enable them to hear one another's stories, speak about what is nearly unspeakable evil, and support one another. Over time, these women come to understand their rights, learn how to receive legal assistance, and find ways together to cope with their pain. They develop strength in community that can help them overcome the paralysis and helplessness that comes from having lived under conditions of intense fear and terror.⁶⁷ The sisters are committed to being present with people in ways that allow them to be the protagonists of their lives.

A second example comes from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), an organization founded by Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe in 1980 to address the challenges of refugees who fled Vietnam. Following the motto, "To accompany, to serve, and to advocate," JRS is committed to welcoming asylum seekers, listening to their stories, forming friendships with them when possible, and helping them to apply for refugee status. The first commitment of JRS is to listen to what displaced people say they need, to respect them, and let them know they are accepted and valued—all of which best takes place in the context of accompaniment and with the goal of "creating communities of love."⁶⁸

Brisbane-born Mercy Sister Denise Coghlan is the Director of JRS Cambodia, where she runs a center in Siem Reap that welcomes displaced people and gives special attention to victims of landmines and cluster bombs. Coghlan initially got involved with Cambodian refugees when in the late 1980s she left Australia to work with victims of the Cambodian civil war in refugee camps in Thailand. After two-and-a-half years of working in refugee camps, Coghlan and a few Jesuits were given permission by the Cambodian government to move to Cambodia to provide vocational training for people with disabilities. They founded an overarching organization called Jesuit Service, for which she served as Director from 1994 to 2009. Its mission included

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67. Accompaniment has been adopted and applied in a variety of pastoral and social contexts. See, inter alia, Hosffman Ospino, "Theological Horizons for a Pedagogy of Accompaniment," *Religious Education* 105 (July–September 2010): 413–29; T. D. Mashau, "Where and When It Hurts the Most: the Theology of Hope and Accompaniment in the Context of HIV and AIDS in Marriage and Family Life," *Exchange* 37 (2008): 23–34; Dominic P. Scibilia, "A Pedagogy of Eucharistic Accompaniment," *Professing in the Postmodern Academy* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002): 195–214, 330–31; Rafael Malpica Padilla, "Accompaniment as an Alternative Model for the Practice of Mission," *Trinity Seminary Review* 29 (Summer/Fall 2008): 87–98; Brian E. Konkol, *Mission as Accompaniment: A Response to Mechanistic Dehumanization* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017); and John Sherrington, "The Journey of Accompaniment," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29 (August 2016): 294–300 (on accompanying people suffering from dementia).
68. Nick Jones, "Cambodia: Accompaniment Creates 'Communities of Love,'" *Jesuit Refugee Service News* (March 17, 2016), http://www.jrsap.org/news_detail?TN=N EWS-20160316102931.

vocational training for people damaged by landmines and cluster bombs, rural development projects for the poor, and the programs for peace and reconciliation. Jesuit Service did not seek in a paternalistic way to elicit and distribute development aid. The organization instead asked what the people they accompanied believed they most needed to live dignified lives, and they received a comprehensive list that stretched from food, shelter, and water to access to education, land titles, and “participation in decisions that affect their lives.”⁶⁹

Coghlan went on to found the *Metta Karuna* (“Mercy and Loving Kindness”) Reflection Center in Siem Reap, which hosts workshops, seminars, and retreats in which outsiders can learn to see the world from the point of view of the poor. JRS Cambodia’s promotion of accompaniment provides a rich relational context within which their members serve and advocate on behalf of asylum seekers, refugees, and Cambodians who have been internally displaced due to land evictions, conflict, and human trafficking. It seeks to work with disabled and poor Cambodians to achieve their expressed goals, which run from greater access to wheelchairs to rebuilding social trust and from building communities of interreligious dialogue to resisting the predatory moves of international development corporations.

Decades of accompanying displaced persons has led Coghlan to express a sentiment that resonates with Pope Francis and other advocates of accompaniment: “Academia from a glass castle will not bring realistic responses unless they have direct contact with the affected people.”⁷⁰ When sustained direct contact is based in *caritas*, she says, it will strive to help the “poorest to reflect on their current situation so they can come up with their own constructive solutions.”⁷¹ Coghlan’s accompaniment led her to play an important leadership role in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines that led to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and for which it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the same year. In 2015, Sister Coghlan received the JRS Accompany Award.⁷²

Pope Francis on Accompaniment as “Pastoral Strategy”

Both cases we just considered suggest that accompaniment begins with forming relationships of mutual trust based on equal dignity and then moves to a shared commitment to promoting the agency of community members. Francis of course also stresses these values.⁷³ While he inherits the language of integral human development from his

69. “A Discussion with Denise Coghlan, RSM, Director, Jesuit Refugee Service, Cambodia,” Interview, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University (May 28, 2010), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-denise-coghlan-rsm-director-jesuit-refugee-service-cambodia>.

70. Amaya Valcarcel and Nick Jones, “Interview with Denise Coghlan RSM on Asia Pacific Challenges” (February 15, 2016), <http://www.jrs.org.au/2532-2/>.

71. Coghlan, interview at Berkley Center.

72. See Christian Fuchs, “JRS at 35: Honoring a Nun’s Dedication,” at http://jrsusa.org/news_detail?TN=NEWS-20151103084852.

73. Benedict XVI also referred to accompaniment in his document *Sacramentum Caritatis*, where he said that the church accompanies divorced and remarried couples. Benedict

predecessors,⁷⁴ the importance he gives to accompaniment leads him stress the centrality of human agency to the human good. His path, I would suggest, helps to avoid the problems of “developmentalism” noted above.

Accompaniment is central to Francis’s conception of pastoral care, spirituality, and evangelization, his exercise of ecclesial leadership, and his conception of the social mission of the church. He regards accompaniment first and foremost as a way of facilitating spiritual renewal and growth. As *Evangelii Gaudium* put it, “Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur ... Only through ... respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives.”⁷⁵ The pope’s repeated call for a “culture of encounter” finds its richest expression in accompaniment.

The piety underlying Pope Francis’s advice reveres a God who is always quietly active in the midst of human beings wherever they happen to be. God is the eternal companion calling us to be companions to one another, and fraternal communion is attained through accompaniment. Paraphrasing the Gospel of John, the pope urges his readers, “Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another.”⁷⁶

As a kind of “field hospital,” the church must do what is possible to dispense the medicine of God’s healing grace.⁷⁷ Displaying the mercy that lies at the heart of his pontificate, Francis has visited Lampedusa, prisons in Rome, the war-torn Central African Republic, Ciudad Juarez, a soup kitchen in Washington, DC, and Syrian refugees on the island of Lesbos. These short-term visits are not the long-term proximity entailed in accompaniment, but they do point to the foundation of the Catholic ethic of accompaniment: the intrinsic dignity of every human person. As *Evangelii Gaudium* explains, “The church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious, and laity—into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the

XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (February 22, 2007), 29, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html.

74. See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html, accessed December 14, 2017; and Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html. Both encyclicals offer rich reflection on the theme of integral human development but neither mentions accompaniment.

75. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 171, http://m.vatican.va/content/francescomobile/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (hereafter cited as EG).

76. EG 99; Jn 13:35.

77. Antonio Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis,” *America Magazine* (September 30, 2013), <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>, accessed December 14, 2017.

sacred ground of the other.”⁷⁸ Accompaniment can communicate love and friendship in ways that facilitate the healing of wounded people. Pastors, the pope writes, “need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth.” This is why the “confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy which spurs us on to do our best.”⁷⁹

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the pastoral care of families, *Amoris Laetitia*, lays out what it means for the church to accompany individuals, couples, and families with complicated lives in a way that is inviting and encouraging rather than excluding and defeating. The clergy, he says, must help people “form their consciences, not replace them.”⁸⁰ Critics have harshly blamed the pope for listening and conversing rather than instructing and commanding.⁸¹ While they accuse him of encouraging subjectivism and laxism, he insists that accompaniment involves dialogue for the sake of evangelization and anything but a process of “values clarification.”⁸² “Spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God ... [for] to accompany them would be counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father.”⁸³

Francis’s approach to accompaniment registers St. Ignatius’s trust that the Spirit works in every person’s life. We need, the pope says, “a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery.”⁸⁴ He rightly worries that judgmental attitudes by self-righteous Catholics drive people away from the path that will enable them to grow into more fully developed human beings and better Christians. He implies that, when it operates wrongly, the church herself can undermine the “integral human development” of her members. Many Catholics have been relieved by his insistence that clergy and laity alike drop the agenda of controlling, manipulating, or dominating other people, however messy their lives. Accompaniment works within the possibilities and limitations that come with complicated lives—and whose life, he would ask us, is not complicated?⁸⁵

78. *EG* 169.

79. “A small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties. Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings” (*EG* 44).

80. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2016), 37, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf (hereafter cited as *AL*).

81. See Charles Pope, “What Is ‘The Art of Accompaniment’? Some Concerns over Another Phrase Emerging from the Synod” (November 16, 2014), <http://blog.adw.org/2014/11/what-is-the-art-of-accompaniment-some-concerns-over-another-phrase-emerging-from-the-synod/>.

82. *EG* 173.

83. *EG* 170.

84. *EG* 171.

85. “Moreover, pastors and the lay faithful who accompany their brothers and sisters in faith or on a journey of openness to God must always remember what the *Catechism of the*

Accompaniment as the Context for Service and Advocacy

Francis is especially interested in spiritual and pastoral growth, but he also sees the relevance of accompaniment to social ethics. The notion can seem so gentle and accepting that it might be taken to be apolitical, but this inference would be a mistaken.

Accompaniment in JRS Cambodia does not lead to partisan political activity, but it is committed to local, national, and international forms of advocacy to change laws and public policies. As noted above, it has become prominent in the international effort to ban and clear landmines and to provide assistance to people who have been disabled by them. It also engages in advocacy for improvements in education, food security, land titles, and the treatment of detainees. Witnessing the effects of violence and other forms of injustice enables Coghlan and other agents of Cambodia JRS, and the Laurita Sisters in Colombia, to speak the truth about what might otherwise be unknown to the wider publics of their respective countries.

Pope Francis and those who exercise accompaniment seek to be grounded in *caritas* and its uncompromising affirmation of the dignity of every person. This is why the church bears a special responsibility to accompany people whom the world treats as “disposable.” We affirm worth by drawing and staying close to the marginalized: “Only on the basis of . . . real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation.”⁸⁶ What Jesuit Greg Boyle says about the mission of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles resonates with Pope Francis, JRS, and the Laurita Sisters: “We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away.”⁸⁷

We get the clearest picture of Francis’s understanding of how accompaniment provides a context for service and advocacy from his July 2015 address to the World Meeting of Popular Movements in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.⁸⁸ In this talk, the pope praises ways in which the church in Latin America has embraced popular movements fighting for the people’s rights to the “three Ls”—“land, lodging, and labor”—that are, along with other goods, conditions that promote integral human development.⁸⁹

Catholic Church teaches quite clearly: “Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors” (EG 44, citing *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1735, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P5N.HTM).

86. EG 199.

87. Greg Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (New York: Free, 2010), 190.

88. Francis, “Address of the Holy Father, Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) (9 July 2015) Second World Meeting of Popular Movements,” http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html (hereafter cited as “Address, Popular Movements”).

89. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 3.

Immersed in a global economic system that puts so many hundreds of millions of people at the periphery, Francis notes, ordinary people have a right and a duty to resist injustice. The pope did not go to Bolivia to ask the rich to give more generously or even to demand that they promote justice. Addressing the poor directly, he urged them to devote themselves to accomplish real, structural change. He finds popular movements particularly important because they advocate from a place of proximity to what he calls the “storms of people’s lives”.⁹⁰

I have seen you work tirelessly for the soil and crops of *campesinos*, for their lands and communities, for a more dignified local economy ... you have helped them build their own homes and develop neighborhood infrastructures ... I have seen first hand ... where workers united in cooperatives and other forms of community organization were able to create work where there were only crumbs of an idolatrous economy.⁹¹

He praises the informal economy and “communitarian production” for enabling some people to recover a sense of their own dignity. Governments ought to be protecting these workers, he insists, and provide institutional support for the enterprises that employ them. All of this will strengthen “full and participatory democracy”⁹² and, citing *Populorum Progressio*, enable people to be the “artisans of their own destiny.”⁹³

Francis praises clergy and lay ministers who accompany popular movements and he urges Catholics at all levels to be more engaged with them. At their best, he thinks, these movements show us something of what it means to love our neighbor on a large scale. Recalling the spirit of *Octogesima Adveniens*, Francis modestly notes that “neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social reality or the proposal of solutions to contemporary issues. I dare say no recipe exists.”⁹⁴

The pope goes on to urge popular movements to take on three great tasks essential for the common good: to put the economy at the service of people, to unite people on the path to peace and justice, and to defend the earth. Radically distancing himself from the paternalism of earlier Catholic social teaching, Francis declares that ensuring a just future for humanity cannot be left up to local elites, let alone global elites. The world’s peoples, he insists, “do not want forms of tutelage or interference by which those with greater power subordinate those with less.”⁹⁵ The future of humanity, the pope insists, lies “fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize. It is their hands which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change. I am with you ... and I ask God the Father to accompany you.”⁹⁶ One cannot find a clearer statement of the shift from paternalism to accompaniment.

90. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 2.

91. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 2.

92. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 3.1.

93. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 3.2.

94. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 3.

95. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 3.2.

96. Francis, “Address, Popular Movements,” 4.

Opportunity for the Church: Accompaniment and Community Organizing

Can the church's increased embrace of accompaniment give rise to a commitment to help citizens organize? We have seen two examples of religious-backed political accompaniment—the Lauritas Sisters in Colombia and JRS in Cambodia. We can call to mind from US history the consciousness-raising and conscience-forming work done in parishes and congregations that inspired the bus boycotters in Montgomery, Alabama, in the 1950s, the sit-ins and student marches in Nashville, Tennessee, in the 1960s, the striking farmworkers of the United Farm Workers in Texas and California in the 1970s, the sanctuary movement of the 1980s in which over five hundred churches provided shelter, material goods, and legal advice to refugees fleeing violence in central America, and the annual School of the Americas protest at Fort Benning, Georgia, started in 1990.

Catholic parishes have been particularly important for a number of ecumenical coalitions of political activists inspired by the model of community organizing first developed by Saul Alinsky along with Auxiliary Bishop Bernard Sheil of the Archdiocese of Chicago and businessman Marshall Field III.⁹⁷ In 1940, these leaders founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a nationwide community-organizing network aimed at strengthening citizen leadership, reconciling divided communities, and pursuing practical goals identified by local community leaders. The Industrial Areas Foundation Training Institute helped to form a generation of faith-based organizations dedicated to social change and agency-promotion.

A prominent example of Alinsky's influence is seen in the work of community organizer Ernesto Cortes, the co-chair of IAF and executive director of the West/Southwest IAF regional network.⁹⁸ Cortes has been involved in creating over thirty organizations that have trained and supported local community leaders, the first of which was a church-based organization in San Antonio called Communities Organized for Public Service, or COPS. After three decades of work, COPS has been responsible for "more than \$1 billion worth of sewers, sidewalks, parks, clinics, streetlights, and other infrastructure improvements in poor neighborhoods in San Antonio alone, with another \$1 billion worth of improvements carried out along the Mexican–American border."⁹⁹

Cortes has successfully mobilized a wide array of religious congregations, including many Catholic parishes, to accomplish concrete social changes like new housing

97. See Edward R. Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003); Industrial Areas Foundation, *IAF: 50 Years Organizing for Change* (Franklin Square, NY: Industrial Areas Foundation, 1990); and Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

98. See Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger: A Story of Faith and Power Politics* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1990).

99. Cheryl Dahle, "Social Justice—Ernesto Cortes, Jr." (November 30, 1999), <https://www.fastcompany.com/39208/social-justice-ernesto-cortes-jr>.

units, living-wage laws, job training programs, and education reform. Industrial Areas Foundation has helped members of many Catholic parishes, Protestant congregations, and other religious communities gain greater political awareness and finds ways to become actively engaged in the processes of participatory democracy.

Political engagement is a lengthy and time-consuming process involving consciousness raising, community building, identity formation, capacity strengthening, efficient organizing, and of course acting to produce concrete results. IAF organizations aim to help citizens participate directly in decisions about policies that affect their communities. COPS has been so successful because it has given people an avenue for engaging in church-based forms of social activism that build coalitions of ordinary citizens that can effectively address particular problems affecting their participants, for example, underperforming schools, lack of affordable housing, dangerous streets, contaminated vacant lots, or badly constructed water and sewer systems. It has been instrumental in getting \$500 million for improvements in the west side of San Antonio, new water connections for 20,000 people in a neighborhood of El Paso, and indigent health-care coverage for 200,000 people all across Texas.¹⁰⁰ COPS continues today to work to create conditions that allow people to act in pursuit of their own values.

What is important to note for our purposes is that COPS and similar IAF-based organizations have successfully promoted integral human development by recruiting members of parishes and other religious communities to come to training sessions where they could learn the political skills that would allow them to build coalitions to address critically important local challenges. The organizer's role is to teach and encourage, not to do for others in a way that creates dependency. In the words of Paul VI, they help people become the "artisans of their own destiny." This involves learning "how to get public information about issues and problems, how to prepare for a public meeting, how to plot strategy, how to confront a public official, [and] how to get the news media interested [in what they are doing]."¹⁰¹ In answer to the question, "Why is the church getting involved in things like this?" one volunteer answered, "What is the church if it is not helping people?"¹⁰² Pope Francis could easily ask the same rhetorical question.

Cortes advocates a notion of "internal revolution" that has important points in common with the distinctively *political* dimension of accompaniment. Community organizing in a particular locale begins with "one-on-ones" that allow for the sharing of stories and perspectives and builds the relationships that become the basis of effective and durable collective public action. Both community organizing and accompaniment promote integral human development by the distinctive ways in which they build bonds of trust, establish new alliances, strengthen civic friendship, and enhance social

100. See Rogers, *Cold Anger*, 25–27.

101. Rogers, *Cold Anger*, 38.

102. Rogers, *Cold Anger*, 39. See the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, at <http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/collection/collection-resources.cfm>.

capital in order effectively to address an expressed practical need in the community like better sanitation, safer streets, or more successful schools. While community organizing can take place without accompaniment, it is also clear that accompaniment can prepare members of a community to be politically engaged. Conversely, greater political engagement within a community organization can also help to promote accompaniment.

Relational meetings, Cortes explains, is “where the spiritual action is.”¹⁰³ The meetings, which strongly resonate with Pope Francis’s “culture of encounter,” allow participants to determine what can be done to make their lives better. Meetings are intended to formulate plans of action that give their participants more control over their lives, a clear affirmation that their community matters, and a sense of accomplishment from achieving their goals. This strong agency-enhancing agenda is advanced through practices that resonate with the Catholic principles of solidarity and subsidiarity and provide a concrete and practical way of pursuing the goal of integral human development. Cortes maintains that the IAF’s “real achievement [is] the development of churches into institutions of public life which shape and support their families in both their private and public lives.”¹⁰⁴

IAF community organizing has effectively brought countless numbers of religiously active citizens into nonpartisan political accompaniment. This form of accompaniment is done within local contexts, focuses on concrete problems, responds to the particular social dynamics of each particular community, and exercises sensitivity to the cultural values at stake in any given context. As James Ball points out, parishes that join IAF-inspired organizations embody a church that not only *teaches* and *preaches* about justice but actually *encourages its parishioners to participate* in coordinated movements to take concrete steps to accomplish it.¹⁰⁵ Participating parishes also embody a church that pursues *integral* human development because they effectively *integrate* the deep Christian convictions nurtured in prayer and worship with publicly expressed, effective political action.

A concrete example of how this works can be seen in the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.¹⁰⁶ This IAF affiliated organization began to take form in the mid-1990s

103. Rogers, *Cold Anger*, 61.

104. Ernesto Cortés, “Reflections on the Catholic Tradition of Family Rights,” in *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought*, ed. John A. Coleman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 155–73, at 161.

105. James B. Ball, “A Second Look at the Industrial Areas Foundation: Lessons for Catholic Social Thought and Ministry,” *Horizons* 35/2 (2008): 271–97, 294–95.

106. The church has also been involved in a variety of other IAF-affiliated community organizations around the country, including the Gamaliel Foundation, Austin Interfaith, One LA, Arizona Interfaith, and AMOS (in Iowa). The US Bishops’ Catholic Campaign for Human Development gives these examples: Omaha Together One Community, Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment (in Tennessee), Massachusetts Senior Action Council, Boston Workers’ Alliance, and Empowering and Strengthening Ohio’s People. See “Community Organizing” (2009; revised September 20, 2011), <http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/Who-We-Are/upload/Community-Organizing.pdf>.

when a group of forty-five clergy and community leaders met to talk about how to overcome the notorious division of Boston neighborhoods along racial and class lines for the public good. Its primary goal is to “develop local leadership and organized power to fight for social justice.”¹⁰⁷

GBIO is currently comprised of forty member churches, synagogues, mosques, and other institutions whose members come together to determine what issues are most important to them and to build consensus around what strategies would be most likely to achieve their goals. While never endorsing candidates or political parties, it does use concerted political action to achieve particular policy goals. In 2002, GBIO gathered 125,000 signatures for a petition and holding large-scale public meetings that led to the state legislature’s creation of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The \$317 million invested in this fund to date has been used to create 17,000 units of affordable housing across the commonwealth. In 2006, GBIO and its partners played an important role in mobilizing public support for a health-care bill that benefited nearly half a million Massachusetts residents. In 2012, GBIO helped to secure follow-up legislation to limit the rising costs of health care. In 2017 it mobilized members to shape what became a widely praised and successful criminal justice reform bill that, among other things, made juvenile sentencing more humane and put new restrictions on the use of solitary confinement.

When their work began in the 1990s, both Catholic clergy and lay founders of the GBIO saw a strong consonance between its community-organizing agenda and Catholic social teachings. The organization began with seed money from ten different religious denominations, including some particularly committed Roman Catholic parishes. Its co-founder was John Doyle, a priest of the archdiocese who spent twenty-five years in Bolivia before becoming pastor of St. Peter’s, a large parish in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston. The support Doyle and a number of other influential Catholic pastors gave to the GBIO was essential to its initial success. He explained, “We spent several years building our organization within congregations and institutions, strengthening them. The purpose always was to have enough strength and numbers and power to influence the decisions made about the quality of life in our society.”¹⁰⁸

This is true in other locations as well. It is my contention that those who profess to take seriously the social and political implications of Francis’s notion of accompaniment ought to get involved with local IAF-affiliated organizations. Doing so would provide a practical and concrete way of promoting integral human development in their own local settings.

107. Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, “About GBIO,” <http://www.gbio.org/about-gbio>.

108. See *The Boston Phoenix*, February 24—March 2, 2000, <https://docplayer.net/16436517-Global-mission-in-the-twenty-first-century.html>. Unfortunately, the breaking open of clerical sexual abuse in 2002 joined with the process of amalgamating parishes led to a serious decline of Catholic participation in GBIO. GBIO is still going strong, but Catholic participation is almost non-existent except for the inner-city parish of Saint Katharine Drexel and her excellent pastor, Oscar J. Pratt.

Conclusion

I have tried to provide in this essay a narrative showing some of the key landmarks in the evolution of the church's thinking about integral human development. The major shift moves the church from paternalistic, top-down charity to a more egalitarian, mutually respectful form of social and interpersonal engagement known as accompaniment. Francis has placed the authority of the universal magisterium behind a paradigm shift toward accompaniment that began in grassroots movements, particularly in Latin America, and has spread to those who work with marginalized communities throughout the world.

The church's relatively recent appreciation for the centrality of agency encouraged by the framework of accompaniment suggests that local churches and other Catholic communities ought to increase their involvement in and support for community organizing. The vast majority of Catholic parishes and dioceses in the United States completely ignore and avoid community organizing, even when done in ecumenical, interfaith, and strictly nonpartisan ways. While intending to avoid inappropriately "politicizing" faith and polarizing their congregations, Catholic communities are also inadvertently contributing to the privatization of faith and refusing to take responsibility for promoting integral human development, particularly for people pushed to the margins of our society. This general lack of social engagement suggests that Catholics have not committed themselves to appropriating the social and political dimension of accompaniment. This is not surprising, given Catholicism's historic tendency to be conflict-averse, but it is a serious flaw in our ecclesial integrity and witness.

Community organizing, at least in the form discussed above, provides the most effective practical venue for Catholic communities that want to take seriously the church's commitment to social justice. Prayer, liturgy, and works of mercy are all crucial aspects of the Christian life, but the church as the Body of Christ is called to do much more. Accompaniment is a style of pastoral service and spiritual discernment, but it is also a deeply Christian way of respecting and promoting the comprehensive agency of the marginalized. It remains to be seen whether the church will actually take up the pope's challenge.

Author Biography

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