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ÓSCAR ROMERO: A LIBERATIVE MODEL FOR ENGAGING WITH THE HOMELESS IN CLEVELAND

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INTRODUCTION

On October 14, 2018, the Catholic Church canonized Óscar Arnulfo Romero. This canonization was polarizing because it highlighted a man who engaged with the world in a different way. Óscar Romero embraced the world around him, coming face-to-face with the poor and marginalized and speaking out against the abuses he witnessed. In doing so, he set an example for engaging with the poor. He moved past seeing the marginalized as injured or castaways and instead identified with them. He became one with them and left a legacy for Catholics to follow, not just in El Salvador, but also around the world, including here in Cleveland. As such, looking at his legacy can help us begin to view the issue of homelessness in Cleveland differently. In El Salvador, the issues of oppression were obviously very different than they are in Cleveland. A Civil War plagued the country and the government armies were murdering people for wanting their human dignity respected. While the issues are quite different, there are important lessons from Óscar Romero’s life that are applicable to the situation of homelessness in Cleveland. The purpose of this project is to use his life and work as a model for Catholics in Cleveland to find ways to engage with marginalized peoples.

Though most of Romero’s priesthood had been unremarkable, he experienced a conversion of heart when he was Archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 until his death in 1980. During his episcopacy, Romero became a voice for the Salvadoran people. This paper investigates how Romero’s practice of liberation theology helped form his idea of preferential option and solidarity with the poor. Using these aspects of his theology, we will strive to connect with the people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland. In
connecting with this contemporary local issue, Óscar Romero’s theology will start to become clearer and transformative.

**ÓSCAR ROMERO’S LIFE AND LEGACY**

Óscar Romero is more than a man who died for his views and faith. Martyrdom is a significant part of his legacy, but the entirety of Romero’s life is worth a longer discussion. Many people think of Óscar Romero as a man who dedicated himself to the poor and eventually became their voice. By being a voice for the poor, Romero began to develop an understanding of liberation theology. He began speaking of a preferential option for the poor. This development is critical to Romero’s life because there was great turmoil between the government, the military, the church, and the poor. Those experiencing the worst effects of this turmoil were the poor. For many Americans this chaos may be unimaginable, but it was an everyday occurrence for Romero and the people of El Salvador. If you look closely at Romero’s life, you notice he experienced a conversion of heart, and afterwards Óscar Romero’s life completely changed. In examining Óscar Romero’s theology and life, we have a contemporary example of living out solidarity and the preferential option for the poor.

**ROMERO’S EARLY LIFE AND PRIESTHOOD**

Óscar Romero was born on August 15, 1917, in the Curriad Barrios, San Miguel, El Salvador.¹ Because he joined the seminary at age thirteen, Romero had a rather romantic view of the priesthood. He found it to be a great honor to be a priest, and he

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held this conviction throughout his life. He went through seminary in Rome where Neo-
Scholasticism influenced his study of theology. Neo-Scholasticism is “the development
of the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It
is not merely the resuscitation of a philosophy long since defunct, but rather a restatement
in our own day of the philosophia perennis.”

In other words, this philosophy believes
that there is only one Truth and that all things lead to this Truth. In understanding, this
one Truth Neo-Scholasticism was direct, defensive, and lacked engagement with the
world. This is important to understanding Romero because his understanding of faith for
most of his life relied on Neo-Scholasticism and the church was correct in only
concerning itself with leading souls to heaven. In Rome, he was known to be a very pious
priest. Eventually, he was called back home to continue his ministry in El Salvador. Upon
arriving home, he oversaw a parish and eventually moved from strictly parish work to a
role as the secretary of the diocese. As secretary, he was constantly engaged in ministry,
allowing him to establish relationships with both the destitute and the wealthy. He
cherished these relationships because he believed his relationships with the wealthy
would help him better serve the poor. However, this belief would eventually change.

Romero was very passionate about leveraging media and used any medium he
could to spread the gospel, including newspaper and radio. His use of media ultimately
led to a promotion in the diocese of San Miguel. While he was there, he was known for
his role as a disciplinarian in the diocese. He was hard on the other priests in his diocese,
which made his relationship with them difficult. In 1967, a new bishop was selected who

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2 “Neo-Scholasticism,” New Advent, accessed March 14, 2019,
stripped much of Romero’s power. Romero even had to go through psychological testing, which led to a diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder and being spiritually scrupulous. Romero was exhausted and lonely. However, the new bishop appointed him the secretary general of the bishops’ conference. This role resulted in Romero’s responsibility of interpreting the documents of Vatican II as well as building an understanding of the Medellín conference for the church in El Salvador and himself.

Trying to comprehend Vatican II was challenging for him because the church decided to turn toward and engage with the secular the world. This shift eventually led to The Medellín conference, which was a meeting between all of the bishops of Latin America. In this conference, they wrote about the role of the church in Latin America. The bishops’ conclusions were polarizing. David Abalos explains, “The Church is called upon to separate itself from the Establishment so that it may be free to criticize social and political structures and champion the needs of the people …. At the same time, they serve notice on the ruling elites of Latin America that governments can no longer expect the Church to keep silent in the face of terrible injustice.”

This approach was controversial because it meant the Church began to see itself as an active voice for the people, a voice that the Medellín bishops described as a “preferential option for the poor,” which was a new idea to Romero. This “preferential option for the poor” insisted that the church and individuals speak up for the poor and evaluate governmental policy by how it effects the poor. This emphasis was difficult for Romero to comprehend because of his spiritual scrupulousness and fear of abandoning

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tradition. It was not something he was accustomed to doing. A “preferential option for the poor” pushes us to engage with those who are vulnerable in society and to allow them to influence our decision-making.

Eventually in 1970, Romero was ordained as auxiliary bishop of San Salvador. During this time, he remained focused on discipline and tradition. Bishop Romero’s next few years revolved around trying to remove the Jesuit order from El Salvador. In the seminary, he questioned their lack of theological teaching and accused them of Marxist leanings. These battles revolved around the Jesuits’ involvement in political affairs that he believed should be separate from the work his priests were doing. In response to an invitation by Jesuits to a Mass, Romero said, “You’re not doing pastoral work here at all! You’re doing political work! And you haven’t called me to a Mass! You’ve called me to a meeting of subversives.” He eventually won this battle and had them removed from the seminary. Next, he worked to have them removed from the local high school where they had been teaching, but ultimately failed. Bishop Romero’s conservative ideologies were at odds with the preferential option for the poor movements of the priests, Vatican II, and Medellín. All of these things challenged Romero’s beliefs because in his understanding the church had no right to be involved in social issues of this world. His understanding of the church’s role was to care for the spiritual needs of the people and nothing else. These tensions were so strong that his appointment as Archbishop in 1977 created scandal within the El Salvadorian community because his ordination seemed like a step backwards into old times away from which the church was moving.

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A CONVERSION OF THE HEART

At the beginning of Romero’s life, he did charity for the poor, but he never let these encounters touch his heart to move him to grow in solidarity and away from what separated him from the poor and marginalized. A conversion had to take place in Romero’s heart before he could fulfill God’s intention for his life. In examining this conversion, we must look to his time as bishop in Santiago de María. Romero was assigned to Santiago de María, a region that is a rural diocese dominated by coffee industry. It was in Santiago de María that Romero directly encountered the oppression of farmworkers, violence, and malnutrition of children. In this diocese, there was a center where a group of Passionist priests were educating farmworkers and training them in the Word to be leaders in their communities. During his time there, Romero criticized much of the work they were doing but at the same time, would occasionally share his praise for them. However, he eventually shutdown the center because he believed they were being too political in their training. After shutting down the center, he spent more time with the Passionists and discussed the center. He ultimately decided to reopen it after understanding the commitments of the Passionists and their care for the oppressed farmworkers. This alignment with the Passionists lead to Juan Macho, a Passionist priest, becoming his Pastoral Vicar in the diocese. Macho claims this was the beginning of Óscar Romero’s conversion of heart.5

Additionally, Romero’s deciphering of the Medellín Conference was impactful. He often found the documents that came out of Medellín to be controversial. His Pastoral

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Vicar remembers Romero commenting on the constant citing of the Medellín documents. Romero found this to be troubling, but the vicar responded:

‘Look, Monseñor, I have to believe in the assistance of the Spirit at Medellín as much as at Vatican II, because if I deny that there was a special assistance of the Spirit at Medellín, I’d be one step away from denying it in the Vatican, and this I cannot do. I can’t accept in any way that in Medellín there wasn’t any assistance of the Spirit when nearly half of all Catholics were represented there, I can’t.’ I remember that he was very pensive, and then said, ‘I never thought about it like that.’ From then on he began to cite Medellín.

This conversation pointed to the beginning of Romero moving away “from sin, away from thoughts and behaviors damaging to oneself or others and toward seeking God’s will.” The documents of Medellín began to inspire him.

By 1977, Romero experienced a transformation in the way he saw poverty that drastically changed his perspective. Archbishop Romero had always cared for those who were struggling with poverty. Throughout his life, he was continually facing poverty, but he never saw the need for a drastic change in the structure of how aid is delivered to those who were suffering. This shift in understanding culminated in 1977 after the assassination of his friend, Father Rutilio Grande. The years prior to Grande’s death prove to be crucial in the shaping the conversion of Óscar Romero, while providing context to his mindset when Grande was murdered. This experience is key when we reflect on how to experience conversion in our life. Additionally, understanding Father Grande’s work is important because he was the first to start organizing farmers to begin

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6 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 56.
7 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 57.
8 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 45-46.
9 Clarke, Love Must, 38-57.
challenging the oppressive landowners, and his work and death helped complete Romero’s conversion.

Father Grande was a respected priest who worked in the parish of Aguilares, which was a parish of peasant farm workers. He challenged them to take the gospel, apply it to their present situations, and demand their dignity to be respected. This call created outrage from the landowners who accused him of raising the consciousness of farm workers and the growth of peasant organization, which demanded rights and respect.10 On February 13, 1977, Father Grande preached, “Woe to you hypocrites who with mouths and lips call yourselves Catholics and within are filthy with evil. You are Cains, and you crucify the Lord when he walks in the figure of the humble farm laborer.”11 His identification with the farmers and passion for justice is what lead to his assassination.

Grande’s assassination was the climax that lead to the full conversion in Romero’s heart that transformed his outlook and thought processes moving forward. Ricardo Urioste likens:

Romero’s conversion to the healing of the blind man from Bethsaida in the Gospel of Mark (8:22—26). As Jesus heals the man by putting spittle in his eyes, he sees blurry figures at first. Only upon being touched by Jesus again does he see with clarity. Thus, it is not that Romero had no compassion for the poor before becoming archbishop, nor that he did not take great measures to care for the poor. However, his conversion marks a new seeing of their reality, which brought a new clarity about his place within their reality and the deeper response that it demanded from him.12

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12 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 70.
This conversion is essential to the development of Óscar Romero’s witness. He was a man who understood his role in caring for the poor, but he saw them as the other. This conversion, then, moves him from seeing the poor as others to seeing them as brothers and sisters. It is here we see a change in Romero’s outlook and his development of a preferential option for the poor and of solidarity. Before the killing of his friend, Romero was planning to preach on the issue of the rich and people living in poverty. He questioned speaking on this topic, but after the death of his friend, he felt called to preach to all the people of El Salvador about the controversy between the rich and poor. There was no turning back. This change developed over time in his preaching and writings, and ultimately it made the preferential option for the poor the meaning of his life. As explained earlier, Romero found his relationships with the rich to be a key part in his ministry. He believed that they could help him alleviate the poverty around him. After the murder of Father Grande, this relationship changed completely. He no longer saw the rich as helpful to the people suffering around him. Instead, he saw them as the cause. He chose the side of the oppressed people of El Salvador and worked for their liberation.

Liberation Theology and the Influence on Óscar Romero’s Conversion

During this time, Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez also began writing his seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation*. Gutiérrez’s work influenced other theologians like the Jesuit Jon Sobrino and Romero himself. Gutiérrez describes liberation theology as the following:

> It is for all these reasons that theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology… this is a theology.

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which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed. It is a theology which is open—in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of humankind, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just, comradely society—to the gift of the Kingdom of God.¹⁴

Gutiérrez’s understanding of liberation was highly influential in Óscar Romero’s life. Óscar Romero took seriously finding the human dignity in every person.

Additionally, Elizabeth Johnson explains liberation theology’s characteristics and method very clearly. She explains how liberation theology has a great awareness of human relationship. It sees how sin has affected social and personal relationships, and it ties people closer to their actions. Liberation theologians do not focus much on philosophy, but use a social analysis of situations. This means that they look at economic, political, social, and even anthropological studies to determine the cause of their situation. They look to see who is benefitting from the situation and how it contributes to the oppression that they are experiencing. After social analysis, liberation theology looks to faith for expression but pushes for a change in the unjust situation. The reason for this focus lies in the understanding of their vision of the reign of God.¹⁵ They believe that the reign of God is already arriving and that “the new heaven and the new earth should already be beginning to take root, if not totally, then at least in real anticipation here and now.”¹⁶


¹⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, Consider Jesus, 87.
She further explains how liberation theology emphasizes first recognizing suffering in certain groups. This suffering is not strictly from poverty but a plethora of other ways too, such as political oppression, patriarchy, and apartheid. Though not all practices of liberation theology are the same, in this case a community is formed who expresses concern about an issue by talking to each other about their situation, by praying, and by studying scripture in relation to their suffering. Then, the most crucial part of liberation theology is for the community to look for a way for the situation to be changed. Finally, liberation theology must be involved in some sort of action toward justice. Liberation theology is not something taught solely in a classroom. There must be actions, as without actions, it cannot be liberation theology. Liberation theology believes that action is what begins to move people toward liberation.  

**ROMERO’S PASTORAL LETTERS**

Liberation theology’s influence on Óscar Romero ultimately helped him create a renewed option for the poor, but his understanding of what this would mean did not happen instantly. At the beginning of his time as Archbishop, he spoke of the overall transcendence of God. He mentioned finding God in all people and situations, specifically the poor. In the next year, he tried to articulate the relationship of the church, the poor, and politics. He saw people misplacing God’s mission of putting the poor first and pushing political agendas as the mission for the poor. He called for them to allow faith to inform their politics while still siding with the poor in their struggle. Then he finally spoke of the church’s role in this situation. The church must identify with the poor

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17 Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 83-87.
to be a church. In his homilies, writings, and ministry he articulates this option for the poor and vulnerable. His homilies and writings work together with one another in developing his understanding of a preferential option for the poor.

On August 6, 1977, Romero wrote a pastoral letter called “The Church, The Body of Christ in History.”18 This pastoral letter focuses on the transcendence of God in our world. In this letter, Romero emphasized the importance of the church and its role in the world. Michael Lee says, “Romero links his notion of transcendence to that of the church as a sacrament … the church as a ‘sacrament of salvation,’ he indicates its special mission to be the living presence of Christ in the world, mediating a partial taste of salvation.”19 This understanding of the church is that it is a living presence of Christ. It pushes for a church that models Christ and his actions. To model Christ in action one must realize Christ’s humanity to be included in a church that follows him. In doing so, Romero focuses on the humanity of Christ and his relationship with the people of El Salvador.

On December 10, 1978, Romero preached on the word becoming flesh and being with us. Romero said:

We weep tears of joy and gratitude knowing that this infinite God became flesh like us and dwelt among us. If Christ were to become incarnate today—right now in 1978—he’d be a thirty-year-old-man; he could be sitting here in the cathedral and we wouldn’t be able to pick him out from all the rest of you. He’d be a campesino from Nazareth, thirty years old, sitting here in the cathedral like any campesino of our villages. He’d be the Son of God made man, and we wouldn’t recognize him. In everything he’d be like us! But when that Christ who is God—through whom the

18Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 93.
19Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 94.
world was made—became human, then he lifted all human beings to the category of God.\textsuperscript{20}

Once he established that Jesus’ incarnation is an important element to understanding the church, the church can begin to realize its role in continuing the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. Jesus’ humanity is central to his understanding because Jesus entered this world as poor and from Nazareth. His poverty and being from Nazareth places him in the same place as the “campesino,” who is the peasant farmer. Jesus was just like them in every way, which raises them up to the category of God. This shows that every human being has God dwelling within him or her. In continuing the ministry of Jesus Christ, Romero emphasizes the importance of the church to have an evolving tradition. Lee says, “The most important changes in the church after Vatican II and Medellín were not cosmetic elements like changes in liturgy, but complete rethinking of the colonial Catholic assumptions … Romero contrasts what he calls a ‘non-evolving traditionalism’ with authentic Christian tradition.”\textsuperscript{21} Tradition must evolve with the issues of the time. The Church cannot remain stagnant and expect to be a church that proclaims Christ’s mission. A church that can use tradition to work toward justice is a relevant church.

This idea makes sense if you understand the immanence of God. God’s immanence in today’s world makes the imitation of Jesus possible. Since God is immanent in this time, then a witness to true Christian tradition will evolve with the issues of justice now. Creating a church that is not stuck in the past allows us to view

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21] Lee, \textit{Revolutionary Saint}, 95.
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Jesus’ life as relevant today. Lee says, “In Romero’s theology, proclaiming the reign, calling to conversion, and denouncing sin are the key components of Jesus’ ministry that all believers must imitate; they are the criteria by which authentic Christian discipleship is measured.”

This call for the imitation of Christ moves people to work for justice in both the political and social spheres. It is within this understanding of Christ’s role in the world, influenced by Medellín and liberation theology that Romero’s understanding of the Church’s role for the poor begins to develop. However, even though the intentions of the church for the poor is worthy, some people would alter this message for political gain. Ultimately, some people used the messages of liberation theology to push the ideas of Marxism. By identifying with liberation theology and speaking for the poor, many became adversaries to the powerful because of these Marxist associations. This abuse of liberation theology being practiced in Marxist techniques often led to violent retaliation toward the Church and its people because they believed everyone associated with liberation theology was a Marxist.

Romero became aware of this problem, and on August 6, 1978, he wrote on the issues of “The Church and Popular Political Organizations.”

He spoke about the importance of the church to be on the side of those who experience oppression and to help them as they organize and struggle for their rights. This letter continues to emphasize the “The Church, The Body of Christ in History” but adds an additional element to it. Lee says, “That plan of salvation has certain principles: it involves the whole person, is centered on the reign of God, demands conversion, and excludes

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22 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 100.
23 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 109.
violence.” Romero says, “We have always tried to be just and objective and we have never been moved by, nor have we ever preached, hatred or resentment. On the contrary, we have called for conversion. We have pointed to justice as the indispensable basis of the peace that is the true objective of Christians.” The added term of excluding violence is important. People often used violence as part of the path to liberation and to creating the reign of God. Some identified their faith closely with political parties that used violence to reach their means. Romero emphasized the importance for believers to use their faith to engage with politics instead of party ideologies. Romero made sure to speak about faith being the true way to engage in politics. Romero explains:

One cannot put greater trust in political options, right or left, than God… the political circumstances of nations change, but the church refuses to be a toy of mercy of changing circumstances. The church must always be the horizon of God’s love, as I tried to explain this morning. That is why Christian love surpasses all the categories of regimes and systems.

Even though he does not preach about the right political way, he emphasizes Christian love to be the way. This means closely aligning with the poor because Christian love exists here. This approach conflicted with other bishops who accepted the status quo and only cared about the spiritual welfare of people. Romero did not advocate for party ideologies. This created a voice for the poor. Lee says, “In a very real sense, he was allowing his person and his office to be led by the poor, whom he understood as the

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24 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 110.
26 Romero, A Prophetic Bishop, 432.
transcendent presence of God.”

Romero’s final letter was called “The Church’s Mission amid the National Crisis.” Romero wrote this letter not only from his own experiences, but he reached out to the priests and base communities for them to share their experiences with him as well. Romero hoped to foster a more accurate voice of the church at the time. This letter focuses on the church as a natural political force. In addition, it emphasizes how the church must respect and support the rights of people as they work toward liberation. The four tasks on which this letter focuses are, “proclaiming the gospel, denouncing sin, unmasking idolatries, and promoting integral liberation.”

Additionally in this document, he finally maps what a preferential option for the poor is. Romero says:

The church, then, would betray its own love for God and its fidelity to the gospel if it stopped being the voice of the voiceless, a defender of the rights of the poor, a promoter of every just aspiration for liberation, a guide, an empowerer, a humanizer of every legitimate struggle to achieve a more just society, a society that prepares the way for the true kingdom of God in history. This demands of the church a greater presence among the poor. It ought to be in solidarity with them, running the risks they run, enduring the persecution that is their fate, ready to give the greatest possible testimony to its love by defending and promoting those who were first in Jesus' love. This preference for the poor, I must repeat, does not mean an unfair discrimination between the various classes of society. It is an invitation to all regardless of class, to accept and take up the cause of the poor as if they were accepting and taking up their own cause, the cause of Christ himself: 'I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me'.

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27 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 114.
28 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 119.
29 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 117-118.
This understanding of the preferential option for the poor is done by identifying with the poor. The poor are those farm workers, children and indigenous peoples who have no voice. Romero goes on to map out the way to live out the preferential option for the poor:

Striving to understand and denounce the mechanisms that generate this poverty (Puebla #1160). Uniting our efforts with those of people of good will in order to uproot poverty and create a more just and fraternal world (Puebla #1161). Supporting the aspirations of laborers and peasants, who wish to be treated as free, responsible human beings. They are called to share in the decisions that affect their lives and their future, and we encourage all to improve themselves (Puebla #1162). Defending their fundamental right to freely create organizations to defend and promote their interests, and to make a responsible contribution to the common good (Puebla #1163). \(^{31}\)

Romero’s development of solidarity and of a preferential option for the poor happens throughout the letters, which finally concludes that a church must have a preferential option for the poor. The most important part of Óscar Romero’s understanding of a preferential option for the poor is “the church ought to be in solidarity with them, running the risks they run, enduring the persecution that is their fate.”\(^ {32}\) This development is crucial in Romero’s theology. His understanding of the rich being able to help him alleviate the poor in this understanding is no longer possible. The church cannot sit along the side and speak for justice, liberation, empowerment, and defending the poor when they are not willing to be in solidarity with the poor and to face the risks that the poor face.


This articulation continued throughout the rest of 1979 and 1980. He would speak at Universities saying that the church is not set apart from the world; the Church is a church by immersing in the messy world. He continues the discussion by proclaiming that the church learns from the poor. The poor reveal the needs of the world. We must identify with them to help understand the needs that the church should meet. This understanding of preferential option for the poor extends farther than just the letters and homilies that Romero writes; it results in definitive actions for the poor.

**ROMERO’S UNDERSTANDING OF PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR**

By the late 1970s, Romero had begun to develop his own understanding of the preferential option for the poor, and the theologian once influenced by liberation theology, began to influence the discipline himself. For example, Jon Sobrino speaks about how influential Romero is to liberation theology and the country of El Salvador. Sobrino explains how Romero put the poor before everything in his life. He quotes Romero saying, “I am excited, dear brothers and sisters. I am going to Puebla, and I am going to take with me, in my voice… the expression of this church that you are. You! What a living church! What a martyred church! How filled with the Holy Spirit …. May my humble voice at Puebla be the echo of the voice of all these communities of yours.”

This connection and solidarity with the poor is an essential aspect to Romero’s preferential option for the poor. He let their passions and pains become his passions and pains, so when he speaks of the church in El Salvador he is the “voice for the voiceless.”

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Sobrino goes on to say, “He understood his word to be actually that of the whole Salvadoran people, the word of the suffering of all of them without exception, and of their whole generous response to God in their love for their sisters and brothers.”

This identification as being the voice of the people of El Salvador became actualized in his actions.

As Archbishop, Romero refused to participate in presidential inaugurations and had continual disagreements with his fellow bishops about the relationship of the church and its people. He was pushing for a church that no longer accepted the status quo of political systems that were abusing the poor. Romero was a voice for the poor even when he was associating with other Church leaders. For example, at the conference in Puebla when they were speaking about evangelization and human development, he made sure to mention the importance of political realities of poverty and violence coexistent with the focus on baptism and conversion. His identification with the poor moved him to speak out against the United States. He begged them to stop funding the oppressive governments that were killing the poor. In his final homily on March 23, 1980, he preached to the military, begging them to stop following the sinful orders that are killing their brothers and sisters. This was met with a round of applause from the congregation but was the final act that would lead to his death.

**ROMERO’S DEATH AND LEGACY**

On March 24, 1980, Mario Molina assassinated Óscar Romero while he was celebrating the Eucharist. His killing was a result of his imitation of Christ in his actions.

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and words.\textsuperscript{35} In Romero’s assassination, we see connections to Jesus’ death. Christ was crucified because of his identification with the poor and speaking out against the wrongs done to them. Romero was ultimately killed for championing a similar cause.

As inspirational as Óscar Romero’s life is, he nonetheless was highly controversial to many of the bishops. Romero’s identification with the poor was challenging for the bishops because of the power struggle it created between the church and the government. The bishops believed that the church was to meet the spiritual needs of the people. In doing so, they would stand with any government because they were only focusing on the spiritual aspect. Lee explains that the bishops’ vision here “is a colonial vision in which the church serves as protector of the status quo, a dual-ordered status quo in which the church supports the government in political affairs because its domain is that of spiritual affairs.”\textsuperscript{36} This understanding carried on throughout Óscar Romero’s time as Archbishop. Even after his death, people in the Vatican were struggling with how to classify his death or answer if he was a martyr or not. Anna Peterson and Manual Vasquez explain that he lies outside the definition of a martyr for the church, which is defined as being killed because a tyrant hated the faith. They explain, “Romero identified the church with ‘the people’ in such a way that it would be a falsification of his own convictions to suggest that he was killed out of hatred for the church … it was not the church that made Romero an assassin’s target, but rather his personal … identification of the cause of Christ with the cause of liberation for the Salvadoran people.”\textsuperscript{37} Essentially,

\textsuperscript{35}Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 129-131.
\textsuperscript{36}Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 92.
\textsuperscript{37}Anna Peterson and Manuel Vasquez, Óscar Romero and the Politics of Sainthood. (Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2011), 276.
the conservative side of the church argued that Romero was killed not because of someone’s hatred of the church. Instead, he was killed for his personal beliefs and identification with the poor. Additionally, some within and Church did not want to see him become a saint because he would be identified with a more progressive church. Another cause for the 38-year delay for him to be canonized as a saint is the political unrest in El Salvador. Some leaders were afraid that if they made him a saint right away it would cause people to pervert his legacy for the political left and progressives within the church.38 Ultimately, this did not stop the Vatican from canonizing him on October 14, 2018.

Even though there was much controversy about Óscar Romero, it did not stop his theological legacy from continuing. The legacy that Romero left behind is his understanding of the preferential option for the poor. Romero’s message shows that there must be a preferential option for the poor, as a church, this means prioritizing the needs of the most poor and most vulnerable in society in all actions. We see Romero’s legacy personified with Pope Francis: “In Pope Francis writings and discourses, the pope has made it clear that his theological-pastoral option revolves around the preferential option for ‘a poor church committed to the poor.’”39 In our world today, the wealth disparities and the lack of care for the poor are reaching exponential levels. The church needs to take seriously the ministry of Romero for a model of imitation. Romero’s life shows us how we can imitate Christ’s option for the poor and apply it to our current world. His life

shows that one must cross boundaries in the world of religion and enter the social world in our option for the poor. In doing so we will be able to be a “voice for the voiceless” and learn to take seriously the call of imitating Christ.

After examining Romero’s life and legacy there is one clear conclusion about his ministry, and it revolves around the poor. Through Romero, we witness a man grow into a saint. He found church orthodoxy at the beginning of his life to be the most important aspect to the faith, but after witnessing deaths of his friends and watching the situation for the poor continue to get worse, he experienced a conversion. In this conversion, he developed solidarity with the poor. In his letters, he tried to understand how God relates to the poor in this world. He understood the importance of the poor having a legitimate voice because God dwells among them. This understanding ended up creating issues within his country and he witnessed the use of the poor for political agendas and gain. He found this issue troubling, so he finally developed an understanding in his final letter of the preferential option for the poor. For Romero, a preferential option for the poor ultimately meant caring for the poor with the highest quality and not using them for gain. This understanding of the poor to be cared for and liberated from their oppressive situations became his life’s work. In doing so he advocated for the less fortunate, he wanted to witness change in systems that continually oppress and use the poor. In his actions, he ran the same risk as the poor, and in doing so was assassinated. His legacy and life did not end there. It surpassed his earthly existence and is currently challenging all to live a life of preferential option for the poor. The next step is how do we as Catholics follow this saint’s witness and engage with the marginalized in Cleveland, Ohio.
POVERTY AND RACE

One of the biggest crises in the United States currently is the wealth gap between the rich and poor. Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty says that in the U.S. alone, there are 46.5 million people living in poverty, which is the highest number since poverty estimates have been published. These gaps in wealth can be seen first-hand in the city of Cleveland. In the past, Cleveland, Ohio, was a city flourishing with industry, but more recently, changing economics structures in the United States have greatly affected Cleveland. This change has left many people in some communities with no work, no homes, and no chance of escaping the poverty that has entrenched them and their communities. Statistics show that in 2017, Cuyahoga County, where Cleveland is located, had a population of 1,249,000. Within Cuyahoga County 227,740 people lived below the poverty line. Out of those 227,740 there were 23,000 people, or 1.8 percent of the county, affected by homelessness. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council citing U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides the following definition for homelessness:

A homeless individual is defined in section 330(h)(5)(A) as ‘an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides

temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.’ A homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)]

Housing and Urban Development of the United States defines homelessness as follows:

(1) Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution; (2) Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence; (3) Unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; or (4) Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

Both definitions provide surface level overviews of homelessness but lack a certain amount of depth, as they do not get into the causes of homelessness. We must look at the structural causes of homelessness such as race, housing, and education. These interrelated social justice issues are at the core of homelessness. Once we begin to understand the structural causes of homelessness, we can turn to faith to reevaluate how to best respond to the poor and vulnerable.

In looking at the numbers of homelessness in Cleveland, we see an alarming trend regarding race. Blacks and Hispanics suffer from homelessness at a much higher rate.

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compared to other races. The number is staggering (Appendix A).\(^{45}\) Seventy percent of people using the shelters are Black and twenty-five percent are Hispanic. This alarming discrepancy means we must consider race when examining the social structures that perpetuate homelessness in Cleveland.

Race and housing availability is another critical factor to evaluate when it comes to homelessness in Cleveland. The book *Evicted* by Princeton University sociologist Matthew Desmond explains the very complex issues behind the housing crisis in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a city facing similar crises to Cleveland. Desmond highlights multiple people’s experience of eviction, including African Americans tenants, white trailer park tenants, and even the property owners and their roles. Desmond identifies several key issues. First, housing often is unaffordable for people in lower income situations. At the beginning of his book, he explains the living situation for a mom and her two sons. They were evicted from a place they had lived in for eight months because someone kicked the door down. They were blamed wrongly for destroying the door and were punished for something they did not do. At that time, they went to stay at a homeless shelter until they could find new housing in the predominantly black inner-city neighborhood on Milwaukee’s North Side. When they were able to move into their new house, the water often would not work so they would have to scoop out water from the toilet for bathing and cleaning. After living in the new house for a couple weeks, the city deemed it unfit for human habitation, so the family had to move again. This time they had to move deeper into the inner city, which was a haven for drug dealers. After four

\(^{45}\) NEOCH, “Research and Stats.”
months, this mom was finally able to afford to move to the bottom floor of a duplex with broken windows and filthy floors. The rent at this location was $550. If she wanted to live in a little nicer place and pay $628 a month, rent would have taken 88% of her welfare check.46

For many people who have never struggled to find housing, this woman’s situation is hard to understand; it even seems unreal. However, this situation is a reality for many people of color for those in lower income brackets. Desmond explains, “Today, the majority of poor renting families in America spend over half of their income on housing, and at least one and fourdedicates 70 percent to paying the rent and keeping the lights on.”47 This scenario is a far too common experience for the poor and vulnerable in American cities, and this scenario often ends with eviction.

Milwaukee and Cleveland share a similar story. Both were thriving with factories and blue-collar jobs before falling victim to changing economics in the United States. Cleveland’s eviction rate is 4.53%, 2.19% higher than the national average.48 The three locations with the highest eviction rates in the area are Cleveland (8,612 cases), Bedford (1,674 cases), and Euclid (1,618 cases) (Appendix B).49 A large percentage of these populations are African American or Hispanic. In Cleveland, the population is 61.6% Black or Hispanic, Bedford 59% and Euclid 61.4% (Appendix C).50 Although the

47 Desmond, Evicted, 4.
49 NEOCH, “Research and Stats.”
50 United States Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Cleveland City, Ohio.”
Eviction statistics do not show specifically the race of the people, communities of color are the most impacted. The demographic makeup of areas with high eviction rates shows that these communities primarily consist of people of color.

Evictions have long-lasting effects that not only hurt the people removed from their homes but their communities as well. Desmond describes the story of Doreen and her family, and how they were evicted and had to move to a new neighborhood. In Doreen’s old neighborhood, she used to spend time checking on neighbors and interacting with people in the community. In her new neighborhood, she would hardly step off her porch and never interacted with her neighbors. Jane Jacobs explains that public peace is not usually kept by the police but by members of the communities interacting with one another creating controls and standards for the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{51}

When people in neighborhoods are uprooted against their will, public peace can be damaged.

Desmond further explains how moving around constantly with children trickles into the communities and schools:

A single eviction could destabilize multiple city blocks, not only the block from which a family was evicted but also the block to which it begrudgingly relocated. In this way, displacement contributed directly to what Jacobs called “perpetual slums,” churning environments with high rates of turnover and even higher rates of resentment and disinvestment. ‘The key link in a perpetual slum is that too many people move out of it too fast—and in the meantime dream of getting out.’\textsuperscript{52}

This disinvestment comes from two places: displaced individuals and directly from the government. Once a person is evicted from one area, it can destroy city blocks because of

\textsuperscript{51} Desmond, \textit{Evicted}, 70.
\textsuperscript{52} Desmond, \textit{Evicted}, 70.
the loss of the person’s role in the community. After the eviction, they must search for places to live, and multiple evictions from housing may raise red flags with landlords. At that point, evictees are either searching for a place that is below adequate in a community that they will not invest in or risk becoming homeless. People who live in a community where they do not feel safe creates a lack of communication and a constant searching to get out. During this search, people are not investing in their communities and engaging with neighbors creating controls and standards. The government sees these places and they decide that there is no need to invest because they are crime ridden and high poverty locations. The areas do not receive adequate government resources such as education and other public services.

**Education**

In addition to poverty and race, access to quality education also has an impact on homelessness. The idea of investment in children offering greater return in the future is a common idea. Many people say education is the “key” to elevating people in poverty. Investing in education leads to jobs, safety, and ultimately a more engaged community. A lack of education leads to people unable to find jobs and resorting to desperate measures to make ends meet. This problem disproportionally affects people of color and the poor and vulnerable in Cleveland and creates future issues such as homelessness, unlivable wages, and substandard housing.

Many people believe everyone should receive quality education but unfortunately, this is not the reality in the United States. In his book, *The Shame of the Nation*, Johnathan Kozol looks at the issue of education in the United States. His approach starts with telling stories about classroom issues seen in inner city Black and Hispanic
communities. Kozol focuses on society’s failure to invest in urban communities and schools. He explains, “I had visited many elementary schools in the South Bronx …. I had also made a number of visits to a high school where a stream of water flowed down one of the main stairwells on a rainy afternoon … in one make-shift elementary school house in a former skating rink next to a funeral parlor in another nearly all-black-and-Hispanic section.”\textsuperscript{53} He further compares these schools to ones in wealthier suburbs. In wealthy schools, parents often raise private funds, allowing them to invest more in each student and increasing the gap between the rich and the poor schools.

Throughout the book, Kozol emphasizes the differences in the way the United States has invested in the education of Black and Hispanic children, especially those living in poverty. Kozol says, “Experts in desegregation sometimes note that social policy in the United States, to the degree that it concerns the education of black and Hispanic children has turned back more than 50 years to where the nation stood in 1954.”\textsuperscript{54} This means, as authors Arshad Ali and Tracy Buenavista explain, “Now more than fifty years later… public schools are more intensely segregated than they were at the time of the Brown decision.”\textsuperscript{55} This segregation has resulted in unequal resources and investment in poor communities and communities of color.

This inequality is evident if you examine spending per pupil in school districts located in the previously discussed communities with the highest eviction numbers.


\textsuperscript{54} Kozol, \textit{Shame of the Nation}, 213-214.

Cleveland, Bedford, Euclid, and Parma are all located within Cuyahoga County. (Appendices D, E, F, G). The Cleveland school district is 80.3% Black and Hispanic with 100% of the students classified as economically disadvantaged. The city of Cleveland ranks 14 out of 15 in classroom instruction spending per pupil in school systems with 10,000 or more students.\textsuperscript{56} Bedford school district is 85.6% Black and Hispanic, with 65.1% of students classified as economically disadvantaged. In school systems with 2,500-4,999 students, it ranks last in classroom instruction spending per pupil.\textsuperscript{57} Euclid school district is 87.7% Black and Hispanic, with 59.7% of students classified as economically disadvantaged, and in school systems with 5,000-9,999 students, it ranks 39 out of 46 in classroom instruction spending per pupil.\textsuperscript{58} Finally, as a comparison, Parma school district is 80% White, non-Hispanic and 14.6% Black and Hispanic, with 47.6% classified as economically disadvantaged. In the city of Parma with systems of 10,000 or more students, they rank 3 out of 15.\textsuperscript{59}

The comparison of Parma to Cleveland, Bedford, and Euclid is worth pointing out. Though Parma, which is predominantly white, has high poverty levels and eviction rates, their schools nonetheless rank 3 out of 15 in spending on classroom instruction per pupil. Cleveland city schools, which fall in the same category as the Parma school system


by pupil number, but whose students are predominantly students of color, ranks 14 out of 15. The spending on classroom instruction in the Black and Hispanic schools is toward the bottom of Ohio’s spending. We can conclude based off statistics of classroom spending that color could be a determining factor in how investment in school regions is determined. As discussed previously, this lack of quality education corresponds with housing and homelessness.

The disinvestment by governments highlighted by Desmond starts from the beginning by not investing in the schools within these communities. Children living in these regions are automatically a step behind people in white communities. This disinvestment easily can lead into situations of homelessness because the lack of quality education and training puts them behind in advanced job opportunities, stable housing due to the lack of job opportunity that stems from the poor education, and health and well-being. Understanding this structural issue helps us begin see the complexities behind poverty and homelessness. This should challenge us to continue investigating other structural issues such as redlining, mass incarceration, mental health, veteran assistance, and many others. We must start somewhere to begin bridging the gap between the well off and poor. In doing so, we must reflect on our faith tradition and Óscar Romero’s life to see what our faith calls us to do in situations of injustice.
Catholic Social Teaching often is called the greatest secret within the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, Óscar Romero was living out these principles in his life and work. He gave us concrete examples of living out what we call Catholic Social Teaching which is “the church’s explicit and official grappling with contemporary social problems …” Today, Catholic social teaching is a primary resource for the Catholic contribution to the public sphere on matters of globalization, justice, human dignity, and peace.”

There are seven principles of Catholic social teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Call to Family, Community, and Participation, Rights and Responsibilities, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, Solidarity, and Care for God's Creation. Reflecting on Óscar Romero’s life gives us concrete examples of how these important principles are to be lived out. Three in particular are important when considering Romero’s Witness and the contemporary issue of homelessness: Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, and Solidarity. Examining how Romero understood these principles give us the ability to look at a modern saint and use his witness when engaging with people experiencing homelessness.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person is at the core of Catholic social teaching. We all have inherent dignity when God created us because we are made in God’s image

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and likeness. Each person, no matter race, culture, sex, or beliefs, has an inherent dignity from God. Óscar Romero makes this dignity clear, when he preaches:

We weep tears of joy and gratitude knowing that this infinite God became flesh like us and dwelt among us. If Christ were to become incarnate today—right now in 1978—he’d be a thirty-year-old-man; he could be sitting here in the cathedral and we wouldn’t be able to pick him out from all the rest of you. He’d be a campesino from Nazareth, thirty years old, sitting here in the cathedral like any campesino of our villages. He’d be the Son of God made man, and we wouldn’t recognize him. In everything he’d be like us! But when that Christ who is God—through whom the world was made—became human, then he lifted all human beings to the category of God.61

As explained earlier, he is showing how Christ, who is God entering human form, lifts all human being to the category of God. By Christ entering our world as human, it shows God’s special relationships with humanity and God’s willingness to experience all the aspects of humanity, even death. When God entered this world, God entered as a poor carpenter from Nazareth, creating a special identification and relationship with the poor. We turn back to Jesus’ life and Romero’s words and remember Jesus was just like a campesino. When we engage with people experiencing homelessness, we must find God within him or her. This relationship is the basis for the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.

The teaching of preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is one of the most challenging parts of Catholic social teaching. It challenges us to put the needs of the most poor and vulnerable in society first when we think about any economic or political decisions. Focusing on the poor is a lifestyle that changes the way that we view the world. In choosing the poor, you choose the people whose voices go unheard, but in

61 Romero, A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People, 82.
doing so, Father Gustavo Gutiérrez explains you are engaging in three aspects: “the following of Jesus, theological work, and the proclamation of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{62} To follow Jesus is to be moved by the spirit and to walk in his footsteps. This is the root of preferential option for the poor. Theological work that focuses on hope is also essential. Gutiérrez understands that God’s hope, especially for the poor, can be difficult, but “hoping is not waiting; rather it should lead us to actively resolve to forge reasons for hope.”\textsuperscript{63} We are meant to continue the work that prescribes hope in people and forging reasons for hope in the world.

Óscar Romero always had the poor in mind, and through his conversion, he lived out the preferential option for the poor, ultimately becoming a voice for the poor. Romero says in one of his homilies, “I am excited, dear brothers and sisters. I am going to Puebla, and I am going to take with me, in my voice, … the expression of this church that you are. You! What a living church! What a martyred church! How filled with the Holy Spirit…. May my humble voice at Puebla be the echo of the voice of all these communities of yours.”\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, carrying the voice of those who are not heard is essential to a preferential option for the poor. The three aspects that Father Gutiérrez laid out are prevalent in Romero’s voice. First, the spirit is moving him to walk in the footsteps of Christ. Next, the spirit helps him find hope in bringing the voices of the poor with him in his theological work in Puebla. He is instilling in them hope to change their


\textsuperscript{63} Farmer and Gutierrez, \textit{In the Company of the Poor}, 153.

\textsuperscript{64} Sobrino, \textit{Archbishop Romero}, 172.
situation. This proclamation of the Gospel moves him to go to Puebla and preach about justice for his people. To be able to carry the voice of his people, he must be in solidarity with his people.

Solidarity is a complex topic. A simple definition identifies solidarity as putting yourself in other people’s shoes, but this understanding is not sufficient. Father Thomas Massaro explains that solidarity begins first by understanding and recognizing that people are interdependent. We rely on each other for almost all our needs. We must first recognize this principle and realize its positive implications.\(^65\) He continues, “Solidarity begins as an inner attitude and, when it has fully taken root within a person, expresses itself through numerous external activities that demonstrate a person’s commitment to the well-being of others.”\(^66\) Meghan Clark explains further, how the virtue of solidarity takes place in three steps. First, the attitude that you have toward solidarity is what helps you begin to see the interdependence of humanity. Second, solidarity is a duty, and we must realize our duty to uphold human dignity of all persons and recognize how it expands to communities. Third, solidarity is a virtue that builds on the first two steps of awareness and duty. Ultimately, this virtue is lived out not just through political and social conditions but also through a commitment to personal flourishing and participation in the common good.

Creating a habit of solidarity is critical here. In growing this habit, we must understand the objects and ends of the virtue.\(^67\) Clark explains, “For solidarity, the

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\(^{66}\) Massaro, *Living Justice*, 84

\(^{67}\) Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought*, 108-111.
formal object is our common humanity. The end of solidarity is participation in the universal common good. To be more specific, it is the participation by all in the universal common good …. The virtue of solidarity requires the participation of both the “agent” and those with whom the agent seeks to be in solidarity.” Clark importantly is pointing out that solidarity is not just a one-sided relationship. The person we seek to be in solidarity with must participate equally. Solidarity cannot be “top-down,” let me help you with my privilege approach, but a “bottom-up” approach in which we listen to the poor and the oppressed to hear what they need and what they need us to do.

This equal participation was evident in Óscar Romero’s life. In many ways, Romero was in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in El Salvador. He carried their voices with him when he went to meetings with politicians, bishops, and friends. Óscar Romero preached that the church must be in solidarity with those who are poor and must experience the same risks. In his scenario, this risk was death. By reaching for a universal common good for the poor and marginalized in El Salvador, he let them be part of his voice. He asked them to write to him for his pastoral letter and continually engaged with them. This engagement allowed for authenticity in his preaching and writing and aided his process of conversion. A conversion of heart is central to making Catholic Social Teaching relevant and engaging with the poor and marginalized. Romero’s conversion challenges us to convert our hearts toward people that are suffering and hurting in our world.

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68 Clark, The Vision of Catholic Social Thought, 112-113.
CONVERSION OF THE HEART AND ROMERO’S EXAMPLE

Being Christian is much more than just an identification that Jesus was the Son of God, who died on a cross for our sins. We must have a deeper meaning and understanding to our faith. As Christians, we must reflect on the life of Jesus and try to understand his message. Jesus was a figure who challenged society and continually called for justice. His belief in this message was so strong that he died on the cross. Being Christian is not just belief but should having a consuming effect on our life. Much of society focuses only on the belief. Many Christians assume the poor and marginalized will receive peace in the afterlife. As Christians, this belief is not sufficient, and we must experience a conversion like Romero. It must be a conversion of intensified faith and a calling to something deeper in life.69 Lee explains “Conversion touches on the heart of Christianity: it is a call to faith; it is tied to the movement of repentance from sin, away from thoughts and behaviors damaging to oneself or others and toward seeking God’s will.”70

Óscar Romero shows us what this conversion looks like. As discussed, Romero engaged with the ideas from Medellín and the marginalized in a different way before the death of Grande. After Grande’s death, Romero no longer allowed his destructive thoughts and ideas to push him away from the poor. Even though he was still not seeing them as his brothers and sisters, he began to be moved by them. The abuses to the poor Romero witnessed in his diocese began to complete the change in his heart. Lee explains, “As compelling as the Grande narrative is, and certainly it should keep its place as pivotal

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69 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 45.
70 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 45-46.
in Romero’s change, if it is understood too rigidly or in isolation it raises problems regarding Romero’s biography and, in addition, could be an obstacle to properly understanding conversion itself.”71 Therefore, it is important not to focus only on this one moment when we look at Óscar Romero as a model for engaging with people experiencing homelessness. In Romero’s case, this conversion did not actually happen suddenly. It started when he was made Bishop in Santiago de María, and after the death of his friend Grande, he completely opened himself to God’s will and a full conversion took place. Romero grew in his understanding of what being open to God’s will meant for his life through his preaching, ministry, and letters. Romero’s conversion is a useful model because it shows the evolution of his ideas over the span of several years. It provides an example for our own lives and potential conversions that, though they will not happen overnight are nonetheless crucial for our ability to be in solidarity with the poor.

Romero started his journey as a man continually working to remove those people who were engaging with the poor before evolving into a man who died with the poor. As Catholics in Cleveland, we cannot expect a conversion to come out of nowhere, perhaps caused by some dramatic scene. We must start by understanding how sin effects our ability to follow God’s will. This knowledge requires deep reflection on habits, feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Secondly, we must engage with the people experiencing homelessness. Our hearts can then open as Romero’s did, and we start the process of conversion. This engagement

71 Lee, Revolutionary Saint, 54.
must be sincere. Sincere engagement means we share with them and listen to them. It requires creating a relationship with them. It does not come from the top-down, but from the bottom-up. We share conversation, thoughts, ideas, and stories with one another. Once this conversion begins, we must examine the structures in society that perpetuate oppression. Finally, we must turn to faith. As Romero did with the documents of Medellín, it will challenge us to start living God’s will and working for justice for people experiencing homelessness. When we realize our own sins and we begin to engage with the homeless, we can start to see their human dignity and grow in solidarity with them. As our relationships grow, we begin our conversion, ultimately moving to a preferential option for the poor. This conversion begins with realizing our sin and engaging with the poor and marginalized.

**Understanding Sin**

As Lee explained, a conversion means that we become aware of our sin. In becoming aware, we can begin to understand how it affects others and ourselves, but this requires examining our sins instead of running away from them. Sin in our society is easily dismissed and often justified as appropriate. For Óscar Romero it took him much of his life to understand how his behaviors and ideas were sinful. Once fully becoming aware of sinfulness in his ministry, his life was forever changed. In our understanding of sin, especially how it relates to people experiencing homelessness, we can look toward Annie Bullock’s work. In her book *Real Austin*, she reflects on her involvement with people experiencing homelessness. She is honest about her reactions to the homeless people she would
encounter in her daily life. For example, she talks about how she changed her entire bus route, which added stops and extra time to her commute instead of being on the bus where she would often become uncomfortable through encounters with people experiencing homelessness. She explains how sin is not spectacular most of the time. It is the culmination of little actions, which we excuse as acceptable. She explains, “Sin is hundreds of tiny decisions that add up to a life that is less full and whole than it should be.” We must begin to reflect on our personal habits and see if they are sinful in nature. She lists off examples such as being there without really being present, being engaged without really engaging, keeping a mental distance by joking and assigning nicknames, keeping physical distance by habits of avoidance, and learning to come near without lowering one’s guard. We all in some way have some habitual sins that keep us comfortable.

Therefore, understanding our habitual sins and being honest about them allows us to move forward. Bullock explains we must not feel guilty over these sins because allowing guilt to sink in creates a guilt that consumes our conscience. It causes us to reflect, ask how it is possible, and forces us to think that we are incapable of doing something sinful. It tries to make us believe we are something beyond sin. The truth is that we are all sinful. We are not perfect human beings, and so we must recognize our sin and admit it is a part of who we are.


73 Bullock, Real Austin, 87.

74 Bullock, Real Austin, 88.
Nevertheless, even though we are sinful, it does not mean that we cannot be and do better. We have to replace the idea that we are beyond sin with a more honest understanding. Once we realize this, we can act differently towards guilt because a new way is now open to us.\textsuperscript{75} Bullock explains:

For transformation, two things are necessary: Grace and practice. Grace comes from God but knowledge precedes practice. If sin diminishes my humanity—and I firmly believe that it does—then I am not stuck with it. Once I know that, I can begin again, empowered by the Holy Spirit … I am not stuck with sin because I am a human being, created in the image of God. When I know that, I can begin again and live like someone who was created for something better than a life of sin. Fear and revulsion stand in the way of this better life. I used the term passion to describe them here. They are movements of the soul that prompt sinful actions. They are part of my experience of sin. They move me and I act, bypassing whatever love I have rattling around in my brain. Until I learn to recognize them and overcome them, I am completely bound by sin. I am caught in its way of death. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I am not dead yet.\textsuperscript{76}

We are created in the image of God and when we sin, it diminishes us and our human dignity. This diminishment is an essential concept to understanding sin. We are not created in the image of sin and we must work toward our true humanity, which is in the image of God. In the beginning of Óscar Romero’s life, he relied on old tendencies and passions of “fear and revulsion” that pushed away the poor instead of encountering them. Once he fully understood his sin, he saw God’s will for himself. This pushed him towards conversion as he grew in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in El Salvador. We must come to grips with our own “fears and revulsions.” This allows us to begin to work away from

\textsuperscript{75} Bullock, \textit{Real Austin}, 88-89.

\textsuperscript{76} Bullock, \textit{Real Austin}, 89.
sin and learn to engage differently with people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland.

**PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT**

Striving to understand our passions and sins is the start of a conversion of heart. However, we must also start engaging with the people experiencing homelessness and start reflecting on our reactions to them. In doing so we gain a better understanding of ourselves, in the ways we push them away, and our habits of avoiding them or rudely speaking of them and to them. At the same time, this engagement allows us to understand them and gives us a chance to see their human dignity. As discussed above, Óscar Romero went through this process with the Passionist priests and with documents of Medellín. He began engaging with the people that the Passionists were working with and the people the Medellín documents were written for. This gave him the ability to evaluate the sins that were pushing him away and the ability to see their dignity. How do we begin this engagement with the homeless in Cleveland?

Bullock has some potential answers. She explains, “I am meant for something better than crossing the street to avoid a homeless man or woman. I am meant to do better than leaping off the bus at the first hint of discomfort. I am meant to face people as they are and look past whatever offends me to the truth. And the truth is, the homeless are human beings like me.”

\[77\text{Bullock, Real Austin, 89.}\]
begin the process. By taking this step, we can see a snowball effect and the engagement continues in a deeper sense. Once Óscar Romero began his engagement, he did not stop. His engagement turned into solidarity, a preferential option for the poor, and the respect for human dignity. I will give a personal experience about how we can begin a similar process as Romero from my interactions with the people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland.

I have lived in Cleveland for two years, and just from walking around downtown, I noticed that there were many people experiencing homelessness waiting outside the casino and down certain streets in the city. This issue always bothered me. I would interact with the people I ran into downtown but nothing more. Recently, in a class of mine, I was asked with a couple of classmates to organize a bible study at the local men’s shelter. We call this bible study Scripture and Social Justice. This bible study has given me the opportunity once a week to share in scripture with men at the shelter. This work allows for a completely different type of engagement with the people experiencing homelessness. In the bible study, we really work on allowing the men to speak about what scripture means to them personally. It allows them to use their own voice, sharing with us about their experiences. This bible study is the inspiration for this entire paper. In engaging with these men, I have begun to grow in solidarity with them, see their human dignity, and grow in a preferential option for the poor. From this experience, I have learned that it is important that we engage in a way that gives them the ability to use their voice and let their voice speak through us. Óscar Romero said, “I am excited, dear brothers and sisters. I am going to Puebla, and I
am going to take with me, in my voice… the expression of this church that you are. You! What a living church! What a martyred church! How filled with the Holy Spirit… May my humble voice at Puebla be the echo of the voice of all these communities of yours.”^78 Through this paper, I am trying to carry the voice of the men with whom I share bible study. In carrying their voice, I will give a couple examples of discussions we have had in our bible study together.

The first time that we were there, we reflected on The Good Samaritan parable. After reading the passage a few times, we asked the men to identify with a person in the reading. I honestly thought that this passage would have the same results that it does with us when we read it. They would identify with the Priest or the Good Samaritan. As we went around the room, we heard people say how they identified with certain people, but three people’s responses were most profound. One was a worker who I will call Beth. She said that she identifies with the innkeeper because with hardly knowing any of the men that enter the shelter, she is asked to take care of them like the innkeeper. Another man with long hair and a couple of missing teeth, who I will call Johnny, said, “I didn’t identify with a person but, instead, with the pack mule that carried the man on the road.” He continued, “I often try to carry the burdens of my brothers and sisters as this pack mule did for that man.” The last response was from a bigger man, who wrote his name on his nametag very small making it hard to read, but we will call him Jerry.

---

^78 Sobrino, Archbishop Romero, 172.
Jerry explained, that he “identified with the man that was beaten and left on the road.”

These responses really begin to create a different image of The Good Samaritan parable for me. The participants’ responses gave a glimpse of how different experiences by each person truly affects their understanding of scripture. Additionally, this should help us begin to see the human dignity or lack of human dignity that these men experience. The man that identifies as the pack mule can show us how his brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness in Cleveland do not receive respect of their dignity. He works to help those that are struggling because no one else in society sees them as human causing him to be responsible for carrying their burdens. The man that identified as the beaten man is another example of a lack of people seeing human dignity in him.

At another bible study, I asked the men how to begin to build the Kingdom of God here on this earth now. How do we create change in society? Their answers were short and simple. First, they said, “we must let God be the one that speaks through us”; secondly, “we must enter the belly of the beast. No one who does not enter the belly of the beast can fix it. The belly of the beast is this shelter and the ones like it.” For us, we must enter the belly of the beast; otherwise, we cannot be in solidarity and see their human dignity. Óscar Romero entered the belly of the beast and he died because of his identification with the marginalized found in the belly. Our engagement must drive us closer toward one another and help us grow together. We should feel challenged in Óscar Romero’s
legacy to use our different talents and skills to engage and grow in solidarity with the people experiencing homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Growing in solidarity with people experiencing homelessness is not an easy task. It requires us to evaluate our life and determine how our actions are keeping us from growing in solidarity with the people experiencing homelessness. People who came before us, like Óscar Romero, help set an example. His life shows us how to grow in solidarity, a preferential option for the poor, and respect for human dignity. At the same time, Óscar Romero’s early life provides a foil to his later example. The conversion he underwent is a sign of hope for our community – it is possible to change. This change can turn us toward the people and bring us closer to them in all aspects of our life. Romero’s example is especially applicable to the oppression of the men and women experiencing homelessness in Cleveland. In evaluating these social structures of education and housing in Cleveland, we can understand how race has an extraordinary impact on the funding and investment given to people of color. This under investment has created homelessness at disproportionate levels for people of color. Understanding that being homeless often is not necessarily due to poor life decisions, but instead is imbedded in our structures, we can begin to understand homelessness differently.

As Catholics, we should use our faith as a tool for investigating these issues. In examining Catholic Social Teaching, our faith tells us the rights and responsibilities all human beings have. It is not just that every person has these
rights and responsibilities, but we have to identify with the marginalized and people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland. We must experience a conversion of heart as Romero did. Our conversion should turn us toward the people, and we can only get there when we evaluate our sin. Sins such as switching the side of the street as we walk or changing our bus route to avoid a person experiencing homelessness must be considered. We must evaluate what brings these actions to the surface by evaluating our passions of “fear and revulsion” whatever they may be for each person. Additionally, we must find ways of engagement with people experiencing homelessness. This engagement can start small as it did for Romero engaging with the Passionist priests and people in Santiago de María. Eventually this engagement needs to grow deeper if we want to become the image that God created us to be. In doing so, we begin to see God within each person experiencing homelessness.
APPENDIX B: INCOMING\textsuperscript{79} AND TERMINATED\textsuperscript{80} F.E.D. CASES FOR MUNICIPAL COURTS IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Incoming</th>
<th>Total Terminations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedford MC</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berea MC</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Heights MC</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland MC (Housing)</td>
<td>8,612</td>
<td>8,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Cleveland MC</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euclid MC</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield Heights MC</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>1,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood MC</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndhurst MC</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parma MC</td>
<td>1,217</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky River MC</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaker Heights MC</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Euclid MC</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Courts</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,569</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,385</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{79} “Total Incoming” refers to new cases filed, cases transferred in to the court, reopened or reactivated cases.

\textsuperscript{80} “Total Terminations” includes cases reaching a final disposition and cases that may be temporarily disposed. Cases temporarily disposed are those that are inactive because they have a bankruptcy stay or interlocutory appeal or those in which a party is temporarily unavailable.
## APPENDIX C: U.S. CENSUS DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION ESTIMATES, JULY 1, 2017, (V2017)</th>
<th>PARMA, OHIO</th>
<th>CLEVELAND, OHIO</th>
<th>BEDFORD, OHIO</th>
<th>EUCLID, OHIO</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79,167</td>
<td>385,525</td>
<td>12,627</td>
<td>47,201</td>
<td>325,719,178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PARMA, OHIO</th>
<th>CLEVELAND, OHIO</th>
<th>BEDFORD, OHIO</th>
<th>EUCLID, OHIO</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE ALONE, PERCENT</strong></td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BLACK OR AFRICAN</strong></td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN ALONE, PERCENT(A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMERICAN INDIAN</strong></td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AND ALASKA NATIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALONE, PERCENT(A)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASIAN ALONE, PERCENT(A)</strong></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALONE, PERCENT(A)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TWO OR MORE</strong></td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACES, PERCENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HISPANIC OR LATINO,</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENT(B)</strong></td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE ALONE, NOT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HISPANIC OR LATINO,</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENT</strong></td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: 2016–2017 REPORT CARD FOR CLEVELAND MUNICIPAL CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT


Superintendent: Eric S. Gordon
Address: 1111 Superior Ave E
Cleveland OH 44114-2522
Phone: (216) 574-0800
County: Cuyahoga
Career Tech Planning District: Cleveland Municipal CTPD

Your District’s Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment by Subgroup</th>
<th>Enrollment #</th>
<th>Enrollment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian / Alaskan Native</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>25,120</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6,142</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>6,110</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>8,479</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>38,949</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
<td>3,574</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

794
NC = Not Calculated because there are fewer than 10 in the group

Enrollments of less than 10 students are not shown.

State and federal law require an annual assessment of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to measure their English language proficiency. The Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA) is the assessment used in Ohio to gauge ELP students’ growth in learning English. For information about your district’s OELPA results, see the Department of Education’s web site at http://education.ohio.gov.

Financial Data

These measures answer several questions about spending and performance. How much is spent on Classroom Instruction? How much, on average, is spent on each student? What is the source of the revenues? How do these measures compare to other districts and schools?

Comparison Group: Enrollment 10,000 or more

Classroom Spending Data

What percent of funds are spent on classroom instruction? 64.0%

How does this district rank in comparison to other districts of similar size? 14 out of 15

Spending per Pupil Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Spending per Pupil</td>
<td>$11,054</td>
<td>$9,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>$7,070</td>
<td>$6,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Classroom Spending</td>
<td>$3,984</td>
<td>$3,968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: District financial data do not include data associated with community schools that are sponsored by the school district.

Cleveland Municipal City IS NOT among the 20% of public districts with the lowest operating expenditures per pupil.

Cleveland Municipal City IS NOT among the 30% of public districts with the highest academic performance index scores.
APPENDIX E: 2016–2017 REPORT CARD FOR BEDFORD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT


Superintendent: Andrea Celico
Address: 475 Northfield Rd
Bedford OH 44146-2201
Phone: (440) 439-1590
County: Cuyahoga
Career Tech
Planning District: Maple Heights-Bedford CTPD

Your District's Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Limited English Proficiency Students Excluded from Accountability Calculations: 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Average Daily Enrollment: 3,215

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment by Subgroup</th>
<th>Enrollment #</th>
<th>Enrollment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian / Alaskan Native</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2,636</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NC = Not Calculated because there are fewer than 10 in the group

State and federal law require an annual assessment of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to measure their English language proficiency. The Ohio English Language-Proficiency Assessment (OELPA) is the assessment used in Ohio to gauge LEP students' growth in learning English. For information about your district’s OELPA results, see the Department of Education’s web site at http://education.ohio.gov.

Enrollments of less than 10 students are not shown.

Financial Data

These measures answer several questions about spending and performance: How much is spent on Classroom instruction? How much, on average, is spent on each student? What is the source of the revenue? How do these measures compare to other districts and schools?

Comparison Group: Enrollment between 2500 and 4999

Classroom Spending Data

What percent of funds are spent on classroom instruction? 60.4%

How does this district rank in comparison to other districts of similar size? 109 out of 109

A rank of 1 indicates the highest percent spent on classroom instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending per Pupil Data</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Spending per Pupil</td>
<td>$11,117</td>
<td>$9,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>$6,728</td>
<td>$6,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Classroom Spending</td>
<td>$4,417</td>
<td>$2,968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bedford City IS NOT among the 20% of public districts with the lowest operating expenditures per pupil.

Bedford City IS NOT among the 20% of public districts with the highest academic performance index scores.

Note: District financial data do not include data associated with community schools that are sponsored by the school district.
APPENDIX F: 2016–2017 REPORT
CARD FOR EUCLID CITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT


Superintendent: Charles A. Smalek
Address: 651 E 222nd St
Euclid OH 44123-2031

Phone: (216) 261-2900
County: Cuyahoga
Career Tech Planning District: Lake Shore Compact CTPD

Your District’s Students

Average Daily Enrollment: 5,218

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment #</th>
<th>Enrollment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian / Alaskan Native</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>13 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>4,515 89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>62 1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>222 4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>401 7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>999 19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>3,117 59.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
<td>19 0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NC = Not Calculated because there are fewer than 10 in the group

State and federal law require an annual assessment of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to measure their English language proficiency. The Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OLEPA) is the assessment used in Ohio to gauge LEP student’s growth in learning English. For information about your district’s OLEPA results, see the Department of Education’s website at http://education.ohio.gov.

Enrollments of less than 10 students are not shown.

Financial Data

These measures answer several questions about spending and performance. How much is spent on Classroom instruction? How much, on average, is spent on each student? What is the source of the revenue? How do these measures compare to other districts and schools?

Comparison Group: Enrollment between 5880 and 9698

Classroom Spending Data

What percent of funds are spent on Classroom instruction?

66.0%

How does this district rank in comparison to other districts of similar size?

39 out of 46

A rank of 1 indicates the highest percent spent on classroom instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending per Pupil Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Spending per Pupil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Classroom Spending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Euclid City IS NOT among the 20% of public districts with the lowest operating expenditures per pupil
Euclid City IS NOT among the 20% of public districts with the highest academic performance index scores.

Note: District financial data do not include data associated with community schools that are sponsored by the school district.
APPENDIX G: 2016–2017 REPORT CARD FOR PARMA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT


Superintendent: Carl H. Helling
Address: 511 Longwood Avenue
Parma OH 44134-0932

Phone: (440) 842-6300
County: Cuyahoga
Career Tech Planning District: Parma City CTPD

Your District’s Students

Average Daily Enrollment: 10,658

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment by Subgroup</th>
<th>Enrollment #</th>
<th>Enrollment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian / Alekson Native</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>6,233</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NC = Not Calculated because there are fewer than 10 in the group.

States and federal law requires an annual assessment of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to measure their English language proficiency. The Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA) is the assessment used in Ohio to gauge LEP students’ growth in learning English. For information about your district’s OELPA results, see the Department of Education’s web site at http://education.ohio.gov.

Enrollments of less than 10 students are not shown.
Financial Data

These measures answer several questions about spending and performance. How much is spent on Classroom instruction? How much, on average, is spent on each student? What is the source of the revenue? How do these measures compare to other districts and schools?

Comparison Group: Enrollment 10,000 or more

Classroom Spending Data

What percent of funds are spent on classroom instruction? 73.5%

How does this district rank in comparison to other districts of similar size? 3 out of 15

3 out of 15

A rank of 1 indicates the highest percent spent on classroom instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom Instruction  Non-Classroom Instruction

Spending per Pupil Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Spending per Pupil</td>
<td>$10,613</td>
<td>$9,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>$5,805</td>
<td>$5,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Classroom Spending</td>
<td>$4,808</td>
<td>$4,968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


