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OPINION

How the Teachings of Jesus Apply Today

BY JAMES A. HAUGHT

Jesus sided with underdogs. He championed little people, not the privileged and powerful. "Blessed are the poor" was one of his maxims. He told a noble: "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor."

Christ's teachings were virtually a prescription for the compassionate "safety net" upholding people and families in modern democracies.

"For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me.... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

He also said: "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed, for they can-

not recompense thee."

His parable of the Good Samaritan spotlighted the nobility of caring for those who suffer misfortune.

Jesus didn't support harsh punishments. When the law demanded stoning of an adulteress, he famously said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Jesus advocated separation of church and state. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."

Jesus wasn't a militarist. "Blessed are the peacemakers" was another of his maxims.

Clearly, Jesus espoused values generally aligned with the modern political left and peace movement. Sometimes, this facet of religion is called the "social gospel."

So it's strange that America's white evangelicals and fundamentalists are the bedrock of the Re-

publican Party -- a party that favors the rich, undercuts the safety net, backs militarism and demands harsher justice and the death penalty. Oddly, these conservative believers contradict the values of Jesus.

When George W. Bush was governor of Texas, he signed execution warrants for a record-breaking 135 inmates, including 11 who were juveniles at the time of the crimes. Many cases involved questionable evidence. Bush was renowned as a born-again believer and declared on national television that his favorite philosopher was Jesus. The contrast between the two sets off clanging bells of cognitive dissonance.

Meanwhile, secular Americans who don't attend church have become the largest group in the base of the Democratic Party, which supports the safety net for average folks.

How odd that often churchless people are closer to the social principles of Jesus than many

churchgoers are.

New Pope Francis has gained immense worldwide popularity because he pushes the humane liberal ideas of Jesus, not the sexual taboos and hidebound Puritanism that dominated his church in the past.

"Inequality is the root of social evil," Francis declares. All poor families deserve "land, lodging, labor," he preaches. He says capitalism rests on "unfettered pursuit of money" and discards "unproductive people" like the poor, elderly and less-educated.

The prelate rattles conservatives. Republican figure Pat Buchanan accused him of preaching "socialist sermons."

But the pope is merely voicing the values of Jesus. He is underscoring what should be obvious to every thinking person: that Jesus was a liberal.

James A. Haught, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is editor emeritus of West Virginia's largest newspaper, The Charleston Gazette-Mail.



Suspicion and Anger Derails Police Partnership

BY MARC H. MORIAL

A day after the city of Chicago released the dash-cam video showing the cold-blooded murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald at the hands of a Chicago Police Department officer, the Chicago Urban League, supported by the National Urban League, formally requested that the Department of Justice initiate a "pattern and practice" investigation into the police department.

Based upon the disturbingly stark difference between official police accounts of the October 2014 shooting of the black teen and what is seen on the video, our nation's second largest police department is now under a wide-ranging federal investigation that will examine whether the department engages in a pattern or practice of violations of the Constitution or federal law while policing.

Police claimed McDonald moved toward the officers just before the shooting. The video shows McDonald jogging away from the police. Police claimed McDonald continued moving toward the officers even after he fell. The video shows Van Dyke firing shots into McDonald's motionless body.

Police claimed the knife McDonald held was in the open position. State's Attorney Anita Alva-

rez said the blade was closed.

In other words, the police lied.

This long sought-after probe will investigate the Chicago Police Department's use of force (including deadly force), racial and other disparities in its use of force, and scrutinize the department's ability to handle allegations of misconduct and effectively discipline rogue officers.

many of them while he was already lying on the ground—had 18 citizen complaints filed against him, but he had never been disciplined. According to the New York Times, from 2011 to 2015, in 97 percent of citizen complaints filed, not one officer was punished.

Laquan's unnecessary and tragic death has pushed aside the dark veil of police department unaccountability.

The investigation must usher in an era where the beams of trans-

The Chicago Urban League was, and remains, at the forefront of those demanding broad and bold reform within the Chicago Police Department.

I applaud both the swift work of the Chicago Urban League on this pressing issue and the Justice Department's decision to open the investigation.

We need to not only understand how the police handled this specific case of a 17-year-old boy shot dead by a police officer, but we



Enough is enough. Lies and coverups can neither appear to be nor be the norm in any of our nation's police departments.

The video of Laquan being shot repeatedly as he walked away from the police officer, and the conspiracy to conceal the truth of what happened that night with a concocted account that painted the teenage victim as an aggressor, speaks to a long-standing grievance, particularly among the city's African-American communities, that too many police officers believe they are above the communities and laws they are sworn to protect and serve.

Officer Jason Van Dyke, who shot 16 bullets into Laquan—

parency brings sweeping changes and reforms to the Chicago Police Department.

Enough is enough. Lies and coverups can neither appear to be nor be the norm in any of our nation's police departments. No one is served when the police and citizens look at each other with distrust, fear and hostility. To effectively fight crime, citizens and police officers must be partners in that effort, and that can't happen if suspicion and anger stand in between that vital, life-saving partnership.

also need to know if this points to a pattern of systemic abuse and lies.

As long as organizations, community groups and the citizens of Chicago (and beyond) continue to demand that police departments respect and protect the civil rights of everyone it protects and serves, the days of unchallenged lies and shameful coverups in the Chicago Police Department—or otherwise—are numbered.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.



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