

What would Jesus do? Mission for our Fractured World

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I. Introduction

To quote my mother, “The World is going to hell in a handbasket.” And if the events of this last couple of years are any indication, Mom may be right.

Just look at our Earth:

The World Meteorological Organization argues that we can expect more extremes: in temperatures, in precipitation, and in droughts.

In New Zealand, its 3,000 glaciers are suffering from the effects of greenhouse gases and warming temperatures. Since the 1990s, the largest of these glaciers, Tasman Glacier, has shrunk about 180 metres a year on average. Massey University scientists predict the Tasman Glacier will disappear completely.

The melting polar ice caps will increase sea level so that small island countries in the Pacific will be inundated by sea water, leading to climate migrants that could number 75 million people from the wider Asia-Pacific region by 2050.ⁱ

This year, while Australia was experiencing its hottest weather ever, we in Chicago had a polar vortex!

Surely, these statistics bear out Pope Francis' clarion call to wake up to the crisis of affecting our Earth:

“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades.”ⁱⁱ

The loss of human life, the destruction of property, the devastation of flora and fauna and land are staggering.

I haven't even mentioned terrorism; the fear of attacks always just below our consciousness like a low-grade fever. On March 15, 2019, that horror struck Christchurch. Fifty-one people were killed and 49 injured when a white supremacist opened fire on men and women praying in their mosques. The Australian gunman even live-streamed the first attack on Facebook.

“The World is going to hell in a handbasket.”

And to add fuel to the fire, in the U.S., our public discourse on matters of import—like the economy, terrorism, immigration, health care, racism,

xenophobia, sexual orientation, violence, and poverty—has sunk to name-calling, vilifying, and finger-pointing.

Perhaps my Mother got it wrong. We're not going to hell; we've already arrived.

How are we to respond to the horror and fear that confronts us these days? This insidious xenophobia creeping into our towns? How do we respond to the blatant racism and anti-Semitism among our neighbors and friends? It feels as if we are in a desert devoid of civility, searching the horizon for a path to moral rectitude.

Well, we haven't lost everything, right? We still have our faith. We can still count on our church. Or can we?

On May 22, 2018, Archbishop Philip Wilson was found guilty of concealing child sexual abuse during the 1970s. Two months later, he resigned as Archbishop. And then on December 6, 2018, his conviction was overturned on appeal.

Just five days later, on December 11, Cardinal Pell was convicted on five counts of child sexual abuse of two boys in the 1990s. The verdict was embargoed until February 26, 2019. The highest-ranking church official to be so convicted now sits in prison awaiting the outcome of his appeal.

And most recently, Palmerston North Bishop, Charles Drennan, resigned his position in response to a complaint of “unacceptable behavior of a sexual nature.”

Indeed, we may feel rudderless in a leaky lifeboat on an ever-rising sea of despair. We were supposed to be the navigators. We’re the public witnesses of the Gospel. We’re supposed to be the ones who bear hope. As Pope Francis urges, we are to be missionary disciples. Instead, it feels a lot like Holy Saturday with no hope of Easter.

We may feel very much like the women at the foot of the cross who await the end of the sabbath so as to anoint Jesus. We are caught between hope and reality. Between our sense of mission and our utter lack of direction.

In response to this quagmire, I propose that we embrace our Holy Saturday. That we spend some time pondering exactly what we mean by mission and what mission might look like in our fractured world. We need to remember that we aren’t awaiting the Messiah. Jesus has already come. Our task is to live the belief we profess in the midst of the world in which we find ourselves.

So, all is not lost. We still have the Scriptures. That treasure trove of human suffering seeking, yearning, and finding God in the myriad struggles of their lives. Hope prevails. Exiles return A messiah comes. The incarnation of

God remains one of our most profound mysteries. An affirmation that human beings are beloved by God. The very manifestation of God in human form—Jesus of Nazareth entered into our misery and offered a radical reorientation.

So, what would Jesus advise in this moral quagmire?

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:43-44).

Love your enemies? Pray for those who persecute you? Certainly, Jesus didn't mean those carrying Isis flags, and hate groups that advocate the genetic superiority of one race over another.

Naw, that can't be right.

It makes no sense. There's got to be another way to interpret this. There's got to be an easier way to be missionary disciples.

If we explore Jesus' teaching about loving your enemy, maybe we'll discover that he didn't mean for us to be this good this long. For those who would pick up their cross and follow him, did Jesus envision two millennia of self-sacrificing virtuous behavior?

To answer that question, I've got two questions of my own:

- What did Jesus say?
- And What does that mean for us?

So first, we'll look at Scripture and then I'll propose a mission strategy that takes seriously Jesus admonition that we love our enemies.

Will that work for you? Any wailing, gnashing of teeth? All good biblical responses.

II. What did Jesus say?

The passage we are focusing on today is found in the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel according to Matthew. In Chapter 5, Jesus goes up a mountain and his disciples join him (Matt 5:1). Jesus opens with a series of beatitudes or blessings (Matt 5:3-12), and then launches into teachings on various topics (Matt 5:17-6:34), admonitions for behavior (7:1-12), and eschatological warnings for the true disciple (Matt 7:13-27).

Let's start with the Beatitudes, with which we are familiar.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ "Blessed are

the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger

and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ "Blessed are the

merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for

they will see God. ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called

children of God. ¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for

righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are

you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt 5:3-12)

Since Matthew is presenting Jesus as a great a teacher, we should not be surprised that Jesus begins his outdoor class by going over the syllabus and describing what gets you an “A” in the class—metaphorically speaking. In other words, he outlines the actions and attitudes of those who will be blessed.

Matthew has Jesus begin the Sermon on the Mount with a call to would-be disciples: Blessed will you be if you do these actions and hold these attitudes. If you do, “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” (5:13a, 14a). Or as we might say in the classroom, “You get an ‘A’.”

After this Jesus turns to what his students have learned already. “You have heard it said...but I say to you.” The Matthean Jesus presents six reinterpretations of Scripture that address murder (vv. 21-26), adultery (vv. 27-30), divorce (vv. 31-32), the taking of oaths (vv. 33-37), retaliation (vv. 38-42), and treatment of the enemy (vv. 43-48).

The disciples are to possess righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20). In 5:17-48, Jesus describes what such righteousness looks like.

After commending the disciples that their “yes” and “no” are to be decisive, Jesus turns to the biblical warrant for limited retaliation (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21).

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Matt 5:38-39).

Jesus demands radical submission and meekness in the face of injustice: “Offer no resistance to one who is evil” (Matt 5:39a).

Jesus then outlines five situations in which the disciple is to desist from retaliation: when struck, when sued, when impressed into service, when asked for alms, and when asked for a loan (vv. 38- 42).

If that weren't enough, Jesus then ups the ante:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:43-44).

In Jesus' teaching, the radical mercy required of a disciple is truly a discipline, the greatest hurdle being to love one's enemies (5:44).

Jesus gives his rationale:

"So that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and

on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:45-48).

God makes no distinction in sending rain. If God cares for those who are inimical to God, as children of God shouldn't we follow suit? Jesus argues that loving only those who love you in return isn't really extraordinary. The same can be said of those we "hate"—tax collectors and pagans are good to those of their kind.

Now a little bit about "being perfect." The Greek is *teleios*, and it connotes having attained the end or purpose, therefore complete. As it relates to people, it means full-grown, mature, an adult. The test of a mature disciple, the qualifying exams as it were, is behaving toward one's fellow human beings—even the ones you hate—as God would behave, with love.

And we're not just talking about friendship love, which in Greek is *phileo*. We're talking *agape* here. The self-sacrificing kind of love.

All the excellent teachers I've had have one thing in common. They practice what they preach. They didn't just tell me what to do; they showed me.

Jesus is laying out the course for his disciples. “Love your enemies” isn’t just a high bar set for his followers. Jesus himself will demonstrate just how it’s done.

Think of Matthew’s story of the Canaanite woman who seeks Jesus’ aid to heal her daughter (Matt 15:21-28). Jesus calls her faith “Great”! Or Luke’s presentation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Canaanites and Samaritans were considered Israel’s enemies.

And most dramatically, on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Jesus asks forgiveness on behalf of the Romans who crucify him.

So that’s what Jesus said and how he acted on his words. Which brings us to our next question:

III. What does this mean for us?

Seems to be Jesus really did mean it. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is one thing. Following in his footsteps is a whole different kettle of fish. Receiving a blessing requires doing the actions and holding the attitudes that warrant that blessing.

It’s not enough to go to church. We must be church. And one of the most radical ways to do that is to heed Jesus’ words: be perfect; be a grown-up. Combat hate with love; persecution with prayer. Because God did just that for you.

How do we love our enemy? Love the one we hate? Good question. Maybe it starts by holding ourselves accountable to what we profess. Maybe the first step is to own that we are children of God. That we have a shared humanity with those whom we deem our enemies. I may not be able to see them as brother and sister, but I can start by recognizing that they, too, are “neighbor” in the human family.

Anything less is not fit for the kingdom of God.

IV. How to love your enemies: Prophetic Dialogue

Okay, but how? And here I’d like to introduce a mission strategy developed by the Society of the Divine Word and written about by two of their theologians and missiologists: Steve Bevans and Roger Schroeder.

In their book, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*, Steve Bevans and Roger Schroeder describe the roles of both dialogue and prophecy in mission:

Mission as dialogue is the ministry of presence, of respect. It is a witness, at base, to the God who moves among us in dialogue, the Word become flesh, and to the communion in Godself who call us to communion with our universe and with one another...But authentic mission also involves prophecy, and this in several senses. First, the basic motivation for

*mission must be to share the astounding, challenging, self-convicting, amazing, good news about the God of Jesus Christ and God's vision for the world.*ⁱⁱⁱ

I propose that “prophetic” answers the question “Why we should love our enemy?”

And “dialogue” tells how we are to love our enemy. But first, let's agree on what we mean by mission and who's responsible for that mission.

a. Defining Mission

Even a brief overview of the Church's documents on mission is beyond the time we have, so I recommend to you Roger Schroeder's *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Orbis, 2018). Succinctly, Roger states:

“Mission is proclaiming, serving, and witnessing to God's reign of love, salvation, and justice.”^{iv}

Mission isn't simply something that the church does, rather, it is who and what the church is. Mission is “*constitutive of its very being*.”

“*The entire church is missionary. Mission not just something that specialists (missionaries) do. It is something that all Christians are called to.*”^v

According to Sr. Susan E. Smith, RNDM, lecturer emerita in theology at Auckland University, in the New Testament texts

“baptism was not only a rite of initiation into the community. It signified that women and men, “baptized in Christ” could be proclaimers of the good news, could engage in the mission of the community.”^{vi}

So, the “who” who is to be about mission is “us,” those who have been baptized into the faith, as Pope Francis clearly states in the *Joy of the Gospel*:

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization... The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”.

Basically, Pope Francis is saying that part of the answer to the chaos of our world is us! We are the good news we've been waiting for! And the very first step we need to take is to revivify our "encounter" with the love of God.

The experience of being loved is the inspiration and the motivation for the "prophetic" aspect of Prophetic Dialogue to which I now turn.

b. The Prophetic aspect of Mission

In order to be the Davids against the Goliaths of prejudice, racism, climate change catastrophes and the myriad woes facing us in our fractured world, we must first have a primary and personal experience of God's love.

The First Letter of John says simply: *God is love* (1 John 4:8). And this love is not a response on God's part to anything we did to desire it, as 1 John writes:

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10).

We are not simply to bask in the glory of being beloved by God. There is a response required of God's love (1 John 2:5-6).

As biblical scholar Kathleen Rushton, RSM, writes, "*In our new time we are to move on to finish the works of God by creating new ways in word and action to 'love one another just as I have*

loved you” (Kathleen Rushton, RSM, “Love One Another:—
Our Work,” *Tui Motu InterIslands* 237 (2009): 24).

We are to act on that love as if it were fuel firing all our engines toward goodness. And thus, we will show ourselves to be truly children of God (1 John 4:7).

A prime narrative example of God’s gratuitous and generous love is found in the story of the persecutor-turned-apostle Paul. Paul never denies his former acts as a wrong-doer and oppressor. Rather his experience of sin becomes the foundation of his understanding of Christ’s death. “While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10).

Paul has a profound experience of God’s love and forgiveness. It is out of that personal experience that he is able to endure hardship and personal suffering for the sake of the gospel. In fact, the experience of being loved and forgiven leads to an attitude of hope and a desire to share that hope with others.

“Christians must speak in the context of dialogue,” Fathers Bevens and Schroeder write, *“but we must speak, for we indeed have something to say: we are not ashamed of the gospel, because ‘it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith’”* (Rom 1:16).^{vii}

This something to say is grounded in our personal experience of the divine. Like the author of 1 John, we know intimately that God is love. Like

Paul, we are compelled to share that love with others. The prophetic motivation for mission is the sharing of the Good News about our experience of the God of Jesus Christ.

The prophetic aspect of mission begins with us but doesn't end there. The individual is called by God to speak on God's behalf and to advocate for humanity. Thus, prophecy has both an individual and a communal aspect. As Pope Francis wrote:

Just as you cannot understand Christ apart from the kingdom he came to bring, so too your personal mission is inseparable from the building of that kingdom: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace (Gaudete et Exsultate, 1.25).

The communal element of prophecy, as Fathers Bevans and Schroeder propose, involves both *Speaking Forth* and *Speaking Against* in deed and in word.

Tradition attributes to St. Francis the statement: "Preach at all times, and sometimes use words." Sometimes our most authentic prophetic act is our Christian witness.

As Christians live a life of vital community, of community service of ecological integrity, of shared prayer that is beautiful and inspiring to visitors, they speak forth without words what the gospel is and what human life might be if the gospel is lived authentically.^{viii}

We're not talking huge, billboard-size acts of Christian witness. We can be authentic prophetic witnesses in myriad small but important ways. For example, this past Lent my entire congregation went on a diet. It was a "Low Carbon Diet: A 30-day program to lose 5000 pounds" of carbon dioxide waste. Together, we "lost" 73,000 pounds of carbon waste!

Presence and witness are important. But Christians are also called to speak forth literally, to proclaim the message of the reign of God. Speaking forth means you live your faith "out loud." One example are the meetings with Auckland's (former?) mayor, hosted by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese. According to *NZCatholic*, the commission's chair, Ka Sing Yeung opened the first meeting by clearly stating,

"We're the face of justice and peace doing what we think is right according to our faith. Justice lays the path for peace."^{ix}

But mission that is prophetic isn't solely *Speaking Forth*. It is also *Speaking Against*. This *Speaking Against* challenges a world view that is death-dealing and oppressive. A world that says refugees are not wanted. That the

color of your skin or your nation-of-origin determines your success or failure. That your language and culture are inferior to mine because I set the rules.

The Prophets and Jesus embodied this prophetic aspect of mission. But this isn't only a biblical value. You have a profound experience of "speaking against" for the sake of love, justice and universal peace in your own prime minister and Parliament. The Washington Post reported:

When New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced in March that the country's gun laws would change, it was less than 24 hours after a right-wing terrorist attack that killed 51 Muslim worshipers in Christchurch. Parliament subsequently banned military-style semiautomatic weapons, assault rifles and certain sizes of magazines and ammunition in April, and a buyback program was set up.^x

Prophecy is rooted in an experience of God's love, which requires us to share that Good News with others. Sometimes we speak forth on behalf of the Reign of God; other times we must speak against those forces that hinder and hurt God's creation. But exactly how are we to be prophetic in mission? Dialogue offers an inroad into complicated and often hostile situations.

c. Mission as Dialogue

Now that our confidence in God's love for us has been rekindled, we have the energy and impetus to reach out in love. But how do we do that when

the other, our “enemy” or even our “frienemey” is hostile to our advances? I propose that the dialogue can be the manner in which we learn to love our enemy.

If the prophetic aspect of Prophetic Dialogue is rooted in the theology of the Reign of God, then the dialogical aspect finds its theological home in the Trinity. “Mission as dialogue is the ministry of presence, of respect,” write Roger and Steve. Its very foundation is the Trinitarian relationship of God and the communion of the Godself. God’s very nature is one of dialogue. And by baptism, we are united in that very communion.

Dialogue can be understood in a variety of ways. It can refer to a practice of good communication among persons, or to the practice of openness to and respect for other people, churches, religious traditions, etc. Roger and Steve focus on dialogue as “an attitude of respect and friendship.”^{xi}

When we think of dialogue, certain virtues come to mind. The authors of *Prophetic Dialogue* argue characteristics that form the foundation of authentic dialogue for mission include: repentance, orthopraxis, clarity, meekness, confidence, and discernment. Let me briefly describe each one.

i. Repentance

Repentance recognizes that in our mission activities, the church hasn't always respected the cultural context in which it did "mission." I imagine you can think of situations in your own context where this is true. One of Sr. Helen Bergin's articles introduced me to the annual Peace Festival at Parihaka, which *"involves New Zealanders in communal remembering with the aim of imagining new social structures within the nation."*^{xii}

As men and women who, by our baptism, are the "church," we sometimes are called upon to apologize for institutional wrongs that we may have had nothing to do with. I can tell you from personal experience that it is very hard to feel the anger of those who have been wronged by the institution. But the institution can't speak. I can. I can hold their anger and hurt. I can be with them in their profound disappointment. I can be present. I can do all that because at my core I have experienced God's love and acceptance of me. Dialogue sometimes begins with repentance.

But, you say, "I'm not responsible for the Clergy Abuse Crisis! Why do I have to repent?" I don't mean repent of the sin and crime of abuse—if you weren't a perpetrator. I mean something more personal.

I have found that before I can authentically engage with the other— whoever they may be—I need first to do a personal *examen*. I need to do my

own personal inventory. To own my own mistakes, my own prejudices, my own stumbling blocks before I sit down with someone else whose prejudices, stumbling locks and attitudes I want to address.

ii. *Orthopraxis*

Orthopraxis isn't about the correct dogma. It's about taking the correct steps. Doing the right thing at the right time. As Edmund Chia of Australian Catholic University writes,

“It is through simple acts of caring, sharing, and attending that others see Christ...That accounts for why the Asian bishop stress that evangelization in Asia must begin with the “way” before preaching the “truth.” Presence, deeds, and service are key words...”^{xiii}

iii. Clarity

Clarity should characterize all that we say, but especially when engaging in dialogue with others. As Pope Paul VI wrote, “before all else; the dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible” (Ecclesiam Suam, 81). Dialogue has to be “listener-centered,” without the religious jargon we may be wholly unaware that we speak.

For example, I had a Moslem student in my introduction to the New Testament class. Throughout one particular lecture, I mentioned Eucharist, sacrament, and baptism. She was wholly unable to follow my lecture on John's Bread of Life discourse not because of the evangelist's obscurity but mine!

iv. Meekness

Meekness invites conversation. It leaves arrogance and one-up-manship at home. Our speech has authority by its genuineness and transparency. I don't have another agenda, and you can tell. As Pope Paul VI writes, "It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines toward generosity" (Ecclesiam Suam, 81). "Inclines toward generosity"—how would that look in our everyday conversations?

A very moving example of generosity occurred in response to the Mosque terror attacks in Christchurch. Among the many heartfelt statements of support came a letter from the Wellington Abrahamic Council of Jews, Christians, and Muslims sent to the headquarters of the Federation of Islamic associations of New Zealand. It read in part,

"The Jewish and Christian communities send love and support to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

“Such deadly violence aimed at religious people has been unknown in New Zealand – until now, and has no place in our normally peaceful country. Now is the time to stand together, support our Muslim friends, and most importantly, keep talking and keep working to better understand each other.”

In response, the Chief Executive of the Islamic organization, Sultan Eusoff, responded:

“We want to thank you all for your prayers and coming here today....It’s good to know we have friends supporting us in all of this.”^{xiv}

This is what an inclination toward generosity in dialogue looks like.

v. Confidence

Confidence bespeaks our trust in our own ability to communicate what is of import to us. It trusts the good will among all parties. “Dialogue as mission is first and foremost about establishing and maintaining relationships.”^{xv} “But, wait,” you say, “I didn’t want a relationship with my enemy!” But that’s exactly what good dialogue creates—a space in which both parties can begin to see each other maybe not as friend yet, but not as enemy.

vi. Discernment

And discernment should characterize every dialogue.

“Before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what people say, but more especially to what they have in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them and even, as far as possible, agree with them” (Ecclesiam Suam, 87).

What these and other characteristics that you could name suggest is that mission as dialogue possesses an expansiveness. The biblical metaphor I would use comes from Isaiah:

Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes (Isa 54:2)

When we widen our dialogue tent, sort to speak, we create a space in which all are welcome. In fact, in the tradition of desert hospitality, even if you were enemies, when you entered another’s tent, you were treated as friend and even family.

We’ve talked about the theological foundation of dialogue—that of the Trinitarian relationship of mutuality. We described characteristics of dialogue for mission: repentance, orthopraxis, clarity, meekness, confidence, and

discernment. But exactly how does one go about being in dialogue? Especially with people who think very differently than we do?

I have a suggestion that comes from the Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry at Catholic Theological Union, where interreligious dialogue is a prime focus. From the experience of many conferences and encounters, the Center has developed guidelines for dialogue that we might readily adapt for our purposes. Those guidelines state:

- Recognize that no one person or group owns the truth. Solutions to problems are likely to come from a variety of sources.
- Do not envision yourself or any group as the saving remnant. Do not participate in the bashing of any group.
- Presume good faith on the part of those with whom you differ. Exercise charity; do not substitute labels for complicated realities.
- Test all proposals for their pastoral impact as well as their theological truth. Pastoral effectiveness is a responsibility of leadership.
- Do not ascribe motives to others.
- Critique and evaluate cultural influences and values. Recognize achievements and real dangers.

- Listen more, consult more, and explain more. Put the best construction on differing positions. Seize on valid insights before questionable arguments.
- Practice hospitality and humility.
- Trust in the process.

V. Conclusion

Here's the kicker. Jesus really did mean it. He did mean we are to love our enemies.

We are to love people like Cardinal Pell and Archbishop Wilson. Gunmen like Brenton Harrison Tarrant. Bullies like President Trump.

We are to confront the nay-sayers about climate change with confidence and in a spirit of generosity.

We are to approach our own intractable family members with a deep respect, a listening ear, a spacious tent.

And the way we are to do all these very difficult things, I propose, is by attending to Prophetic Dialogue as a strategy, maybe even as a spirituality.

By virtue of our baptism, or perhaps I should say by obligation of our baptism, we, too, are to participate in mission. We are to profess what we

believe and what we know to be true: that God loves us and so we are to love others. Especially our enemies. And, we are to do that always in dialogue.

Since Jesus really did mean that we are to love our enemies, Prophetic Dialogue becomes one tool that helps us toward that goal. And even if we don't quite get there, I believe our efforts to go the extra mile, to extend a hand in dialogue, to see beyond the hate and mistrust—in essence to see through God's eyes—all our efforts have the potential to bring hope, healing, and wholeness to our very fractured but beloved world.

Amen.

ⁱ https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12245227.

ⁱⁱ Laudato Si, Paragraph 25. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 2011), 59-60.

^{iv} Roger Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018), 3.

^v Bevans & Schroeder, 140.

^{vi} Susan Smith, "Women's Human Ecclesial and Missionary Identity: What Insights Does the Pauline Correspondence Offer the Contemporary Woman?" *Mission Studies* 27 (2010): 145-159, here 157.

^{vii} Steve Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Orbis Books, 2011), 38.q

^{viii} Bevans & Schroeder, 44.

^{ix} <https://www.nzcatholic.org.nz/2019/06/17/justice-questions-for-mayor-at-catholic-forum/>

^x <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/08/05/us-new-zealand-shared-love-guns-their-reactions-mass-shootings-have-nothing-common/>

^{xi} *Ibid.*, 21, citing *Dialogue and Proclamation*.

^{xii} Helen Bergin, “Edward Schillebeeckx and the Suffering Human Being,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 4 (2010): 446-482, here 481.

^{xiii} Edmund Chia, *Towards a Theology of Dialogue* (Bangkok, privately. Printed, 2003), 260.

^{xiv} <https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2019/03/church-leaders-offer-prayer-and-solidarity-after-new-zealand-mosque-attacks-leaves-many-dead.aspx>

^{xv} Bevans & Schroeder, 31.