

5-1-2001

## Hear the just word & live it

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### Recommended Citation

Rudy-Froese, Allan (2001) "Hear the just word & live it," *Consensus*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 1 , Article 20.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol27/iss1/20>

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church" completes the list of domains of experience. Whether committed to sustenance or admonition, this domain reflects a concern for the continuing life of the church. All in all, these domains of experience capture what LaRue argues are the paradigmatic beliefs and concerns reflected in black preaching.

The domains of experience are integral to LaRue's method of homiletic analysis for black preaching. Along with this facet of his biblical hermeneutic for black preaching, LaRue includes the scriptural genre or literary form of the text, the demonstration of God's power, and the use of extended metaphors. Approximately half of this project is committed to two chapters analyzing nineteenth-century and contemporary sermons, respectively. LaRue structures these analyses on David Buttrick's notion of the "moves" in sermon development. While Buttrick's system of "sets" appears to be more appropriate for LaRue's application, his analyses successfully examine the distinctive role of each element of this biblical hermeneutic within black preaching.

At times, LaRue's analyses spend more time than is necessary in recapitulation of each sermon, which collectively already constitute a lengthy appendix and a third of the text. Still LaRue is careful to frame the purpose of his method. He emphasizes that this project does not expound any particular homiletic method. He traces, instead, the basic dynamics of black preaching and its engagement with a strong biblical tradition and African American life. And indeed, this book offers an important critique of black preaching and homiletic development.

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### **Hear the Just Word & Live It**

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.

New York: Paulist Press, 2000

78 pages, \$9.50 Softcover

This short book is written by a well known American Jesuit who has some six decades of passionate and vocal involvement with social justice issues. Burghardt is Senior Research Fellow at Woodstock Theological Center in Washington D.C. and co-director of Preaching the Just Word, a centre for homiletics and social justice. He has published several volumes of homilies.

In this brief book Burghardt encourages the reader to hear cries for justice from the Bible, Jesus, the church, and the world. In chapter 1, we are given a brief

outline of biblical justice. This justice is based on relationship with God, not on modern ethical or legal considerations: God has dealt with creation and humankind in just and loving ways, and we must turn to others in the same fashion. In chapter 2 the reader is reminded to listen to Jesus. Burghardt challenges the reader to hear Jesus' invitation to "choose life" in the midst of such current issues as abortion, capital punishment, and physician-assisted suicide. In the next chapter we are reminded to listen to the church. Burghardt reviews a handful of popes, priests and lay people, as well as Jews and Protestants who have been or are actively involved with the poor and outcast. In chapter 4 we are called to listen to the world. He echoes liberation theology when he says that the voice of Christ and the church must be heard alongside social analysis of actual poverty and oppression. In his last chapter there is some theological reflection on justice as it relates to the liturgy. He closes by encouraging the reader to listen to God in the world and get practically involved in local social programs.

This little work is very American and very Catholic. It is clear from this volume that Burghardt is attempting to inspire and challenge American Catholics to get involved on the side of "life" in current issues like abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and the plight of African-Americans. In this way, we are granted a window into Catholic social thought in America from one of her most popular preachers.

The brevity of the book makes for its surface grappling with the issues involved. The reader is introduced to many social issues with passing statistics, a quotation or two, and one-sentence stories. The result is that we get a kind of overwhelming laundry list of injustice in America together with what the Christian *must* think and do about it. This *must* is too bad because, as a preacher, Burghardt is quite gifted at inviting and inspiring rather than ordering the parishioner into service with the poor.

In spite of the limited scope of this book (American and Catholic), and its size we do get something of the heart of Burghardt and his Just Word project. In his last chapter he inspires the reader with his understanding of justice at the heart of the liturgy, and his passion for listening to the voice of God in the world. His summary of biblical justice, in chapters 1 and 2 is compelling and is vintage Burghardt.

To understand Burghardt and his mission, or better, to be inspired by the man, his mission, and his provocative preaching on social justice, I would turn to his myriads of sermons and his *Preaching: The Art and the Craft* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

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