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More on Moore

Demetria Martinez | Oct. 12, 2009 NCR Today

After seeing Michael Moore?s "Capitalism: A Love Story," I wanted nothing more than to walk from the dark theater into a church to discuss with others what I had seen. Moore?s documentary, a brilliant expose of the ways the rich get richer and the poor poorer included clips of discussions he?d had with Catholic priests, both of whom called capitalism "evil."

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton also put in his two cents, explaining that the teachings and the life of Christ are simply not compatible with an economic system that puts profits before people.

Moore?s critique rises not from having read Karl Marx but from hearing the gospel preached as a Catholic boy, which begs the questions: Why aren?t those of us steeped in that same tradition discussing capitalism and its effects on our communities? Why do we hear so little from the pulpit about church documents focusing on the dangers of unfettered capitalism and the rights of the laborer? How many Catholics can even explain what capitalism is? Why aren?t we holding teach-ins and consciousness raising groups that take as a starting point encyclicals focusing on economics? Of all people, Catholics should be literate in these matters, given our wealth of teachings about social justice. Instead, we have let the rich and powerful highjack religion in this country; they have Christians believing, as Moore also shows in his film, that the so-called free market is sanctioned by God.

According to Moore?s documentary, every seven and a half seconds a family loses its home to foreclosure. Across the land churches are rising heroically to the occasion, working hard to aid those who suddenly find themselves homeless. However, if we do not step back and critique the system that has created this mess in the first place and think about possible alternatives, we will be guilty of perpetuating a travesty for which God shall surely judge us.

I propose that Moore?s film, once out in DVD, be shown in churches as part of a national faith-based teach-in on capitalism. Our churches are full of experts who could facilitate discussions, including economists, peace and justice ministry committee members, community organizers and -- most important -- people who have lost their homes, jobs and health insurance. It would be fascinating to examine alternative economic arrangements that Moore documents -- such as small worker-owned businesses.

There are no easy answers but it?s high time we assume our rightful place, as Catholics, in helping shape a new national discourse on capitalism that is rooted in the realities of the poor. That?s a love story I want to be part of.

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