



Note to Participants Week Nineteen

Reading Assignment for Week Nineteen

Half the Sky, pages 93-130, 167-183; *Cloud of Witnesses*, “Dom Helder Camara,” pages 207-215; and “Note to Participants for Week Nineteen”

Before beginning your reading, meditate briefly on the word of God from the Prophet Isaiah: “Sing for joy all, O heavens, and exult, all earth; break forth, O mountains into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones. (Isaiah 49:13)

Focus Question for Your Reading

As you read this week about women’s maternal health and the impact that education can have on a community, how does this resonate with your own or your family’s experience? Do you know stories of women in your family whose lives were transformed, either through maternal healthcare or through education?

Transcending Boundaries

Perhaps one of the most challenging ideas that will be encountered during the next five to seven weeks will be the implication of the United States and other powerful countries in the economic, political and environmental crises of many poor countries. Indeed, throughout history richer countries, even our own, have taken advantage of smaller, less powerful countries. The historical record states clearly that governments, like people, are not perfect, not always good, and sometimes even very wrong.

But governments seldom admit wrongdoing until long after the fact. And while the historical record documents this fact unambiguously, it is still difficult for many of us to define citizenship in a way that allows for scrutiny, critique and even a kind of holy skepticism



toward government that recognizes the dangers of power. To question authority—even when it is clearly appropriate—potentially puts us at odds with our neighbors, our church members, even our family; there can be much risk in it. You will find this poignantly articulated in the testimony from Dom Helder Camara in *Cloud of Witnesses*.

So, as the discussion of the global economy or first world/third world relationships are discussed, the questions that must always be asked first are, “What does it mean to be faithful to Christ?” and “How do I love my neighbors?”

We are all tempted to ask other competing questions (which ultimately do have to be recognized and navigated) like “What does it mean to be faithful to my family, my country, my neighbors, my political opinions, etc.?”

Nevertheless, in the conversations on the tricky subject of allegiance, you are encouraged to focus on the question of ultimate authority—Who/What is the God of our lives? Who/What gets first and primary consideration in my choice of loyalties? Who/What are we ultimately responsible to? And who is my neighbor and what does that ask of me?

The implication is that there is a more pressing claim on Christians than our allegiance to a particular flag or any other symbol of our division as God’s people. What we are called to is *not* a love of some and a disdain for others

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JustFaith Graduates Focus on Fair Trade

When the ten members of the St. Charles Borromeo (Livermore, CA) 2009-10 *JustFaith* program began the process of discerning where to focus their social justice efforts, fair trade quickly rose to the top of their list. Their goal was to hold a fair trade sale at some point in the upcoming 12 months. The opportunity to achieve that goal appeared sooner than expected, when they agreed to participate in the parish's annual festival in September 2010.

During the weekend event, the group, with the help of prior years' *JustFaith* graduates, sold almost \$5,000 of fair trade products. Customers had a wide variety of items to choose from, such as jewelry, home décor, Christmas decorations, scarves, purses, tableware, coffee, chocolate, teas, and other food items. The products were ordered from Work of Human Hands, a joint partnership between Catholic Relief Services and SERRV International, a nonprofit

organization that seeks to eradicate poverty by providing opportunity and support to artisans and farmers.

The event reached beyond the parish to the greater Livermore community as a result of advance publicity. A lengthy article in the local newspaper about the festival focused primarily on the fair trade market and the *JustFaith* program. Throughout the two-day sale, *JustFaith* graduates not only handled sales, but also fielded numerous questions

from customers about fair trade and *JustFaith*.

While the average amount spent per customer in most Work of Human Hands sales is about \$15, the St. Charles sales averaged \$32 per customer. The event was such a resounding success that the *JustFaith* group plans another sale in December so parishioners can buy Christmas gifts that give hope and support to impoverished artisans and farmers around the world.



Megan Hast and Kristine Kansa assist customers at the Fair Trade sale.

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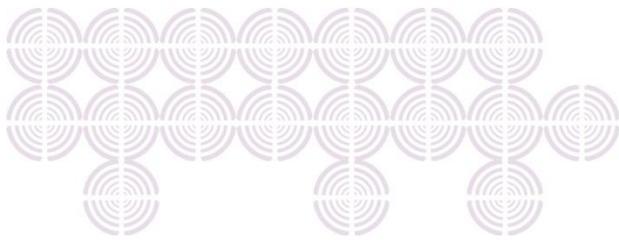
(the claim of nationalism or racism) but to a great, unconditional love that takes in the concerns of all. We are a borderless people. We are a people who will seek to transcend boundaries that pretend to de-

fine who is valuable and who is not. We know all are precious in God's sight.

The Holy Spirit invites us *all* to gather and be as one and to share in a faith in which all are fed. This is a sign of God's dream and God's grace. All are

brothers and sisters. We are all one. We are all each other's keeper. We are all important in the sight of God. And there is no political ideology that can repudiate what God has done and intends to do.

Blessings on the journey!



Week 18 Participant Handout A

Meditation

Reader One: **In my prayer,**
make me a baby girl
who when born is considered to be a burden or curse on the family –
that I may know what it is to feel unwanted.

Reader Two: **In my prayer,**
make me a girl whose brothers are the only ones sent to school –
that I may understand:
before our creator we are equal; still one is deprived.

Reader Three: **In my prayer,**
make me a young girl who is not married –
that I may know the fear
of how property will hinder my choice for marriage.

Reader Four: **In my prayer,**
make me a young girl married in a family exchange –
that I may experience how miserable it is
to marry a person of double or triple my age.

Reader Five: **In my prayer,**
make me a widow who has no source of earning –
that I may understand:
without any source of income, how can I bring sweets for my children?

Reader Six: **In my fast, make me an empty bowl –**
that you may fill the hollow space in me with love.

Reader Seven: **In my almsgiving, make me a grain of rice –**
that in the company of others, my gifts may feed a starving world.

Reader Eight: **O our Lord, give me strength –**
that I can share the sadness of my fellow human beings
and bring a light of hope for them.

All: **Amen.**

*("In My Prayer" by Attique Swati, Pakistan: From Prayer Without Borders, page 32.
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