

## ECCLESIOLOGY

### CATHOLICITY: LOCAL AND UNIVERSAL CHURCH

**Presenters:** Joseph Komonchak, Catholic University of America  
John Erickson, St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary

Joseph Komonchak reviewed the contents of the letter, "On Some Aspects of Communion" and the unsigned article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, "Church Unity Rooted in Eucharist," 7 July 1993, marking the first anniversary of the publication of the Letter *Communiois Notio* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This document responded to some of the more frequent criticisms of the CDF letter by referring the ontological and historical priority of the universal Church to the Church of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, by affirming that the Petrine ministry is not of the same importance as the Eucharist, and by asserting that because of the deep divisions among Christians the Catholic Church is itself wounded. Komonchak then proceeded to argue for an understanding of catholicity as redemptive integration. He noted that there can be no central defining principle of the Church other than a gathering in the Holy Spirit. There can be no racial, ethnic, or sexual principle of ordering within the Church. The redemptive role of the Church is to be a sign and instrument of unity in the midst of diversity and particularity. Komonchak cited the cases of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia as failures of the Church to be such an instrument of integration in the face of the revival of nationalism and the ethnically defined state. He underlined the danger of framing the question of locality primarily in terms of culture. Linking the local church to culture risks redemptive integration.

John Erickson noted that the Orthodox have emphasized the qualitative and extensive aspects of "catholicity" as distinct from its extensive "universal" aspect. Since Afanasiev's identification of the fullness of the Church with the Eucharist, theologians such as Zizioulas have emphasized the simultaneity of both local and universal, noting that the catholicity of the local church celebrating the Eucharist is conditioned by its being in communion with other local churches. Most Orthodox and Catholic theologians substantially agree on what makes a local church catholic and on the relationship between local church and universal church. What awaits further exploration is a determination of what makes a local church local and what is meant when we speak of "place" and therefore of

"local." Several possible responses might be a geographically limited place, wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, or the community around a bishop, hence a diocese. None of these, however, correspond to the "local church" of the early Christian writers who have been normative for modern exponents of eucharistic ecclesiology. Our notion of "place" has changed in many crucial ways over the centuries. Erickson notes that if the Church is truly to be catholic, structures both on the local and universal level are needed that go beyond the "local church" in order to draw the rich variety and diversity of human experience and culture together into communion. More than structures are needed, however. He called for a systematic exploration of the implications of baptism for ecclesiology to correct some of the shortcomings of modern eucharistic ecclesiology and modern missiological theory. Baptism does not merely affirm human culture, but is also critical of culture inasmuch as it entails a complete reorientation to life.

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### HISPANIC/LATINO THEOLOGIES

For the eighth consecutive year, the workshop on U.S. Hispanic/Latino theology met during the annual CTSA convention. This year the workshop centered on two papers, one by Prof. Otto Maduro of Drew University and another by Prof. Orlando Espín of the University of San Diego.

Both presentations discussed epistemology and its impact on a number of issues in U.S. Latino theology. Maduro raised very serious methodological and foundational questions dealing with epistemology and culture, while Espín focused on the role of cultural and class epistemology in soteriology.

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