

SACRAMENTAL LIFE & LITURGY

- Topic: Liturgy's Prophetic Dimensions
 Convener: Bruce T. Morrill, Boston College
 Moderator: Timothy Brunk, Villanova University
 Presenters: Rhodora E. Beaton, St. Catherine's University
 Joel Z. Schmidt, University of Notre Dame
 Danielle Nussberger, Marquette University

Taking her lead from *Dei Verbum*, no. 21, Rhodora Beaton introduced her paper, "Prophetic and Sacramental: The Word of God in Liturgical Proclamation," as a reflection on "the one table of the word of God and the Body of Christ" from the perspective of the liturgical proclamation of the prophetic books of the Bible. She began with an analysis of the categories of prophetic proclamation in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrating how they rely as heavily on symbols and actions as on oracles. Prophetic actions are both indicative of the hidden intentions of God and transformative for those who encounter them. In the extreme case, such actions become so integrated into the life of the prophet that his entire life is seen as a mediation of the intentions and presence of God. The paper's second movement considered how Jesus of Nazareth's actions and sayings were in continuity with the transformative actions of the preceding prophetic tradition, making his life the culminating example of the prophetic. Such a claim does not diminish the uniqueness of the Incarnation but, rather, demonstrates the consistency of God's revelatory action in salvation history. Beaton concluded by suggesting that the perspective of the prophetic books proclaimed in the first reading at Mass highlights the continuity of God's revelatory actions and emphasizes the significance of word, symbol, action, and embodiment to word and sacrament alike. By beginning from the perspective of the word of God rather than from a strictly sacramental perspective, this approach provides an integrated approach to the one table of the word of God and the Body of Christ. When contextualized within the prophetic tradition, word and Eucharist are more clearly seen as elements of a whole.

The theological framework for Joel Schmidt's presentation, "Schematism and Sublimation: Two Functions of the Productive Imagination at Work in Christian Preaching and/as Prophecy," came from Yves Congar's understanding of prophecy, a key feature of which is the interpretation of ever-new historical events in light of God's will and their eschatological fulfillment. Congar's understanding of typological interpretation as "the utilization of a text to clarify *an analogous case* producing itself within a fundamentally single [unified] plan" provides a concrete means of realizing this prophetic activity. Having set the stage in these theological terms Schmidt then demonstrated how Paul Ricoeur's analysis of the schematizing and metaphorical function of the productive imagination provides a means of understanding the role of imagination in typological interpretation, and thereby prophecy, since it includes: a juxtaposition of seemingly heterogeneous terms, an initial sense of the absurdity of such a juxtaposition, and

a subsequent insight into a fundamental analogy between the two terms. The role of schematization in prophetic preaching leads one to consider the “iconic” nature of prophetic visions by sketching images of what the in-breaking of God’s kingdom might look like in ever-new historical circumstances, as well as how this schematization guides the insight into similarity between the ostensibly heterogeneous terms of the present circumstance and the once-for-all revelation in Jesus Christ, the ultimate criterion of Christian prophecy. This theory of sublimation has implications for understanding how our prophetic visions, far from being able to cut off our most regressive tendencies, arise out of the substrate of our individual and collective archaisms (echoing Aquinas’s profound, “grace does not destroy but perfects nature”). The pattern of recapitulation evinced in Jesus Christ is reflected in our visions of the time when God will be “all in all.” In this fullness all will be transformed, nothing left behind.

In “The Prophetic Witness of Christian Discipleship: Balthasar’s Theology of Eucharistic Conformity,” Danielle Nussberger pursued her conviction that attending to Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology of the saint yields better comprehension of the axiomatic unity between the first two parts of his great trilogy, *Glory of the Lord* and *Theo-Drama*. A possibility for every Christian, the saint is a living icon of Christ when imitating his characteristic self-abandonment, thereby prophetically witnessing to and embodying the risen Lord, furthering the Kingdom of God in one’s unique historical and cultural location. This thesis is strengthened and amplified when one shows how Balthasar’s theology of the saint, in relation to his Christology and Trinitarian theology, is inherently and unavoidably Eucharistic on two counts. First, Balthasar arrives at his twin concepts of a Christological and saintly metaphysics as a result of his careful consideration of the saint’s Eucharistic sensibilities through participation in the liturgy, where one’s encounter with the crucified and risen Christ and the communal Body of Christ gives birth to the saint. Second, Balthasar can only conceive of a life of saintly prophetic action in the world as the consequence of the Christian having been conformed to the Eucharistic Lord, who gave his life for the many and still gives himself through the rite. The community becomes the Body of Christ by thankfully receiving him and giving the gift of his grace-filled life away again to others in need. These two points of contact between the Eucharist and Balthasar’s theology of the saint are crucial to comprehending the unity between his theo-aesthetic and theo-dramatic projects, often overlooked by those who misinterpret Balthasar’s support for the contemplative mode of Christian existence as a rejection of active involvement in the world’s transformation. Rather, this reading of Balthasar enables us to embrace his challenge to receive Christ’s body contemplatively so as actively to “be” Christ in communion with God and world.

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