R. Wayne Kraft
Memorial Lecture

This annual lecture, part of the university's Heritage Week celebration (previously "Patron's Day"), offers a current theological viewpoint related to or informed by the spiritual tradition of the university's patron -- ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. Speakers of national prominence are invited to present this lecture on campus. The text that follows is provided for personal enrichment and is not intended as a commercial or professional publication.

Walter Burghardt, S.J.

SPIRITUALITY FOR URBAN MINISTRY

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Fr. Walter Burghardt is Senior Fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Professor Emeritus of the Catholic University of America, and Director of the "Preaching the Just Word" Project.

Fr. John Harvey's gracious introduction reminds me of an introduction I received recently at the other end of the spectrum. I was about to start a lecture at Mercy Hospital in Miami and I began by taking out the program. I said, "When I received your program in the mail several days ago, I opened it with great anticipation. What would you say about me?" Your program reads: 'Fr. Burghart is an imminent speaker'." So I rushed pell mell to my Webster Unabridged. "Imminent" — threatening to do something soon and usually bad! I don't know why I think of it now, but there is a wonderful, cute little story connected with the Bible. A nun, a sister, was teaching 4th grade girls Bible stories and at one point after several weeks, she said, "Now, girls, I want you to draw your favorite Bible story." So they drew and drew. Everything was going fine until Nancy brought her drawing up. Sister said, "This is in the Bible?" "Yes." Nancy had drawn a white stretch limo. In the front was a middle-aged gentleman, in the back a young man and a young woman rather scantily clad. "This is in the Bible? Show me," sister said. Well, with great difficulty, Nancy thumbed through the first couple of pages of Genesis. "There," she exclaimed, "... and God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden!"

Now for the celebration of your College's Patron Saint, it brought these temptations to me, a Jesuit lecturer. I was tempted to use Francis de Sales as an example, a persuasive proof that a young man can attend a Jesuit college, have a Jesuit for a spiritual director, found a Jesuit school — and
still become a Saint! I shall resist the temptation. I shall go into a field more fruitful, not only for the priests but for the lay person of today and still dear to the heart of Francis.

My topic stems from my own involvement in a contemporary ministry. We know it as "the faith that does justice." My specific topic is a spirituality for urban ministry. My shortest answer is three movements, actually three questions: One, how do I understand urban ministry? Two, what do I mean by spirituality? And three, the most significant part of this address, what do I see as a spirituality for urban ministry?

Through much of this, even when not mentioned, Francis de Sales moves like an unseen provocateur, an inspiration and a challenge. First, what do I mean by, how do I understand, urban ministry? Here Francis de Sales was at home. He played with children and debated with the octogenarian Calvinist, Beza. He distributed food to the poor and played the diplomat with prince and pope. He gossiped with the simplest of folk and directed a diocese with 450 parishes. He instructed a deaf-mute and established an academy he hoped would blossom into a Christian Athens. He rebuilt churches and wrote books and cranked out volumes of letters. So preoccupied was he by so complex an apostolate, that he could scarcely steal, he said, a quarter hour for his spiritual writings. Let's move from urban ministry in his time to our own.

How do we understand urban ministry? Not a technical definition—rather what are some aspects of the culture which such ministry seems to address? For without such a context, a spirituality spins round and round in outer space. My sources are hands-on ministers and my program of "preaching the just word" across the country. What do they tell me? Among much else, five realities — at times harrowing, at times heartening, at times harrowing and heartening together. Five realities:

One — the people in question are used to a struggle for survival. They have experienced, often still experience, what it means to do without: without food, without education, without work, without wealth, without luxuries. If and when they do come into material goods, most are not spoiled by them. Their struggle puts them into the camp of what the Hebrew Testament called the "anawim." I mean those pious, humble folk, originally the material poor, oppressed, downtrodden. These were people who were so conscious of their spiritual needs, so aware of their dependence that they looked to the Lord for strength and help. They looked to God as their faith. These are the poor the prophet Amos had privately advised when he threatened the people of God with punishment. Why? "Because they sell the righteous ones over and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way."

Two — for these the family is not our current father, mother, one-and-a-half children; it is the extended family. There may be thirteen or fourteen or sixteen in one house: brothers, sisters, kids born out of wedlock. It often includes a woman of 40, already a grandmother raising grandchildren. The advantage — such a family relates intimately to the New Testament where everybody is a sister or brother. Here there is a bonding, a recognition of sisterhood and brotherhood. The disadvantage — it doesn't always work. The culprits — crack and coke, imprisonment, guns. But even dysfunctional families know that addiction is a dis-ease, that it destroys relationships.
Three — there is an openness to rescue, an openness to the power of God. I mean an awareness that Somebody — capital "S" — Somebody bigger than me has to come in and straighten things out. It gives these people a peculiar sense of the real. With this is a graphic aphorism reported to me by my good friend and colleague, a diocesan priest in Washington, Fr. Raymond Kemp. He told me the aphorism among these people is: "you had better make a lot of friends on your way up because you'll need them on your way down." They look at the Donald Trumps of this world and say, "It won't last. Events will bring the biggees down."

Four — in the midst of such urban existence is a sense of healing — healing not so much from doctors and priests, rather the expectation that God will bring healing. They even sense that certain diseases may be to their betterment. For example, take a person who tested positive for HIV for ten years. God cares, God heals, even if God doesn't always cure. Somehow God will make it come out right.

Five — nihilism. I mean a pervasive feeling that there is no future beyond this desperate moment. Settling a score, proving yourself a man leads to kids killing kids, a life for a Reebok, the love for the almighty dollar. Much of it stems from poverty, the poverty that causes personal depression. Why work for $5.25 an hour in McDonald's when you can make $500 to $1,000 a week selling or delivering crack? Expensive clothes, the hip-hop culture, rap music — the stress is on today. Life is for now. And so, in Washington, DC we have youngsters preparing their own funeral, where they will actually decide how to be dressed, how to look. Why? Because of their experiences. Over 200 of their playmates have been killed by gunfire. That experience tells them they cannot expect to be around very long. Fr. Kemp was asked by a teen-ager on the Donahue show if he would officiate at her funeral. What we face here is not only a crisis of culture, we confront the crisis of faith.

We move now to my second question. What do we understand by spirituality? St. Paul marks a useful beginning. The spiritual person is one whose whole being, whose whole life is influenced, guided, directed by what he calls the Spirit who is from God. Granted, this understanding is broad, but it must be regarded as basic. Why? Because over the centuries, "spiritual" has been employed in all sorts of contexts and meanings. Spiritual has been used in contrast to corporeal, or material, in contrast to those exercising civil power, rather than ecclesiastical.

It has been applied disparagingly to writers suspected of quietism or fanaticism. It has proclaimed terms like devotion, piety, imperial life. So then, should anyone ask you what you understand by spirituality, your basic response might well be: "my spirituality is my Christian living as guided by the Holy Spirit." This Spirit is not some ghostly apparition from outer space, simply the third person of the Trinity, the divine person given to you by the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the divine person alive within you, shaping you into images of Christ, shaping you increasingly as sisters and brothers in Christ, as children of the Father.

How does the Holy Spirit effect this? By infusing into you incredible gifts you could not possibly produce by your naked human nature. I mean a faith which is at its best a total self-giving to God, a hope which is a confident trust in God's promises, a love which enables you to love your sisters and brothers as Jesus has loved you. I mean what St. Paul called "spiritual wisdom and understanding" so that you may lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, that you bear
fruit in every good work, that you grow in the knowledge of God. I mean what Paul termed "the fruit of the Spirit" — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. I mean instead of charisms, gifts that build up the Christian community. Different gifts to different persons but Paul says all are activated by the same Spirit. The Spirit allots to each individually just as the Spirit chooses.

Now, within Catholicism, there are spiritualities and spiritualities. Basically, each spirituality lives up to the description I attempt. Each, I mean, is a living out of the Christian life under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the gift the indwelling Spirit produces in us for our personal sanctification and our contribution to the life of the community. But different social situations, different cultures, different religious communities, different personalities lay special stress on different facets of the richness, the breadth and depth that Catholic spirituality encompasses. And so, you have a cursio spirituality, a charismatic spirituality, a lay spirituality. You have the Franciscans stressing lady poverty, the Dominicans emphasizing the proclamation of the Word, Jesuits laying particular weight on obedience. You have individuals imitating the lady mystic Julian of Norwich, Theresa of Avila, or Therese of Lisieux, Dorothy Day or Thomas Merton. And there is Salesian spirituality embodied in Francis' person and in his famous Introduction to the Devout Life and Treatise on the Love of God. Here the life for Jesus is his exclamation "Vive Jésus" specifically, live Jesus by making the gentle and humble Jesus live in the hearts of men and women wherever they live and move and have their being. So, there are special emphases within the one basic spirituality. Why? To soothe different needs, desires, tasks, and persons.

Finally, important to you and me is a recent temper. You see, for all too long and for all too many, spirituality has been identified with our interior life, what goes on inside of us. A holistic spirituality includes both the inner experience of God and its outward expression in relationships. That is why I was delighted recently to discover a definition that attracts me mightily, a definition of spirituality that covers succinctly what we are about this evening. Spirituality is a process of being conformed to Christ for the sake of others.

That definition leads quite naturally into my third question, the specific core of my address. How do you fit this understanding of spirituality into your ministry? I'm speaking not only to priests; I'm speaking to everyone who has been baptized, for that is when you are sent on mission, on ministry. How is what is revealed of practical significance for what you are about? Yes, remember your spirituality for urban ministry will involve the living out of the Christian life under the influence of the Spirit. But that is discouragingly general. What must you do, where must you put your emphasis, given the cultural context I have suggested earlier? You see, ministry, urban ministry can be undertaken for various reasons, from a variety of motives: human compassion for the AIDS affliction, a very human sense of obligation to the less fortunate, a commitment to a low-salaried job, even hours of community service imposed by a judge for your misdemeanor. All is well and good, at times quite admirable, perhaps even a source of spirituality — but not yet a Catholic spirituality. For a Catholic spirituality, an urban ministry calls for at least three characteristics. It must be biblical, it must be ecclesial, and it must be eucharistic. Each characteristic demands attention here.
First, a spirituality for ministry must be biblical. This is so not only because all Christian spirituality has to stem ultimately from God's Word; it must be based properly on the privileged source of God's self-revealing to us — Scripture. That is more commonly true, but for your specific ministry God's Word, God's written Word has a singular significance. For central to urban service is a single, two-syllable word, I mean "justice." For urban ministry will be neither sufficiently Catholic, nor adequately effective, if what you understand by justice is restricted to the justice our philosophies formulate and our laws legislate. What you do and why you do it must be linked inescapably to the God whose very nature it is to be just, in a special way because the Hebrew Testament and the New Testament reveal three things: one, the profound meaning of justice; two, God's preferential option for the poor; and three, God's judgment on justice in this life and the next.

To begin with, Scripture reveals the profound meaning of justice. My point is this: when the prophet Micah declared to Israel — "What does the Lord require of you? Must you do justice?" — he was not imposing on God's people simply or primarily an ethical contract: "give to each man, woman and child what is due to each," what each person has a strict right to demand because he or she is a human being. That right can be proven by philosophy or has been written into law, and that much is indeed important: give each one what each deserves. But it is not enough — it's not biblical enough, not Christian enough, not Catholic enough. What then was the justice God wanted to roll down like waters, like a river? Biblical scholars have expressed the basic idea in a single paragraph.

The biblical idea of justice is fidelity to the demands of a relationship. In contrast to modern individualism, the Israelites lived in a world where to live meant to be united with others in a social context either by bonds of family or by convenant relationships. This web of relationships — king with people, judge with plaintiffs, family with tribe or kinfolk, the community with the resident alien and with the suffering in their midst — all this was a covenant. This constituted the world in which the Israelites' life was played out. So in this context, when is God judge? When God is faithful to God's promises, when God acts as God should, for example, defending or vindicating God's people, punishing violations of the covenant. When are God's people just? When they are in right relationship in all the aspects of their life, properly postured towards God, towards other men and women within the community, and even toward the earth, the earth that called not for despotic abuse but for reverential care, the land without which the Israelites were not perfectly a people. So for the Jew, justice was not a question simply or primarily of human deserving, of human law. The Jew's was a gift to others what they themselves had been given by God: how to act towards one another and towards the stranger as God had acted towards Israel and precisely because God had acted that way. A text in Deuteronomy is revealing: "Love the stranger, the resident alien because you were sojourners, strangers, aliens in the land of Egypt." Their justice was to image, not the justice of man and woman, but the justice of Yahweh. For Israel the practice of justice thus understood was an expression of steadfast love, God's love and their own. Injustice was infidelity, and so not to execute justice was not to worship God.

This is the tradition that sparked the ministry of Jesus. He sums up that ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me." Why? "To bring good news to the poor, proclaim release for prisoners, sight for the blind, to send the
downtrodden away free." So for Jesus, too, the just man or woman is not primarily someone who gives to another what that other deserves. Jesus inaugurates a new covenant where the most significant relationship is the monosyllable that says it all — "love" — and astonishingly where loving one's neighbor already commanded in Leviticus, is said by Jesus to be like loving God. But more importantly, when Jesus says love your neighbor as yourself, he is not introducing a psychological balancing act: as much or as little as you love yourself, that much or that little shower love upon your neighbor. It means, instead, I have to love my sisters and brothers as if I were standing in their shoes. This is what our covenant demands, what Jesus sums up when he says "love one another as I have loved you." Precisely that is New Testament justice — not an invitation, but a commandment, not to give in proportion to merit, but to love as Jesus loves, even at times unto crucifixion. The first Christian community seems to have captured that vision, responding to the new commandment. If anyone, they claimed, is hungry or in thirst, naked or a stranger, sick or in prison, it is always Christ who clamors for bread or water, Christ who cries to be clothed or welcomed, Christ whom you visit on a bed of pain or behind bars. And the first letter of John is terribly uncompromising: "If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother or sister in need, yet closes his heart against him or her, how does God's love abide in him?"

Next Scripture reveals God's preferential option for the poor. Remember who the poor are in God's inspired words. They are not only the poverty stricken, those without money enough to lead a decent human existence. Poor was the leper, ostracized from society, excluded from normal association with others, compelled often to live outside his town. Poor was the widow for she could not inherit from her husband, was an obvious victim for the exactions of a creditor, had no defender at law and so was at the mercy of dishonest judges. Poor was the orphan with no parents to love him. Poor was the sinful woman who bathed Jesus' feet with her tears, the woman caught in the very act of adultery to be stoned according to the law of Moses. Poor was wealthy toll collector, Zaccheus, a henchman of the Romans, a social outcast because of his job, no longer a true son of Abraham. Israel's poor were the afflicted, those of lower class oppressed by the powerful. The poor were all those on whose behalf Yahweh castigated his chosen people through the prophets: "cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice; rescue the oppressed; defend the orphans; plea for the rich."

Now, a preferential option for the poor does not glorify poverty; it does not canonize the poor. It does not imply that the poor are necessarily holier than the wealthy, that the rich and powerful are by definition evil. No, God opted for the poor as God's kings were expected to opt because the poor were in greater need. As for us, it involves a new way of seeing the reality in which we live, seeing it not so much from the standpoint of the comfortable and powerful, but from the viewpoint of the prejudiced and powerless. It involves a new perspective for reading Scripture, an option for those whom Jesus himself favored, the small and simple, the poor and the marginalized. It may even lead us to experience, to actually share at times, the reality of the poor. I find it fascinating that the biblical approach to the poor has found its way into more recent church teachings. You see, back in the past, in an earlier part of this century, in a world that was structured by a rocket — at home, in school, in the church, in the state, in society — Leo XIII and Pius X could not help seeing the poor at the bottom of an economic ladder, apparently ordained by God to remain that way. For Pope Pius XI, the poor were poor because personal sin and selfishness held sway in the world. Even Pius XII and John XXIII did not challenge the place of the poor within the existing
structures of society. But with Paul VI and John Paul II, as well as the Latin American and North American bishops, a significant shift has taken place. Now the plight of the poor is seen not primarily as a part of reality that calls for charity, but as part of disordered systems that call for justice. In this context, the spirituality demanded of us is solidarity with the poor.

And thirdly, Scripture relates justice to God's judgment in this life and the next. In this life, indeed—simply listen to the Hebrew prophet Micah: "The Lord has told you, oh mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with your God." But also for life without end—listen once again to Matthew's Jesus: "When the Son of man comes in His glory, he will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, in heaven a kingdom is prepared for you from the foundation of the world'." Why? "For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food or thirsty and give you drink? When was it we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, naked and gave you clothing. When was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, you did it for me.'" Not only is this your reward — the kingdom in return for your love — here is the hungry and thirsty and the homeless and naked, and the ill and imprisoned. Here is where you find God, in the crucified image of Christ.

Second, the Catholic spirituality for urban ministry must be ecclesial. What do I mean? I mean it takes place within a distinctive community, within the Church Jesus founded to continue the work of salvation he began in Bethlehem and brought to a high point at Calvary. What Jesus said to eleven Apostles the day of his resurrection he said to each one of you here, one thrilling day in your past: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." You are sent not as rugged individualists, but as part and parcel of a people. You are sent as members of a body wherein St. Paul insisted no one, absolutely no one, can say to any other, "I have no need of you." In this body the gifts vary: wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healing, administrators like Ignatius Loyola in an office, or Dorothy Day living and sleeping with the rat-infested. The gifts vary, but the Giver — capital G — is the same, the same Holy Spirit living within each of you and secretly shaping the one body.

Negatively, this means that your spirituality for justice is not a process you would develop in a sheer "me and Jesus" spirituality. Now such a relationship, me and Jesus, is indeed rightful, even special. As Jesus told his Apostles the night before he died: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." Still, ever since the Holy Spirit descended upon the infant church at the first Pentecost, St. Paul's declaration to the Christians of Corinth is basic for Christian living. "In the one Spirit," he wrote, "we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit." Of that body, Jesus is indeed the head, but he is head of a body and it is within his body that God's grace circulates like a bloodstream. Not only are the sacraments — from the waters of baptism to the final oiling — communal experiences, experiences that bring the Church together, encounters with Christ in the context of community. By God's gracious giving, we are commissioned to be channels of grace to one another. I am ceaselessly thrilled, often
challenged, at times frightened by an insight of a remarkable Presbyterian novelist and preacher. He once compared humanity to an enormous spider web and said, "If you touch it anywhere, the whole thing trembles. As we move around this world, as we act with kindness perhaps, or with indifference, or with hostility toward the people we meet, we too are setting the great spider web a tremble. The lifelike touch for good or ill will touch another life and that in turn another until who knows where the trembling stops. Or in one dark place and time, my touch will be felt, our lives are linked. "No man, no woman is an island." This is why the work of justice is all important in your life and mine. It is perhaps the most significant way in which we touch our sisters and brothers, touch their religious existence.

But this is not a one-way street. An expression heard repeatedly in Latin America demands our attention — the poor evangelize us. So many of the poor — not only the economically poor, but the young and the aging, the AIDS afflicted and the homeless, the disenfranchised and the dispirited, women and blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans — so many of the poor have helped the churches discover what in 1979 a conference of Latin American bishops called "the evangelizing potential of the poor." How do the poor, the disadvantaged actualize that potential? By challenging the churches with their overwhelming numbers, their ever-worsening misery, by their Christ-like endurance under domination and persecution, by their simplicity and solidarity, by their openness to God and what God permits. In these ways, they have in some measure turned the churches around, compelled them to look within ourselves, stimulated even profound conversion. Theologian John Sobrino expressed that idea briefly and pungently: "When the church has taken the poor seriously, it is then that it becomes truly apostolic. The poor initiate the process of evangelization. When the church goes out to them in mission, the paradoxical result is that they, the poor, evangelize the church." Very simply, the poor and the marginalized are not just recipients of our ministry; they are our teachers and educators. They are not only recipients of our spirituality; they help shape it.

Third, a Catholic spirituality for urban ministry should be eucharistic. Why? To begin with, the principle that has been central to Catholic theology and was reaffirmed by Vatican II: the liturgy, the bishops said, is the summit to which the church's activity is directed; at the same time, it is the source from which all her power proceeds. The renewal in the eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and humans sets them afire. From the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, as from a fountain, grace is channelled into us and that sanctification of men and women in Christ to which all other activities of the church stress and strain as toward their goal.

Now, begin with that truth of Catholic theology, exaggerated as it may sound to unsuited ears, that from the Eucharist as from no other comparable source, all the church's power proceeds. It is the Eucharist that can transform us into eucharists — small "e." So what is the Eucharist? It is a presence, a presence of Christ. It is a real presence, a presence of the whole Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity. It is a presence that stems from love and leads to love. This Eucharist can make of us, demand of us, that we become genuine eucharist — small "e." I mean that we be present to our brothers and sisters, really present. This is a presence of the whole person, not only mind and body, but flesh and spirit, emotions and passion. It is a presence that springs from love and leads to love: "Love one another as I have loved you."
Such a spirituality is particularly pertinent for urban ministry. Why? Because it is sacrificial. It comes through with incomparable power. If we meditate on Paul's words, or Matthew and Mark's views in describing the bread Jesus changed into his body at the Last Supper, we hear four words, four monosyllable words. "Jesus took, Jesus blessed, Jesus broke, Jesus gave." One, Jesus took a loaf of bread. This is not high Mediterranean cuisine but ordinary food, the staple of life indeed, but quite common. It reminds us how Yahweh chose for his people, that motley mob of runaway slaves, culturally undistinguished, often rebellious, frequently unfaithful, unpredictable, unreliable. As Moses told them, "It was not because you were more numerous to any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that the Lord brought you with the mighty hand that redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hands of Pharaoh, King of Egypt." And so for us, you and me, God chose us to be part of God's Kingdom. Specifically servants of urban justice, God chose us; we did not choose God. And God chose us not because we deserved it, but simply because God wanted to, because such was God's mysterious will, God's mystery made of love.

Jesus blessed the bread. What incredible creative power in that blessing! What had been a split-second before the common loaf, is now instantaneously transfigured into the Incarnate Son of God. It is such a blessing — God's Words — that transformed those restless Hebrew tribes into God's people. A similar blessing is pronounced over us when God's waters flowed over us. It is pronounced over us when God calls us to serve justice. This has changed us into agents of the reconciling Christ.

Three, Jesus broke the bread. He divided the bread so that there might be enough for all, but in a sense deeper still, the body of Christ had to be broken if it were to bring life to the world. Remember those powerful words, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain." It cannot produce images of itself, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. You remember how God had to discipline God's own people time and again from the exile in Egypt to the captivity in Babylon and beyond. Why? To bring them to a deeper awareness of God, of themselves, of others. God had to break them. So, too, with us. To make us fit instruments for justice, God has to break us, destroy the false self-reliance. From my experience, paradoxically, I am least myself when I make the world revolve around me. My successes and my failures, my hurts and my frustrations, my hiatus hernia, and my lower back arthritis — see, I have to be transformed, and so God molds me in the fiber of suffering. God does this not for its own sake — sheer suffering is neither good nor bad — but rather to reshape me in the image of God's son, the Jesus who, as the letter to the Hebrews tells us, "learned obedience through what he suffered and so has become the source of eternal salvation."

Four, Jesus gave the bread. He gave what he had blessed, what had once been mere bread and wine, now become himself. He gave it to his dear friends and through them to all of us for the world's redemption. It is strikingly symbolized on the Cross when Jesus flung his arms wide to embrace the world and at the same time his arms were empty for he had given us everything. He had given us Himself in the sacrament of the church. Similarly, a gracious God poured life and love incessantly on the Hebrew people so that in the end God had only God's own Son to give. God so loved the world. We, too, you and I, chosen, blessed, broken are given to a broken little world for
its life. In every Eucharist, all of us, part and parcel of God's priestly people, offer the Body of Christ. And on the same pattern, we offer ourselves for we no longer belong to ourselves. The profound meaning of universal priesthood lies in this: all of us are given, given to others for their life. God changes into Christ not only bread and wine. God changes you and me into Christ for the life of our struggling little world, our desperate inner cities. "The cross," theologian Karl Rahner used to say, "is erected not only over Calvary but over history." Crucifixion is not only a tragic fact inseparable from human living; crucifixion is our way through Christ to God but only if we and our people can transfuse sheer suffering into sacrifice, into crosses that are acts of love, love for our crucified Lord, love for his crucified image. Basic to involvement in inner city ministry is St. Paul's profound impact and declaration to the Christians of Colossae and Asia Minor: "I am now rejoicing in my suffering for your sake. In my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his Body, the Church."

A final word — it's actually a story. It is a story that leads our justice effort in striking fashion to the Christ of the poor. A remarkable Hasidic rabbi, Levi Yitshak in the Ukraine, used to say he had discovered the meaning of love from a drunken peasant. The rabbi was visiting the owner of a tavern in the Polish countryside. As he walked in, he saw two peasants at a table. Both were gloriously in their cup! Arms around each other, they were protesting how much each loved the other. Suddenly, Ivan said to Peter, "Peter, tell me, what hurts you?" Bleary-eyed, Peter looked at Ivan, "How do I know what hurts you?" Ivan answered with this: "If you don't know what hurts you, how can you say you love me?"