

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE “OCCUPY” MOVEMENT

(according to Brian McDonough, director, Social Action Office, Catholic Diocese of Montreal, drawing upon David Korten, Sarah van Gelder & Steve Piersanti)

- 1) The movement names the principal causes of the current social, economic and political crisis: the greed of certain financial speculators, the vulnerability of the global financial system, and the stranglehold exercised by economic interests upon political structures.
- 2) It proclaims, in the prophetic tradition, the kind of world that is desirable, i.e. a world without hunger, where natural resources are shared equitably, where nature and its limits are respected, where peace, justice and compassion reign.
- 3) It re-frames debates in the public square. Whenever our legislators propose laws and policies, these will need to be scrutinized and judged in terms of their contribution to the respect for human dignity, to the pursuit of the common good, and to the well-being of the Earth. The Occupy Movement expresses the exasperation felt by the vast majority of our fellow citizens regarding laws and policies that tend to benefit only a small percentage of the population. In this way, the Occupy Movement reiterates the demands of both the Quebec *Coalition to Eliminate Poverty* and the *Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada*, campaigns which received support from many Church leaders and religious communities.
- 4) The Occupy Movement tells our collective story in a different way: it highlights the struggle for social, economic and political emancipation – a narrative that implicitly and explicitly refers to the Gospel.
- 5) The Occupy Movement embraces many different groups. Like *Noah’s Ark*, it welcomes people of all kinds, irrespective of ethnic origin, political opinion or religious background. It brings together people with very different visions and life experiences. It calls upon their creativity and initiative – thereby calling upon the *Parable of the Talents*.
- 6) It constitutes a real movement, and not just a shopping-list of demands that could be satisfied with a few minor reforms. The Occupy Movement calls for fundamental changes, not only in respect of the situation faced by the excluded members of our society, but also in respect of its social structures and institutions.
- 7) The Occupy Movement makes the links between *local* and *global* issues. The Occupy Movement here in Montréal and its supporters are in constant communication with their allies elsewhere on the planet. What took place yesterday in New York, and the day before in Toronto or Regina, is of real concern here today in Montréal.
- 8) The Occupy Movement invites us to reflect upon the quality of our democratic practices and of our social relations -- in the midst of a difficult political context. It reminds us that political institutions must be founded upon the respect for the human person and upon the pursuit of the common good. The Church’s social doctrine affirms that the purpose and goal of political institutions are to serve people.