

# David McCallum

## Selected Audio Transcript

Interview Conducted November 24, 2020

You know, I'll say with regard to the Catholic Church, my own work over the last few years is around raising consciousness about this Doctrine of Discovery: this series of papal bulls from the fifteenth and sixteenth century that entitled Western monarchs, Christian monarchies, to go and take that land, and if necessary to commit murder to gain it. I would say, from the vantage point of the Church's current social teaching, that those were sins of the Church. From today's perspective, the Church would see itself as overreaching its own mission and values by deploying military power to accomplish the work of evangelization. This was never the way that Jesus himself in the gospels taught the disciples to share the Good News. As Pope Francis has said many times, and has written in his encyclical *Laudato Si* on the environment, the word "dominion" has been abused by some of the Church over the course of history, and been used as a legitimation for domination and for destruction. While there was a context and worldview in those times that partnered ecclesial and secular power as if they were one and the same, this has had two disastrous consequences for many peoples, even as it also brought benefits and gains to the Church and those empires.

However, in partnering the Church in this way with secular powers, or powers that were using their governments, their resources, their military might, in order to colonize and to gain for their own interests, this led to a kind of exploitation, insofar as it served their interests often at the expense of Native peoples, Indigenous peoples, not just here in the Americas, but around the world. And so when we think about the work of evangelization and see this destruction side by side, the Church still has yet to come to terms with its actions here. Even though many Popes have offered apologies to Indigenous peoples around the world over the last 30, 40 years, there's yet to be a sufficient process by which the Church acknowledges just how destructive those actions by those particular Popes at that time were.

And the restorative justice that needs to be done around all of that is very significant, just as there is in the United States such important restorative and reparative work to do around the descendants of slaves, by Catholic organizations and by the Church. So I think as we take stock of the Columbus statue, as we see it, in this context, both historically and from our present perspective, our view is complicated. And it involves, I think, very difficult challenges and tensions around understanding what it is that we should do now, when we look at that statue, and what it represents.

### *Biography*

I'm Father David McCallum. I'm a Jesuit priest and educator. I'm the Vice President for Mission Integration and Development at Le Moyne College. And my role on the Columbus Circle Action Group was simply to be a representative member of the community, not to represent my institution, nor necessarily even to represent the church in my role as a Catholic priest.