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FROM THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE TO THE GIFT OF PEACE

Reading the Consistent Ethic of Life as an Ethic of Peacemaking

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Introduction

The consistent ethic of life stands as one of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's major contributions to Catholic public discourse. Yet if one looks at Cardinal Bernardin's major works in chronological perspective, one might notice a subtle but striking fact: standing like bookends to his championing of the consistent ethic of life are two intriguingly titled documents—the then National Council of Catholic Bishops' document, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*,² and his own autobiography, *The Gift of Peace*.³ Is it mere coincidence that “peace” frames Bernardin's development and forwarding of the consistent ethic of life?

I think not. In this chapter, I argue that the consistent ethic of life must be understood as essentially, necessarily, intrinsically (though not solely) an ethic of peacemaking. Bernardin himself repeatedly noted how his development of the consistent ethic of life grew out of both his work on the peace pastoral and the content of the pastoral itself. But I wish to make an even stronger claim. In this paper, I argue that the consistent ethic ought to be read not primarily as an ethic of principles, not primarily as a tool for negotiating public policy, and not solely as focused on the principle of the sanctity of life. Too often, the “sanctity of life” as a theological commitment becomes decoupled from the Christian story in which it makes sense with the ironic result that “life” becomes an idol that is championed through violence. Therefore, in order for the consistent ethic of life to fulfill its function as a way for Christians to work for the common good in the public square and to faithfully fulfill their mission of incarnating the gospel, we must attend to the substantive theological vision out of which it arose and that must continuously inform it. This paper teases out that vision.

Methodological Presuppositions

Before turning to the argument itself, allow me to state three important methodological claims that shape my reading of Bernardin's work. First, the

consistent ethic of life, to be adequately understood, must be read in context. Too often the consistent ethic of life is treated as a self-contained body of work—analyses focus on the thirty-six or so “consistent ethic” talks and proceed from there. However, while Bernardin was writing and delivering the consistent ethic talks, he was writing and delivering a much larger body of work. Consequently, as with any other important intellectual and theological figure, one necessary hermeneutical lens is provided by the larger corpus of Bernardin’s work as a whole. To fully understand the larger theological and moral vision, his consistent ethic talks must be read in conversation with his homilies and pastoral letters to the Archdiocese of Chicago as well as significant episcopal documents.

Clearly, one difference between the consistent ethic and his other works could be identified as that of “audience.” Bernardin identified the consistent ethic as a tool for engaging public policy in a secular pluralist context. He makes this clear from the beginning in the Gannon Lecture, the first lecture devoted to the consistent ethic of life. And often, when theologians analyze, utilize, and criticize the consistent ethic, they think of it in these terms. As just one example, Alphonse Spilly, who edited the two-volume compilation entitled *Selected Works of Cardinal Bernardin*, locates the consistent ethic talks in the second volume, which is labeled “Church and Society,” under the subheading “The Life of Society.”

But to see the consistent ethic primarily or solely as a tool for the church to navigate its relationship to society, as a tool for public policy, is to overlook the logically prior public at which the consistent ethic is aimed: the internal public of the church, the Catholic community itself. In crafting the consistent ethic, Bernardin was seeking to provide a vision for consensus *within* the church, a consensus that could “shape the public witness of the Catholic Church” and thereby serve as a transformative force within society.⁴ The social policy piece can only follow from and must necessarily build upon the prior task of ecclesial formation.

Thus, in the following pages, I do not explicitly take up the public policy aspects of the consistent ethic. While this is an important dimension of the consistent ethic, it is logically secondary.⁵ The primary “public” that the consistent ethic seeks to shape is the public of the church, the ecclesial public, in its own inconsistency, in its own inability to see connections between war and abortion; sexual ethics, bioethics, and social ethics; technology, peace, and justice; “social issues” and “life issues”—or however these silos are variously named. Minimally, these are all different ways that Bernardin identifies in the consistent ethic corpus the disconnects within the Catholic community. As Bernardin notes, “We should begin with the honest recognition that the shaping of a consensus among Catholics on the spectrum of life issues is far from finished” (SG, 14).

This brings me to my third methodological claim. The consistent ethic is often interpreted as being about “principles,” most specifically about the

principle of the sanctity of human life or the dignity of the human person. Certainly Bernardin's own texts lend themselves to this interpretation (SG, 10-13). But I wish to argue that in Bernardin's corpus as a whole, we see the beginnings of an important methodological shift, one that he himself might not have explicitly seen or been able to claim, but which I think is there in a very powerful way. Especially if we see the ecclesial community as the logically prior and primary public for the consistent ethic, I suggest here that it ought to be understood not primarily as an ethic of principles but as an ethic of practices.

It has been a commonplace within the Catholic tradition to see "spirituality" and "ethics" as two distinct realms, one pertaining to individual, personal faith formation, the other to the impersonal realm of the "public." Bernardin himself was formed in a milieu that took this separation for granted. But those schooled in moral theology since Wittgenstein and MacIntyre know this distinction to be increasingly fragile. In reading the consistent ethic in context, we can see in Bernardin's life and work a move past this artificial distinction toward an appreciation of the practices of the Christian life as both epistemologically crucial and the necessary basis of Christian moral formation, ergo, the necessary basis of principles. Through practices we come to know and are transformed, and this knowledge and transformation are necessary for Christian action and witness in the public sphere, necessary for (in other words) ethics.

These commitments, then, delimit the scope of my remarks and shape my hermeneutic. To summarize, I maintain that the consistent ethic must be read in the larger context of Bernardin's corpus; that its prior and primary audience is the church (in an attempt to shape an ecclesial consensus); and that the ability to apply—or better, *live*—the consistent ethic requires immersion in a spectrum of Christian practices. In the following, I offer a reading of the consistent ethic of life in the context of Cardinal Bernardin's corollary writings—*The Challenge of Peace* (1983), his pastoral letters and homilies written from 1982 onward, and *The Gift of Peace* (1997). By displaying the contours of this far more extensive discourse—a corpus that preaches a powerful vision of Christians as peacemakers, formed through Christian practices in the image of a kenotic, peace-giving Christ—I hope to make the case that the development of the consistent ethic of life as an ethic of peacemaking is an intrinsic development, bringing to fruition the critical insights found within the powerful witness of Bernardin's own life and work.

The Challenge of Peace: A Genealogy of the Consistent Ethic

Cardinal Bernardin launched his championing of the concept of the consistent ethic of life on December 6, 1983, as the center point of his

Gannon Lecture at Fordham University (SG, 7-14). Invited to speak on the NCCB's pastoral on war and peace, his Gannon Lecture became the first step in attempting to forge what he called a theologically grounded broader moral vision.

But the consistent ethic did not here spring into the world *ex nihilo*. In developing the consistent ethic of life as a platform for use in the public square, Bernardin was not creating something new—indeed, he did not claim to be. Instead he rightly suggested that he was simply retrieving a vision rooted in and widely dispersed throughout the Catholic tradition. Even the phrase itself precedes him. Bernardin himself indicates that the bishops' pastoral was a key starting point for him in developing the notion of the consistent ethic (SG, 7).

If we trace this genealogy, it becomes clear that the consistent ethic emerges out of the Christian commitment to peacemaking. In this section, I begin with a brief outline of the historical forebears of the consistent ethic. One of those historical forebears is the bishops' pastoral, where they root a vision of the consistent ethic in their theology of peace. The second task for this section, then, is to display the theology of peace forwarded by the pastoral letter, highlighting components of the document that are important not only for understanding the consistent ethic but that can be followed as Bernardin's work continues.

The Consistent Ethic of Life: A Brief History

Bernardin makes clear that the main catalyst for his re-envisioning the traditional spectrum of issues was his appointment as chairman of the NCCB's Committee for Pro-Life Activities. From that vantage point, he now creatively connected what had been traditionally treated as quite disparate issues, issues where the direct linkage to "life" might not be as obvious: genetics, including genetic counseling and genetic engineering; abortion; war; capital punishment; euthanasia and care of the terminally ill; pornography; hunger; homelessness; unemployment; education of the illiterate; undocumented migrants; sexism; racism; welfare reform; working mothers and single parents; birth technologies; health-care reform; care of the disabled; care of the elderly; inhumane living conditions; inhumane working conditions; violence; exploitation; tolerance of poverty; international justice and peace.⁶ In Bernardin's vision, these and any issue in which life or human dignity is threatened or diminished constitute a "seamless garment," a metaphor he later employed (SG, 15, 36, 52-54, 69, and 77).

The image of the seamless garment, most often associated with Bernardin, was not, however, his own. It originated in a 1971 interview given by Eileen Egan. Egan was, importantly, a member of the Catholic Worker movement and a prominent peace activist.⁷ Not only did she help found the organization Pax Christi, in her work with the Catholic Worker, she attended

to and lived in solidarity with many of those named within the consistent ethic.

The same year that Egan coined the phrase "the seamless garment," Archbishop Humberto Medeiros of Boston gave an address entitled "A Call for a Consistent Ethic of Life and the Law," where he called for an ethic that was "comprehensive in scope and consistent in substance," that connected Christian commitment to nascent life with problems of housing, education, welfare, race, warfare, and so on.⁸

In this, Egan and Medeiros were drawing not only on their own insights as to the necessary connections among these issues (or, negatively stated, the problematic inconsistencies in positions held by many Catholics); they were drawing as well on a theme sounded in the Second Vatican Council. In *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et spes*), one finds an early articulation of this theme:

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord: "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Mt. 25:40).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator. (§ 27)

Thus, the notion of the consistent ethic of life and the seamless garment were astir within the Catholic community when the NCCB inaugurated their Respect Life program in 1972, articulated by a cofounder of Pax Christi and the magisterium. By 1983, the Respect Life program had become the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Bernardin was at the helm. When Bernardin picked up his pen to write the Gannon Lecture, the concept of the consistent ethic had shaped the Pro-Life Committee for eleven years.⁹

The Challenge of Peace: *Peacemaking as Vision, Method, Practices, and Process*

Equally, for three years prior to his penning the Gannon Lecture, Bernardin—by virtue of his role as chair of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on War and Peace, the committee responsible for drafting *The Challenge of Peace*—had been steeped in an intense process of reflection on peace, specifically a theology of peace and its relationship to traditional Catholic analysis. Bernardin makes clear that in proposing the notion of the consistent ethic of life in his Gannon Lecture, he is drawing from the final section of *The Challenge of Peace*. Here the bishops, in a section subtitled "True Peace Calls for 'Reverence for Life,'" outline a vision of a consistent ethic:

No society can live in peace with itself, or with the world, without a full awareness of the worth and dignity of every human person, and of the sacredness of all human life (James 4:1-2). When we accept violence in any form as commonplace, our sensitivities become dulled. When we accept violence, war itself can be taken for granted. Violence has many faces: oppression of the poor, deprivation of basic human rights, economic exploitation, sexual exploitation and pornography, neglect or abuse of the aged and the helpless, and innumerable other acts of inhumanity. Abortion in particular blunts a sense of the sacredness of human life. In a society where the innocent unborn are killed wantonly, how can we expect people to feel righteous revulsion at the act or threat of killing non-combatants in war? (§ 285)

As Bernardin will later, the pastoral most explicitly wrestles with the linkage between the issues of war and abortion. But importantly, it also includes the middle ground, the "many faces" of violence within society. The issues of life and peace remain coupled throughout the section, ending as it does with Pope Paul VI's "If you wish peace, defend life."¹⁰

Four aspects of the pastoral and Bernardin's experience with it are important for our purposes here: the thickly displayed theology of peace the pastoral develops in chapter 1, Bernardin's own contribution to the pastoral, the pastoral's methodology, and the pastoral process itself.¹¹ Let me take each of these in turn.

A Theology of Peace. *The Challenge of Peace* opens with a "religious vision of peace" (§ 20) or a "theology of peace" (§ 25).¹² Beginning with the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures, the bishops offer a vision of peace that is first and foremost theocentric—peace is the fruit of the covenant, of right relationship with God (§§ 27, 33).¹³ Covenant fidelity entails, on the one hand, forgiveness, reconciliation, and union (§ 27), and, on the other, care

for the needy and helpless; as they say, "a society living with fidelity was one marked by justice and integrity" (§ 34).¹⁴

The bishops trace how the links between communion with God, reconciliation, care for the poor, and peace are reinforced, deepened, and extended in the New Testament witness. Here their display becomes Christological, centered on both the person of Jesus and his proclamation of the reign of God. Conversion (§ 44) and the Sermon on the Mount emerge as central to what Jesus's vision of peace looks like:

His words, especially as they are preserved for us in the Sermon on the Mount, describe a new reality is manifested and the longing of the people is fulfilled. In God's reign, the poor are given the Kingdom, the mourners are comforted, the meek inherit the earth, those hungry for righteousness are satisfied, the merciful know mercy, the pure see God, the persecuted know the Kingdom, and peacemakers are called the children of God (Mt 5:3-10). (§ 46)

As in the Old Testament, central to the character of this kingdom is forgiveness:

Jesus' words also depict for us the conduct of one who lives under God's reign. His words call for a new way of life which fulfills and goes beyond the law. One of the most striking characteristics of this new way is forgiveness. All who hear Jesus are repeatedly called to forgive one another, and to do so not just once, but many, many times (Mt 6:14-15; Lk 6:37; Mt 18:21-22; Mk 11:25; Lk 11:4; 17:3-4). The forgiveness of God, which is the beginning of salvation, is manifested in communal forgiveness and mercy. (§ 47)

Such forgiveness, of course, pertains not only to friends and families but most importantly to enemies, who we are called to love.¹⁵

Jesus models the possibility of this sort of love, forgiveness, and service to the poor, and makes it possible through the ongoing presence of His Spirit. His first act post-resurrection is to confer on his followers his "gift of peace" (§ 52), a gift that made it possible for the community to become its identity—the Body of Christ.

The early Christian communities knew that this power and the reconciliation and peace which marked it were not yet fully operative in their world. . . . At the same time, they knew that they were called to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19-20), people who would make the peace which God had established visible through the love and the unity within their own communities. (§ 53)

God's gift of peace in Christ enables the church to become a community of reconciliation that thereby witnesses to God's reconciling love in the world.

Thus, consistent with the model provided by *Gaudium et spes*, the bishops ground their theology of peace "solidly in the biblical Kingdom of God [and] then place it centrally in the ministry of the Church" (§ 25). Importantly, this Scriptural vision of a kingdom inhabited by those named in the consistent ethic says little about the sanctity or dignity of human life. Rather, it is thoroughly Christological, grounded in a sacramental sense of Christ's ongoing work as well as in the concrete contours of his life as narrated in the Gospels:

Jesus Christ, then, is our peace, and in his death-resurrection he gives God's peace to our world. In him God has indeed reconciled the world, made it one, and has manifested definitively that his will is this reconciliation, this unity between God and all peoples, and among the peoples themselves. The way to union has been opened, the covenant of peace established. The risen Lord's gift of peace is inextricably bound to the call to follow Jesus and to continue the proclamation of God's reign. . . . In the continuing presence of Jesus, disciples of all ages find the courage to follow him. To follow Jesus Christ implies continual conversion in one's own life as one seeks to act in ways which are consonant with the justice, forgiveness, and love of God's reign. Discipleship reaches out to the ends of the earth and calls for reconciliation among all peoples so that God's purpose . . . will be fulfilled. (§ 54)

Bernardin and the Pastoral. By chairing the Ad Hoc Committee, Bernardin could not avoid a constant interaction with this "religious vision." As we will see, most of his life's work simply elaborates it. Equally important for our purposes is the last section of the pastoral, entitled "The Pastoral Challenge and Response" (§§ 274-329). This section returns to the Christological focus of part 1, opening with John Paul II's call to the church to be a community of Jesus's disciples, a community of those who are "doer[s] of the word, wayfarer[s] with and witness[es] to Jesus," following the "personal and demanding" road that may entail a "share of the cross" (§ 276).¹⁶

Central to this section is its description of two Christian practices, prayer and penance.¹⁷ Again citing John Paul II, the pastoral affirms that the objective reality of peace requires conversion: "disarmament of the human heart and the conversion of the human spirit to God alone who can give authentic peace . . . Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts" (§ 284). Necessary for such conversion is the practice of prayer:

A conversion of our hearts and minds will make it possible for us to enter into a closer communion with our Lord. We nourish that

communion by personal and communal prayer, for it is in prayer that we encounter Jesus, who is our peace, and learn from him the way of peace. . . . As believers we understand peace as a gift of God. (§§ 290, 293)

This section continues on to provide a wonderful, extended meditation on the varieties of practices of prayer available to Christians and their communities—contemplative prayer, the Mass, the Eucharist, the sign of peace.

Following the discussion of prayer, the bishops boldly note the importance of penance: "Prayer by itself is incomplete without penance. . . . Because we are all capable of violence, we are never totally conformed to Christ and are always in need of conversion" (§ 297). The bishops call for a visible, tangible sign of penance, in a return to the traditional practice of Friday fasts and abstinence for the cause of peace: "Every Friday should be a day significantly devoted to prayer, penance, and almsgiving for peace" (§ 298).

This final section of the pastoral is significant for two reasons. First, it unapologetically assumes the epistemological importance of Christian practices. Prayer is deemed to be that by which we "learn from [Christ] the way of peace" (§ 290); "it fosters a vision of the human family as united and interdependent in the mystery of God's love for all people" (§ 294). Both are deemed crucial to "conversion"—to our formation, or better transformation, into "instruments of Christ's peace in the world" (§ 293). Most importantly, this final section—the section on conversion, prayer, and penance—was originally drafted by Cardinal Bernardin.¹⁸

The Pastoral's Methodology. This attention to practices, coupled with the "religious vision" of chapter 1, lead to the third aspect of the pastoral that I would like to highlight. Just as in the consistent ethic, Bernardin and others sought to make new connections between traditional Catholic moral theology and social ethics, moving beyond their traditional boundaries; here the bishops point toward new methodological integration.

First, more extensively than perhaps anywhere else in the magisterial corpus, traditional moral analysis of the just war principles is situated within a context of a biblical theology of peace.¹⁹ Here the bishops continue and expand this similar sort of methodological shift found in *Gaudium et spes*. Classic philosophical reasoning, so long characteristic of the Catholic moral tradition, is now brought into conversation with thoroughgoing biblical exegesis. What is more, the pastoral opens and closes with the more traditional "theological" material, locating the philosophical, principled analysis within that context, giving it priority.

In addition, the pastoral brings together the traditional moral analysis of just war principles with communal, liturgical practices. Although prayer, penance, and the Eucharistic life of the church had long been the practical context of the Catholic moral tradition, all too often the discourse proceeded without any reference thereto. "Ascetical" theology or "spirituality" was decoupled from rigorous moral analysis. Here they are again brought into

conversation, set side-by-side. And again, communal liturgical practices provide the framework for the analysis that proceeds via rational principles.

Does the pastoral integrate Scripture, principles, and practices in a totally satisfactory manner? Not at all. But it is critically important that they are all tied together into one document, a document meant for multiple audiences—the Catholic community as well as all those interested in the wider public debate. For both indicate a necessary and crucial methodological shift in the Catholic moral tradition and empower its development.

The Pastoral as a Process of Peacemaking. The last aspect of the pastoral worth noting is, of course, the process of making it happen. Bernardin himself noted that “the process of discussion, writing and witness” may have been “the most important long-range consequence” of their efforts.²⁰ The pastoral itself was the product of a three-year process of study, writing, meeting, discussing, arguing, consulting, revising, and responding to the cultural context. It entailed engagement with not only the members of the National Council of Catholic Bishops itself, but equally with officials in the Reagan administration, bishops from across the Catholic communion, the Vatican, U.S. Catholics, and the American public as a whole. As Bryan Hehir notes, “The first year of the committee’s work was largely given over to a series of ‘hearings’ in which a number of people were invited before the committee to share their expertise and experiences.”²¹

This itself was no easy process. As Jim Castelli’s wonderful account of the writing of the peace pastoral in *The Bishops and the Bomb* displays, the production of the document required in no small part dialogue, reconciliation, and redemptive suffering. In shepherding the process—in particular, in shepherding the potentially fractious Ad Hoc Committee—Bernardin saw firsthand the depths of the divisions within the Catholic community. Castelli’s account demonstrates the nature of those divisions, the hostile rhetoric and politics attendant to both sides. One of Bernardin’s main contributions to the pastoral was to engage in the kind of practical work necessary to overcome these divisions and move toward a document that was approved by 96 percent of the bishops in the NCCB. In other words, producing a document on peace required the practice of peacemaking.

And, of course, this should make sense. The method of dialogue was embraced by Bernardin and the bishops not only as a shrewd political tool. Bernardin notes in a later address that John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II identified the method of dialogue as itself a way to peace.²² Only by being formed in the practices of peace would they be able to embody it, achieve it, and offer a credible witness to it. As has been said, the means *are* the end.

This then is the ground that is laid by 1983 when Bernardin launches the consistent ethic of life as a program of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities. From the Second Vatican Council and a Catholic Worker peace activist, the concept of the consistent ethic meets, in *The Challenge of Peace*, a Christologically displayed theology of peace tied centrally to the practices of the Christian life through a dialogic process that itself was an exercise in

reconciliation and peacemaking. As we shall see, these elements then shape Bernardin's work until the end.

"Christ Lives in Me": Bernardin's Writings from 1983 to 1996

Bernardin delivered his addresses on the consistent ethic of life from 1983 to 1996. In some years he delivered as many as six such lectures, and in others only one. He delivered no lecture on the consistent ethic of life in 1992. But during this period, he wrote far more. From 1983 to 1996, his "selected works"—at least as collected by Alphonse Spilly—comprise two volumes, over two hundred documents, over 1,250 pages. I will not here provide an exhaustive analysis of all 1,250 pages! In fact, what follows is merely a sketch, a sampling to indicate that the themes developed in *The Challenge of Peace* continue in his other work. Through material from his pastoral letters and some of his homilies, I hope to at least suggest that the themes and practices of peacemaking outlined above resonate thickly through this other corpus.²³ And they do so, as he is creating and forwarding the consistent ethic program.

I begin with his 1985 pastoral reflection on Christology entitled "'Christ Lives in Me': A Pastoral Reflection on Jesus and His Meaning for Christian Life," for it captures well the relentlessly Christocentric focus of his theological vision. By 1985, the consistent ethic of life (as a program) was two years old, and Bernardin had been taking no small amount of heat for it. It is significant that in his introduction he makes the following claim: "It seems clear that the internal and external problems and tensions confronting the Church today cannot ultimately be solved on the level of ecclesiology alone. We must have recourse to Christology to understand the inner reality of the Church and to work for its authentic renewal."²⁴

The subsequent fifty-page reflection is a personal, heartfelt, and compelling account of the significance of the person and work of Christ for individuals, for ecclesial identity and formation, and for the work of the Church in the world. No summary can substitute for reading it oneself, but let me point to three key aspects of it.

Central to his argument is the *identity* of Christians and of the church with Christ. Through a wonderful display of the early church witness, he builds to the claim that Christians are to be "more than just 'like' Jesus. They are to *put on* Christ. . . . They are to *become* Christ, to be *other* Christs. They are to carry on Christ's work and help bring it to completion."²⁵ The Church, likewise, is Christ's Mystical Body; "it is Christ present in the world."²⁶

The bulk of the letter moves through a meditation on what it means to call Jesus "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" to a consideration of the sacramental life of the church as crucial for making real the above-mentioned identity, giving specific attention to Eucharist, penance, and an extended

reflection on prayer.²⁷ At the end of this section, he turns his attention to "following Christ in today's world," moving from Christ, through Christian practices, to mission in the world. Here he delineates this mission under the headings of "presence to others," "our obligation to the poor," and the "quest for peace": "While outreach to others takes many forms, I shall highlight three: being 'present' to friends and neighbors, helping the poor by promoting justice, and being peacemakers. . . . Following the Lord Jesus leads one to become involved in these and other social issues."²⁸

He continues later:

To speak of social issues may seem to have little to do with the theme of prayer and participation in the Church's sacramental life as bases for our relationship with Jesus. But there is a direct and necessary connection. As prayer and the sacraments are the foundation of our relationship with Jesus, so that relationship is—or should be—the ground and context for our lives, including our efforts to address and remedy the social evil of our times.²⁹

To attend to these social issues, these social "evils," is a way of continuing Christ's redemptive mission in the world. But if it is so, our work must likewise be Christoform: "As Jesus triumphed over sin and death, we also can overcome evil and death by being united with him in faith and love. We 'overcome' evil, of course, precisely as he did—by redemptive suffering. The Cross is central to the Christian life."³⁰ Christ, prayer and sacraments, service to the world. These are his constant themes.

Again and again, the particulars of Jesus's life and witness are proclaimed in his sermons. In the third sermon he gave in his new role as cardinal-archbishop of Chicago (August 29, 1982), this time to the people of the archdiocese, gathered in Grant Park for his first Mass, he provides a deeply personal witness to the Jesus who frequents his sermons:

All this amounts to a great challenge. In meeting this challenge we must open our hearts to Jesus Christ. We must not hold back any part of ourselves from the power of God's Holy Spirit. If we open wide the doors of our whole lives, holding nothing back from God, Christ will surely enter. Then we will be fitting heralds to announce God's word to others.

As a priest and bishop I have continued to try to open wide the doors of my heart to Christ. I have found again and again that, when I stopped resisting, stopped trying to be completely in charge of my life and placed my trust in the Lord, things have gone better for me. As your new archbishop, I want each of you to know how important Jesus Christ is to me. I believe in him and all that he has taught. He is the Way to my salvation. I love

him with all my heart, and the central desire of my life is to be intimately united with him. Then I will experience his great love for me in the very depths of my being. I know that in this way my life will become one with his.

I wish to affirm you and encourage you, as you also search for the Lord in your daily lives and seek to grow in intimacy with him. Do you ever feel misunderstood, lonely, discouraged, wounded, abandoned? Then you need to experience Jesus' love, compassion, and healing power. He is not far away. He is right there beside you, waiting for you to turn to him and place yourself in his hands.

. . . If each one of us continues to strive for union with Jesus, we can go forth from this, our first Mass together, "as those who serve." We can build bridges of faith and love between ourselves and all those around us.³¹

Union with Jesus, the particular Jesus of the Beatitudes and Matthew 25, is the basis for becoming servants to the world, disciples who will serve precisely the people named in the consistent ethic.

Again and again, he connects the person of Christ to the issues of the consistent ethic. In a Passion Sunday homily (1983) he offers a meditation on Jesus, drawing on Luke 19:37-40:³²

But he rides into our midst anyway. And even though our welcome may sometimes be less than enthusiastic, still he warns us that if we fail to recognize him for who he is, the lifeless stones themselves will cry out in greeting. Perhaps the reason our cheers sometimes ring hollow is that we recognize deep down the reality of our situation, that as Lord of Life, he has sway over every aspect of what we do and are. Nothing is excused. Nothing is exempt. Nothing is locked to his entry. Politics, economics, human endeavors of every kind: all are unbarred to his gaze. And this means that those voices which would limit the man on the donkey to what is specifically "religious" understand neither who he is or what he claims.³³

Politics, economics, human endeavors of every kind—this is the stuff of the consistent ethic. It is Jesus's lordship over all that opens these areas up to Catholic witness in the public realm. In one last homily he reminds the Catholic community that the essence of this lordship is love, a love that includes enemies (SG, 98-101):

We gather this evening in love, not in hatred, for "love never wrongs the neighbor. Hence love is the fulfillment" of the gospel and the law. May the God of love, the creator of life, continue

to show his care for us. May the Lord Jesus walk with us in our efforts for justice and peace. May he give us the very fullness of life. May our loving embrace of one another this evening reach out to include all our brothers and sisters in all stages of human development and all circumstances. (SG, 101)

In his pastoral letter on liturgy, "Our Communion, Our Peace, Our Promise" (February 1984), he shifts his attention more exclusively to communal liturgical prayer, still unfailingly linking it to peace and service to the world.³⁴ The letter moves step by step through the components of the liturgy, commenting as needed on each. When he gets to Communion, he explicitly refers to *The Challenge of Peace*, reminding his hearers of the bishops' injunction "to make the sign of peace at Mass an authentic sign of our reconciliation with God and with one another. This sign of peace is also a visible sign of our commitment to work for peace as a Christian community. We approach the table of the Lord only after having dedicated ourselves as a Christian community to peace and reconciliation."³⁵ He continues:

At this table we put aside every worldly separation based on culture, class, or other differences. Baptized, we no longer admit to distinctions based on age or sex or race or wealth. This Communion is why all prejudice, all racism, all sexism, all deference to wealth and power must be banished from our parishes, our homes, and our lives. This Communion is why we will not commit the world's resources to an escalating arms race while the poor die. We cannot. Not when we have feasted here on the "body broken" and the "blood poured out" for the life of the world.³⁶

Christology continues as the basis of ecclesiology and Christian witness in his pastoral letter on the church, "The Family Gathered Here Before You" (1989). Here he identifies five "constant elements of Church life," which include proclamation of the gospel, celebration of the sacraments, work for Christian unity, work in the world, and "direct service . . . rendered in love." It is this last one that I would like to highlight here:

In St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus describes his mission in an opening discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth. Quoting from the book of Isaiah, he says: . . . To be faithful to Jesus' mission, the Church must care for people, especially for those most in need. Its service to humanity includes instruction, healing, peacemaking, and authentic and full human liberation. These activities are not peripheral to the Church's mission, but are at its very heart. We read in St. Matthew's Gospel that the care of the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters is the ultimate criterion by which we shall be judged (Matt 25: 31-46).³⁷

His point of raising this passage is to turn it to critique the church itself. He challenges the church to be inclusive and break down barriers of class, gender, age, felony status, sin, and (dis)ability. He challenges economic disparities within the church. He calls the church to become the embodiment of loving, reconciled human relationships to that it is both true to its identity and can then witness it in the world.³⁸

In his homily on Thanksgiving Day 1983, he articulates a “recipe for holiness,” a recipe he finds notably displayed in the Beatitudes.³⁹ What are the ingredients of this Beatitude recipe for holiness? Importantly, peacemaking is among them:

It calls for a poverty of spirit. . . . The recipe calls for sorrow. . . . Another ingredient is humility. . . . The recipe also calls for peacemaking. Peacemaking does not mean simply reaching some general agreement that peace is a good thing. It is much more than merely expressing a vague hope that peace might come some day. This recipe, instead, calls for concrete, practical peacemaking; for the doing of deeds that will promote peace with justice in our relationships, neighborhoods, and world, deeds that will prevent war in our time. This is one of the most important ingredients in the recipe for holiness.⁴⁰

Here he harkens back to the bishops’ pastoral in its rooting of Jesus’s peaceableness in the Beatitudes and enjoins living the Beatitudes as a practice of prayer: “Think of the Beatitudes as a workable recipe for holiness in our world. Life as envisioned by Jesus in his Beatitudes—the Lord’s own holiness lived out in our lives—is the most perfect gift we can bring to God. It is the best prayer we can offer.”⁴¹

The Gift of Peace

Clearly, then, what emerged from *The Challenge of Peace*—a theology of peacemaking and reconciliation rooted deeply in the scriptural witness to Christ, necessarily fostered through Christian practices—continues to be a focus in Bernardin’s writings going forward, and in fact deepens. This trajectory is crystallized in his simple yet profound and powerful autobiographical reflection, *The Gift of Peace*.

The Gift of Peace is a deceptively simple book. On its face, it seems a somewhat random series of autobiographical reflections—the story of how he was falsely accused of sexual abuse; his struggle with terminal pancreatic cancer; and a brief opening reflection on how he took up the practice of daily prayer. But he clearly includes these three stories between the covers of one, small book because he saw them as deeply interconnected. I would argue what we find here is not a simple story of his spiritual journey; it is more

fundamentally a treatise on the relationships between Christian practices, spiritual conversion, and social action.

The narrative is very intentionally written and very intentionally opens with the section entitled "Letting Go." Here he recounts his story of learning to attend to prayer, a story that frames his whole account. Bernardin reprises the testimony he gave in his homily at the opening Mass to the Archdiocese of Chicago mentioned above, witnessing to his lifelong project of attempting to "throw open wide the doors of his heart" to Jesus and to turn over control of his life to God.

For Bernardin, the key to learning to let go was the practice of prayer. Having risen to the rank of archbishop in the 1970s, he had like so many professionals become "very busy, and I fell into the trap of thinking that my good works were more important than prayer."⁴² Confronted and counseled by his own priests, he comes to adopt the habit of praying for one hour each morning, or rather "giv[ing] God the first hour of my day, no matter what, to be with him in prayer and meditation where I would try to open the door even wider to his entrance."⁴³

Here we see the Cardinal embark on a particular practice—the practice of prayer—a traditional Christian practice. It is through and only through this practice that he develops a particular disposition, attitude, skill, virtue—he names this as "letting go," but we could equally well call it "openness" to God and others, liberation from those things which possess us (pride, possessions, power, fear), trust in God, learning to understand God as the Lord of life, and so on. In his life he had long believed these things in theory, but he acknowledges that he had not really believed them in practice because he had not lived as if they were true.

These virtues, these dispositions prove critical for the last two major events of his life. The first of these is the false accusation of sexually abusing a seminarian. He introduces this chapter of his life with a meditation on "emptying oneself"—"emptying myself of everything—the plans I consider the largest as well as the distractions I judge the smallest—so that the Lord can really take over."⁴⁴ He quotes the Pauline hymn of the kenotic Christ ("Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave . . . humbling himself, obediently accepting death, death on a cross" [Phil. 2:6-8]) to convey what he means by "emptying oneself." Here he returns more explicitly to the Christological themes outlined above—Jesus' experience of suffering and continuing presence to us—as well as his emphasis on discipleship as suffering "*in communion with the Lord*."⁴⁵

I will not rehearse the details of this part of the story here (I would encourage all to read it), but a few key elements are important. As with many situations that incite us to violence, the accusation came out of nowhere and was devastating. His world was, in many ways, turned upside down. The accusation struck at one of the key centers of his identity—his chastity. Since

Bernardin was cardinal archbishop of Chicago, the news meant that instantly millions of people knew this charge and most likely believed it to be true. He was angry, bewildered at who could possibly launch such a false charge against him, and deeply humiliated. "As never before," he notes, "I felt the presence of evil."⁴⁶ Here a destructive power was at work, bearing down on him, threatening everything he held valuable—his life's work, his deepest convictions, his personal reputation, his position as cardinal of Chicago.

Yet at the same time he felt equally sustained by the conviction "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). He knew almost tangibly the presence of the God he had come increasingly to know in prayer. And the habit of prayer he had learned through ordinary days and years now becomes crucial. Before facing hordes of reporters the day after the accusation becomes public, he prays the rosary early in the morning, meditating on the Sorrowful Mysteries, and later spends an hour by himself in prayer and meditation. While he feels very much akin to Jesus's aloneness in the garden during his own Agony, he equally knows that it is God's grace, strength, and presence that enables him to face the reporters, to stand calmly in the face of evil, and to speak the truth in love and peaceableness.

Moreover, from the beginning, he finds himself overwhelmed with a sense of compassion for his accuser. A few days after the filing of the charges, he notes, "I felt a genuine impulse to pray with and comfort him."⁴⁷ He almost immediately writes a letter to the man, asking if he might visit him to pray with him. The man's lawyers never deliver the letter. The case eventually unravels on its own, and the charges are eventually dropped as the "evidence" proves to be fabricated. Bernardin could have simply rejoiced in his vindication, or he could have brought countercharges for defamation of character. But this is not the road he chooses. Rather, eleven months after the suit was dropped, he again tried to contact his accuser. This time he was successful. In the end, he meets with him and—beyond what would be wildly imaginable—was reconciled with him.⁴⁸ They become friends, such that six months later, when Bernardin is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, one of the first letters he receives is from his former accuser. It is a powerful story of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Bernardin makes clear that it was only by becoming open to the presence and grace of God in his life, an openness given by God and cultivated through the practice of prayer, that enabled this story to unfold as it did. Through the practice of prayer, Bernardin learns to love God and to let go of the god of self-love. He developed the virtues necessary to be able to love one who is clearly his enemy, the person who he states has inflicted upon him the most damage, in the most vicious manner, that he has ever experienced. What does such love look like? It is nonviolent—the cardinal made clear to his advisors and attorneys at the outset of the crisis that there will be no scorched-earth countersuit to beat the enemy down. It is compassionate—it feels the pain of the other, even of the enemy. It is reconciling—it seeks not to obliterate the

enemy but to overcome the enmity between them through reconciliation. It reaches out to the enemy, in order to both create community with the enemy and to do the work of God's love in the world.

To this extent, it is Christoform—Bernardin makes clear that such is the nature of Christian love, rooted in the person of Jesus. Through his practice of prayer he has come to know Jesus as a fully human person, one who both experienced pain and suffering and yet “transformed human suffering into something greater: an ability to walk with the afflicted and to empty himself so that his loving Father could work more fully through him.”⁴⁹ And it is this Jesus that he meets through his practice of prayer that increasingly becomes the One who shapes his life.

This experience becomes the prelude to the final chapter of his story, the story of his struggle with terminal pancreatic cancer complicated by painful spinal stenosis. In his narrative, we watch as he uses the tools of medicine to resist the growth of cancer in his body. We watch as he wins a short-lived remission, and then how the cancer returns with renewed virulence. But importantly, the autobiography of his illness is not primarily about his illness; it is instead about how his illness leads him into a new world of ministry, meeting, being present to, and praying for literally hundreds of others who struggle with cancer. Again, with his diagnosis of cancer, Bernardin transforms his life and actions into one of powerful public witness. He models not only a position of need—an unusual position to be taken by a leader in our culture—but he transforms his tragedy into a powerful new ministry, ministering to other cancer patients and others who are sick in an entirely new way. Modeling to the world what it looks like to reach out to “the least of these” in society (to live the consistent ethic of life, we might say), he bears witness to the possibility of radically different social relations. In the end, he comes to be reconciled even with his cancer and death, learning from Henri Nouwen to refer to death as his “friend.”

From start to finish, *The Gift of Peace* bears witness in one actual Christian life to the theology and practice of peacemaking articulated in *The Challenge of Peace*. From shepherd to lamb, Bernardin embodies in his life the peace preached in the pastoral—a peace that is the fruit of consistent God-centeredness and communion with Jesus; a peace learned through practices of prayer and sacrament; a peace tied to ongoing conversion of heart; a peace gained through forgiveness and sacramentally mediated reconciliation; a peace that leads to justice and the consistent ethic of life, to work that values the lives of all persons, in this case, one's enemies and cancer patients.

“O Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace” The Consistent Ethic as an Ethic of Peacemaking

That we find this Christological, sacramental, lived embodiment of reconciliation and peacemaking in the life and works of Joseph Cardinal

Bernardin should come as no surprise. He was an affiliate first order Franciscan oblate who carried with him the prayer of St. Francis and who had the practice of saying it at the beginning of meetings—particularly meetings he knew would be contentious or difficult.⁵⁰ “O Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”

But how does this broader context of his life and works help us reread, recast, reorient the consistent ethic of life? Echoing Bernardin, “The logic of the consistent ethic cuts two ways not just one: It challenges pro-life groups and it challenges justice and peace groups” (SG, 107). While the challenge to justice and peace groups is to revision traditional issues in social ethics as “life” issues—which I think has been a creative and helpful move—the challenge to “pro-life” groups is to understand “life” issues as equally “peace” issues.⁵¹

As Bernardin notes, “The substance of a Catholic position on a consistent ethic of life is *rooted in a religious vision*” (SG, 14, emphasis added). One of the key tasks going forward for the consistent ethic is to articulate that religious vision in a thickly theological way. In the liturgy pastoral, he asks his readers to “move beyond the pithy statements [of the pastoral] to a study of the rich heritage they seek to reflect.” Likewise, I hope this display makes clear that we need to move beyond the “principle” of the sanctity of life to the rich theological heritage it attempts to capture. For too often, it functions—even for religious adherents—with the thinnest of theological content. The principle of the sanctity of life—if it draws only on one line from Genesis and maybe the Incarnation—is theologically inadequate.⁵² The *principle* of the sanctity of human life or the dignity of human life must necessarily be attached to a very particular body of content, a particular vision, a particular set of narratives that control the parameters for the application and interpretation of that principle. Prior to our ability to deploy the principle of sanctity of life, then, it is necessary to display thickly the religious vision out of which it arises.

For Bernardin, that vision is deeply Christological—everywhere except the consistent ethic of life. Here I would take issue with him. In the Gannon Lecture, in I think his attempt to bring the peacemaking conversation into conversation with the pro-life community, he casts the pastoral—and the peacemaking tradition—in terms not entirely faithful to the pastoral. He notes:

The central idea in the [pastoral] letter is the sacredness of human life and the responsibility we have, personally and socially, to protect and preserve the sanctity of life. Precisely because life is sacred, the taking of even one human life is a momentous event. Indeed, the sense that every human life has a transcendent value has led a whole stream of the Christian tradition to argue that life may never be taken. That position is held by an increasing number of Catholics and is reflected in the pastoral letter. (SG, 10)

But is it? The theology of peace of chapter 1 of the pastoral is not a principled pacifism and not a pro-life pacifism. Rather, it's a Christological pacifism, rooted in a vision of the kingdom of God as captured in the Sermon on the Mount and in discipleship to our Lord who met death on the cross. And while the final section of the pastoral does invoke the sanctity of human life, it does so in a context of liturgical practices that are centered not on the dignity of human life but on the centrality of the cross.

Moreover, Bernardin's own witness challenges his own presuppositions. Without a doubt, the world in which Cardinal Bernardin was trained did not make explicit connections between Jesus and the public square, prayer and social policy. Bernardin was formed in a milieu in which moral theology was one discipline and "spirituality" was separate. Trained in natural law, for Bernardin legitimate public engagement on the part of the church required a publicly accessible language and rational discourse capable of convincing all people of goodwill. Christian participation in public life requires consistency, coherency, and compelling intellectual engagement, arguments that persuade and convince. As he notes in the Gannon Lecture: "Attitude is the place to root an ethic of life but ultimately ethics is about principles to guide the actions of individuals and institution" (SG, 12).

I would suggest, however, that his journey is one that overcame his past. I would like to think that he had, perhaps, a nonthematic awareness of the problematic separation of "spirituality" and "ethics," and of the constitutive role of practices for Christian moral discernment and action. For we do not find *discontinuity*. At the end of his life, Bernardin was in the process of writing a pastoral letter on the liturgy. He did not live to finish it. But even in draft form, it speaks to his confidence in the formative necessity of Christian practices.⁵³ Liturgy, he notes, is "who we become." Liturgy, moreover, is of a piece with public action. He continues:

Following on the example of the early churches described in Acts, we should name the deeds, the works of the church this way: Our liturgy and all our life of prayer and rite; every aspect of our work of formation of children and adults as Catholic Christians; the building up of our communion as sisters and brothers in the body of Christ and the striving we make toward justice the service of any in need. These are not so many separate departments of parish or diocesan life. *They are and must be seen as one whole.* (emphasis added)

Neither ought liturgy, moral theology, spirituality, nor systematics be seen as separate disciplines, with distinct and mutually exclusive methodologies. They are and must be seen as one whole, each informing the other.

And in the end, Christian practices emerge as the basis for serving the common good. In speaking of a diocesan-wide process he had initiated a few years earlier he notes:

After reflection and much consultation, I came to the conclusion that during the next several years our energy should be focused in part on the liturgy with special attention to the Sunday Eucharist, to preaching and to the celebration of the sacraments. I came to this conclusion after reflecting on how we might best be an evangelizing people. I was concerned that as Catholics we needed to become more enthusiastic about our faith and freely share that faith with others. We must invite all people to hear the message of salvation, work in our culture for the dignity of the human person, and the common good of all. If this were to happen, however, we first had to renew and strengthen our liturgical life. . . .

That liturgy, prayer, and social ethics are of a piece cohere with his growing conviction that the primary public of the consistent ethic is the church. As he notes in his Seattle lecture:

However the idea must be linked to a community—a constituency—which holds and embodies the vision. Within our own Catholic tradition, we recognize that a vision without a community is not capable of influence. A vision tied to a committed community is the first prerequisite of serious social impact. This is why we try to build that community and invite others into the discussion. (SG, 214)

And essential to the building of this community are practices of dialogue and reconciliation, key elements of the ethic of peacemaking. At the end of what I believe was his last consistent ethic address, he offers a critical yet hopeful account of the church, in the course of which he lays the groundwork for his common ground initiative. I quote it at length because I find it so powerful:

Eleven years ago, the pastoral letter on war and peace spoke of a “new moment” in the nuclear age. The letter has been widely studied and applauded because it caught the spirit of the “new moment” and spoke with moral substance to the issues of the “new moment.” I am convinced that there is an “open moment” before us on the agenda of life issues. It is a significant opportunity for the Church to demonstrate the strength of a sustained moral vision. . . . But to take advantage of this new, “open moment,” we must learn how to work together as a community of faith. Unfortunately, a great deal of polarization exists within the Church today. This has created at times a mood of suspicion, even acrimony. A candid discussion of important issues—and a common witness to them—is often inhibited, so that we are not

always able to come to grips effectively with the problems that confront us. So what do we do?

As I conclude, I would like to suggest how we might begin to answer that question. The reality is that those who take extreme positions are often the most noisy—they get most of the attention. Those in the middle—the majority—are often quiet. I submit that we must make a greater effort to engage those in the middle and, in the process, establish a common ground—a new space for dialogue—that will make it possible for us to reach those who are alienated or disillusioned or uninformed for whatever reason.

To establish this common ground—this space for authentic dialogue—a broad range of the Church's leadership, both clerical and lay, must recommit themselves to the basic truths of our Catholic faith. The chief of those truths is that we must be accountable to our Catholic tradition and to the Spirit-filled, living Church that brings to us the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus who is present in sacrament, word, and community is central to all we do. So our focus must constantly be on *him*, not on ourselves.

This rules out petty criticisms and jealousy, cynicism, sound-bite theology, inaccurate, unhistorical assertions, flippant dismissals. It rules out a narrow, myopic appeal to our personal or contemporary experience as if no other were valid. It acknowledges that our discussions must take place within certain boundaries because the Church, for all its humanness, is not merely a human organization. It is rather a chosen people, a mysterious communion, a foreshadowing of the kingdom, a spiritual family, the body of Christ. When we understand the Church in this way, we will be able to see the full beauty and relevance of our heritage as it has developed under the influence of the Holy Spirit from the apostolic age to the present. It will also help us to become more tolerant of one another.

In sum, what we need in the Church today is a realization that there is room for considerable diversity among us. When there is a breakdown of civility, dialogue, trust, and tolerance, we must redouble our efforts to restore and build up the unity of the one body of Christ.

Dealing with each other in a consistent, gospel-inspired way will add greatly—I would say it is indispensable—to our public, collective witness to the consistent life ethic, which is so desperately needed in today's world. (SG, 265-66)

Were the church to achieve this vision of consensus and unity, how would Christian peacemakers engage in the public square? *The Gift of Peace* provides the program—by witness. In *The Gift of Peace*, Bernardin worries neither about arguing and justifying particular Christological claims nor that

they will be illegitimate. He simply embodies them and allows the power of their witness to do the work of persuasion. Likewise, to recast the consistent ethic as an ethic of peacemaking might require that it navigate the public sphere not primarily via rational arguments (although that is not impossible) but rather through the changed lives of Catholics and Christians embodying, putting on Christ.

This is the work that remains to be done—to better display how the consistent ethic could reflect Bernardin's deeply held theological and lifelong convictions about peacemaking and to continue to develop his methodological insights toward a more theologically satisfying practice of moral theology, one no longer separated from dogmatics, ascetical theology, liturgical theology, and so on. If we could do this, we would see that what connects these disparate "issues" is not necessarily "life" but rather the vision of the gathered, reconciled community found throughout—a community of peace and love, reconciled to each other across the myriad of boundaries that slash our world in its ongoing violence, a community that practices penance, prayer, and service as a way of discipleship, following the Jesus captured most powerfully in the Sermon on the Mount and the cross. Whether this community is the community mentioned in *The Challenge of Peace* (§ 285), envisioned in Bernardin's championing of the consistent ethic, the church displayed in his pastoral writings, or the community he created through his ministry to the sick at the end of his life, they all coexist in the hope that one day, eschatologically perhaps, they will all compose one seamless garment of God's kingdom.