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Liberation Theology

and
A View of El Salvador

▼
El Salvador

Contrasts



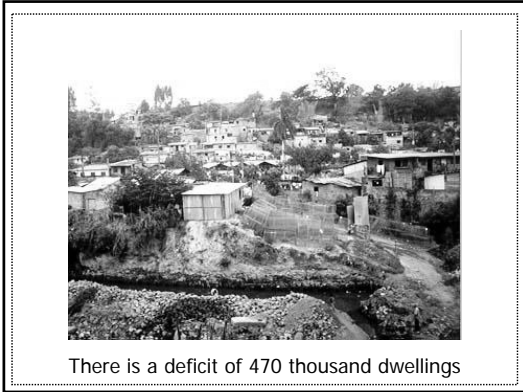
Almost half of the population of El Salvador lack safe drinking water

Drinking the water in El Salvador is the second most dangerous thing you can do...

The most dangerous thing you can do is breath the air



Half the population lives in poverty

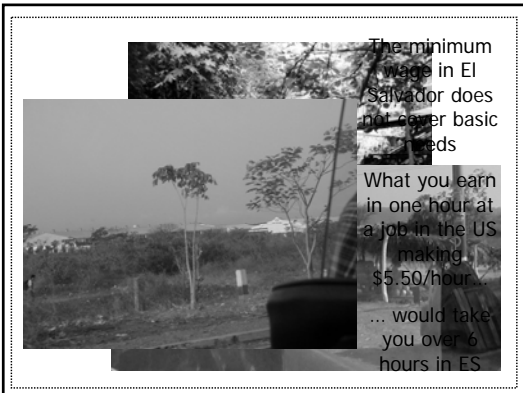


There is a deficit of 470 thousand dwellings



In New York City (whose population is about the same as ES), there are 2-3 homicides each day.

In El Salvador, there are 23 each day

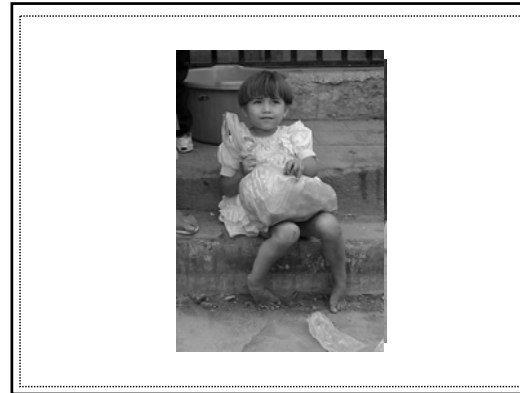


The minimum wage in El Salvador does not cover basic needs

What you earn in one hour at a job in the US making \$5.50/hour...

... would take you over 6 hours in ES





What are we to think?

◆ Blessed are you poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God
Luke 6.20

To whom might these words of Jesus
sound dangerously revolutionary and
threatening?

▼

What is Liberation Theology?

A way of *doing* theology that begins with experience, affirms the dignity of all people, and whose goal is neither aid nor reform but liberation.

Who are the “poor”?

Those who are:

- ◆ Economically poor
- ◆ Any others who are oppressed because of race, ethnicity, sex

None are free till all are free

**Background of
Liberation Theology**

Liberation Theology Chronology at:
www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/chronology.html

Excerpts from Liberation Theologians at:
www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/liberation.html

Background of Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology acknowledges:

- ◆ The dignity of each human
- ◆ That such dignity has social consequences
- ◆ That society ought to be structured for dignified living
- ◆ That sin can be institutionalized or experienced in the structure of society
- ◆ That there is a spiral of violence that needs to be broken:
oppression and hunger > rebellion >
oppression by the state

What about the “poor in spirit”?

How might someone who is well enough off to be watching this PowerPoint relate to liberation theology?

They are all those who place themselves and their strength at the service of God and their sisters and brothers; all those who do not put themselves first, who do not see their security and the meaning of their lives and actions in profiting from this world and accumulating possessions, honor, power, and glory, but open themselves to God in gratitude and disinterestedly serve others, even those they hate, building up means of producing a more worthy life for all. Faced with a predatory, consumerist society; the evangelically poor will use the goods of this world with moderation and sharing. They are neither rigid ascetics who disdain God's creation with all the good things God has placed at the disposal of all, nor spendthrifts who intemperately and selfishly take all they can for themselves. The evangelically poor will establish solidarity with the economically poor and even identify with them, just as the historical Jesus did. *Boff, page 48*

What are responses to Lib. Theol?

- ◆ Liberation theology provides the most convincing refutation of modern atheism, because it has demonstrated, through its actions, that God is no longer a source of alienation in history, but the fountainhead of social commitment.

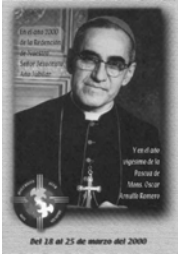
What are responses to Lib. Theol?

- ◆ When I advocated feeding the hungry, they called me a saint; when I asked why they were poor, they called me a Communist.
Dom Helder Camara

What are responses to Lib. Theol?

- ◆ “American foreign policy must begin to counterattack (and not just react against) liberation theology.”
Santa Fe Report of 1982 produced by advisors to President Reagan

Archbishop Oscar Romero





What are we to think?

The poor are a sacrament
who can transform our lives
if we are willing to open ourselves to them,
to accompany them.

Archbishop Oscar Romero



Liberation Theology and Exodus

Regarding Liberation Theology:

In Exodus, violence was necessary to
overcome oppression.

- Is violence always necessary?
Inevitable?
- Sometimes necessary?
- Always to be avoided?

**Regarding Liberation
Theology:**

Exodus demonstrates a “departing”
from oppression.

- Is this the best for which we can hope?
- How might one live with (former) oppressors?

**Regarding Liberation
Theology:**

Exodus displays no reconciliation
between oppressed and oppressors.

- Is reconciliation a necessary part of liberation?