

SACRAMENTAL AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Topic: The Bishop as Steward of the Liturgy
Convener: Bruce T. Morrill, Boston College
Presenters: Judith M. Kubicki, Fordham University
Thomas F. Burke, Boston College
Respondent: Brian P. Flanagan, Boston College

Judith Kubicki started by examining conciliar and post-conciliar documents in her paper entitled, "Vatican II's Vision of the Bishop's Role in the Liturgy: Can There Be a Prophetic Dimension to Stewardship?" Arguing that article 22 of *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* signals an ecclesiological shift by identifying not only the Apostolic See but also the bishops as responsible for ordering the liturgy and approving liturgical books. The bishops' role is not limited to ensuring that liturgical laws are obeyed and rubrics observed but must also ensure that the faithful are actively engaged and spiritually enriched. Bishops therefore must determine ways to inculturate the liturgy within their own national conferences, a work of stewardship entailing a prophetic dimension. Quoting biblical theologians Dianne Bergant and Walter Brueggemann on prophecy and the prophetic imagination, Kubicki observed that assuming a prophetic stance involves teaching, fidelity to the tradition, and a commitment to inculturation. The bishop's prophetic task is to hold in creative tension fidelity to tradition and authentic inculturation.

Kubicki continued by summarizing a telephone interview she had conducted with Bishop Donald W. Trautman, chair of the USCCB's Committee on the Liturgy. Kubicki reported the Bishop's enthusiastic affirmation of the prophetic dimension of episcopal service to the liturgy. Trautman discussed several serious challenges entailed in the current task of approving translations of liturgical texts and asked theological scholars to speak out in support of proper liturgical reform. For her part, Kubicki concluded by observing that liturgical assemblies exist only in particular times and places. Being attentive to that particularity requires taking a prophetic stance that acknowledges the need for authentic inculturation of the tradition.

Thomas Burke then presented "What Kind of Stewardship? Serving the Church's Prayer within the Shadow of the Cross." When the bishop presides at Eucharist he stands *in persona Christi* and acts on behalf of the faithful, for whom Christ became the least and servant of all. The bishop's ministry is thus grounded in Christ's mission on the cross and entails what Louis-Marie Chauvet calls the consent to the presence of the absence of God. The bishop's embodiment of Christ's presence and the exercise of his Christly role, Chauvet contends, can only be understood within the shadow of the cross.

Taking his cue from the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus, Chauvet argues that, like the disciples, the church must resist the temptation to create a "direct line" to Christ in the sacraments. Instead, it must assume the on-going responsibility for his presence today through the power of its witness in the world. If the church wants to discover Christ it must agree to *receive* him as he makes himself known in the approach of the stranger or in the breaking of bread.

Similarly, Burke argued, when the bishop acts *in persona Christi* he must consent to Christ's sacramental "absence" by renouncing the desire for mastery of his presence. He must reject idolatrous conceptions of power that conflate the person of the Word with the person of the bishop, and instead reflect Christ's mediated presence within his own ministry by virtue of his difference from Christ. Then it will be possible to unite both the church's agency and the Spirit's power to the priestly act of standing *in persona Christi*, reflecting the God who relinquished a hold on power in the experience of the cross.

Brian Flanagan recognized a complementary in Kubicki's treatment of episcopal responsibility *for* the liturgy and Burke's investigation of the formation of the bishop *by* the liturgy. He proposed that Kubicki's stimulating use of the prophet metaphor might be further grounded in a theology of the ecclesial communities the bishop serves (e.g., the local church, the wider regional or global church, the historical church speaking through tradition). Attention to the bishop's prophetic role in speaking not only from his local church to other communities, a function Kubicki emphasizes, but also to his local church on behalf of the wider communion of churches would further development the metaphor. Flanagan strongly endorsed Burke's application of Chauvet's theology of the sacramental mediation of Christ's presence and absence to the question of episcopal ministry, especially for its promising insight into the liturgical minister's acting *in persona Christi*. Flanagan concluded by asking, with a view to Kubicki, how the bishops' liturgical formation "in the shadow of the cross" practically affects his stewardship of the liturgy and, with a view to Burke, how episcopacy differs from liturgical presidency in this framework.

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