

CORE367/PHIL368: Liberation Thought
Br. Dennis Beach, OSB
Graded Writing Assignment 2

Due Friday, March 9, by 5:00 PM. (No class on Friday because of board meetings)

Context

The Mission Committee of your church is interested in forming a parish mission connection with a church group in Central America, and they know that this church group has been inspired by principles of liberation theology. This connection makes the pastor and some members of the committee nervous, since they know that there has been criticism of liberation theology. The pastor hears from your parents (lovely parents you've got!) that you've been studying liberation theology in a class and invites you to come and give a presentation to the Mission Committee. Your task: present the basic perspective and emphases of liberation theology, as well as the main lines of the Vatican's critique of it, ultimately making a recommendation as to whether the church group should go ahead with this project or find another mission project that steers clear of liberation theology. You can assume an interested audience, with some basic Christian commitments and understanding, but most of liberation theology may be new to them. You should also assume that at least some persons will be concerned about the harmony of the liberation perspective with official church teachings.

Your "talk" should reflect a good understanding of the chief ideas, as you yourself would like to organize them, of Gutiérrez's *Theology of Liberation* as well as the Vatican "Instruction." You are of course encouraged to illustrate points by examples, and in that sense you are free to use the Bible perspectives from Brown's book as well, but Gutiérrez and the Vatican document should be your main emphasis.

Since it's not a scholarly audience, the talk should be limited to 1400 words—1500 if you absolutely have to. Believe it or not, this would probably take a good ten to twelve minutes to deliver, since one rarely simply reads the words off the page when one is in front of an audience as fast as one does in a practice session.

Alternate Context

You are free to imagine an alternate context that fits your imagination and experience better (say, Catholic school committee, etc.) Other mainstream Christian denominations have also shown interest in liberation theology, and while they wouldn't be concerned about the Vatican as such, the suggestion that there is a Marxist or political interpretation of the gospel would be of concern to most Christian congregations.

You are also free to imagine a secular or non-denominational civic interest group (say, Habitat for Humanity) who have been asked to collaborate on a project with a church community in Central America inspired by liberation theology. Thus the civic group wants to know something about what perspective on religion would shape the beliefs of the people they'd be collaborating with, and what concerns they might encounter from Catholic/Christian supporters.