

theological education in terms of faculty and student relationship to the "cultural other." Fifth, Is our theology sensitive to the need to reinterpret our theological categories, including that of theological anthropology, in light of the changing racial, cultural, gender and class horizons of our global church and society?

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### SACRAMENTAL AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Topic: Locating Liturgy: Worship in Its Contexts

Presenters: Nwaka Chris Egbulem, Amen Foundation, Washington D.C.

James Empereur, San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio

William Reiser, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester

Susan Roll, Christ the King Seminary, Buffalo

Having devoted its recent meetings to the theoretical work of such figures as Kilmartin, Chauvet, and Schmemmann, the group turned more concertedly to questions of practice in this year's session. The four panelists presented papers providing description and analysis of liturgies in the following contexts, respectively: African, gay and lesbian, Latino, and women's communities.

Drawing from his extensive research and writing on the rite Zairois in the Congo, Nwaka Chris Egbulem posited the Zairian Mass as the premiere result of the inculturation movement in Africa. In both its achievements and shortcomings, the rite contains lessons for the universal church about the process of inculturation as an encounter between gospel and culture that is characterized by genuine reciprocity and mutual respect. An adequate treatment of the Zairian rite requires attention to both the ritual text and its actual celebration, especially since the latter easily surpasses the former in its engagement of and sensitivity to the local culture. The text is conservative in that it is based on the structure and content of the Mass of Paul VI, albeit with notable modifications. The introductory part, which includes a litany that individually names official saints but only collectively refers to African ancestors, is symptomatic of the compromised quality of the text as an exercise in inculturation. In their celebrations of the rite, however, the local churches have successfully incorporated the unique genius of their music, dance, orality, poetry, and costumes. In addition to these cultic elements of African life, Egbulem perceives the further need to introduce the African experience of conflict and the struggle for liberation into the liturgy.

In discussing the gay and lesbian context, James Empereur worked from the premise that good ritual is an expression of spirituality. The church's liturgy has the potential for gay and lesbian persons to be an antidote to the denigration of their bodies experienced among family, society, and church. To the extent that

the church silences or erases gays and lesbians in the liturgy, it falls short of authentic worship, which entails the participation of all with their gifts. This is a difficult challenge, since biblical tradition lacks any personages whom gays can claim as models. The greater visible presence of homosexuals in the worshiping community, nonetheless, challenges all personally to integrate their sexuality and spirituality, as well as the community to realize liturgical celebrations wherein all divisions, including that of body and spirit, are irrelevant. The liturgical experience of union with God and fellow humans in the church can correct the tendency for many gays to reduce intimacy to sexual experience. In turn, union with God as embodied in liturgy may inform gays in their search for union with God in their sexuality. Union with God, with others, and in intimate friendship must all move in the direction of a more just, human world. While the difficult circumstances of gays and lesbians has led them to form special worshiping communities providing positive experiences of dignity, these must not function as substitutes but, rather, complements to the church's regular liturgy. Since the liturgy is, finally, a dress rehearsal of the kingdom of God, participation in it is less a matter of what one gets out of it for oneself than what one can contribute to the service of love and justice for all.

William Reiser's description of a ritual of blessing he created for use in his pastoral ministry among Hispanics in a city in the northeast U.S. opened into his analysis of the relationship between the Sunday liturgy and the daily life and religious practices of people in that community. In response to numerous families requesting a house blessing, Reiser developed a ritual to enact a recurring theme in his preaching: the connection between the eucharistic table and the family table. The two tables define one another, for each occasions a particular mode of the risen Jesus' real presence, a celebration of shared life open to reconciliation and forgiveness. Visits to some thirty homes yielded the following, among other, observations: Except for older couples, the families appear to have fallen into the same meal patterns as the rest of society, with people eating in front of televisions and at different times from one another. This incidental pattern of meal-taking cannot but affect the pastoral goals of the church's eucharistic liturgy. The presence of house shrines raised the topic of popular religiosity. Reiser finds that practices with shrines, statues, processions, and the rosary, when complemented and nourished by regular participation at the eucharistic liturgy, engender vibrant faith. In contrast, among those who do not regularly join the liturgical assembly, he has noticed a fair amount of superstition. Finally, the canonically irregular marital situations of many couples indicates yet another way in which the two tables interpret one another. What cannot be celebrated in church can be celebrated at home. Such families do express around their tables a graced oneness with others that is ordinary, real, and broadly sacramental.

The focus of Susan Roll's paper on the liturgical experience of women was also an original ritual she had helped create. Roll described the daunting challenge of constructing a morning prayer for a conference of the European Society of Women in Theological Research, whose participants spanned a wide range of

national, linguistic, cultural, and ecclesial affiliations, as well as levels of comfort with addressing an ultimate being or engaging in coded ritual behavior. Inspired by a reflection of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Roll and her colleagues performed a ritual blessing of the apple, a symbol of evil and misogyny derived from Genesis 2. Through a series of gestures and texts, the ritual transformed the apple from a symbol of evil to a symbol of women's search for wisdom, a legitimating symbol of the very work of the assembled women scholars. The ritual is representative of characteristics that are common to women's experimental worship: the use of natural elements, including the preparation of food, as symbols expressing new realities and levels of meaning for the participants; the contextual nature of the rites, not pretending to universal applicability or repeatability; shared practices of planning and leadership; space configured in circles and allowing for movement; texts across a spectrum of genres and often concerning structural oppression or hidden suffering; new music composed by and for women; and new ritual occasions, especially serving the cycles of cosmic and human life and the crises of women. Roll perceives these ritual practices by women as providing both liberative spaces of worship for their participants and transformative challenges to the official structures of worship in the church.

Numerous themes for further theological study emerged from these four contextual analyses of liturgy. Several were discussed during the second part of the session. Insofar as all of the presentations concerned groups who experience forms of marginalization within ecclesial and wider social structures, their unique approaches and innovations in liturgical practice offer enrichment or even correctives to the official ritual of the church. These groups, in turn, need to be open to elements of the church's tradition which bear prophetic reminders of the human shortcomings in efforts for liberation and the otherness of God in the gracious work of salvation. In all of the contexts the experience of suffering remains central, persistently requiring that the church develop forms of remembrance, liturgical and otherwise, that sanctify, console, and empower its participants by relating them to faithful women and men who have gone before.

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