



O Lord, our Lord,
how glorious is your name over all the earth!
You have exalted your majesty above the heavens.
When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars which you set in place—
What is man that you should be mindful of him
or the son of man that you should care for him?
You have made him little less than the angels,

and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
putting all things under his feet.

—PSALM 8:2; 4-7

FINAL INTEGRATING EXERCISE

“8. How do the prophets connect with modern day life? How can contemporary society relate to the messages of the prophets. Be very specific, and use the biblical prophetic texts generously to support your ideas.”

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Please answer one of the following questions. Please staple this sheet to your final copy of work. ESSAY

CHOICES:

1. From an exegetical and hermeneutical perspective, the prophetic texts reflect a strong element of violence. Discuss the issue of violence in relation to the historical cultures and social location of the prophets. Also comment on social violence, the theological portrayal of Yahweh in this culture, and deal with how one might deal with this issue of violence for contemporary readers and believers of the biblical text today.
2. The prophetic texts offer a vision of hope not only for their ancient audiences but also for people today. Discuss this aspect of hope in relation to the prophetic biblical texts.
3. Using the prophetic texts, discuss how we might discern today who are "true prophets" and who are "false prophets." Include discussion on the characteristics of a prophetic vocation and what the costs are when someone chooses to embrace this vocation for the common good. Be mindful of the fact that core to the prophetic vocation is the revelation of who God is. This revelation of who God is needs to be retrieved from the biblical text in a way that one understands how culture and society have influenced and shaped theological reflection upon the experience of God.
4. The prophets were great literary artists. Discuss the many literary techniques, including metaphor, that the prophets use, and discuss how the various techniques have an impact on their theological message and on the listeners themselves.
5. Using the prophetic texts of the Eighth Century BC, present a picture of the historical, cultural, social, and theological world of this century. Then discuss how we have gone beyond or have not gone beyond this portrait of the Eighth Century BC. Finally, in light of this discussion, indicate how we embrace and live out the prophetic tradition and vocation today.
6. The prophets Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39) and Hosea prophesied at the same time in Israel, during the problematic eighth century, BCE. Analyze, compare, and contrast the prophetic teaching styles of both prophets and argue if their particular methods of conveying God's message was appropriate to the times. Provide examples.
7. Throughout the course of the semester, we have discussed the influence of the prophets and the role each played in their particular society. Using evidence from the Bible, as well as other literary examples, state the prophets that were most effective in delivering the word of God and helping to bring the Israelites and humankind back into accordance with the eternal covenant (i.e., Noachic and Sinaic covenants). Support your reasoning with a specific discussion and references to the biblical texts.
- 8. How do the prophets connect with modern day life? How can contemporary society relate to the messages of the prophets. Be very specific, and use the biblical prophetic texts generously to support your ideas.**
9. Describe the prophetic vision of hope. Support with specific references to and discussion on selected prophetic texts. How can we grasp the vision today, and what do we as individuals and as a global community have to do to make the vision of hope a reality? Incorporate reflection on contemporary social, ethical, ecological concerns and issues.
10. Think about and identify people in the contemporary world who have seen and grasped the prophetic vision. What did they do? What was their vision? How did they act? How successful were they in hindsight?
11. What are the different images and metaphors for God found in the prophetic texts? How do the styles of the prophets differ in their perception of God? What theological constructs contributed to some of the ideas about God? Does it seem that some of these perceptions, images, and metaphors can be reconciled with each

- other, or are they complete contradictions? Do you think people persist in holding these images of God? If so, how are such images expressed in contemporary society?
12. What are the differences between the prophetic messages of hope and those of doom? How is it possible for one prophet to deliver both kinds of messages?
 13. In this course, we have learned about the prophets and their messages. How have these prophets affected our own lives? How will we use their message in the future?
 14. If the biblical prophets were around today, what kind of messages would they be spreading? Support examples with information from the prophetic texts.
 15. It has been suggested that the view of God exerting power over all creation is a problematic view especially when such power is used to destroy. However, it has also been suggested that unfortunately such displays of power are still necessary today to solve violence. Discuss such displays of power in both biblical times and today. Is this display of power necessary today? Was it necessary yesterday? Is it necessary ever?
 16. How has this class and your knowledge about the prophetic vocation and text altered your views/vision of the prophetic text and/or of God?
 17. It is said that history repeats itself. Having read the prophetic texts, do you think that we live in a global situation that is similar to the times of the prophets? How are our times different?
 18. What are the major themes in the prophetic texts? How can these themes be applied to some current events and situations today?
 19. Do you find the portrait of women in the prophets disturbing? Did the prophets dislike women or did they intend the meaning of their indictments to mean something else? Can we extract or preserve anything positive from such socially conditioned texts?
 20. Modern ecumenism is an effort to foster understanding and respect between different faith traditions. What support does one find in the prophetic vision for such an initiative? Is there anything that might dissuade one from it?
 21. Is there a prophet you personally feel connected with, i.e., his message speaks to you about your own life? What might you change or be more aware of because of it? How are you a prophet today?
 22. There are particular offenses that the prophets highlight within the Jewish community in the eighth and sixth centuries. What are they? Are we still committing these same mistakes now? How, individually and socially, can we turn from these things?
 23. A Call to Prophetic Responsibility: What is the individual responsibility of the prophet? What is the individual responsibility of the Israelites? How does God hold them accountable for their responsibilities? How do the different views of God within the text confirm or deny these responsibilities/roles? How are these responsibilities affected by the language/ideas of the text (e.g., inclusive language, gender roles, patriarchy, hierarchy, etc.)? How does all of this connect to our individual responsibility today?

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1 INTRODUCTION:

God's covenant is the conduit to connect the prophets with contemporary life. God covenants with people are found in many Scripture passages including Gn. 17:7-8 (covenants with people), Lv. 19:9-15, 35-37; Dt. 14:22-29, 15:1-18, 24:10-22 (some of covenant's social laws), and people of covenant (Jer 24:7; Hos 2:25). Lk. 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; and Heb, 8:7-12 (Christ's new covenant). God's covenant is a contract that conforms to the will of God, but it arises out of God's special relationship with his creatures. As we shall see in the study, those brought into this special covenant relationship are called to be just and righteous by keeping God's commandments as in Lv. 19:9-15: "Now when you reap the harvest of your land ... you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger... You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him ... You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly." This notion of justice is echoed in Jeremiah 9:3-5. As in a marriage bond, a covenant involves commitment by both parties; their righteousness is their faithfulness to the covenant commands. The demands of the covenant are rooted in the being and character of God; so that righteousness can be more broadly defined as conformity to God's standard.¹ The study to follow explores how God's covenant connects the prophets with modern day life and examines how contemporary society relates to the messages of the prophets.

2 GOD'S COVENANT TO FREE PEOPLE: SOCIAL INJUSTICE

The notion of justice and righteousness is pivotal to God's covenant. Justice and righteousness founded in the prophetic tradition means a right legal status before God and conduct that is consistent with God's demands as revealed in the provisions of the covenant. In God's gracious covenant with Israel, justice means God and his people being loyal to that covenant. God is committed to doing what is right. Thus, God's righteousness is his faithfulness to his word of promise as indicated in His covenant to free people from the Egyptian bondage: "...Thus says the Lord GOD, 'On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, ..., I am the LORD your God, on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land

of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them'..." (Ezek. 20:5-6). God's covenant to free people from Egyptian bondage is also echoed in Ex. 6:6-8. Modern Catholic proclaims that justice are found in Jesus' covenant to free people spiritually: "With death overcome, the sons of God will be raised up in Christ, ... all that creation which God made on man's account will be unchained from the bondage of vanity" (Gaudium et Spes, no. 39).²

Amos condemns the status the Israelites fall into slavery through the sale by the parents as debt payment: "Thus says the LORD, 'For three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not revoke its punishment, because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals'" (Am. 2:6). Joel denounces the sales of children for prostitution and profit: "They have also cast lots for My people, traded a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine that they may drink" (Joel 3:3). The issues of slavery at the times of the prophets are echoed in Nahum 3:10, Amos 5:11-12; 8:6, and Obad. 11.

History repeats itself, today the poor and the vulnerable, women and children continue to be enslaved by the same forms of bondage. Human trafficking is an example of modern day slavery in which people, mostly women and girls, are abducted, deceived or coerced into situations of forced labor and prostitution. The root causes of trafficking include poverty, violence and political conflict. Worldwide, rising unemployment and the decline of government-sponsored social services, have contributed to severe poverty in the developing world and an increase in labor exploitation. Families living in absolute poverty often lack the means to feed all of their children. Parents may decide to sell one or more of their children because they cannot afford to raise them. In many places especially in Asia, girls are considered less valuable than boys, and are more likely to be sold. Violence in the home, often linked to economic instability, can also make women and children more vulnerable to trafficking. Fearing for their safety, women and children often run away from situations of domestic violence. In search of shelter and food, they may become targets of trafficking agents who deceptively offer them security. Traffickers often take advantage of the desperate conditions created by wars, preying upon those living in refugee camps.³ The U.N. estimates that 10 to 14 million people are trafficked worldwide each year. In 2005, the International Labor Organization estimated that there were 9.5 million victims of forced labor in Asia alone⁴ in which more than 1 million children, are forced into prostitution; in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, younger and younger children are being sought in the

belief that they are less likely to be infected.⁵ In 2004, Cambodian police estimated that more than 50,000 girls were in brothels through Cambodia, many of whom were Vietnamese trafficked to Cambodia for sexual exploitation. The World Human Rights Organization and UNICEF estimate that one-third of the prostitutes in Cambodia are under the age of 18, the majority of whom are Vietnamese.⁶

Modern Catholic condemns any form of slavery: "All violations of the integrity of the human person ... all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons; all these and the like are criminal; they poison civilization .. and militate against the honor of the creator" (Pope Paul VI, Vatican II counsel, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27).⁷ Catholic organizations such as the Coalition of Catholic Organizations against Human Trafficking which has over twenty national and international Catholic organizations united to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking, through public education, advocacy, and services."⁸ By our virtue of baptism, we are called on to fulfill our prophetic vision by immediate action to stop human trafficking and to raise awareness about the issue of trafficking and serve the victims, advocating nationally and internationally structures of law, and legislation to criminalize smuggling and trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. We as the church need to raise awareness by training leaders and teachers to identify domestic violence and advocate public policy by writing letters to legislators about the issues of immigration and human trafficking.

3 GOD'S COVENANT TO PROTECT HUMAN DIGNITY, AND THE RIGHTS OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:

Modern Catholic proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society as God's covenant with people and their children: "They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me" (Jer. 32:38-40). Thus, Prophetic message can also be defined in terms of social justice and in recognizing

rights and responsibility (e.g. Ez. 18:24; Is. 5:7; Lv. 19:15), right to life (Dt. 5:17, 30:19), rights of workers (Sirach 34:22), freedom from oppression (Ps. 146:5-8) and against unjust laws (Is. 10:1-2). Modern Catholic presents this notion of justice in declaring the "Rights and Responsibility": "Beginning our discussion of the rights of man, we see that every man has the right to life... and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services..." (Peace on Earth - Pacem In Terris, no. 11).⁹

Despite much prophetic efforts throughout generations, human right violation continues to escalate in today's world, most pervasively in women and children. Its forms are both subtle and unconcealed and its impact on development profound. People routinely subjected to assault, rape, sexual slavery, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, verbal abuse, mutilation, and even murder. According to UNICEF, roughly 60 million women who should be alive today are "missing" because of gender discrimination, predominantly in South and West Asia, China and North Africa. In the United States, where overall violent crime against women has been growing for the past two decades, a woman is physically abused by her intimate partner every nine seconds. In India, more than 5,000 women are killed each year because their in-laws consider their dowries inadequate. A tiny percentage of the murderers are brought to justice. In some countries of the Middle East and Latin America, husbands are often acquitted from killing an unfaithful, disobedient or willful wife on the grounds of "honor". Throwing acid to disfigure a woman's face is so common in Bangladesh and Southeast Asia that it warrants its own section of the penal code.¹⁰ The "slaughter of innocents" continues in many parts of the world from the Middle East to Africa to South America as this list continues to grow. If the prophets were to appear today, they would no doubt wonder where is the pervasive presence of American super power that creates a responsibility of using that power in the service of human rights.¹¹ One thing is certain; the prophets would not be silent.¹² The human right violation clearly is a question of conscience for our government and for each of us as citizens in a democracy!

4 GOD'S COVENANT TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND RIGHTS OF WORKERS:

The understanding of justice is clear in the passage where Isaiah denounces the leaders of the people who "deny justice to the innocent" (Is. 5:23) or "deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor" (Is.10:1-2). Dt. 5:17, 30:19 and Sir. 34:22 reiterate the right to life and rights of workers. Much resemblance can be found in modern Catholic social teaching: "The State has also the duty to protect the rights of all its people, and particularly of its weaker members, the workers, women and children. It can never be right for the State to shirk its obligation to work actively for the betterment of the condition of workers" (Mater of Magistra, no, 20).¹³

One of the most urgent issues facing our nation is immigration: "There are some two million undocumented people among us, most of whom are workers. Our economy and communities depend on them. They bus our dishes, pick our vegetables, clean our offices and homes, and care for our children among other jobs." These were some of the "inescapable facts" about immigration.¹⁴ According to Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, N.Y., chairman of the U.S. bishops domestic policy committee, "the immigration status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable. The 'system' is broken. We need far-reaching and comprehensive reform," he added. "There is no fence long enough or high enough that can wall out the human and economic forces that drive immigration. Immigration reform cannot start or stop at our borders. U.S. policy must help overcome the pervasive poverty and deprivation, the violence and oppression that push people to leave their lands. Policies on debt and development, foreign aid and global trade are essential elements of any effective immigration reform." Bishop DiMarzio said, "Human dignity is a gift from God, not a status to be earned. Fundamental rights to work, decent wages, safe working conditions, to have a voice in decisions, and the freedom to choose to join a union do not depend on where you were born or when you came to our nation."¹⁵ As prophets by our virtue of baptism, we need to contact members of congress, asking the congressperson to support just immigration reform and protecting the right of workers. To "the God of one and all" to help members of congress not be exclusionary, and by the intercession of Mary, an immigrant who fled to Egypt with her son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

5 GOD'S COVENANT TO PROTECT THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE:

God's righteousness is his covenant to protect the weak and the poor: "You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there..." (Dt. 24:17-18). Similarly, modern Catholic proclaims that "in protecting the rights of private individuals .. special consideration must be given to the weak and the poor..." (Pope Leo XIII, On the Condition of Workers - Rerum Novarum, no. 54).¹⁶ This understanding of the covenant as a legal standing to protect the poor and the vulnerable is clear in both prophetic tradition and modern Catholic teaching. Laws providing for the poor can be found in Dt.14:28-29 and 26:12-13, laws protecting aliens, widows, orphans in Ex. 22:7-22; Lv. 19:33-34 and prophetic laws protecting debtors in Ex. 22:24-26; Lv. 25:23-28; Dt. 15:1-11, 23:20, 24:6 and 10-13. In the New Testament, Luke narrated Jesus' mission to the poor and the outcast (Lk 4:16-21 and 14:12-14). The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the Economic Justice for All, no. 88 exhorts that "The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The option for the poor... states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons..."¹⁷

Today, poverty has brought the destruction of lives as economies shifted to favor free trade agreements and the repayment of punishing debt through World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies.¹⁸ The largest flows of capital from wealthy nations are channeled into the exploitative control of capitalism and militarism and away from humanitarian concerns such as providing for the basic needs, education, and rights of the world's population. When a nation spends more on military armament and personnel than on education and assistance to the poor, provides corporate welfare during times of high profits and stagnation in labor income, and promotes the use of violent approaches for resolving conflicts, it should not be surprising to find that the public education system has suffered, the gap

between the rich and the poor has increased, and the violence escalate as the result of economic injustices.¹⁹

Moreover, the poor and the vulnerable are most affected by the devastation of the global warming disaster. Their lives, homes, children and work are most at risk. Ironically, they contribute least to the problems of global climate change but bear the greatest burdens because they have the least capacity to escape. The poor and vulnerable often do not have the economic and technological resources to either adapt to or ward off the expected impacts of climate change. Heat waves, droughts, and storms and consequent economic costs will fall most heavily upon the poor. Since the "least of these" are most at risk from the climate change, as Christians, we need to share an abiding love for God's gift of creation and the biblical and prophetic mandate as well as moral responsibility to care for God's creation both human and nature; Genesis 1:31 (goodness of creation), Genesis 2:15 (stewardship of earth), Daniel 3:74-81 (all the earth blesses God), Hosea 4:1-3 (humans wound the earth) and Romans 8:18-25 (all creation awaits redemption). Our response to global climate change is a sign of our respect for God's creation and moral measure of our faith and stewardship. Global climate change is about the one human family. It is about our responsibility to the poor and the vulnerable and those generations yet unborn. The voices and the presence of the poor and vulnerable are often missing in debates and decisions on climate change. We need to advocate public officials to help ensure those voices are heard, their needs addressed, and their burdens eased.²⁰

As people of faith, we are the heirs of the biblical prophets who summon us "to do right, and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi. 6:8). As followers of Jesus, we embrace the Sermon on the Mount: "... Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness You are the salt of the earth You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:1-6, 13-14). These words challenge us not only as believers but also as citizens of the wealthiest country in the world to be "the salt of the earth" and to serve "the least among us". We must strive to look at economic life through the eyes of faith, applying scriptures and prophetic response to the U.S. economic policy.²¹ As prophetic laws protecting debtors in Ex. 22:24-26; Lv. 25:23-28; Dt. 15:1-11, 23:20, 24:6 and 10-13, we need to advocate economic policy calling for debt cancellation and an end to global poverty. Specifically, we need to contact members of legislators, asking them to support fair trade, just economic policy, poverty-focused

development assistance, and breaking the chains of unjust and oppressive debts. In a time of war, mounting trillions of deficits, and growing needs, as people of faith, we need to advocate our nation's leaders to ensure that there are adequate resources to protect and enhance the lives and dignity of people who are poor and vulnerable both here at home and around the world.

6 GOD'S COVENANT TO PROTECT THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS:

The prophets have expectation of God acting in righteousness to bring judgment to the unrighteous. It is associated with the day of the LORD, the coming of Messiah and the work of the Servant of the Lord (Is. 32:1, 61:1-3; Jer. 33:15-16; Dn. 9:24). "Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness, and his upper room without justice, uses his neighbor's services without pay, and does not give him his wages" (Jer. 22:13). Many other Scripture passages reverberate the dignity of works and right of workers; God labors and rests (Gn. 2:2-3), humans cultivate earth (Gn. 2:15), Sabbath gave laborers rest (Ex. 20:9-11, 23:12, 34:21; Lv. 23:3; Dt. 5:12-15), Sabbath is for benefit of people (Mk. 2:27), wage justice (Lv. 19:13; Dt. 24:14-15; Sir. 34:22; Jer. 22:13; Jas. 5:4), do not drive laborers (Is. 58:3), Jesus uses wage law in parable (Mt. 20:1-16), Jesus worked as carpenter (Mk. 6:3), laborer deserves pay (Mt. 10:9-10; Lk. 10:7; 1 Tm 5:17-18) and so on. In similar contexts, modern Catholic proclaims: "We must first of all recall a principle that has always been taught by the Church: the principle of the priority of labor over capital. This principle directly concerns the process of production: in this process labor is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause" (Pope John Paul II, *On Human Work - Laborem Exercens*, no. 12).²² This notion of justice is echoed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (*Catholic Framework for Economic Life*, no. 5): "All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations."²³

Today in every part of the world, workers follow the globalization of finance and production. In Asia, there are seven and a half million immigrant workers from the Philippines alone. They migrate at the

rate of 200 per day. Most of them are women who spend eleven months a year away from their children to send remittances back home for family survival. Particularly vulnerable are undocumented workers. Boatloads of workers from North Africa risk the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean to land in Spain and struggle for survival in Europe. Farm workers risk dehydration and exposure in the California deserts hoping to find decent jobs to raise their families in Mexico and Central America. Chinese stifle in steerage on boats which take them to sweat shops in New York. All of these: refugees, migrants documented and undocumented, are signs of the times challenging us to respond in the spirit of Christ. As Pope John Paul II : " How can the baptized claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking?" As followers of Jesus, we are called on to His covenant in welcoming His hidden presence in the stranger in our midst. As a universal church, we need to ask leaders nationally and internationally to work toward structures of law and economy which protect the dignity and right of workers including acquittal for undocumented workers, international cooperation to promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development in countries of origin.²⁴

7 GOD'S COVENANT TO BRING PEACE TO NATIONS:

Prophetic messages are the way of peace for all nations. Micah and Isaiah provide the majority of instances. Worldwide peace is characterized by righteousness. "...Many nations will come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD... that He may teach us about His ways... and He will judge between many peoples...then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks... Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war..." (Mi. 4:1-3). Isaiah 2:1-4 echoes this same notion of peace. Prophetic tradition calls to save all nations (Gn. 22:17-18; Ps. 22:28-29); there is no national distinctions in God (Rom. 10:12) and we are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). The National Conference of Catholic Bishops reverberates this notion of peace in "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, no. 23": "Because peace, like the kingdom of God itself, is both a divine gift and a human work, the Church should continually pray for the gift and share in the work. We are called to be a Church at the service of peace, precisely because peace is one manifestation of God's word and work in our midst." Pope John Paul II echoes the notion of peace as a positive, action-oriented concept; "Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect

and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements." Global solidarity expresses concerns for world peace and international development. We are called to global solidarity. We are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, gender, economic, or ideological boundaries.

A prophetic vision of establishing worldwide peace requires communities of faith professing to be the Body of Christ to engage in the prophetic leadership role of confronting and countering the destructiveness of domination systems in whatever form, whether a Saddam Hussein style of dictatorship or a U.S. style of politics and militarism.²⁵ Specifically, we need to add our voices to the collective voice of the U.S. Catholic bishops in declaring, "Participation in public life is a moral obligation," by exercising our right to vote, using our ballots to influence a more just U.S. foreign policy and advocating for the end of violence and regional/global arms race by writing letters to legislators. We may not have specific competence in political, economic and military strategies and do not assess particular tactics, but we can share a moral tradition to help inform policy choices. We also need to persist in praying for peace and those most affected by the war and unjust policy.

8 CONCLUSION:

Prophetic tradition insists that religion that does not manifest itself in action for justice is false religion. The Hebrew prophets boldly proclaimed that God rejected worship and prayers that ignored social justice. Jesus asked, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you" (Lk. 6:46)? And the New Testament epistle of St. James insists that "faith without works is also dead" (Jas. 2:26). What we see every day in the world makes us hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness. It is a holy demand for action, and that action is rooted in the hunger for justice,²⁶ even it may lead to actual bodily martyrdom. In responding to the issues of injustices and unrighteousness, much resemblance can be found in times of the Prophets and in our times. Jesus condemned Jerusalem: "... you are sons of those who murdered the prophets... behold, I am sending you prophets some of them you will kill and crucify... that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar...." (Mt. 23:31-46). In certain situations, by

following Jesus, we could be confronted with situation where we must face death. That was what happened to 130,000 Vietnamese Martyrs in which 117 were canonized by Pope John-Paul II in Rome on June 19, 1988. These Martyrs are faithful to their prophetic calls until death! In contemporary society, prophetic response to issues of injustices is unpopular as it questions the comfortable and pleasure-seeking assumptions of popular culture; it challenges the authority of the government when it becomes corrupted, violent, or abusive. That was why the government of El Salvador assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero as they were afraid of his authority in challenging their political oppression²⁷. On U.S. soil, the late Martin Luther King Jr. whose efforts led to end segregation and racial discrimination through non-violent means was a modern display of the prophetic response on the forefront of Civil Rights.

Lord, help us put our faith in action that we as members of the Body of Christ will respond more fully to the Gospel instruction to serve those in need, work for justice and peace, and honor the dignity of all God's people both in our local community and throughout the world. Amen.

END NOTES:

- ¹ Chris Mack, "Covenant Righteousness", <http://www.jesusinstituteforum.org/Dan814nIsaiah.html> (April 8, 2008).
- ² Gaudium Et Spes. December 7, 1965. Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World Promulgated By His Holiness. Pope Paul Vi. Vatican Web Site. The Holy See. 12-Apr-08 <http://www.Vatican.Va/Archive/Hist_Councils/li_Vatican_Council/Documents/Vat-li_Cons_19651207_Gaudium-Et-Spes_En.Html >.
- ³ Global Fund For Women, "Trafficking", <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/cms/hot-topics/trafficking/trafficking.html> (April 11, 2008).
- ⁴ Ibid.
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