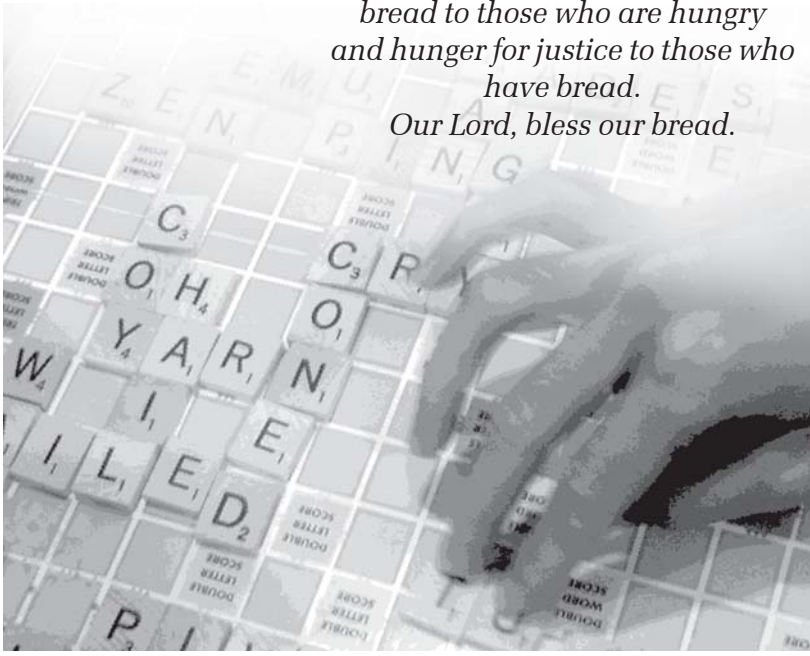


# Scrabble, Injustice, and Me<sup>1</sup>

*Bendice, Señor, nuestro pan. Y da  
pan a los que tienen hambre  
y hambre de justicia a los que  
tienen pan.*

*Bendice, Señor, nuestro pan.  
Our Lord, bless our bread. Grant  
bread to those who are hungry  
and hunger for justice to those who  
have bread.*

*Our Lord, bless our bread.*



<sup>1</sup> This article was originally presented as a chapel message to the students, faculty, and visitors of Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois on November 3, 2003.

I have nothing at all against Scrabble. Many happy memories of family Sunday afternoons rush over me at the sole mention of the game. Words are such close friends of mine that I devoured books, studied linguistics and literature, love simultaneous translation, and have been an editor for many years. I firmly believe every family should play Scrabble regularly. Thus, the SkyMall advertisement on the airplane from El Salvador to Chicago drew me in. It invites purchasers to “enjoy the world’s most famous word game ‘millionaire style!’” Millionaire style? “All 100 letter-tiles are minted into ingots and accented with 24 karat gold.” Wow! Price tag? Six hundred dollars. Now that, I believe, verges on obscenity. There is a justice issue at stake here. Let me explain what I mean.

El Salvador’s newspapers are full of it: news about gangs and violence, murders and kidnappings. Right alongside, with colorful and glorifying photographs, are the portrayals of the army and the police “cleaning up” the cities. Kids, ages ten to fifteen, are being rounded up by the hundreds like cattle and shoved into already inhumanely crowded jails. You need not DO anything to be subjected to this treatment. You need only LOOK like a gang member and you are sunk. This stage is set by the *Plan Mano Dura*, or the Heavy Handed Plan, put in place by the government. On one level it makes sense. Who of us wouldn’t want crime to decrease in our neighborhood? Who doesn’t want to feel free to walk the streets without being mugged or murdered?

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