

epikeia (Roman Catholic) and *oikonomia* (Greek Orthodox) the church may interpret a fundamental law in a way that will advance its mission toward unity. Thus, allowing interchurch couples to share eucharistic communion is neither a general plea to admit all Christians to the Roman Catholic table, nor a call for new legislation, nor a mere compromise but, rather, reverence for the marital sacrament and promotion of ecclesial unity.

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SPIRITUALITY

- Topic: Religious Experience and the Development of Spiritual Teaching:
Thérèse of Lisieux and Dorothy Day
Convener: Joan M. Nuth, John Carroll University
Moderator: Stephen T. Krupa, John Carroll University
Presenters: Mary E. Frohlich, Catholic Theological Union
Leon Hooper, Woodstock Theological Center

Professor Frohlich began the session with a discussion of postmodern cultural desolation and various modern interpretations of Thérèse of Lisieux's "trial of faith," experienced at the end of her life. Frohlich attempted to draw parallels between both types of experience, in the interest of uncovering levels of meaning in Thérèse's life with resonance for postmodern culture.

The most obvious difference between the two is that Thérèse understood her own desolation within the context of the Christian meaning-giving narrative. Yet there are similarities. Both Thérèse and the postmodern philosopher Bataille described being swallowed up by a void that is destabilizing but also fruitful. Frohlich wondered what might be the theological implications of such experience. For Thérèse, her desolation issued into an abandonment of the desire for heaven as another world, replaced by a sense of heaven as "love in the present moment." Frohlich finds similarity here to postmodernity's rejection of "essences" in favor of ever-shifting events or "traces" of experience.

Frohlich next mentioned the work of Denys Turner and Mark McIntosh, both of whom criticize the modern tendency to overemphasize experience in interpreting mysticism, stressing instead the theological implications of mystical experience. Yet, in agreement with Bernard McGinn, Frohlich thinks that these two writers may move too blithely from the "negativity of experience" to the specificity of revelation as available to human intentional consciousness. Surely, Thérèse is a saint because she was faithful to Christian revelation. Yet she is also a saint because she committed herself to loving when the meaningfulness of that revelation fell away and she found herself instead in the depths of what McGinn

has called "mystical dereliction": the sense of being overwhelmed by a void, a nothingness, that annihilates one's sense of meaning. According to Frohlich, it is here that we can find the conjunction between Thérèse's desolation and the desolation of modern culture. While Thérèse was far from any kind of nihilistic celebration of the void (as in Nietzsche or Bataille), her experience of the void, insofar as it was incapable of being apprehended by her intended consciousness, makes her, in a very real way, the sister of the nihilists. Frohlich concluded that Thérèse of Lisieux, new doctor of the church, can point us in the direction of combining, in our postmodern rendering of theology, the lessons of her final "trial of faith" which was, all at once, a radical transcendence of intentional consciousness, a heroic exemplification of the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ, and an unreserved act of solidarity with those most abandoned to nothingness.

While Frohlich attempted to develop Thérèse's life story in a direction compatible with postmodern culture, Leon Hooper presented another development, that of Dorothy Day. Day's first reaction to Thérèse, the "sweet," socially passive saint, was negative, but she eventually embraced her as a "worker's saint," through an interpretive reconstruction of both her inner sense of self and her outward movements toward social transformation.

Thérèse has been critized by von Balthasar for lacking a well-developed sense of sinfulness, which he considered essential for spiritual maturity. Day disagreed with this interpretation, finding Thérèse's ground of holiness instead in her experiences of human love, however flawed, especially love for her father, which was not without sexual overtones. It was this which led her to a dependent, trust-filled, passionate love for God her Father. Such an interpretation of Thérèse was influenced by Day's own experience of being led to the desire for God through her human loves, through her love for her daughter and for the man who fathered her child. Day recognized a similar Catholic sense of the compatibility between nature and grace in Thérèse's life story. Founded upon this experience of human love, Thérèse measured her life by the norm of love, desiring passionately above all else to "make Love to be loved." Day suggests that the "ordinariness" of this way is open to all. Ordinary human nature, sexual at its core, is open to union with God. Thus the saint whom Day finds usable as a model for the Catholic Worker movement is not a person overburdened by a sense of personal sinfulness, but one who has an appreciation of her own capacities for loving and a commitment to do so.

How to reconstruct Thérèse in the direction of a socially conscious spirituality? The young woman who spent her life hidden behind the walls of Carmel seems an odd candidate to model the type of social action which absorbed the energies of Day and her Catholic Worker companions. Yet Day found food for such an interpretation in Thérèse's zeal for the salvation of souls, as stated, for example, in her words at the time of her death: "I will spend my heaven doing good upon the earth." Perhaps the clearest connection between Thérèse and Day's apostolate can be found in Day's appropriation of Thérèse's "little way" as fundamental to the spirituality of the Catholic Worker. As the

Catholic Worker movement progressed, it was forced to make adjustments from being a grandiose social movement aimed at transforming capitalistic and totalitarian societies to being involved in the ordinary, day-to-day work of attending to the specific needs of the most destitute and abandoned. In response to accusations that tending the dregs of society was mere tokenism, Day spoke of the socially redeeming effect of such efforts. She saw them as responses to the "sacrament of the present moment" and was motivated to continue them through her faith in the little way of St. Thérèse. Thus a sheltered, bourgeois young woman of the nineteenth century became for Day a stalwart model for the radical, socially active Catholic Worker movement of the twentieth century.

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THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- Topic: Incarnation and Human Embodiment
as Ground for Theological Anthropology
Convener: Susan Windley, The University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
Moderator: Ted Ulrich, The Catholic University of America
Presenters: Diane Schneider, St. Mary's University, Winona, Minnesota
Michael Stoeber, The Catholic University of America

Both presentations dealt with the difficult test case of suffering as a problem to human embodiment and spiritual growth. In her paper, "The God of Illness and Wholeness," Schneider argued that a process interpretation of the relationship between God and human being is more adequate to understanding suffering than classical Christian theology. The aim of a process understanding of this relationship is that God is the real source of "becoming possibilities." Through process ontology, she explained that God has a vested interest in the becoming of each human being, and lures humanity to fullness of life and relationship. Evil, on the other hand, is chaos, what happens when actions taken from our free will are not in harmony with God's will. Tragically, this results in suffering and a kind of illness. She closed the paper asking, "how does the process God deal with the suffering of human beings?" In the language of process theology, God works in our "mind-body," feeling and identifying with human suffering. Physical suffering should not be defined as purely evil; human beings should try to take the opportunity to learn from the suffering. Is the suffering rooted in our past? The negativities of our pasts must be challenged; otherwise they continue to drive themselves and are manifest in disharmony and suffering. In these challenges, God lures the suffering mind-body toward transformation. This