

THE GRACE OF MEDELLÍN: HISTORY, THEOLOGY & LEGACY—
SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: The Grace of Medellín
Convener: Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F., Boston College School of
Theology and Ministry
Moderator: Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Boston College School of Theology and
Ministry
Presenters: O. Ernesto Valiente, Boston College School of Theology and
Ministry
Félix J. Palazzi von Büren, Boston College School of Theology and
Ministry
Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F., Boston College School of
Theology and Ministry

During this session the three presenters delivered papers based upon chapters included in their co-edited volume entitled *The Grace of Medellín: History, Theology and Legacy—Reflections on the Significance of Medellín for the Church in the United States* (Convivium, 2018) commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Second Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America held in Medellín, Colombia in August of 1968.

In his paper, “Medellín: Propheticism and Reconciliation,” Ernesto Valiente examined the ways in which to this day, the 1968 gathering of the Latin American bishops at Medellín, Colombia, is widely recognized as the most important historical event of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. Valiente explained that as the bishops gathered in a *kairos* of grace to receive in a creative manner the teachings of Vatican II, they also recognized that violence had been an integral part of Latin American societies since the colonial period, and sought to warn and prepare the continent for the dangerous future that they foresaw. Highlighting specific sections of the final documents of the Medellín conference in a systematic manner, Valiente provided an account of how these documents have contributed to the pursuit of social reconciliation throughout the continent.

In his paper, “Medellín and Atzlán: Considerations for Latino/a Eschatology,” Félix J. Palazzi von Büren, began by drawing attention to the fact that the *Medellín Conference* and *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* were important historical events that occurred within months of each other. He explored some of the ways in which with a prophetic voice, these two events contributed critical interpretations of changing times and their religious, social, political, cultural, and ecclesial demands. At the same time, they also demonstrated a harmony of meanings, aspirations, and promises. Palazzi examined at length the inter-connectedness of these two events so as to demonstrate their foundational importance in the articulation of Latino/a eschatology understood as *memoria futuri*. He argued that, in looking to the future, one of the key challenges and horizons of Hispanic theology will be keeping alive the memory of these events. These two grace-filled memories cannot be limited or reduced to a mere evocation of the past. Rather, the historical and eschatological consequence of such memories must give rise to the transformation of the historical present that in turn opens the way to a future full of hope.

Selected Session: The Grace of Medellín

In her presentation, “Medellín and the Transformation of Mission: A North American Perspective,” Margaret Eletta Guider explained how the dynamics of Medellín and its Final Documents served as catalysts for engaging the theological and moral imaginations of pastoral agents throughout Latin America, including missionary bishops, priests, women and men religious, and lay volunteers from the United States. Using Bonaventure’s threefold understanding of grace as a structure for analysis, Guider proposed the *grace of the Incarnate Word*, the *grace of the Crucified Word*, and the *grace of the Inspired Word* as three ways of illustrating diverse aspects of the *challenges, consequences and inspirations* of Medellín. Highlighting the ways in which experiences of conscientization and conversion enabled US missionaries to become artisans of peace, protagonists of hope, and agents of solidarity and accompaniment, some to the point of martyrdom, Guider noted how Medellín contributed to a transformed understanding of mission *and* discipleship, not only for US missionaries who remained in Latin America, but also for those who returned to the United States.

During the discussion moderated by Nancy Pineda-Madrid, other contributors to *The Grace of Medellín* volume, including Robert Schreiter, Hosffman Ospino, Natalia Imperatori Lee, Daniel Castillo, and Elizabeth O’Donnell Gandolfo, shared additional insights about Medellín’s influence on the Church in the United States, specifically in terms of theological education, Hispanic ministries, and pastoral vision. The conversation highlighted the multiple ways in which Medellín has been a gift for the American and the universal church.

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