

Post-Parochial Strategies for Advancing Urban Solidarity

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Joy and Hope: The 50th Anniversary of *Gaudium et Spes*

Bro. Raymond Fitz, S.M., Ph.D.
Fr. Ferree Professor of Social Justice
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Dayton

This paper is a reflection on my experiences as an educator and community activist through the lens of the tradition of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Vatican II document on The Church in the Modern World. In my forty-five years as an educator in a Catholic university I have endeavored to create experiences and conceptual frameworks that assist faculty and students in integrating the Catholic social tradition into their work of inquiry and learning. For the last thirty years, I have been a community activist partnering with others to organize ways to help young people succeed and families thrive in our community's distressed neighborhoods. I have focused most of my efforts in helping our urban public and Catholic schools meet the challenges of educating in distressed neighborhoods.

In my work with urban neighborhoods and urban Catholic education, I have become convinced that we need a new approach to urban Catholic education. In this paper I will use the tradition of *Gaudium et Spes* to make a case that the Catholic Church is called to have an educational and evangelizing presence in the distressed neighborhoods of the metropolitan region. This case is developed by 1) outlining a framework for advancing justice in a metropolitan region, 2) identifying a dilemma facing the Church in the metropolitan region in its ministry to distressed neighborhoods, 3) outlining some key practices of breaking the cycle of poverty in distressed neighborhoods, 4) proposing an approach to the practice of urban solidarity that can help the Church constructively address its urban challenge and 5) outlining elements of an effective urban educational and evangelizing presence for the Church.

Gaudium et Spes raised, in a new way, the question of how the Church should interpret the world and engage with it. The event of *Gaudium et Spes* initiated on-going conversations and arguments on this question – what I have called the tradition of *Gaudium et Spes*.¹ This tradition has been a major influence on contemporary Catholic social teaching and thought. This paper brings together the tradition of *Gaudium et Spes* as well as the findings of contemporary poverty reduction research and practice to explore new strategies for how the Catholic Church can advance urban solidarity. I use the phrase “post-parochial strategies” because these strategies require a major reframing of how we as a Church educate for faith and organize our efforts to be a neighbor to those who live in distressed neighborhoods.

In the first section a social ecology model is used to develop a multi-level and multi-disciplinary perspective on the issues of justice within the metropolitan regions. Viewing the metropolitan region as a social ecology provides a way to define the metropolitan common good along with the conditions of social life that support that common good. The social ecology model is used to identify how relational, structural and cultural forces shape the common good in a region and what is required to advance justice in the metropolitan region.

In the second section the metropolitan perspective is used to examine the injustice of poverty in a region. The examination starts with an important “sign of the times,” namely, urban sprawl. Two important consequences of urban sprawl are examined 1) creation of distressed neighborhoods and 2) the movement of Catholics out of inner city neighborhoods into the suburbs. Both of these consequences present major challenges to the Church's capacity to address urban injustice. Distressed neighborhoods are examined to

¹ Massimo Faggioli. *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press. 2012 outlines the neo-Augustinian and neo-Thomist position in this conversation and argument on the meaning of *Gaudium et Spes*.

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identify barriers to young people succeeding and families thriving. Distressed neighborhoods are often locked into cycles of poverty in which the poverty of the family contributes to the next generation's being in poverty. The movement of Catholics to the suburbs separates the Church from the people and realities of distressed neighborhoods. This section concludes by highlighting a dilemma for the Catholic Church – namely there is a growth of distressed neighborhoods in the urban core and simultaneously the Catholic Church has moved its resources to the suburbs and is disinvesting in urban neighborhoods.

The third section uses the social ecology model to identify important characteristics of a supportive and engaged neighborhood, that is a neighborhood that supports young people succeeding and families thriving. The concepts of human agency and collective efficacy used to indicate the fundamental capabilities needed to reverse the cycle of poverty. Next a brief statement of characteristics of a supportive and engaged neighborhood is provided. These characteristics help us appreciate why a multidimensional and integrated approach is necessary. Two of the best practice models for breaking the cycle of poverty are outlined: 1) the two generation model and 2) the community schools model.

The fourth section focuses on urban solidarity as a way the Church might approach the challenges of advancing urban justice. Urban solidarity is seen as an interrelated set of virtues that allow persons and groups to make a firm and persevering commitment to realizing the common good of the regional community. In the development of urban solidarity, priority is given to social prudence as a virtue of experiential learning where one grows in the virtues of urban solidarity through inquiry and reasoned action to advance justice and then reflecting on what one has learned through that action. Social prudence then is complemented by the development of the virtues of social justice, compassion, hospitality, social fortitude, social temperance, and the virtues of constructive conversation. This section concludes with reflections on how urban solidarity requires a new way of being Church and how post-parochial strategies are needed to implement urban solidarity.

The fifth section outlines one scenario on how the Church could exercise urban solidarity by creating an educational and evangelizing presence in distressed neighborhoods. This presence would be realized through an Urban Catholic Education Partnership that supports several Catholic Early Learning Centers and Catholic Neighborhood Schools in distressed neighborhoods. Important elements of the Centers and Schools are outlined along with the Partnership governance structure. This section concludes with comments on the role religious communities and communities of lay Catholic movements might play in the Partnership.

I. Advancing Justice in Metropolitan Regions

Many scholars of urban issues have demonstrated the necessity of addressing issues like the injustice of poverty from the perspective of the metropolitan region.² In our teaching and community work it has been helpful to use a social ecology model to analyze urban injustice. This section utilizes a social ecology model to build an interpretive framework to describe social justice for a metropolitan region. This framework allows us to apply the concept of the common good at many levels within the region and the conditions of social life in the region that support the common good at each of these levels. In following sections this framework will be employed to untangle the many problems of urban poverty.

² David Rusk. *Inside Game/Outside Game*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999 and Myron Orfield. *American Metropolitan: The New Suburban Reality*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002. Clearly there are factors outside of the metro region that have an impact on urban justice, e.g. the global dimensions of the economy, federal welfare policy, etc. In this analysis of urban injustice we are looking at factors that can be addressed from within the region.

Social Ecology Model³

A social ecology model is an interdisciplinary model used to analyze complex problems of contemporary society which require knowledge from multiple disciplines to develop a broader view of human flourishing (see Figure 1). Applying the social ecology model to analyzing urban justice/injustice views the metro region as multi-leveled social network that provides the social, cultural, and institutional context for the well-being of people and groups within the region. The social ecology model sees children and families as embedded in neighborhoods, neighborhoods within cities, cities within a county, counties within a region, and regions embedded in a particular state and in the United States as a whole. There is also a variety of

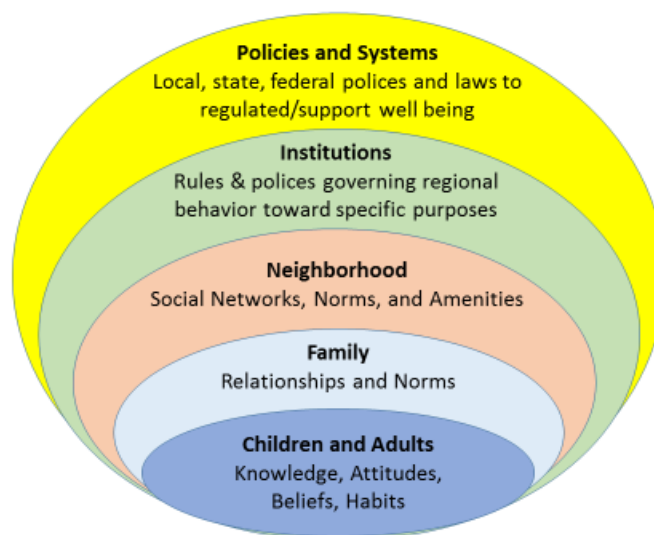


Figure 1: The Social Ecology Model

organizations and processes that cut across all of the entities in a region, such as a Council of Governments that provide different services for the region, like wastes disposal or emergency services. The social ecology model helps us understand the interdependencies that are necessary to develop a more complete approach to urban solidarity. The social ecology model provides a language that can be used in public conversations on urban policy as well as a language that is compatible with Catholic social thought.

Social Justice in the Region: A Brief Statement of the Ideal

“Metro” Common Good: The starting point for applying the social ecology model to the problem of urban injustice is to define the “metro” common good. Following the lead of *Gaudium et Spes* 26 we can define the “metro” common good, by analogy, as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members *within the region* relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.” As GS indicates the “metro” common good has grown in complexity and it involves rights and duties of all persons and groups within the region.

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that both charity and justice are required to promote the common good. “To desire the *common good* and strive towards it *is a requirement of justice and charity*. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis*, or ‘city’. The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them” (*Caritas in Veritate*, #7).

³ For a description of the social ecology model see Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>, accessed February 4, 2015. For an application of the social ecology model to persistent poverty see Margery Austin Turner, et al, *Tackling Persistent Poverty in Distressed Urban Neighborhoods: History Principles, and Strategies for Philanthropic Investment*, Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2014.

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Conditions of Social Life: The “conditions of social life” of the metro region are the relationships, social structures and the culture that support relationships within the region.⁴ Relationships are foundational for our growth as human persons. When we are young children, we are highly dependent on the care of adults to make sure we are fed, clothed, and provided with supportive interactions and opportunities to explore the world. When we are in our later years, we once again become dependent on the care of others. Yet all ages of our growth and development as human persons are influenced by relationships – relationship in the family, relationships with peers, relationships in our work environment, and relationships in our community. As adults our relations are interdependent – we give and receive care. Relationships can aid or hinder our development as a person. Relationships can promote the growth of the human person or relationships can be toxic – placing obstacles in the way of growth. We will see later in the paper that relationships have an impact on a person’s quality of life and that poverty has an impact on relationship.

Social structures include the multiple patterns of interconnections and interdependencies of people and groups within the region. For example, families are situated within neighborhoods and the conditions of their social life are influenced by the conditions of the neighborhood, e.g., the quality of its schools, access to employment, access to amenities such as playgrounds, libraries, healthy food, etc.

In our analysis of the social structures of metro regions we will focus on one very important type of social structure, namely institutions of the region. Institutions, in a broad sense, are the permanent social structures that organize the region through making and enforcing rules that govern cooperative behavior toward a specific social purpose or function that transcends persons or groups.

Among the important institutions in a region are:

- **The Family** is a structured pattern of behavior for raising children and providing for the good of its members.
- **The Economy** is a structured pattern for the production, distribution, and consumptions of goods and services. A major shaper of the economy is the markets – the process of buying and selling. The economy is a major source for employment.
- **The many levels of Government** within a metropolitan region are the institutions by which the region is governed, i.e., it is concerned with the law in realm of public order, and the administration of public life. The levels of government within the region include cities, townships, school districts, and county jurisdictions, Councils of Government that span the whole region, and levels of government that are larger than the region which include the State and Federal level.
- **The Civil Society** of the metropolitan region is the area of voluntary collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family, and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated.

This set of institutions will be important in our development of urban solidarity.

Culture is another helpful concept in understanding the “conditions of social life” in the region and in neighborhoods. Culture can be understood as the learned and shared beliefs which shape and influence both the perception and behavior of persons. Some of the elements that are part of culture are values, assumptions, norms, and attitudes. Values are the relatively enduring beliefs that a group has about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. A simple example of a value in a neighborhood would be, “It

⁴ For the sake of developing an easy to use framework for analysis of urban injustice the discussion of structures and culture in this paper is greatly simplified. A more in-depth treatment can be found in William Julius Wilson. *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. 2009.

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is important for children to get a good education.” Assumptions are beliefs we have about ourselves and how the world works. “Graduating from college is necessary to obtain a job that can support a family” is an example of an assumption. Norms are the agreed-upon expectations and rules which guide behavior in a given situation. In a neighborhood, an example of a norm would be, “Children should be in school and not hanging out on the corner.” Attitudes are the organization of values and assumptions that are directed toward a person, group, or situation. For example, what attitude does a group have toward the police in their neighborhood – “Are they helpful for the safety of our neighborhoods or are they here to catch us doing something wrong?” Values, assumptions, norms, and attitudes are given coherence by narratives and symbols. An example of a narrative for an urban neighborhood might be, “What is the story that provides a model for masculinity for young men in the neighborhood?”

All of these elements of culture come together to define the expectations that we have for ourselves, other persons and groups within the region and in our neighborhoods and organize the enduring relations they have with one another. Culture forms the structure of our consciousness and provides a sharing of outlooks and acceptable modes of behavior among individuals who face similar place-based circumstances and/or have the same social network. For example, the culture of a neighborhood will influence what is seen as acceptable behavior of young people in the neighborhood, how teens relate to one another, as well as, the relationship parents have with the principal and teachers at their children’s school.

Social Justice as an Ideal: The concepts of the regional common good and the conditions of social life – relationships, institutions and cultures – provide the framework for defining social justice as an ideal within the region. Justice is about right relations; a region is socially just when the orientation of relationships and the organization of its institutions and its cultures are aligned to realize the common good of the region, i.e., the flourishing of all people and groups within the region. In the Catholic tradition the good of the individual is inseparable from the good of the community. It is easy to articulate the conditions for social justice of a metropolitan region, but as the next section will illustrate, it is a rare metropolitan region in the United States that is socially just by this definition. In the next section, the examination of patterns in the region will illustrate how relationships, institutions, and cultures shape the opportunities available to children and families. Advancing urban justice requires that we organize people and groups to change and transform relationships, institutions and cultures so that there is a better realization of the common good. As the remaining pages of this paper will attempt to illustrate some approaches to this very difficult task.

II. Urban Sprawl, Persistent Poverty, and Movement of the Church

The starting point for this paper is the demonstration that almost all metropolitan regions in the United States are highly segregated in terms of economic class and this economic segregation is growing. One way to address urban injustice is to address this growing economic gap between neighborhoods. In this paper a different approach is taken. Urban injustice is addressed from the perspective of roadblocks to educational opportunities in neighborhoods. Metropolitan economic segregation is recast into *high roadblock neighborhoods* (distressed neighborhoods) and *low roadblock neighborhoods* (more affluent neighborhoods). This choice of descriptive language is pragmatic, i.e., it facilitates public conversations. It is relatively easy for a metropolitan region to agree to a shared vision “that every child will have excellent opportunities for learning, i.e., they will be ready to learn when entering kindergarten and ready to earn upon graduation from college or after earning a post-high school certificate.” The risk of using this language is that it may not state the case of the injustice of urban poverty with sufficient “prophetic urgency.” People can agree to a vision but lack the tools and the motivation to do something about this vision, especially as it concerns those that are poor.

In this section urban sprawl and two important social consequences of urban sprawl are examined. First, urban sprawl results in the segregation of distressed neighborhoods in the urban center and these neighborhoods limit the opportunities for young people to succeed and families to thrive. The dynamics

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of distressed neighborhoods perpetuate an intractable “cycle of poverty.” Urban sprawl also has an ecclesial consequence; Catholics have moved into the suburbs at a rate that is greater than the general population. This movement has caused the Church to refocus its resources to the suburban parishes and, often as an unplanned consequence, the Church slowly abandons the center city. The response of the Church in metropolitan regions to urban sprawl has greatly diminished its capacity to address issues of urban injustice.

Urban Sprawl

Many scholars of urban issues have demonstrated the necessity of addressing issues like the injustice of poverty from the perspective of the metropolitan region.⁵ A metropolitan area is a region consisting of a densely populated urban core and its less-populated surrounding territories that are highly interdependent because they share, for instance, infrastructure (e.g. transportation systems), a common economy, and housing resources. A metropolitan region is not a single, unitary thing, but comprises multiple jurisdictions and municipalities and within each of these municipalities a collection of neighborhoods that provide the social context for families and children.

Table No. 1: Urban Sprawl in Greater Dayton Region								
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 1950 to 2010
Urban Population	346,864	501,694	606,549	596,134	613,147	723,955	720,393	2.08 times
Urban Area Sq. Miles	66.2	149.0	185.9	253.7	274.1	327.6	340.4	5.14 times
Data from Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission								

Urban sprawl occurs when the amount of urbanized land in a region grows at a significantly faster rate than the population growth of the region. Almost all urbanized areas in the United State have experienced urban sprawl.⁶ The case of the Greater Dayton, Ohio metropolitan region is used as a case of urban sprawl and its consequences. This metro region has the City of Dayton as its urban center. It contains three Counties. Montgomery, which contains Dayton as the County seat, and the Counties of Miami to the north and Greene to the east. Table No. 1 summarizes changes in the urban population and the changes in the urbanized areas from 1950 to 2010. Urban sprawl is clearly evident. Urban population has doubled from 1950 to 2010 and the amount of urbanized land has grown by more than 5 times.

Table No. 2 which shows the trends for total population in each of the Counties of the Dayton Metropolitan Region and illustrates where the population changes have occurred. The population of the Greater Dayton Region peaked in 1970 and has decreased by 2% in 2010. During this period of time both Greene and Miami Counties have gained population (29.20% and 21.54% respectively) and Montgomery County has lost population (-11.71%).

⁵ David Rusk. *Inside Game/Outside Game*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999 and Myron Orfield. *American Metropolitan: The New Suburban Reality*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002. Clearly there are factors outside of the metro region that have an impact on urban justice, e.g. the global dimensions of the economy, federal welfare policy, etc. In this analysis of urban injustice we are looking at factors that can be addressed from within the region.

⁶ Orfield, Chapters 1-3.

Geographical Area	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1970 to 2010
Greene	58,892	94,642	125,057	129,769	136,731	147,886	161,573	29.20%
Miami	61,309	72,901	84,342	90,381	93,182	98,868	102,506	21.54%
Montgomery	398,441	527,080	606,148	571,697	573,809	559,062	535,153	-11.71%
The Region	518,642	694,623	815,547	791,847	803,722	805,816	799,232	-2.00%

Table No. 3 shows the impact of urban sprawl on the city of Dayton. While Montgomery County lost 11.71% of its population since 1970, the City of Dayton lost 41.87% of its population and the population of Montgomery County outside of the City of Dayton has grown by 8.53%.

	1970	2010	% Change
Montgomery	606,148	535,153	-11.71%
Dayton	243,459	141,527	-41.87%
Outside	362,689	393,626	8.53%

The Creation of Distressed Neighborhoods. There are many reasons why urban sprawl occurs and there is debate about the pros and cons of this phenomenon. This paper highlights one impact that is very detrimental to opportunities for learning in Montgomery County, namely, when urban sprawl occurs in a metropolitan region there is almost always a growth of high poverty and extreme poverty neighborhoods⁷ in the center of the region. This trend for Montgomery County, OH is illustrated in Figure 1 (on the next page). The change in high and extreme poverty census tracts from 1970 to 2013 is dramatic: 1) extreme poverty tracts (> 40%) grew from 3% to 14%; 2) high poverty tracts (30% to 40%) grew from 4% to 10%; and low poverty tracts (< 10%) decreased from 68% to 37%. While there are high poverty census tracts outside of the city of Dayton, most of them are within city limits. In Dayton almost half of its census tracts (38) have poverty rates of 30% or higher and more than 63% of the children in Dayton live in these neighborhoods. In the next section the relationship between distressed neighborhoods and roadblocks to learning is explored.

⁷ A poverty rate of 30% or more is used, in most studies of poverty, to designate distressed neighborhoods. According to the US Census Bureau, low poverty neighborhoods are neighborhoods with a poverty rate of 10% or less, high poverty neighborhoods would be 30% and less than 40% poverty, and extreme poverty neighborhoods would be 40% or greater.

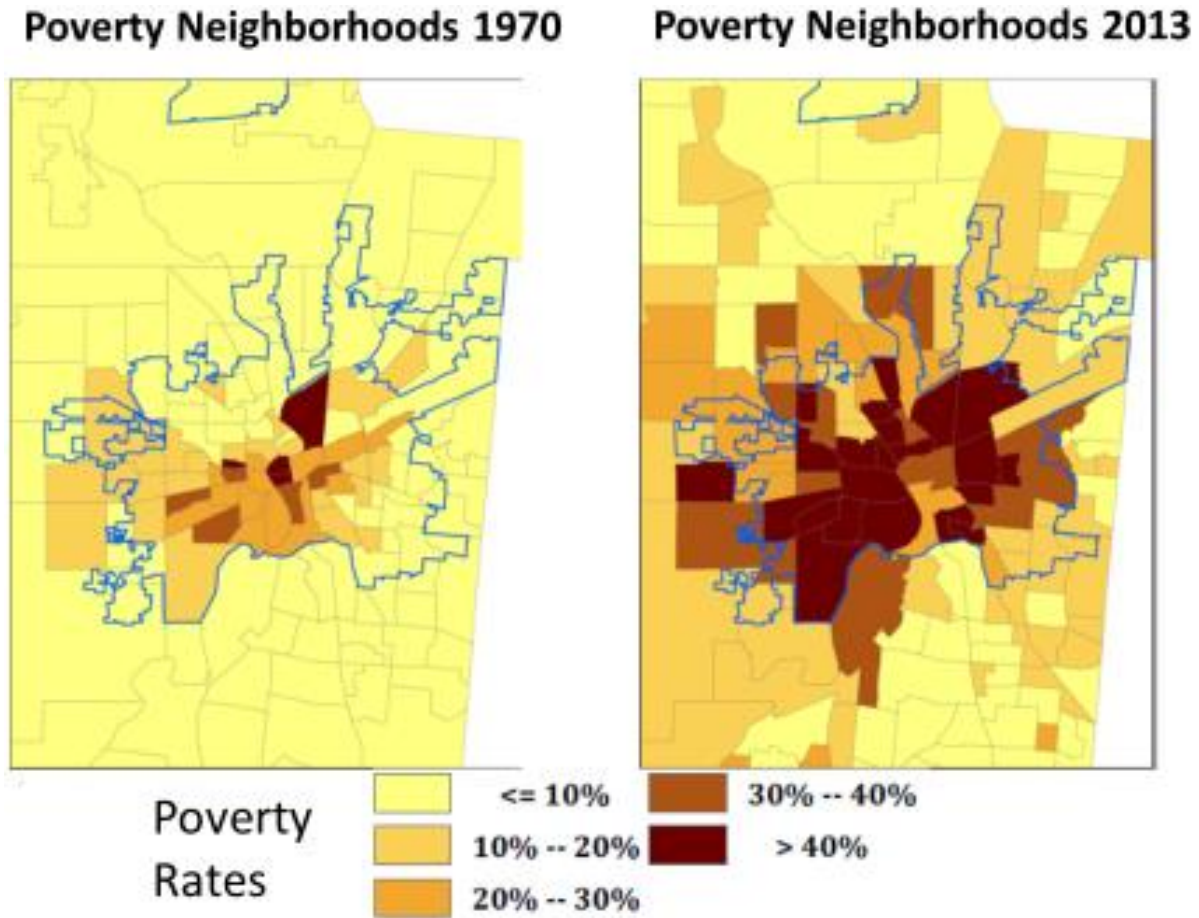


Figure 2: Changes in Poverty Neighborhoods

The Roadblocks in Distressed Neighborhoods⁸

Further examination of distressed neighborhoods indicates that within these neighborhoods there are many roadblocks to children succeeding and families thriving. A summary of data on these roadblocks is organized around the impacts on the strength of families, the conditions of the neighborhood, the quality of early learning and schools, and how all of the factors impact the opportunities for young people to succeed.

Fragile Families: Distressed neighborhoods have a higher percentage of single parent families, families on welfare, parents who are unemployed, and parents who have not completed high school. While the number of single parent families is declining over all, there is still a high percentage of single parent families in distressed neighborhoods, especially women who have not completed high school. Being a

⁸ This is a summary of research that can be found in Raymond L. Fitz and Virginia Saurine, High Poverty Neighborhoods and Barriers to Learning: A Summary of Some Major Research Findings – 2014 <https://www.udayton.edu/artssciences/endowedchair/ferree/papers.php> which will be available at the end of March.

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parent in poverty, especially if you are single parent, is highly stressful. As a parent you are constantly concerned with making sure your family has food and shelter. Often a parent is not able to afford health care for themselves and their children. Managing this stress gives parents little time to read to their children and the absence of affordable child care means that children may not have suitable nurturing relations when they are in child care. The stresses of a high poverty household often contribute to and lead parents to depression and substance abuse problems.

Distressed and Disengaged Neighborhoods: In distressed neighborhoods there is often the lack of a supportive network to help families and a lack of role models within the neighborhood who value education. In part, due to poverty, there are higher rates of crime and violence. There is a lack of amenities such as easily accessible healthy food, play grounds, and recreational opportunities. Often families are isolated from one another and there is not the trust among neighbors needed to work with others to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. The lack of neighborhood pride has many people not keeping up their property or in working with others to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood.

Ineffective Early Learning and Schools: In distressed neighborhoods there are fewer opportunities for children to engage in early learning, especially formal pre-school programs. The early learning resources in the community are often not aligned with the PK-3rd grade curriculum of the local school. Schools in distressed neighborhoods on the average have lower primary reading and mathematics scores, higher levels of chronic absenteeism, higher dropout rates, and lower high school graduation rates. For a multitude of reasons, families of children in distressed neighborhoods are disengaged from the school of their children. Because of declining property values and high tax delinquency rates, center city school systems have little money to invest in the special needs of their students. Administrators and teachers in schools in distressed neighborhoods are often not equipped to handle the many roadblocks to learning that their students face.

Young People Not Succeeding: All of the above factors contribute to a lack of academic success of children in distressed neighborhoods. The stress of poverty has been shown to have negative impact on the early development of those parts of the brain (executive function) that impact early academic and emotional learning. Distressed neighborhoods have a higher percent of children who are not kindergarten ready, have higher levels of chronic absenteeism, a lower percentage who are proficient in third grade reading and mathematics, and greater drop-out rates. Young children in distressed neighborhoods have markedly smaller size vocabularies than children from more affluent neighborhoods. Children raised in single parent families, as compared to intact families, are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems; be physically abused; smoke, drink and use drugs; be aggressive; engage in violent, delinquent, and criminal behavior; and have developmental delays. Only a few highly resilient students from distressed neighborhoods will persist in school to obtain a college degree or a post-secondary credential.

Multi-generational Cycle of Poverty: This brief overview of distressed neighborhoods indicates the many structural and cultural forces within these neighborhoods that present roadblocks to opportunities for young people to succeed and families to flourish. Many persons and families in distressed neighborhoods are locked into a *multi-generation cycle of poverty*. Because parents lack the educational, social, and financial resources to support their children's success in learning and development, their children often drop out of school, have children as single teenage parents, and have not developed the skills for employment. As young adults these children form families that repeat the cycle with their children. Distressed neighborhoods have a large number of youth ages 15-24 who are out-of-school or out-of-work and are raising dependent children.

People experience poverty not only as a deficit in financial resources but also as the stress of dealing with a large number of problems. In distressed neighborhoods the problems outlined above are mutually reinforcing in a negative and interlocking complex in which each problem intensifies other problems, thus

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making the complex of problems much larger than the sum of its parts. An intervention that targets only one element of this complex of problems will be overwhelmed by the other problems.

Underlying causes: People who are locked into a cycle of poverty very often experience a sense of **helplessness**, i.e., they believe that it is impossible for them to control their situation. Because of the adversity and toxic stress of living in poverty, many persons believe it is impossible for them to take action that will help them meet the challenges of daily life. The experience of helplessness keeps a person focused on the short term – a survival orientation. It might be money for food, how to address a child's urgent health problem, or dealing with a dysfunctional relationship within the household. It becomes difficult for a person experiencing helplessness to plan because they feel they have insufficient control of their life. Helplessness is reinforced by a variety of false beliefs that persons in distressed neighborhoods have about their personal capabilities and their ability to do very much about their situation.

There is also the experience of **collective helplessness**, i.e., the people in the neighborhood's inability to collectively address the problems of the neighborhood. Collective helplessness is also seen in the inability to regulate the behavior of people within the neighborhood, so for example there are higher incidences of crime and violence in the neighborhood. Neighbors are often isolated from each other and do not have bonds of trust that would allow them to work together. Without the capacity to work together, the negative spiral of problems continues. There is higher crime in the neighborhood, more abandoned buildings, and more destructive situations for young people.

There is a **disconnection between** people in **distressed neighborhoods** and people in **more affluent neighborhoods**. Through the media, the poor know about the life of the more affluent and the more affluent know about the life of the poor through the reports of failing schools or TV reports of violence in poor neighborhoods. These stereotypes of each other keep the neighborhoods disconnected. The poor have become "other" to the more affluent and the more affluent "other" to the poor. I believe there is a sense of personal and collective helplessness a community endeavors to bridge the experience gap between the more affluent suburbs and the distressed neighborhoods of the region and work together to advance justice. We are often at a loss on how to initiate and sustain this bridging dialogue.

Consequences for the Church

Urban sprawl also has consequences for the Church's capacity to address the roadblocks facing children and families in the urban core. The movement of Catholics to the suburbs combined with an outmoded parochial financial strategy has caused the Catholic Church to diminish its presence in the urban core.

Movement of Catholics to the Suburbs: Because of their excellent education, most often in Catholic schools, Catholics are among the most economically upwardly mobile religious groups. In examining the data available, it also seems that Catholics are moving to the suburbs as fast as or faster than the general population of the metropolitan region. This movement of Catholics to the suburbs has resulted in the organization of suburban parishes and parish schools. As suburban parishes were formed they began to utilize their parish resources to build churches and parish schools. Resources utilized to maintain a Catholic presence in the urban core were now reallocated to the suburbs.

Inadequacies of the Parochial Financial Strategy: As the Catholic Church has moved into the 21st century it has been hindered, in my judgment, in addressing the issue of urban presence by a financial strategy that once worked well for the early and middle 20th century. In simplest terms this strategy places the major responsibility for the creation and sustaining of Catholic educational presence on the parents of the children and resources of the local parish. This financial strategy, which has been given the name "every tub on its own bottom," says if the parish can no longer support the school based on tuition and parish resources, it is to be closed. All responsibility for Catholic presence has been put at the local level. The creation of special inner-city Catholic education funds has been able to prop up this financial strategy on a temporary basis.

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Diminishment of Catholic Urban Presence: In almost every metropolitan area this movement to the suburbs and availability of fewer clergy along with a parochial financial strategy has led to a significant diminishment of Catholic urban presence. There has been a wide spread closing or consolidation of urban parishes and the closing of many urban Catholic schools. There is initial research that has indicated that once a Catholic school is no longer present in a neighborhood, there is a deterioration of the social capital in the neighborhood along with the elevated levels of crime and disorder and suppressed levels of social cohesion.⁹ As Catholic educational presence diminishes in the urban core, there is a growth of roadblocks to learning that were identified above.

A Dilemma for the Church

With the growth of urban sprawl there is a growth of center city neighborhoods locked in the cycle of poverty. Simultaneously Catholics have moved to the suburbs and consequently the Catholic Church has invested its resources into building churches and school in the suburbs and has been disinvesting in the urban neighborhoods. What are the consequences for the Church and her mission to advance justice? Are the members of the Catholic Church willing to address the injustice of high poverty neighborhoods? Many Catholics in the suburbs have little or no contact or interaction with people in high poverty neighborhoods and there is little practical knowledge of the realities of living in poverty. There is a “gap” between the experience of Catholics in the more affluent and middle class suburbs and the experience of Catholic and others that live in high poverty neighborhoods. Practicing the virtue of urban solidarity is one important way to overcome the gap.

III. Working toward Justice in Distressed Neighborhoods

In this section key ideas for post-parochial strategies are outlined. In the previous section personal and collective helplessness were identified as one of the major root causes for the cycle of poverty that is characteristic of distressed neighborhoods. Both types of helplessness also contribute to the fact that people from the suburban neighborhoods and from the distressed neighborhoods are not able to bridge their experience gap and work collectively to advance justice in the region. Developing a sense of agency and collective efficacy provide a foundation for addressing the injustice of poverty. Building on this foundation a framework for a support and engaged urban neighborhood is developed. Next, a brief review of two best practice strategies for breaking the cycle of poverty and revitalizing distressed neighborhoods is provided.

Agency and Collective Efficacy

Agency¹⁰: One of the most important characteristics of the human person is that they can be an agent, i.e. exercise control over the nature and quality of one’s life. A strong sense of agency allows one to see oneself as an individual actor capable of making one’s own interpretation of events, one’s own judgments and decisions and successfully acting upon and shaping the social context. Having a strong sense of agency allows a person to more readily and automatically pause, reflect, and decide rather than react. It has been shown that people with a strong sense of agency are likely to confront themselves with difficult challenges and have a strong sense of internal motivation. People with a strong sense of agency put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments and are more likely to attribute their failures to circumstances under their control rather than blaming external factors. People with a high sense of agency are resilient; they recover quickly from failures.

In Section II we saw that living with the inherent stress of poverty can negatively impact a person’s life and the decision-making processes of problem-solving, goal-setting, and goal attainment – on their ability

⁹ Margaret Brinig & Nicole Garnett, *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools’ Importance in Urban America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

¹⁰ In the psychological literature there many terms that are used to describe agency, for example, self-efficacy, a sense of self, voice, locus of control, or personal power.

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to be an agent. Coping with a lack of resources that allows one to feed, provide a protective environment, and provide opportunities for learning for their children to learn is a very complex task. This complex task requires a high degree of agency. To improve the agency of people living in poverty requires a supportive process of life coaching in which they are helped to improve their capacity to deal with the many challenges they face in such areas as health behaviors, educational attainment, and money management. A comprehensive approach to life coaching for human agency includes family stability (principally housing and child stability), well-being (principally health/behavior and social supports), education, financial management, and career management¹¹.

Collective Efficacy¹²: Collective efficacy is analogous to human agency; it is the capacity of a group to exercise social control over the nature and quality of its life. Collective efficacy is the belief that the group has the capacity to identify issues, set goals and strategies, and take action to realize the goals. Most often collective efficacy refers to the ability of a community to control the behavior of individuals and groups within the community. The exercise of collective efficacy allows a group to enforce desired norms of behavior and therefore to be able to create an orderly and safe environment. Neighborhoods that are high in collective efficacy have been shown to monitor and control juvenile behavior, have lower rates of violence, and lower rates of murders. Increasing collective efficacy has been shown to bring about a number of positive changes in distressed neighborhoods¹³.

The Relationship of Agency and Collective Efficacy to Social Context¹⁴: There is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human agency and collective efficacy and social context, especially relationships, institutions and cultures. Relationships, institutions and culture can both enrich and constrain human agency and collective efficacy. For example, good schools in a neighborhood provide support for a child to learn; poor schools present road blocks for learning. A neighborhood association can be effective if city government is responsive to citizens' concerns; it may be stalled in its desire to take action if city government is unresponsive. On the other hand, institutions and culture of a region were created by past generations exercising human agency and collective efficacy. If the relationships, institutions and cultures (the conditions of social life) no longer support some "social groups and their members relatively through and ready access to their own fulfillment" then human agency and collective efficacy must be exercised to change these relationships, institutions and cultures. Agency and collective efficacy must be exercised to bring about social change.

A Supportive and Engaged Neighborhood: A Brief Statement of the Ideal

The social ecology model also allows us to bring together an interdisciplinary approach to creating a framework for a supportive and engaged neighborhood, where young people succeed and families thrive. In working with the neighborhoods in the urban core of Dayton, our team at the University of Dayton starts out the neighborhood change conversations with the question "What would you like to see occur in your neighborhood within the next five years?" This a question is designed to get neighborhood leaders to develop a shared vision of the future for their neighborhood. The framework in Figure 2 (next page) is adapted from work of the Urban Institute.¹⁵ It provides a helpful way to summarize over twenty years of

¹¹ Elisabeth D. Babcock. "Using Brain Research to Design New Pathways Out of Poverty." Crittenton Women's Union, January 2014. Web. Retrieved March 2014.

¹² Collective efficacy is chosen because it helps understand the collective power of groups in neighborhoods. Collective efficacy requires both social capital (relations of trust, information sharing, and reciprocity) and the capacity to deliberate on goals and strategies and to carry out intended actions.

¹³ Robert J Sampson. *Great American City: Chicago and Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago. The University Chicago Press, 2012.

¹⁴ A good description of the constraints on agency can be found in Cristina L. H. Traina. "Facing Forward: Feminist Analysis of Care and Agency on a Global Scale." *Distant Markets, Distant Harms: Economic Complicity & Christian Ethics*, Ed. Daniel K. Finn. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. 173-201.

¹⁵ This description is an adaptation of the work of Margery Austin Turner. et al. *Tackling Persistent Poverty in Distressed Urban Neighborhoods*. The Urban Institute, 2014, Retrieved February 15, 2015. They build on a model

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responses to questions on the shared future for the neighborhood. The framework also summarizes what urban scholars and practitioners believe is needed to support the success of children and the flourishing of families. This framework has proved to be very helpful in developing strategies for neighborhood change. Key elements of the framework are explained below.

Child Fundamental Needs: Both neighborhood leaders and scholars believe that it is important for children to have good opportunities for growth and development. Among the areas stressed are:

- **Responsive caregiving** – It is important that parents support their children in all areas of their human development. These responsive caregiving relationships must be reinforced and aligned by child care providers, early learning, and the child’s school.
- **Safe and secure environment** – It is important for the child to have adequate and safe housing. The child’s environment should be free of toxic stress from poverty, domestic violence, and violence in the neighborhood.

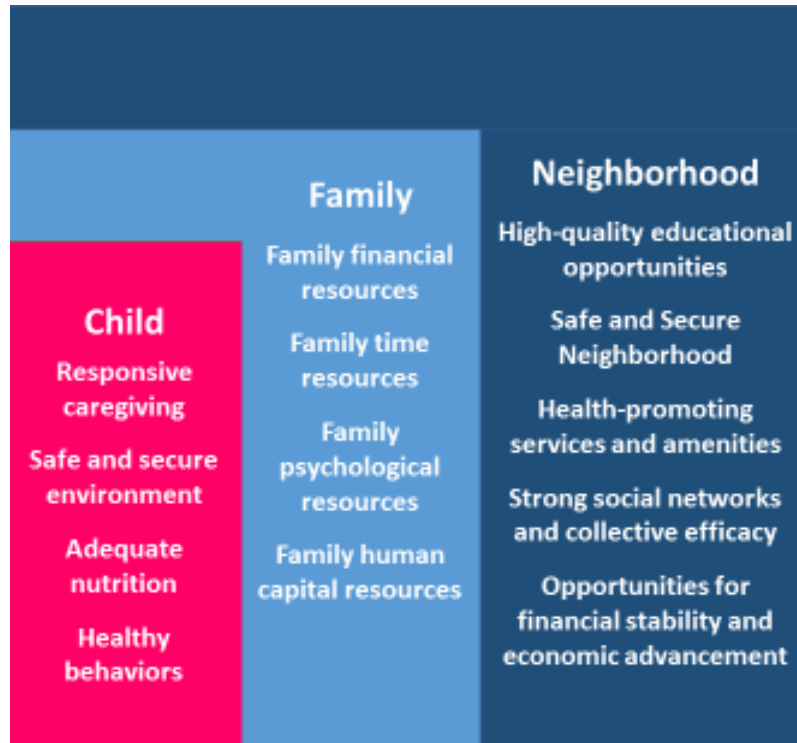


Figure 3: Neighborhood Ecology

- **Adequate nutrition** – A child should have regular meals with a diet that supports healthy growth.
- **Healthy Behaviors** – A child should be trained in habits of healthy behavior, which include adequate sleep, diet, and physical activity as well as the regulation of computer usage, television watching, etc.

Family Resources: In order for children to be supported in healthy growth and development their families should have the following resources.

- **Family financial resources** – allows families to buy goods and services that children need to thrive. These basics include housing, food, health care, and child care, but higher-order needs such as enrichment activities, college savings, and finance asset building are also important.

developed by Kamla K. Mistry et al. “A New Framework for Childhood Health Promotion: The Role of Policies and Programs in Building Capacity and Foundations of Early Childhood Health.” *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 102 No. 9 (2013). 1688-1696.

Working Draft Under Substantial Revision – Not to be Quoted

- **Family time resources** – time for parents and care givers: time to form deep attachments with their children, to be read to regularly and to share new learning experiences. The quality of this time is as important as the quantity.
- **Family psychological resources** – parents’ psychological health and psychosocial skills. Parents’ mental health is particularly important to the development of children, as is their ability to show patience, to teach by example, and to manage stress. Children also benefit from parents who can sustain and model healthy marriages and other healthy adult relationships.
- **Family human capital resources** – language proficiency and literacy, education, and work skills. The human capital of parents affects their employment and income-generating potential as well as their ability to parent, advocate for their children, and support them throughout their schooling and development. This capacity also allows families to navigate civic and community-based institutions they need to raise healthy well-adjusted children, including faith-based organizations; arts and cultural institutions; preschool, summer, and after-school programs; and youth development and recreational programs.

Neighborhood Assets. In order for a neighborhood to support families and children it must have the following assets:

- **High-quality educational opportunities**, from early childhood through high school and including before and after school care, summertime activities and enrichment that promotes learning.
- **Safe and Secure Neighborhood**, that allow children and their parents to feel physically safe and psychologically secure and not subjected to repeated traumas.
- **Health-promoting services and amenities**, including affordable sources of healthy food; physical and mental health services for children and parents; safe places for children to play and exercise; and homes, schools, and community spaces free of environmental toxins and hazards.
- **Social networks and collective efficacy** that enable the neighborhood residents to work toward shared goals, mutually support one another and each other’s children, and advocate effectively for resources that come from outside the neighborhood.
- **Access to opportunities** for financial stability and economic advancement, including supportive services that strengthen families generally, summer job programs and apprenticeship opportunities for youth, alternative and adult basic education, training opportunities for all ages, and transportation links to regional employment opportunities.

Community Building. This description of a social ecology of a neighborhood presents an ideal, which is hardly ever realized in practice, yet it can provide direction for creating positive change for a neighborhood. One approach for creating positive neighborhood change is community building. Community building is a *process* with a *purpose*. Community building is an on-going process by the neighborhood residents, professionals from outside the neighborhood, and often learners from a University to collaborate for positive community change which involves creating a shared vision, mobilizing neighborhood assets, recognizing and solving problems and realizing goals. The broad purpose of community building is to improve the lives of families and children, to strengthen current neighborhood assets, and create new assets, relationships, and institutions, and to set new standards and expectations for the culture of the neighborhood. The community building process has been used successfully in a wide variety of neighborhood situations.

Some Best Practices for Addressing Urban Poverty

Two Generation Models for Breaking the Cycle of Poverty:¹⁶ An emerging best practice for breaking the cycle of poverty is the two-generation model. Two Generations programs are organized in different ways, yet their common thrust is to provide high quality early learning for children (0 to 5) and at the same time provide parents with the resources they need to move from poverty to economic self-sufficiency and a better quality of life for themselves and their families. “Research has documented the impact of a parent’s education, economic stability, and overall health on a child’s trajectory. Similarly children’s education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. Two-generation approaches provide opportunities for and meet the needs of low-income children and their parents simultaneously, helping the two generations make progress together.”¹⁷

While there are a wide variety of ways two generation models of breaking the cycle of poverty have been implemented, they usually combine an Early Head Start and Head Start Programs with the complementary services at the Head Start site to help parents develop the resources they need to pursue education for career advancement, to have ready access to economic supports (such as housing, transportation, asset building, child care subsidies, etc.), and the development of social capital (developing relations within the family and with peers and other community resources, participating in community change efforts). The two generation model is showing excellent results for both children and parents.

The Community School Movement:¹⁸ The creation of Community Schools has emerged as a best practice for helping young people from high poverty neighborhoods succeed and families thrive. A Community School is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. The intent in organizing a Community School is to provide children and families in distressed neighborhoods all of the resources that students would find in more affluent neighborhoods. When you visit a successful Community School, you see a vibrant hub for the neighborhood which brings together many partners to offer a range of support and opportunities to children, youth, families, and the neighborhood. Community Schools provide for the neighborhood¹⁹:

- **Quality education** - High-caliber curriculum and instruction enable all children to meet challenging academic standards. The school uses all of the community's assets as resources for learning and involves students in contributing to the solution of community problems.
- **Youth development** - Young people develop their assets and talents, form positive relationships with peers and adults, and serve as resources to their communities.
- **Family support** - Family resource centers, early childhood development programs, coordinated health, mental health and social services, counseling, and other supports enhance family life by building upon individuals' strengths and skills.

¹⁶ A major resource for two generation models for breaking the cycle of poverty is Ascend at the Aspen Institute. Ascend is the hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success and economic security -- <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/>.

¹⁷ Anne Mosle, Nisha Patel, and Jennifer Stedron, PhD. *Top Ten for 2Gen: Policy Ideas & Principles to Advance Two-Generation Efforts*, The Aspen Institute. Washington, D.C., 2014.

¹⁸ The Coalition for Community Schools provides a wealth of information on the Community Schools Movement <http://www.communityschools.org/>. The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of national, state and local organizations, in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks.

¹⁹ Taken from the Coalition for Community Schools’ website, <http://www.communityschools.org/>.

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- **Family and community engagement** - Family members and other residents actively participate in designing, supporting, monitoring and advocating for quality programs and activities in the school and community.
- **Community development** - All participants focus on strengthening the local leadership, social networks, economic viability, and physical infrastructure of the surrounding community.

Both the Two Generation Model and the Community Schools Model will be utilized in Section V to put together a possible scenario for advancing urban solidarity.

IV: Toward the Practice of Urban Solidarity

In this section the practice of urban solidarity is outlined as a way of bridging the “gap” between the experience of Catholics in affluent and middle class neighborhoods and the experience of Catholics and others that live in high poverty neighborhoods. To overcome this “gap” of experiences requires a profound intellectual, moral, and spiritual conversion. One of the main ways this conversion will come about is if Catholics of the region engage in constructive public conversations which involves inquiring into the injustice of high poverty neighborhoods, developing a shared vision of justice, deliberating on goals and strategies to address the vision, and taking action to implement the strategies. These public conversations have to involve Catholics from the suburbs as well as Catholic and others from the high poverty neighborhoods of the region. This journey to deeper conversion will result in a broadening of horizons on the issues of justice and a stronger motivation and determination of will to rectify injustice in the region. The concept of urban solidarity developed in this paper endeavors to provide the virtues needed for these public conversations.

Urban Solidary: Much has been written on the issues of solidarity as applied to relationships of nation states with one another, transnational organizations that can promote dimensions of the global common good, and on particular issues such as immigration and human rights.²⁰ Our aim in developing urban solidarity is to apply this important aspect of Catholic social teaching to the urban realities described in the previous Section.

Urban solidarity is an interrelated set of virtues that enables persons and groups in a metropolitan region to make a firm and persevering commitment to collaborate for a greater realization of the metropolitan common good

Seeing urban solidarity as an interrelated set of virtues allow us to broaden our understanding of urban solidarity and points to a spirituality and practice of urban solidarity. The importance of public conversations will be discussed below.

The Virtues of Urban Solidarity: Personal and Social²¹

The development of urban solidarity is an endeavor to point to the necessity of both personal and social virtues that will be required if the Catholic Church is to work toward the metropolitan common good. Personal virtues or habits are dispositions that support persons in their full human development, i.e. their

²⁰ See for example Meghan Clark. *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014 and Kristin Heyer. *Kinship across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012.

²¹ This approach to urban solidarity was suggested by the work of Christopher Vogt. “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics.” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 394-417.

pursuit of human flourishing. Social virtues are those habits or dispositions which help groups, organizations, and associations pursue their common good and make a contribution to the common good of the larger society. Personal virtues are supportive of the practice of social virtues. A person lacking personal virtue, e.g., fortitude, will have a difficult time contributing to a group's determination to pursue the common good (social fortitude).

The interrelated set of virtues that makes up urban solidarity is organized around social prudence. Integral to the practice of social prudence are the constitutive virtues of social justice, compassion, and hospitality and these virtues are supported by constructive public conversations, social fortitude, and social temperance. The relationship of these virtues is shown in Figure 4: The Virtues of Urban Solidarity.

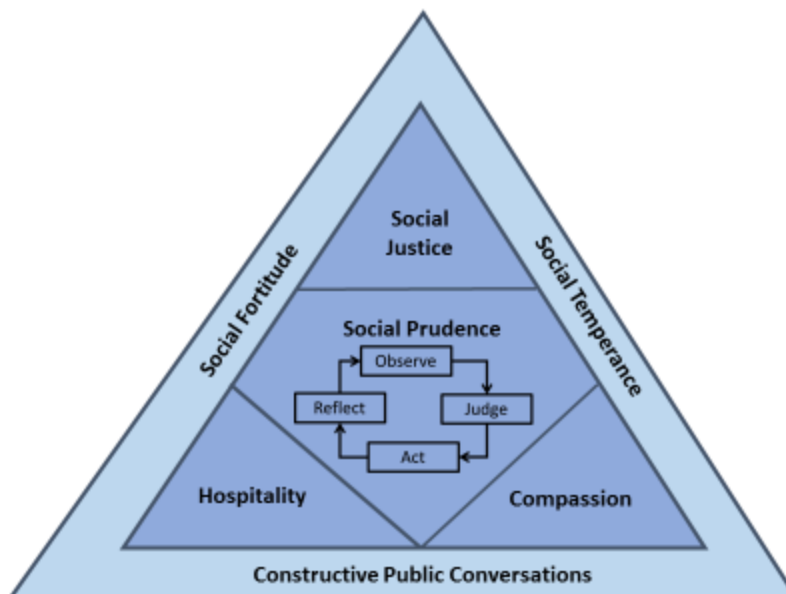


Figure 4: Virtues of Urban Solidarity

Prudence -- An Organizing Virtue:

Practical reason enables us to observe concrete situations, to discern a good we would like to accomplish, to choose means to accomplish that good and then to take action. Prudence or practical wisdom, as a personal virtue, disposes practical reason to discern the true good in a situation and then to choose the right means to achieve that good. In the Catholic tradition, prudence guides the judgments of conscience and provides the measure to apply other personal virtues. (1806 Catechism).

On several occasions the US Bishops insisted on social prudence in addressing critical issues in our society, e.g. deciding on candidates for public office and climate change.²² **Social prudence** involves a group applying intelligence to their joint action. Social prudence allows groups to discern what constitutes the common good in a given situation. Social prudence requires a deliberate and reflective process that aids in shaping the community's conscience. Prudence not only helps identify the principles at stake in a given issue, but also moves us to adopt a course of action which promotes a better realization of the common good. Social prudence provides the key to organizing the other virtues that are part of urban solidarity.

Above we indicated that if the Church wants to close the experience gap between the suburbs and distressed neighborhoods of the region, then members of the Church, from both the suburbs and the urban center, must organize constructive public conversations that address the cycle of poverty in distressed neighborhoods. A modified rubric of Catholic social action, “observe, judge, act, and reflect” can guide the exercise of social prudence through public conversations.²³ Table No. 4 Social Prudence as a Process

²² See the USCCB documents *Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship* and *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

²³ Belgian Catholic priest Joseph Cardijn originated “see, judge, act” to describe the phases of Catholic social action. I have modified this phrase in two ways. “Observe” replaces “see” so that listening to those afflicted by injustice is more explicit. “Reflect” is added so the lessons learned in the previous phases (practical knowledge) can be more explicitly incorporate into the shared knowledge of the group.

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of Experiential Learning proves to be a helpful set of questions to guide for public conversation utilizing social prudence.

Table No. 4: Social Prudence as a Process of Experiential Learning	
Phases	Questions
<p>Observe: <i>Listen</i> to the voices of those impacted by injustice and together <i>define an issue</i> to be addressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What in the experience and stories of those suffering injustice helps understand their social context? • What relational, institutional or cultural elements are presenting barriers to human flourishing for people suffering injustice? • Whose interests are being served by the current institutional and cultural arrangements? • What ideas provide a rationale for the current institutional arrangement - the current patterns of injustice? • Who promotes these ideas?
<p>Judge: Together <i>imagine</i> a desired future and <i>deliberate</i> on the strategies to realize the desired future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a common ground among the stakeholders for a shared vision of justice for the situation we are addressing? • Is this vision shared by the least advantaged? • Whose thinking must change and how must it change if we want to realize this shared vision? • What leverage (assets and resources) do we have to realize this shared vision and how can we use this leverage to develop a strategy for realizing our shared vision?
<p>Act: <i>Mobilize</i> persons and financial resources to implement the strategy and <i>adapt</i> to changing circumstance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we mobilize people in order to implement our strategy? • How can we mobilize resources needed to support our strategy? • How can we adjust our plans as we encounter surprises? • How do we keep people motivated and focused on the vision of justice?
<p>Reflect: <i>Evaluate</i> by comparing the actual outcomes to the desired outcomes and <i>learn</i> how to do better in the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What surprises did we encounter during the change process? • What did these surprises tell us about assumptions and our visions of change? • How do we need to change in order to advance justice? • How were the least advantaged affected by the change?

Constitutive Virtues

Urban solidarity needs more than the exercise of social prudence; if the regional common good is to be pursued, then virtues of justice, compassion, and hospitality must wove into the practice of social prudence.

Justice: Justice, as a personal virtue, is about right relationships – with God, with neighbors close and at a distance, and with creation. Justice toward the neighbors close and at a distance dispose one to respect

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the rights of each person and to establish human relationships that promote human flourishing of persons and the common good. Social justice is the moral virtue that engages persons and groups in changing the patterns of social organization (relationships, institution and culture) so that there is a better realization of the common good. Social justice emphasizes the *institutional and cultural dimension* of urban solidarity.

Compassion: Compassion is the virtue that enables one to perceive and respond to the suffering of others. Compassion allows a person to understand the pain caused by dysfunctional relationships and suffering that is endured because of deficits in institutions and cultures. Compassion emphasizes the *affective dimension* of urban solidarity. Margaret O’Connell’s work on compassion²⁴ provides helpful insights in relating compassion to social prudence. In exercising social prudence we must perceive our connections to the cause of suffering of others, learn to interpret the social context of those who suffer by listening to their memories and narratives, and actively commit ourselves to creating new relationships with the capacity to transform ourselves – and the social reality.

Hospitality: Hospitality is a virtue that allows persons and groups to welcome and share with their neighbor. Hospitality plays a very important part in urban solidarity. If we are to bridge the gaps between the different neighborhoods that make up the Church in our metropolitan regions, we must provide spaces that give people the **concrete opportunity to listen** to the neighbor, near and far, and understand their stories (narratives) and the social context of their daily reality. Urban solidarity will only proceed if people with different experiences within the region take sufficient time to be present to one another and to listen carefully to their experiences.

Supporting Virtues

From my experience in facilitating conversations that address important issues of urban justice I have found three other virtues to be very important.

Constructive Public Conversations: To exercise social prudence requires initiating and facilitating constructive public conversations. There are a number of important habits for conducting a constructive public conversation. The facilitator of the conversation has to make sure the group has a good question to orient the conversation. Constructive conversations start with a period of dialogue where different perspectives on the questions can be expressed. For there to be true dialogue there must be a deep listening which requires the participants to temporarily suspend their assumptions and answers to the questions. Once there has been a period of dialogue, the facilitator can move the group to a period of deliberation on an appropriate answer to the orienting question. The facilitator can usually distinguish two or three strong options for answering the orienting question and the facilitator can move the group to deliberate on the strengths and weakness of each option. During the period of deliberation participants must advocate their position with respect for others, continue to listen deeply to others, and inquire into the position of others through good open ended questions.

Fortitude: The personal virtue of fortitude or courage ensures constancy in pursuing the good and firmness when encountering difficulties in pursuit of the good. Fortitude gives strength to resist temptations to give up and to overcome obstacles in our pursuit of the good. **Social fortitude** is the virtue that allows a group to maintain their commitment to the common good in the midst of all the difficulties and oppositions they will encounter. Working toward a more perfect realization of the common good is a very slow and exasperating political process. It often involves surfacing conflicting perspectives and reconciling these perspectives into a workable consensus. To realize urban solidarity a group must have the fortitude to “stay at the table in the midst of conflict.”

Temperance: Working toward urban solidarity requires persons and groups to maintain a balance among multiple goods. There is the personal balance between action and contemplation (prayer and reflection).

²⁴ Maureen O’Connell. *Compassion: Loving Our Neighbor in an Age of Globalization*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009.

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There is also the balance that is involved in striving for an ideal realization of the common good and an appreciation that “politics is the art of the possible.”

Developing the virtues and practices of solidarity in the parishes of the metropolitan region will enable the Church to develop the willingness and the capacity to undertake an intervention to break the cycle of poverty in high poverty neighborhoods.

The Practice of Urban Solidarity Requires a New Way of Being Church

The practice of urban solidarity will require the Catholic Church to undertake a new way of being the Church in the metropolitan region.

Becoming a Metropolitan Church: To advance urban solidarity the Catholic Church has to take on a regional identity; it must be more than a collection of semi-autonomous parishes. To address urban solidarity on a regional scale the Church must have a way of organizing a collaborative effort that is regional in scope. Advancing urban solidarity requires post-parochial strategies of organizing and financing these collaborative efforts.

Leading with Pastoral Boldness: The pastoral leadership of the Metropolitan Church (the bishop or a delegate) must have a bold vision of urban solidarity, be committed to developing social innovation to realize this vision, and be able to engage others in implementing these social innovations. This will require a pastoral style of leadership that can engage Catholics in the metropolitan region to reflect seriously on their call to conversion that will allow them to give priority to the poor of the region and help them to put into practice urban solidarity. Implementing the new social innovation required for urban solidarity may encounter resistance from the clergy and perhaps many Catholics in more affluent suburban neighborhoods. Overcoming this resistance will require the skills of persuasion that will allow people to see the social reality from the lens of urban solidarity.

Becoming a Collegial Church: While clerical leadership will be important in terms of many pastoral dimensions of the practice of urban solidarity, it will be equally important to have strong lay leadership involved. Lay leaders will have the skills to manage, lead, and raise funds for a social innovation that will be necessary to advance justice in high poverty neighborhoods.

Creating a Post-Parochial Financial Strategy: In order to realize the social innovations required for the practice of urban solidarity, there must be a post-parochial strategy for resources management. This will require strong fund raising capability and it will require suburban neighborhoods to share some of their resources to help fund the social innovation needed to practice urban solidarity in the metropolitan region.

Bridging the Two Neighborhoods: If the metropolitan Church is going to take on the mission of advancing urban solidarity, then the pastoral leadership (a bishop or his designate) and his lay collaborators must organize a group with a mandate to design, initiate, and sustain a Catholic social innovation in high poverty neighborhoods that will help break the cycle of poverty. This group must have membership from both the distressed neighborhood and the more affluent neighborhood. The two neighborhoods, the distressed neighborhood and the more affluent and middle class neighborhood, must together engage in a constructive public conversation using some version of the social prudence rubric of “Observe, Judge, Act, and Reflect” that will allow Church to practice urban solidarity.

V: A Post-Parochial Strategy for Urban Solidarity: Urban Catholic Education Partnership²⁵

The purpose of this section is to weave together the ideas of the previous sections into a concrete proposal for urban solidarity. One way the Catholic Church in a metropolitan region can make a strong statement on advancing urban solidarity is to develop an Urban Catholic Education Partnership (the Partnership) that would provide a variety of services for distressed neighborhoods in the urban core. Partnership would not be the propping of the traditional Catholic School in the distressed neighborhoods, but an initiative that builds on the Church competence for excellent education and expands it so that it can truly be an instrument to help people break the cycle of poverty. While this is not the only way the Church could realize urban solidarity, it does suggest the scope of thinking that needs to be done to implement a post-parochial strategy for urban solidarity.

The Need for Holistic Approach to Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

In over twenty years of helping leaders of neighborhoods to articulate a desired future we have found some common elements. The most important concern of neighbors is almost always for their children. They want their children to be healthy, to have sufficient food, to have stable housing, and most of all they want their children to have the opportunity for an education that will enable them to have a good quality of life. Neighbors are concerned with the necessary supports for families. They want families in the neighborhood to have support in dealing with the stress of poverty, help in improving their parenting and family skills, to be engaged in their children's school, and to have greater economic opportunities and access to jobs. Neighbors want a neighborhood that is safe and relatively crime free, that has housing stock that is well-kept, they want their children to have access to good schools, and they would like access to amenities like small parks, easily accessible and fairly priced healthy food, access to good jobs and neighborhood engagement that makes good things happen. While there are some services provided to distressed neighborhoods, they are almost always delivered in a disjointed fashion and not easily accessible to children and families. In distressed neighborhoods there is a need for an integrated set of services that will help break the cycle of poverty and promote a better quality of life.

Urban Catholic Education Partnership

The creation of the Partnership is one way to address this need for integrated services in distressed neighborhoods. The Partnership proposal will incorporate the two models discussed in the last section, namely, the two generation model for breaking the cycle of poverty and the community schools model for supporting learning in distressed neighborhoods. The Partnership also contain elements that would allow the Catholic Church to have an evangelizing presence in the neighborhood.

A Mission Statement: The Urban Catholic Educational Partnership will organize and collaborate with others to provide a set of programs that

- assist children in having a strong start in early learning and have access to an excellent PK-8 Catholic school that will prepare them to successfully transition into a Catholic college preparatory high school;
- provide parents with the knowledge and skills needed to build strong families, to support their children's learning, and to develop economic self-sufficiency;
- assist the people of the neighborhood in building the assets of their neighborhood and improving their quality of life; and
- provide invitations and opportunities for all in the neighborhood to develop their life of faith.

²⁵ The ideas in this section have been enriched by conversations with a number of people in Dayton, Ohio that are concerned about keeping a strong presence of Catholic education in the urban neighborhoods. Several dioceses are initiating experimental program that are similar to the ideas expressed in this section. Any errors or problems with the articulation belong to the author.

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The Partnership would organize Early Learning Centers and Catholic PK-8 Neighborhood Schools in urban neighborhoods. The Partnership would have a governance structure consisting of a Board and a small central administrative staff. Each of these elements are explained below.

Early Learning Centers

Early Learning Centers would utilize the two generation model for breaking the cycle of poverty. The Partnership would make sure that these Early Learning Centers are aligned to feed students into the Catholic Schools that are part of the Partnership. The Early Learning Center could utilize a former Catholic school facility or another facility in the neighborhood to organize its programs. The facility would have two sections; one section to house an Early Head Start Program and/or a Head Start Program and the other for the life skills development of the parents. The Head Start Programs would be organized to be high quality early learning environments. Most often these Head Start Programs can be financed through a combination of State and Federal Grants.

The Partnership would complement these early learning opportunities for children with life coaching and opportunities for parents to engage in the learning and skill development that they need to move their family from poverty to economic self-sufficiency and good quality of life. As indicated in the previous section, this life coaching would cover a number of areas such as pursuing career advancement through education, working on economic support with housing, etc., and the development of social capital to support the family and to participate in neighborhood improvement. The life coaching would have to be adapted to the needs of the parents. The Partnership could organize this skill and knowledge development function itself or it could contract with a Catholic Social Services agency or other community agency to fulfill this function.

Catholic Neighborhood PK-8 Schools

The Excellent Catholic Neighborhood Schools would be organized using the Community School Model that was outlined in the previous section. The Catholic Neighborhood School would be a vibrant hub and gathering place for the neighborhood and it would be open from early in the morning to late at night. The Catholic Neighborhood School would bring together many community partners to offer a wide variety of support and opportunities to children, youth, families, and the neighborhood. While the implementation of the Community School model to a Catholic school in a distressed neighborhood will have to be adapted to the circumstances of the neighborhood, its core will be a strong academic program. Below are some of the elements of a Catholic Neighborhood School.

The adaptation of this model would have to be fitted to local circumstances.

Strong Leadership: The Catholic Neighborhood School would be led by an outstanding principal with the skills to integrate a strong learning environment for urban children with a strong Catholic identity that is appropriate to the neighborhood served. Strong principal leadership is one of the key elements in the success of urban primary schools in distressed neighborhoods. The principal would be responsible for ensuring that appropriate data is collected to evaluate the quality of the academic and support programs that are offered by the Catholic Neighborhood School.

Excellent Faculty: The teachers in the school should be chosen for excellence in their teaching area, their ability to collaborate in integrating the curriculum around the standards of the common core or other State standards, and most of all for being competent in removing the barriers to learning for children from distressed neighborhoods. The school day would be extended to allow for extra work in reading. Faculty must be committed to using data to design good instructional programs and to measure progress in learning. The teachers in the School must be willing to collaborate with the Child and Family Support Team and be willing to make home visits in order to help children and families. The School would form a partnership with a Catholic college preparatory high school in the city to insure that students coming from PK-8 school would be well prepared to make the transition to high school.

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Child and Family Support Team: The Child and Family Support Team would consist of two persons and work closely with the principal and the faculty. One member of the team would have counseling skills that could help children with developmental and mental health problems and work with parents on issues of mental health, such as depression. A program of social emotional development would be integrated into the curriculum.

The second person would have both life-coaching skills and community organizing skills. This person, using life-coaching skills, would work with parents to address the problems of family stability, well-being (health and social supports), education, financial management, and career management. This would be a continuation of the work that was started with parents in the Early Learning Centers. Using their community organizing skills, this person would help keep families engaged in the School, help families build their collective efficacy to improve their neighborhood and to bring the resources of other social service agencies into the Center to provide after school programs, recreational programs, health services for families, etc. This person would also coordinate an after school program utilizing volunteers from local parishes and Catholic high schools.

Mentors and Volunteers: To improve the academic success and the social-emotional development of the students, it is important to organize a strong cadre of student volunteers from the local Catholic high schools and colleges as well as mentors from the suburban parishes. These volunteers could serve as tutors, mentors, and organizers of after-school programs for academic enrichment and sports activities. The opportunities to volunteer in the School would help people from the suburbs experience the realities of families and students coping with the difficulties of poverty. This could be another effective way of closing the experience gap that was identified at the end of Section II.

Well Trained Catechist: One unique feature of the Catholic Neighborhood School would be its evangelizing outreach to students, parents, and the neighborhood. The Catechist would help the principal and faculty integrate faith and learning in the School's curriculum. Appropriate themes of integration would be chosen to fit the neighborhood context, e.g. if the neighborhood was Christian but not Catholic, a theme like the Beatitudes might be the appropriate way to support the evangelizing mission of the School. The Catechist would also help organize the School's evangelizing outreach within the neighborhood, e.g. by organizing Bible Study Program for the people in the neighborhood.

School Leadership Team: The Principal would lead a School Leadership Team whose purpose would be to align all the activities of the School so that they help children and their families succeed and thrive. The Leadership Team would develop and periodically revise a strategic plan with vision and mission statements for the School and a multi-year plan to fulfill the mission. The School Leadership Team would also create an annual plan to realize important objectives of the strategic plan.

Governance of the Partnership

The Urban Catholic Partnership would be a Catholic not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization whose mission is to initiate and sustain the network of Catholic Early Learning Centers and Catholic Neighborhood Schools in the distressed neighborhoods of the metropolitan region (see the Mission Statement above). The Partnership Board would consist of Catholics, lay persons and clerics, and others who have a deep commitment to the mission of the Partnership, the competence and skill to lead the Partnership and the capacity to mobilize the resources needed to sustain the Partnership. Membership in the Board would have representation from the Catholic Church of the metropolitan region and from the neighborhoods served by the Partnership. If a Religious Community or a community from a Lay Catholic Movement would commit to the mission of the Partnership, they would have representation on the Board.

The day to day work of the Partnership would be carried out by an **Executive Director** and a small staff. The Executive Director would be an educational leader who has the skills to lead and manage the Partnership and to provide leadership for the fund raising and resource mobilization needed to sustain the Partnership. The staff of the Partnership would handle all of the financial systems, information systems,

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and facility operations for all Early Learning Centers and the Catholic Neighborhood Schools in the Partnership. This arrangement would allow the leaders at each Center and the School to focus on the quality of the services being delivered to the children and families.

The Executive Director and staff would also be responsible for engaging other partners in the Partnership. Important partners would include a Catholic college preparatory school that would be receiving students from the Catholic Neighborhood Schools and a Catholic university with the capacity to help with curriculum, with the delivery of services, and with evaluation of the programs. Important service for the Centers and the Schools could be delivered through collaborative agreements with community agencies, e.g., Federally Mandated Health Centers could deliver medical services to the children and families in the Catholic Neighborhood Schools, Mental Health Agencies could be used to deal with difficult mental health problems, etc.

Other Partners from the Church: Religious communities and communities of lay Catholic movement may want to join the Partnership and make a commitment to the mission of the Partnership. A religious community may want to commit itself to sponsoring one of the Catholic Neighborhood Schools or have people that could provide services in one of the Early Learning Centers or Neighborhood Schools. Some lay communities may have persons and families that want to live intentionally in urban neighborhoods in order to be a witness to Christian presence and a partner in working for justice. These communities could help, for example, with family engagement in the Catholic Neighborhood Schools by hosting dinners for parents of the children in the School which would allow parents to talk about their concerns and challenges. These communities could also assist the Catechist in facilitating bible studies and faith sharing among members of the neighborhood.

The purpose of this section was to give a concrete example of how the Catholic Church of a metropolitan region could enter into the practice of urban solidarity. While the scenario presented is by no means a complete plan, it is intended to give some picture of what might be done.

Conclusion

This paper is a reflection on the experience of working in high poverty neighborhoods to improve education in both public and Catholic schools. Utilizing a social ecology model, the conditions for a metropolitan region to be socially just are outlined. Over the last fifty years metropolitan regions, especially in the East and Midwest, have experienced trends of urban sprawl. In overly simplistic terms, urban sprawl has segregated the region into neighborhoods of two types: 1) distressed neighborhoods in the center of the region and 2) middle class and affluent neighborhoods in the middle and on the fringe of the region. Most Catholics have moved to the middle class and affluent neighborhoods and the Catholic Church has disinvested in distressed neighborhoods. An examination of distressed neighborhoods indicates that there are serious roadblocks to young people succeeding and families thriving. This is a condition of major injustice in the region.

If the Church wants to address the injustice of distressed neighborhoods, then it must face two critical issues. First, Catholics in the suburbs are isolated from the experience and stories of people living in distressed neighborhoods. This isolation often leads to a lack of awareness of injustice, inability to address the issues of urban injustice, and perhaps indifference to injustice. Second, the Catholic Church has eroded its educational and evangelizing presence in distressed neighborhoods. This lack of presence may lead to a lack of credibility of the Church's efforts to address urban injustice and a lack of understanding of the stories and experiences of people living in poverty.

Next, two frameworks were introduced that can assist the Church with addressing the issue of urban injustice. First, utilizing the social ecology model the conditions for justice or right relations in an urban neighborhood are explored and two best practice models for restoring justice and ending the cycle of poverty are introduced. Second, the practice of urban solidarity is conceptualized as an interrelated set of virtues with social prudence as the orienting virtue. The framework for the practicing of urban solidarity

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to be successful will require a new way of being the Church. The final section presented, in outline form, a scenario of how the Church might establish an educational and evangelizing presence in the center city.