

- Topic: The Politics of Exclusion and Participation: Ethics and the Eucharist
Moderator: Maura A. Ryan, University of Notre Dame
Presenters: Margaret A. Farley, Yale University Divinity School
Christine Firer Hinze, Marquette University
Brian F. Linnane, College of the Holy Cross
William C. Spohn, Santa Clara University

Roman Catholic moral theologians and canonists have often been drawn into serving as gatekeepers with regard to Eucharist participation. Alongside the language of Eucharist as sacrament of unity and conversion in the Christian tradition is a long preoccupation with drawing the boundaries, defining those behaviors and beliefs that warrant exclusion from the Eucharistic celebration. But, as this session demonstrated, the urgent question for Christian ethics is not "Who is worthy to approach the table of the Lord?" but "How are we to embody Eucharist in and for the world?"

Margaret Farley opened with her paper entitled "No One Goes Away Hungry from the Table of the Lord. Intercommunion: An Ethical Perspective." From within her experience in an ecumenical divinity school, Farley defended intercommunion as a fitting response to the partial, yet real, unity existing among Christians and Christian churches. Sharing Eucharist need not require unanimity of belief nor uniformity of polity; rather, she argued, it is possible to come together in a communion that "accept[s] diversity anchored in the deep unity of a shared commitment to the God of Jesus Christ, . . ." and to participation in the saving work of Christ for the world. Obstacles to intercommunion are real; yet, if Eucharist is to be bread for the world, we must face broken communion within Christian churches.

Christine Firer Hinze followed, turning attention to the current problem of welfare reform. In "Work, Welfare, and the Welcome Table: Poor Families in the United States and the Politics of Inclusion," Firer Hinze argued for an ethical analysis of public assistance programs grounded in "a biblically and sacramentally informed view of God's economy." "Jesus' economics" places concerns for sufficiency and self-reliance at the center of just policy; a place at the table is the concrete expression of Eucharist solidarity. Eucharist provides both a moral vision for inclusive, participative human community and a context for *continual* formation in the call to neighbor-love.

In "Moral Theology, Human Sexuality, and Eucharistic Participation," Brian Linnane challenged the practice of excluding from the Eucharist those who do not conform to magisterial teaching on sexual ethics. Taking the admission to community of divorced-remarried Catholics and those in same-sex relationships as starting points, Linnane argued that denying sexual otherness undermines the Church's transformative and reconciling potential. The Eucharistic community will facilitate personal and social conversion, not by excluding and punishing, but

by recognizing difference as a requirement for authentic and liberating community.

Finally, William Spohn explored the implications of shifting understandings of Eucharist for an ethical response to the global problem of AIDS. Earlier metaphorical concepts of matter-form, substance-accident, and the language of sacrifice are being displaced, he argued, "by the metaphor of Eucharist as the table-fellowship of Jesus." Eucharist as "extension of Jesus' hospitality" calls into question all patterns of exclusion and marginalization, of blaming and shunning, as well as the very practice of gatekeeping. As AIDS continues to take its toll in the developing world, first world Christians must answer the challenge of bringing millions with HIV around the welcome table.

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