Portfolio Part V. Write a Catholic opinion-editorial (oped) essay on environmental justice in the Central Valley that draws on principles from the Catholic social justice tradition to appeal to a Catholic audience. An oped is a particular kind of succinct, persuasive essay. You should explain what environmental in/justice means, define a specific EJ issue as a moral problem, and argue for one element of a solution. Your venue is a Catholic newspaper or on a Catholic webpage. For example, see: http://new.stocktondiocese.org/Pastoral-Ministries/Advocacy/Environmental-Justice/EJ-Newsletters and other samples below. You will have an opportunity to revise this into the script for your imovie. Due week 8c (new date: November 11), 750 words.

Please name your file 11.64.5yoursurname. Email that to me at kdwarner@gmail.com with the same name in the subject line.

You should approach the oped and the imovie as an integrated project. You should write the oped knowing that you will use an excerpt from it as a script illustrated by images in the imovie. Thus, you should simultaneously think about images you will use and write the oped. You will bring the URLs for 6 images saved to a jump drive to the imovie teaching session 7 November. You should bring these on your laptop to class on 9 November. We will work with these images in class on the 9th.

The op-ed has been a chief way to persuade opinion leaders and policy makers to take action on a new issue or to connect issues in a new way. Its influence has diminished somewhat due to changes in media structure, but it remains an important tool for civic engagement and leadership.

I will grade this on the basis of the following criteria: could this oped be effective at persuading a Catholic audience to perceive the promotion of environmental justice in the Central Valley as a duty consistent with the Catholic worldview? You should demonstrate through this oped that you can deploy one or more principles from Catholic social teaching or the sacramental imagination.

An op-ed occupies the domain between “objective” reporting and pure advocacy. It reports some news, but it does not have to present both sides of the issue. It generally presents a perspective or an agenda that is only one step beyond the position currently held by its primary audience. It seeks to present a new perspective, but one that builds upon the audience’s already-established ethics and values. In an oped, the writer tries to persuade an audience to agree with a certain point of view.
Op-eds are short essays, generally 750 words (700-800). Economy of language is critical! You only have 150 seconds to present a new perspective to your audience. Short attention spans are rampant! Every word, every sentence, every idea has to build toward the key argument. You should plan to edit text multiple times before submitting it. Be sure to have a few friends read it before turning it in.

Start your essay by jotting down in one sentence what you want to persuade your audience to believe and to do. You may describe what you want the audience to do, or government actions you want your audience to support. Write this down and use it as a reminder to yourself what the purpose of the essay is, and help you stay on track.

Think about how you want to “frame” the problem. If you can persuade your audience to see the problem the way you do, they will be more likely to support your conclusion. Then scribble a four point outline, but starting with your conclusion. The fourth point is the “clincher,” what you want your audience to take with them from the article. State this as what some one (the public, leaders, an organization, businesses, the government) “should” do, what action they should take. It should follow this general flow:

a. EJ problem (communicated with a story, a narrative, to engage human interest)
b. Catholic social teaching principle or sacramental imagination
c. Your argument (your moral claim)
d. Belief you want your audience to have, or action you want them to take.

Now work backward. What points do you need to make to set your audience to accept your clincher? What data, what ethical values will persuade them to accept point four? A few strong well-explained points are much better than a long list. These ideas should flow, persuade, and build on each other. Use the bulk of the op-ed to set yourself up so that any logical, right-minded person who accepts that data you present will come to the same conclusion you do.

Now write the essay. Do not get stuck on the first line. Put something in, but use it as a placeholder until you finish your first draft, and make a revision. By the time you get to the last couple of sentences (the clincher), you should write and re-write them a few times. Polish them, and show them to a roommate. After you take a break, edit the whole essay for clarity and focus. Now think about the first line. Write it as a hook. Make it interesting. Pose something novel, or a little bit controversial (too controversial will drive people away). Convey the main idea of your argument -- without giving it all away – in the first line, so that people will want to read it. Be sure you use a catchy title!
If you make any factual claims (evidence), you must use a footnote.

**Some suggestions for writing effective opeds:**

1. Always run a spell check.
2. Write an engaging title that makes the reader want to read your essay.
3. Do a complete proofreading to make sure that:
   a. Avoid a breezy, conversational style
   b. You do not start sentences weakly (e.g., unfortunately, interestingly, it’s a facility that…. even though the government has come out with reports…., which means that when it comes to the Cerrell Report….,
4. Do not use: any personal “quotes.”
5. Do not use the word “I.”
6. Do not ever put an URL in the text or in parentheses.
7. Use clear declarative or imperative sentences. Every sentence should have a clear subject (early in the sentence) and a verb
   - Declarative: of, relating to, or constituting the grammatical mood that expresses the will to influence the behavior of another.
   - Imperative: of, relating to, or constituting the grammatical mood that expresses the will to influence the behavior of another.

Here are some sample opeds. Note the sentence structure. The authors use short, declarative sentences.

From the NY Times

From the Bakersfield Californian:

From the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change: