

03-22-15

Hi all!

One of my team mates shared this with me this morning. It gives a Biblical perspective to why we do what we do in places like the place I am in now. I will try to get an update email out of my past week either today or in a few days. I am off today (Sunday) and tomorrow (Monday) & some of us are doing an overnight trip to an island. The work here is so exhausting (emotionally, physically, & spiritually) that we grab any opportunity to have a respite, burn out can easily sneak up on you here. I doubt I will have internet or cell service there so contact & skype (with family today) will probably not be possible. So, I'm going to finish writing my report for the work we did yesterday & then head off. I hope you all have a wonderful weekend and start to warm up.

Love you all!  
Cindy

## Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation



*Family homes on former Juarez dump, Juarez Mexico, CAC archives.*

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## Hebrew Scriptures: Preferential Option for the Poor

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### **Roots of Liberation**

Sunday, February 22, 2015

One of the great themes of the Bible, which begins in the Hebrew

Scriptures and is continued in Jesus, is the preferential option for the poor, or the bias from the bottom. About 1200 years before Christ, Israel was at the bottom, an enslaved people in Egypt. The Exodus, the great journey of the Hebrew people out of slavery and finally into the Promised Land, is an archetype of the interior spiritual journey from entrapment to liberation. It is the universal story.

Moses, himself a man at "the bottom" (a murderer on the run and caring for his father-in-law's sheep), first encounters God in a burning bush (Exodus 3:2), which, like so many initial religious experiences, is experienced alone, externally and yet interiorly as well, both earth-based and transcendent at the same time: "Take off your shoes, this is holy ground" (3:5). This religious experience is immediately followed by a call to a very costly social concern for his own oppressed people, whom he had not cared about up to then. God said, "I have heard the groaning of my people in Egypt. You, Moses, are to go confront the Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go" (3:9-10).

There, right at the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the perfect integration of action and contemplation. First, the contemplative experience comes--the burning bush. And immediately it has social, economic, and political implications. The connection is clear. There is no authentic God experience that does not situate you in the world in a different way. After an encounter with Presence you see things differently, and it gives you the security to be free from your usual loyalties: the system that you have lived in, your economics, and your tribe. Your screen of life expands exponentially.

I believe the Exodus story--with Moses and the Jewish people--is the root of all liberation theology, which Jesus clearly exemplifies in the synoptic Gospels (see Luke 4:18-19).

Liberation theology focuses on freeing people from religious, political, social, and economic oppression (i.e., what Pope John Paul II called "structural sin" and "institutional evil"). It goes beyond just trying to free individuals from their own particular "naughty behaviors," which is what sin has seemed to mean to most Christian people in our individualistic culture.

Liberation theology, instead of legitimating the status quo, tries to read reality, history, and the Bible not from the side of the powerful, but from the side of the pain. Its beginning point is not sin management, but "Where is the suffering?" This makes all the difference in how we read the Bible.

God sees all the many kinds of suffering in the world. The world tends to define poverty and riches simply in terms of economics. But poverty has many faces--weakness, dependence, or humiliation. Essentially, poverty is a lack of means to accomplish what one desires, be it lack of money, relationships, influence, power, intellectual ability, physical strength, freedom, or dignity. Scriptures promise that God will take care of such people, because they *know* they have to rely on God.

Adapted from *Gospel Call for Compassionate Action (Bias from the Bottom)* in *CAC Foundation Set* ([CD](#), [MP3 download](#));  
and *Job and the Mystery of Suffering*  
(published by Crossroad Publishing Company), p. 126