



November 2005

HARVEST TIME is rooted in the Biblical vision of economic justice which calls us to harvest God's abundant creation in such a way that everyone has enough.

Through a variety of avenues, Harvest Time supports Christians of unusual wealth as they move into deeper freedom so that their personal resources become instruments of God's love and justice.

Harvest Time is partnered with over 25 grassroots ministries in political and economic "war zones" in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, and Washington, DC. Wealthy Christians in the Harvest Time network are invited to invest their lives and resources in these partnerships. Harvest Time's primary mission, however, is to encourage wealthy Christians to freely and joyfully respond with their lives and money according to the leading of God's Spirit—within or beyond Harvest Time's own efforts to stand in economic solidarity with the poorest of the poor.

Pleonexia and Compassion *Reflections by John Haughey, S.J. & Rosemary Feerick*

INTRODUCTION ROSEMARY FEERICK

The other day, Bryan called to say he had just come across a past Ministry of Money newsletter that deals with pleonexia – the insatiable desire for more of what we already have. Bryan and Don have been re-reading all of the Ministry of Money newsletters as part of the research for the book about Don's life that Andrea and Keith Miller are writing. Bryan had just finished reading a newsletter that contained excerpts from a workshop given by John Haughey in 1991. Bryan was excited and called to tell me that he thought Harvest Time should consider sharing John Haughey's teaching with our mailing list. He sent me the text to get my opinion.

When I read John Haughey's words, I recognized right away that his analysis is excellent. But, unlike Bryan, I did not feel excited or inspired. Instead, I felt deflated.

I called Bryan to share my reaction. We were both perplexed by the difference in our responses to the article. We decided to discuss the article again the next day. After a good night's sleep, I read it again. Again, it left me feeling discouraged. Confused by my reaction, I sat down to try to put words on my response to John Haughey's teaching.

When I shared what I had written with Bryan, we realized that when we put John Haughey's teaching together with my response we had the essence of Harvest Time's call. As we see it, that call has to do with holding together the prophetic challenge that scripture offers to the wealthy with the tender love of Jesus that invites us to surrender more deeply into God.

In this newsletter, we have decided to share with you excerpts from John Haughey's teaching and what I wrote in response to it. We hope that Haughey's prophetic words will challenge you. And we hope that my response will remind us to maintain a spirit of compassion as we consider the ways that we are subject to the power of pleonexia.

MATTERS OF THE HEART JOHN HAUGHEY, S.J.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF
MONEY NEWSLETTER #71
APRIL 1991

At this point in our Christian lives the knowing part is pretty mature. What is necessary is that we take our heads and not put them on Jesus' head, but on His heart. It is in His heart where there are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but more importantly than these, His heart is what we each need to get in touch with.

*Nurturing a new breed of rich rulers not turning away sadly (Mark 10:22),
but turning to Jesus with rejoicing and hilarious generosity.*

You'll learn more by resting your head on Jesus' heart than by figuring it all out, because this matter of money is much, much more an emotional issue—having to do with fears and guilt than with having to get it straight or clear.

The head has an unbelievable capacity for being immobile, requiring more and more information, but the heart walks toward truth, toward love.

God has no power except love. In our working with money, we must become more secure in God's love. Money has everything to do with security, and love is its only antidote. This doesn't mean we shouldn't argue or think, but we should argue and think with our hearts. Let's make our sharing deal with matters of the heart.

Be careful of trying to create a "theology of money" since you can miss the rather radical way that Jesus dealt with individuals' relationship to their possessions. Look at the differences in how He dealt with the rich young man and with Zaccheaus in Luke's Gospel. He never asked Zaccheaus for anything except dinner! Zaccheaus wasn't married to his possessions. The rich young man, in his heart, thought he somehow was what he had.

In other words, Jesus' call is very different for each of us and the timing is different with each of us. This is one of the reasons you have to be careful of making something common which is meant to be very personal; or making a generalization where the call is to a particular person at a particular moment in their walk with the Lord. Generalities can be articulated, but they are only good up to a point!

"Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Luke 12:15

PLEONEXIA

Pleonexia is a Greek word which is translated into English as a passion for more... an insatiability for more of what I already experienced or have. "If I just have a little bit more, I will be secure." (I will be financially secure; I won't have this gnawing uncertainty...if I have just a little bit more...).

The deception is: "If I have more of this which I appetite, then I'll have life as a result of this more that I have." But a person's possessions do not guarantee life.

Luke 12:15 instructs us to avoid pleonexia in all its forms. Avoid this lust for more; this libido for control, for satisfaction, for knowledge, for financial security. It takes many forms, even spiritual forms.

Pleonexia sums up an extreme needing to come to a mean. Virtue in Greek philosophy is always a mean between two extremes. Pleonexia means too much of a good thing. It has to do with excess. God designed each of us with a desire for more that is infinite. Pleonexia is a profound miscalculation about what that more is that is scripted into us to desire.

A person may be wealthy, but that person's possessions do not guarantee life. The deception is: "If I have more of this which I appetite, just a little more of this, then I'll have life as a result of this."

The craved object of our pleonexia always functions as an idol. The object of our pleonexia subjects us to the power of our insatiable desire.

Ephesians 5:3 "Pleonexia is forbidden by the holiness that is in you."

Pleonexia is a profound miscalculation about how to deal with our capacity for infinity. It is an itch that is never relieved. When this itch begins to get legs into our culture, it starts showing its ugliness: drunkenness, infidelity, child abuse, wife abuse, rape, militarism. When a critical mass of the citizenry is incited to pleonexia, you have a sick culture. You have a culture that is propelled by a more which is insatiable.

The major activity incited by pleonexia is accumulation. The man with the grain bins in Luke 12 is called fool because grain is making a fool of him. Any object of pleonexia makes a fool of the one pursuing it because that object lulls us into thinking that our life comes from that object; and when we have more and more, we begin to misconstrue the right order that God has written into our hearts and into the world and into things. The fool's favorite word is my. I will pull down MY barns... There is no sin here except the sin of idolatry. No conscious sin is committed except the sin of narcissism... MY, MY, MY, MY, MY!!

What is the purpose of the grain? It is the same as the purpose of all material reality. It is

that all may share in the bounty! The social consciousness of the fool is nonexistent! And the spiritual consciousness of the fool begins to evaporate because the object itself has assured him that he has life as a result of it. Others' needs do not even come into the picture.

People from outside our North American culture see so much more clearly what is peculiar to our culture. What is unique about our culture is this pleonexia. We have more. We incite the need for more. Culturally, we reinforce the need for more in order for our supposedly free enterprise system to grow! The only thing our free enterprise system knows is the law of growth, and it calls this pleonexic growth normalcy.

If our economy functioned in the mean rather than in the extreme, then we would be the authors of our economy. We are the authors of our economy if it does our bidding; if we use it to pursue our values. We are not the authors of our piece of the economy if it dictates to us or tells us what is of value or tells us what we ought to have in order to be someone, or tells us what we ought to need.

So the basic perversion is this difference between subject-object. Once I succumb to pleonexia, then I become an object among other objects rather than a subject determining my life, rather than the author of the micro-economic realities that affect my life.

We live in the extreme and we call it normalcy. We live in an economy which incites pleonexia – more than we need and too little of the more we really need.

The economy is not the problem. Like the Sabbath, the econ-

“For human beings it is impossible but not for God. All things are possible for God.”

Mark 10:27

omy was made for us. We end up instead being made for the economy. We become measured as economic units and we begin to measure ourselves in economic terms, and we begin to measure other people in economic terms.

The problem is not the economy; it is our hearts! The deal that God made with our first parents and all of us sinners was this: I will make and you will co-make. As civilization matured, part of the co-making was the creation of economies. Economies were an agreed-upon process whereby needs are met and supplies are made and each person in an economic context was to exercise the virtue of contributed justice. That is to say, he or she was to be productive, utilizing the work of God's hands. As a result of utilizing God's goods, they were contributing to the common good, the commonwealth. Then the common wealth was distributed according to the needs of people. That was the plan. That was what an economy was for. It was to be a means of production and distribution with everyone contributing to it!

The problem is that once labor (us) created capital (it), capital started taking on a life of its own. And then capital, because we

ceased being its authors due to pleonexia, started dictating to us, rather than us to capital. So now we can't figure out what to do with the trade deficit, the budget deficit, basic human needs. None of the things we value can be budgeted. The things we don't value have an enormous piece of the budget. We're all objects (economic objects) being impacted by the economy rather than subjects determining the economy.

And all of this starts in the heart, so we can't lament victimhood. It starts in the heart and it starts in this being driven for the more! (see Jeremiah 17:9)

Consumerism, racism, sexism, militarism—all the 'isms' that we are guilty of are all due to one thing. They're due to the fact that we are not seeing the great hope to which we are called!! The object of our hope is wrong or too remote or just plain dim. Ignatius of Loyola puts it this way: “There are two powers in the world; one is the power of Christ and the other is the power of Satan. The power of Satan never discloses itself as satanic. So, you can't see Satan. All you see is smoke.”

What Satan does is send minions out by the millions and they have a strategy. The first step is to get people to appetize something; which brings this transcendental hope down to something less and they go for more of it, focusing upon this more. And once we get more and more of it, then we are socially confirmed in what it is. We are now living in some particular place and it is now expected that who we are is what we have! We see ourselves and others in terms of what we have. So, first of all we start with ardor for more of “this!” We then receive confirmation by our im-

mediate society. The movement is all in one direction. The final stage is independence.

Independence means I do not have to own my human vulnerability, my mortality, my dependence on God, my dependence on people, my need to interdepend. "I will be invulnerable!" Like the man with the bins of grain—the aspiration was to invulnerability. "I can control everything." The strategy of Satan is that we each become independent. Then if you put us all together in a country, what do we try to become? We try to become invincible. Even worse, we try to control everyone else by becoming the "cops" of the world.

This pleonexia is working well and universally. Even the developing countries around the world are saying, "What we want is to be like the North Americans."

It all starts in one heart and then one heart incites another heart and the inciting is never named in terms of pleonexia. It's never named except with tired words like "materialism." I don't think we can fight materialism by saying, "Boo, hiss materialism!" Which is what we usually do in the churches. It's so boring! And nothing happens! What we have to do is seduce ourselves into concretely envisioning the hope to which we are called which is not simply an ultimate hope. Christian hope impacts the heart now! The right hope and the right accent on hope is the key to money getting back under our authorship. I'm sure of that! Of all the pieces and the lore from The Gospels and theology, hope is the most underestimated piece.

Since God has made us capable for infinity, that infinity has to become more tangible. In lieu of

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Matthew 13:44

the intangibility of infinity, we have this propensity to fasten on something which is not God and make a god of it. We have to become more eschatologically sensitive which is to say that our hopes have to get more real, take on more reality so that the immediacy of those fresh felt hopes can begin to impact the various objects of our appetites. We are talking about hope delivered by an imagination inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is the core of the therapy we need.

Jesus told parables to get us to "forefeel" the Kingdom. As we work through the parables, keep in mind the power of the Spirit to work on our imagination. In this way, the power can begin to concretize our hope, so that the object of our hope is not for that which is extreme. Rather, all our hopes are gathered in the mean because they are integrated and in right order. (See Matthew 13:44-46)

The purpose of worship in your life is to make sure that that which of worth according to your deepest sense is assigned primary worth and that which is of lesser worth is relative to the deepest worth.

How is it possible to live these ideals, to be so disciplined? What is impossible for us is possible for God. Let us open ourselves to God's power which can move us into childhood; into dependence on God.

Jesus said, FOLLOW ME! Don't follow your culture. FOLLOW ME! Don't follow your biases. FOLLOW ME! What's in it for you? ME! Not a grand name. Not an important ministry. Not even importance. What's in it for you is ME! And I hope I am enough for you. And I'd like to ask you to get in touch with my invitation to you to follow ME; possibly to get in touch with resistance you have to the invitation. If you want the resistance to go away, then ask ME. If you want to know the source of the resistance, put your finger on it or ASK ME if you don't know what it is... Follow ME!

Why would you spend a lifetime adhering to the tenets of the church and resist following ME, being with Me, learning of Me and My heart? What I want is for you to follow Me so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete!

RESPONSE ROSEMARY FEERICK

I've just read John Haughey's words again after several hours of silence this morning and again it leaves me close to tears. This is my attempt to put words on my response.

I have been experiencing deep grief recently. Some of this grief is connected to events in my personal life journey. But in many respects it is a much larger grief. It is the grief that comes when I let myself be opened so that I can

see the horror of our wealthy culture. What I see so clearly these days is that I was raised in a culture that is racist, sexist, classist, individualistic, workaholic, etc., etc.. And what I see is that all of those drives and impulses are in me.

My response is deep sadness.

Steps I have been taking in my life recently are my attempts to live differently. In the process of taking those steps, I am letting God come and transform me from the inside out. I am letting myself feel my own personal grief which is deeply connected to the grief I feel when I open myself to the sin of my culture.

Against profound inner ambivalence which tells me to pick myself up and get on with it - against voices I hear which tell me that this grief is overly self-indulgent - against my own instinct that tells me that my worth is connected to what I produce - I let myself sink into the heavy weight of grief. Something in me knows that I need to resist the urge to avoid or anesthetize my sadness. Instead, I need to listen to it, honor it, and let it do its work. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn." Perhaps he meant that there are times when it is healthy to mourn.

Last summer, I took my boys to see Mount St Helen's. There I received the gift of a clear call into the grief. I think I needed that kind of clarity in order to trust it - in order to let it come. All of my default settings about the spiritual life tell me to move toward the light - to move toward where things feel lighter.

And yet the voice of God right now is clear. Trust the grief.

It's hard for me to stay with my

*"At that statement,
his face fell, and
he went away sad..."*

Mark 10:22

sadness. I want to be pleasant, productive, happy, energetic, joyful. Right now, I am none of those. Still, I let myself grieve because I believe that it is part of a process that is reorienting me and drawing me closer to God.

What I most need right now is a tender voice to encourage me. As I let the waves of grief wash over me, trusting them to do their work, trusting the God who I believe led me here, I need a midwife, someone who will occasionally come and just hold my feet.

When I read what John Haughey wrote about pleonexia and the movements of the evil spirit I knew in my head that he is right on. The content is good.

But right now, the intensity of his prophetic voice is hard for me to hear. Right now, I need to hear the voice of the shepherd who leads us through the dark valley that we need to let God lead us into if we are going to uproot pleonexia.

THE SADNESS OF THE RICH MAN

More and more, I have been wondering whether theologians and exegetes may have misunderstood the sadness of the rich man

in Mark 10 who walked away when Jesus told him to sell what he had, give to the poor, and follow him. Maybe this man's sadness wasn't due to the fact that he was arrogant or full of "pleonexia" or because he loved his possessions too much. Maybe he was sad precisely because he "got it." Perhaps he understood that saying "yes" to Jesus would mean making decisions which would hurt his family and cause him to lose many of his friends. Perhaps he knew that discipleship would mean the loneliness of cutting against the grain of his culture of wealth and privilege and losing access to many of the comforts and privileges to which he was accustomed. Maybe he knew that discipleship might mean breaking the hearts of his parents and friends who would not understand his call to reject what he had been taught to value and believe and who would not understand his journey into downward mobility and costly compassion and justice, especially for the poor. Perhaps he knew that they would accuse him of either losing his mind, being terribly ungrateful, or of being a traitor to everything they and their way of life stood for. No wonder he was sad!

To be sure, much is to be gained by anyone who "drops their nets" and follows Jesus, and Mark's teaching on the rich man speaks of all that he would receive on the other side of the costly decision to accept Jesus' invitation. The Christian life *is* full of tremendous joy and the peace that "passes all understanding." But the sadness and the grief are also very real, and need to be honored.

SIN & GRACE

During the first week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,

we consider the power of sin both at a cosmic level and in our own hearts. It's hard work. But the week is ultimately about good news because the deeper reality is that God is with us and that God loves us.

Sometimes grief functions like that first week of the spiritual exercises. In grief, it is easy to see the movements of sin in our lives. For instance, I see that the sickness that John Haughey speaks of is in me. My willingness to open myself to my family reality, my cultural reality, and the reality of my own heart has blasted my denial about that. John is not speaking about those greedy people "out there." He is speaking about me. He is speaking about us.

The moments when we see that are difficult. But they are also graced. Because the only way that God can turn us away from mammon is if we stop focusing on everyone else's greed and start confessing our own. Then we can begin to recover from pleonexia. Then God finally has a chance to open us up so that we can see that God's extravagant love is not just a nice idea, but a reality that can be trusted. Then we can begin to turn our financial lives over to God.

But without community, most of us will only go so far. I think that is because it is simply too exhausting, confusing, and lonely to stay grounded in God's abundance in the midst of a culture that is oriented around scarcity. It is hard to resist the subtle and sometimes not so subtle incitations to greed and fear. The messages are strong. The financial system is powerful. Without a community that can walk with us as we claim the good news of Gospel economics, most of us we will turn back or get stuck.

*"Jesus, looking at him,
loved him..."*

Mark 10:21

What we need to keep moving through the eye of the needle is the grace of God that we experience in community. We need people who can walk with us when it comes to discipleship and money; people who understand what teachers like John Haughey are getting at - to be sure - but who can speak to our spiritual ears when all we hear are the half truths and denials and lies of our culture, the accusations of well-meaning prophetic voices who condemn the wealthy, and the heavy drone of our own self-critiques and condemnation. In other words, we need friends who are not afraid to speak the prophetic truth but who can also remind us that we are extravagantly loved wherever we are - right now - on this painful, liberating, costly, joyful ride called Christian discipleship.



The Well of Grief

by David Whyte

Those who will not slip beneath
the still surface on the well
of grief

turning downward through its
black water
to the place we cannot breathe

will never know the source
from which we drink,
the secret water, cold and clear,

nor find in the darkness
glimmering
the small round coins thrown
by those who wished for
something else.

- *From Where Many Rivers Meet*

Risking Everything: 110 Poems
of Love and Revelation.

Edited by Roger Housden.

Harmony Books, 2003.



Just Sit There Right Now

By Hafiz

Just
sit there right now.
Don't do a thing. Just rest.

For your
separation from God
is the hardest work in this
world.

Let me bring you trays of food
and something
that you like to
drink.

You can use my soft words
as a cushion
for your
head.

From The Gift: Poems by Hafiz
Daniel Landinsky.
Penguin Compass, 1999.

HARVEST TIME PARTNERSHIPS

Harvest Time is partnered with over 25 organizations which serve the material, emotional, and spiritual needs of the poorest of the poor in Washington, DC, Haiti, and Bosnia. Harvest Time friends are invited and encouraged to participate in these partnerships in the following ways:

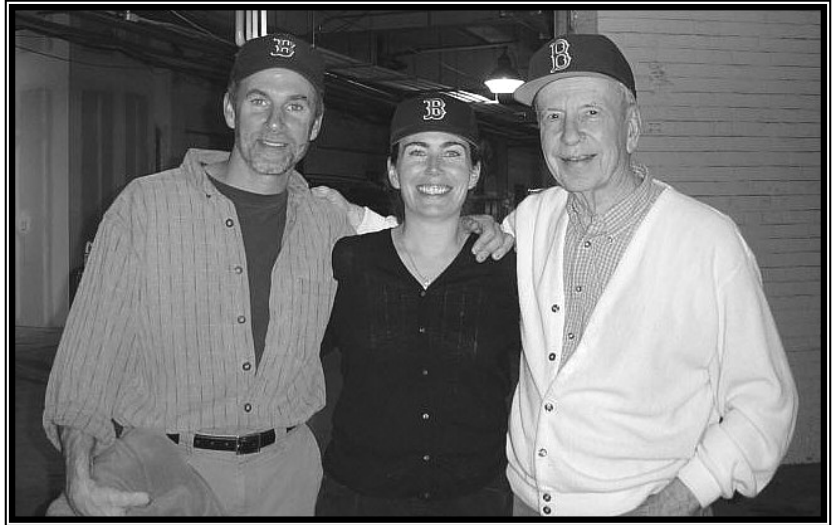
Reverse Mission

Bryan leads short, 3-5 day pilgrimages of reverse mission to Haiti and Washington, DC for individuals and small groups who would like to touch and be touched by the realities of poverty and economic injustice. These are also opportunities to form relationships with ministries that are responding to these realities.

Financial Gifts

Those who are so led, can make financial gifts to the organizations we are partnered with through Harvest Time. Every month, we wire money to Haiti to support ministries that serve hundreds of the poorest and most vulnerable people in some of Haiti's most volatile neighborhoods. Two reports are available for viewing or download on our web site that provide detailed information about the Boston Youth Association and St. Thomas School, two of our partnerships in Haiti. In addition, we distribute funds to several ministries that serve the poor in Washington, DC. A comprehensive listing and brief description of these organizations can be found on the Partnerships page of our website www.HarvestTime.cc. Donors are welcome to designate gifts for a particular ministry or to let Harvest Time staff determine where funds are most needed.

For more information about Reverse Mission and gifts to Harvest Time, please call Bryan at 608-251-0869.



Harvest Time Co-Directors

Bryan Sirchio, Rosemary Feerick, and Don McClanen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Often wealthy Christians who are asking questions about economic justice and who are trying to discern what God is calling them to do with their wealth lack spiritual community around these issues. Harvest Time gatherings provide opportunities for Christians of exceptional wealth to get to know each other and Harvest Time staff in order to nurture a growing network of support, encouragement, challenge, and inspiration as we strive to become more faithful disciples. Gatherings are also opportunities to ask the hard questions in an atmosphere of extravagant love.

“Creating Community Along the Narrow Path”

January 13-15, 2006
Collins Retreat Center
Eagle Creek, OR
(45 minutes from Portland)

For more information about this retreat, contact Rose Feerick at 408-264-3039.

HARVEST TIME STAFF

Rosemary Feerick

Co-Director
4950 Cherry Avenue #13
San Jose, CA 95118
rfeerick2002@yahoo.com
408-264-3039
408-264-0796 (fax)

Don McClanen

Founder/Director, Emeritus
11315 Neelsville Church Rd.
Germantown, MD 20876
harvesttime@starpower.net
301-601-9400
301-601-2931 (fax)

Bryan Sirchio

Co-Director
P.O. Box 45236
Madison, WI 53744-5236
bsirch@sirchio.com
608-251-0869
608-294-7837 (fax)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gordon Cosby, Emeritus
Dot Cresswell
David Erickson
Don McClanen
Kayla McClurg
Bryan Sirchio

“The one who had gathered a large amount did not have too much, and the one who had gathered a small amount did not have too little. They so gathered that everyone had enough to eat.” Exodus 16:18