

Books, 1999); Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); Loida I. Martell-Otero, "Lo Cotidiano: Finding God in the Spaces of the Everyday," available online <http://thewitness.org/archive/dec2000/locotid.html> [accessed November 11, 2007].

Pastoral Implications

As Christians, we all want our lives governed by the love of Christ. As members of the Body of Christ, we want to be part of a community where people are nurtured and can grow in faith. Still, we know that we do not always live that life of love and even though we are forgiven, we remain sinners.

Psychiatrist, Eric Berne, who wrote the classic text, *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* (1964), provides us with a theory of personality and communication that is called transactional analysis. Berne argues that when we interact with others, we can take the stance of a *Parent*, an *Adult*, or a *Child*. When we become the *Parent*, we unconsciously mimic *Parental* attitudes and behaviors. The *Parent* in us can be caring, but also speaks with authority, seeks to discipline, to teach, and to be in control. The *Parent* can be judgmental and patronizing and is easily frustrated by the *Child* in another. The *Child* state, Berne writes, implies becoming child-like and revisiting some behaviors we had as children: laughing, teasing, and being winsome; testing authority and boundaries; engaging in manipulative behavior; but also feeling shame, anger, and despair. The *Adult* state, according to Berne, implies thinking clearly and responsively to what is happening. The *Adult* is attentive, interested, non-anxious, and non-threatened. Whereas the *Parent* connotes the "taught" concept of life and the *Child* the "felt" concept of life, the *Adult* connotes the "thought" concept of life. These ego states are already present in early *Childhood*.

Communication, one can argue, is differ-

ent transactions that occur between the *Parent/Adult/Child* in one person and the *Parent/Adult/Child* in another. Effective communication, transactional analysis argues, implies *complementary* communication: the *Child* state on one person speaking to the *Child* state in another, for example. *Crossed* communication, where a *Parent* state in one person speaks to the *Child* state in another, or where the *Adult* state of one person addresses the *Parent* state in another, is less effective.

When we read Matthew 18:15-20, we can read it as a *Child*, feeling judged, condemned, and ultimately rejected. We can challenge anyone who has power over us and become defensive. Or reading the text can awaken our *Parent* state as we judge others and seek to control them. The *Parent* in us will try to define the "sin" and will assume much responsibility for convincing the other that they are in the wrong. An *Adult* reading of our text, however, recognizes that Matthew 18 is a unit that addresses living in a community held together by ties of love. Matthew 18 encourages mutual concern; it seeks restoration and forgiveness; it offers a promise even as it describes a process. An *Adult* reading of the text recognizes Jesus, as God Emmanuel, being present in the church, now guiding the ways we engage each other as the Body of Christ.

Without becoming judgmental, Jesus states that in Christian community, relationships become strained as one person hurts another, or one might find a person engaging in hurtful behavior. Such sin is a normal part of living in community. The love that holds Christian community together, however, creates the space in which not only difficult conversations can take place and where concern and care can be given and received, but also where prayer can follow a person even beyond the immediacy of the Christian community. It is in this space where relationships can be repaired, where healing can occur, and where forgiveness is discovered. If the one who sins continues with their hurtful and sinful behavior, the community can recognize that choice without becoming the punitive and judgmental *Parent*. The *Adult* in us can continue to seek creative ways to repair the broken relationship.

Matthew 18:15-20 calls each of us, individually, to sustain a difficult conversation and to be responsive to the wounds we receive, cause, or witness. It also describes the way a community can become signifi-

cant to its members as love is lived. Recognizing and experiencing *the pathos of God* for God's people (Abraham Joshua Heschel) is a challenge if the conversations remain strained or if community breaks down. And when we embrace *the power* the community holds over the lives of its members, it increases our *responsibility* to engage in effective communication reflective of God's concern for our well-being. Here, as elsewhere in the Body of Christ, *complementary* communication (Eric Berne) is essential.

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