

“Extravagant Sign.”

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Gods' peace with u!

Let us read together from the bulletin the John, chapter 2, the verses 1-11 – “The Wedding at Cana”

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’

4 And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’

5 His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

6 Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim.

8 He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.’ So they took it.

9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom

10 and said to him, ‘Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.’

11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Amen.

Before u all start now with your traditional sermon nap ... please allow me to do something unusual ... "Expect the Unexpected" ☺ ...

Flip Chart (1) What is Charity?

Flip Chart (2) What is Justice?

We all have watched in last days CNN or other news channels. In this moment, while we are here together in church many thousands of people are still buried under rubble. Most of them probably death, but we still hope. In this moment people are probably still buried alive under the rubble, praying for their lives, without water and food. Without water a person can survive around 4 days. The earthquake was Tuesday, that was 5 days ago...

Watching CNN I still cannot forget several things.

I still have this 2yo boy in front of my eyes, who got found alive among the dead bodies of his brothers. And I still hear the woman saying, repeating over and over again into the microphone of the journalist: "A miracle, a miracle – that was God, that was God."

Was it really God? Does God drop or lift his thumb like a Cesar in the arena – u die, u live – u die, u live... What a horrible imagination – God as judge about dead or life. This is not the God I believe in. This is not the God I WANT to believe in – and I CANNOT believe in this kind of Dictator God.

But Pat Robertson can. The evangelical preacher Pat Robertson credits again to his reputation as hate preacher and divider. According to AFP, the Post and other sources he blames the Haitians themselves for the devastating earthquake, saying that the country "swore a pact to the devil" at its creation. According to

these sources he said on his "Christian Broadcasting Network" show "*The 700 Club*":

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it," Haitians were originally "under the heel of the French. You know, Napoleon III, or whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil," "They said, we will serve you if you will get us free from the French. True story. And so, the devil said, OK, it's a deal," "Ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after the other." ... said the the 80-year-old former presidential candidate. And then he said something, what took my breath away. He contrasted Haiti with its neighbor Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic he said "is prosperous, healthy, full of resorts, etc. Haiti is in desperate poverty. Same island. They need to have - and we need to pray for them - a great turning to God and out of this tragedy, I'm optimistic something good may come," So far the quote.

This is ridicule of the victims. This is racism. This is imperialism. This is still the white arrogant misuse of Christianity, which makes me shame to belong to the same faith.

U might think that it doesn't matter what people like him say as u don't believe in it anyway. But this is not enough. People like Pat Robertson have many fans and a lot of influence, for example within the Republican party. It is not enough to sit here and to be clear with yourself. We have to speak up and to name the powers, which are destructive.

On the vigil [vidschil] of Martin Luther King Day I want that, when u leave this service, u know better why it is not God, who punished Haiti, but that the death of thousands of people is the result of our politics. It is always very easy to make God responsible for everything what happens. Because then we are off the hook... and can go on with our death bringing businesses. If the Haitians wouldn't be so poor they would have been able to do what we in the States with

all matter of course do, when we live in an area of earthquake risky zone: To build stronger, to build earthquake proof. But the poverty in Haiti has a reason. The people of Haiti never had a chance. Because we never gave them a chance. As UCC we have to name to powers of evil. We confessed it last week with the UCC Statement of Mission. Now it is the time. Hear now the history of Haiti and decide for yourself, if Haiti needs charity or justice. Decide for yourself, what your Christian faith tells u, when u hear this story. Listen, u community of faith, open your ears – it is a story of unbelievable suffer of the Haitians, it is a story, which should make us humble, should fill us with holy anger. It is the story of our ancestors and ourselves – with us on the wrong side.

10 million people live on Haiti. Their language is Haitian Creole and French. 95% of the Haitians are black. Haiti is a republic and its capital is Port-au-Prince.

The life of the Haitians changed dramatically, when Christopher Columbus landed December 5th 1492, claimed it for the Spanish Crown and named it accordingly "La Isla Española", "The Spanish Island". Following the arrival of Europeans, Haiti's indigenous population suffered near-extinction, in possibly the worst case of depopulation in the Americas. Only a few Taínos, as the Natives called themselves, survived.

130 years after Columbus for Spain the French came and took over. This was 1625. "La Isla Española" became "Saint-Domingue". And Saint-Domingue became one of the richest colonies in the 18th century French empire. By the 1780s, Saint-Domingue produced about 40 percent of all the sugar and 60 percent of all the coffee consumed in Europe. This single colony, roughly the size of Maryland or Belgium, produced more sugar and coffee than all of Britain's West Indian colonies combined.

The labor for these plantations was provided by an estimated 790,000 African slaves - ruled over by a white population numbered only 32,000. At all times a majority [madschority] of slaves in the colony were African-born; the brutal

conditions of slavery prevented natural increase. Slave traders scoured [scoured] the Atlantic coast of Africa, and the slaves who arrived came from hundreds of different tribes, their languages often mutually incomprehensible.

A former slave reported: "Have they not hung up men with heads downward, drowned them in sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, crushed them in mortars? Have they not put men and women inside barrels studded with spikes and rolled them down mountainsides into the abyss [ae-bís]"

The outbreak of revolution in France in the summer of 1789 had a powerful effect on the colony. The free men of color claimed, they too were French citizens under the terms of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Shortly later the slaves staged a revolt and the Haitian Revolution began. As a result the rebel slaves in the northern province eked out some freedom, though with severe limits.

With the colony facing an invasion by Britain, the rebel slaves emerged as a powerful military force, under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture. Louverture successfully drove back the British and became the defacto ruler of the colony.

In 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte sent a massive invasion force under his brother-in-law Charles Leclerc. Leclerc invited Toussaint to negotiate a settlement. It was a deception; Toussaint was seized and deported to France, where he died of pneumonia while imprisoned

On May 20, 1802, Napoleon signed a law to maintain slavery where it had not disappeared; France intended to restore slavery.

The French burned alive, hanged, drowned, and tortured black prisoners, reviving such practices as burying blacks in piles of insects and boiling them in cauldrons of molasses. One night the French governor held a ball to which he invited the most prominent mulatto ladies and announced at midnight the death of their husbands. Each act of brutality was repaid by the Haitian rebels.

1803 the suffering of the Haitians could have come to an end: Napoleon had to sell Louisiana to the United States to finance his war in Europe... and the indigenous army under the command of Jean Jacques Dessalines devastated the French army. One year later Dessalines became Haiti's first emperor in 1804 and declared Haiti's independence.

Haiti is the world's oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States. Haiti did not receive U.S. diplomatic recognition until 1862 – because it was founded by former slaves. THAT Haiti received then diplomatic recognition we owe the efforts of anti-slavery senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts.

For a short time Haiti saw a cultural, intellectual and economical growth. This period of relative stability and prosperity ended in 1911 when revolution broke out and the country slid once again into disorder and debt. From 1911 to 1915 there were six different Presidents of Haiti, each of whom was killed or forced into exile.

1915 US president Woodrow Wilson sent 330 U.S. Marines to Port-au-Prince. The order: "protect American and foreign" interests. The United States was particularly apprehensive about the role of the around 200 Germans in Haiti. The German nationals controlled about 80 percent of the country's international commerce.

In an effort to limit German influence, in 1910-11 the State Department backed a consortium [consórschen] of American investors, assembled by the National City Bank of New York, in acquiring control of the *Banque National d'Haïti*, the nation's only commercial bank and the government treasury. To avoid public criticism the occupation was labeled as a mission to “re-establish peace and order”. Does this phrase sound somehow familiar to u?

Here a little bit uncomfortable background information: The Haitian government had been receiving large loans from both American and French banks over the

past few decades and were growing increasingly incapable in fulfilling their debt repayment. If an anti-American government prevailed, there would be no promise of any debt repayment, and the refusal of American investments would have been assured. Within six weeks of the occupation, representatives from the United States controlled Haitian customs houses, the banks and the national treasury. 40% of the national income was now used to alleviate the debt repayment to both American and French banks. On whose costs do u think this happened? ... Exactly: The people of Haiti. For the next nineteen years, until 1934, advisors of the United States governed the country, enforced by the United States Marine Corps. The U.S. retained control of Haiti's external finances until 1947.

Because the local U.S.-trained military was the only cohesive and effective institution left in the wake of withdrawal, the result was a sequence of military-backed dictatorships, which would define the next 50 years of Haiti's history. Even I remember the Duvalier era until 71, "Papa Doc" as he got called and the one of his son, called "Baby Doc" until 86. We all also know that Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who got elected in December 1990 in free and fair elections, ended also as dictator. Since 2006 all hopes are on René Prével, who had a strong following among the poor, with 51% of the votes.

I do not apologize, if I bothered u with the story of the Haitian people. Sometimes a story has to be told. I shut off CNN at one point. I wasn't anymore able to see the hypocrisy with which some people shed now crocodile tears. We used this country, we exploited its people, we invaded it when it was in our economical interest and we forgot it – when we were not able to get anything out of it. We call for open markets, but only that our own businesses make the profit. Always only a few make the profit, but the poor remain poor. What would Jesus say? We give the nations water, but Jesus gave them wine.

I run out of time. So let me close with what we started: Charity and/or justice. Charity is in our days used as a free give away; we give what we like to give. But

the other one has no RIGHT. Charity makes us feel good. It has more to do with ourselves than with the other person. But this is not what the bible tells us to do. Charity is the translation of the Greek word “agape” which means “unlimited love”. Paul writes in his famous 1st Corinthians 13: *“And though I feed the poor with all my goods, and though I give my body, that I be burned, and have not love [agapē], it profiteth me nothing.”* For Paul *agapē* / [slash] Charity was *not* primarily about good works and giving to the poor. Paul used the word agape more in the meaning of “justice”. Who ever loves, gives everybody the same access to the resources and chances as he or she wants for him- or herself.

I assume that nobody of us has exploit people of Haiti or somewhere else. Does this make us less guilty, or if u don’t want as sharp: “less responsible”? I am not sure. We all take advantage, when our nations exploit others. But I have somehow the feeling that in the moment when we start to reconcile, to name was has to be named, and to change what has to be changed the water we offer in the moment other nations and races would turn into wine. And that Jesus would appear in our midst again, smiling, arising his wine glass, saying: “Welcome in my kingdom – now u know too how to transform water in wine.

Happy Martin Luther King Day!