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Sobrino: 'Have, have-not gap at new moral low'

Patrick O'Neill | Nov. 22, 2008

COLUMBUS, GA
With global poverty at an all-time high, and getting worse, Jesuit Fr. John Sobrino said the gap between the haves and the have-nots has reached a new moral low: In the minds of the haves, the poor no longer exist.

Sobrino, who was in town to accept Pax Christi USA?s annual book award for ?No Salvation Outside the Poor,? said North Americans and some Europeans exist in a ?civilization of exclusion.?

The poor are even excluded from existence, said Sobrino, who has lived in El Salvador for more than half a century. ?The first thing we exclude people from is existence,? he said. ?We live in a civilization that puts apart the Third World. We live immune to the realities of the Third World.?

The global food crisis is ?a failure of humanity,? Sobrino said, because hunger could be eliminated if wealthy nations had the will to do it.
In addition to the billions squandered on weaponry, Sobrino said he?s ?appalled? at the amount of money spent on the entertainment and fashion industries. He noted that some sports teams have budgets larger than those of poor nations.

?We seem to think that our manifest destiny is to live well and have succe ss,? he said.

Sobrino lost six of his brother priests, a housekeeper and her daughter in an attack by soldiers trained at the former School of the Americas. Sobrino, who lived with the eight victims, was out of the country when the attack occurred.

Sobrino said he wrote his latest book out of sense of ?indignation that the world is the way it is,? and from ?the hope that maybe there is some way out of this mess.?

Turning to the poor with compassion and love is the only way to salvation, Sobrino said.

?They are saving us from total inhumanity,? he said.

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