

- Topic: La Eucaristía en las comunidades de base de América Latina
- Moderator: Gregory A. Banazak, SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary,
Orchard Lake, Michigan
- Presenters: Luis Reyes Ceja, Universidad de Guadalajara
Juan Manuel Hurtado López, Comisión teológica nacional
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This session was aimed at articulating the theology of the Eucharist incarnated in the life and celebration of Latin American base communities (CEBs). It was conducted in the Spanish language.

The CEBs inherit all the burdens and creativity of their continent's history. Luis Reyes analyzed a formational period in that history, the first half of the sixteenth century, when foundational questions and issues concerning the Eucharist were raised by Christian evangelizers. The fundamental questions were three: Are the indigenous capable of receiving the Eucharist? How should the indigenous celebrate the Eucharist? How can the Eucharist be celebrated in a situation of injustice? At the core of these questions were issues of race, oppression, culture, human dignity, and the entire oppressive reality in which the indigenous lived. A sea change in the ecclesiastical and political climate of Europe led to the marginalization of attempts to address these issues. Though often ignored in subsequent history, such unanswered questions and issues continued to fester beneath the surface. The CEBs can be viewed as an attempt to address them today.

According to Juan Manuel Hurtado, the CEBs do this through symbolic transformation. They bring to the Eucharist fundamental elements from their reality which Hurtado summarized as "Bread", "Power", and "The Word". The lack of "Bread" (economic oppression) is transformed into fraternity through the symbolic act of sharing; "Power" (political oppression) is transformed into service through symbolic communal interchange; "The Word" (social reality) is transformed through Scripture received as the symbol of God's plan for human society. In this symbolic transformation, Eucharist in the CEBs serves as prophetic denunciation of society and a proclamation of God's unconditional love for the poor.

For José Sánchez, the key to understanding a Eucharist in the CEBs is the concept of celebration. The CEBs approach the Eucharist not as a habit, a ceremony, or a devotion, but as a *fiesta*. This accords with Jesus' use of the symbol of banquet to speak about the Reign of God. Sánchez offered a phenomenology of the Eucharist as *fiesta*: it is celebrated in the context of the reality of the CEBs; rather than being an escape from reality, the Eucharist nourishes the capacity to hope and dream which is the basis for social transformation; and, rather than inciting violence, the Eucharist of the CEBs creates a peace which

spills forth into daily life. A Eucharist is truly a fiesta not merely when it is adorned with a few folkloric elements—a sarape and Mariachi do not a fiesta make!—but when it changes the reality in which the partygoers live.

Questions from participants were aimed at relating the presenters' ideas to Latin American immigrants in the U.S. Perhaps the principal contribution of the session was to create a forum for exchange between Latin American theologians and members of the CTSA and to do so in the language in which most Latin Americans confess their faith and articulate their theology.

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