

LITURGY/SACRAMENTS—TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Anne McGowan, Catholic Theological Union
Moderator: James G. Sabak, O.F.M., Providence College
Presenters: Nathaniel Marx, Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology
Judith M. Kubicki, C.S.S.F, Fordham University
Veronica Chiari A. Dy-Liacco, University of Santo Tomas

Nathaniel Marx's presentation, "Sacramental Grace at Work in the World Day of the Poor," investigated the sacramental vision underlying Pope Francis' institution of a new annual observance on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time to connect communion with Christ received sacramentally in the Eucharist and embodied in encounters with people who are poor. To assess how local churches in the United States helped Catholics embrace Christ's broken body in the liturgy and the world surrounding the inaugural World Day of the Poor on November 19, 2017, Marx conducted a survey of diocesan offices and national Catholic agencies that coordinate ministries to the poor and analyzed resources prepared by these entities. Typical responses included preaching, an intention in the Prayer of the Faithful, an extra collection, and sharing a meal with people who are hungry; some parishes and dioceses planned more elaborate events and outreach efforts. Marx identified initiatives that connected volunteers in local churches with ongoing opportunities for accompanying poor people in their communities as among the most promising ways to express the sacramentality of the poor. He suggested that future observances of the World Day of the Poor would benefit from greater publicity as well as further consideration of the Church's role both in promoting global awareness of poverty and identifying and implementing concrete local responses.

Judith M. Kubicki's paper, "Sacramentality and the Singing Assembly," explored how the liturgical assembly becomes a site of God's graced action in the world as it sings its prayer in an embodied, communal act of response to God. Inspired by the sacramental theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet, Kubicki highlighted ways in which the manifold dimensions of "bodiliness" engaged through singing enable full participation in the call-and-response dynamic that comprises the fundamental structure of liturgical worship. Furthermore, singing immerses the assembly in a ritual repertoire of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs shaped by the "language" of culture and tradition. Kubicki then extended insights from scholars of performative language theory, particularly J.L. Austin and Wade T. Wheelock, to sung ritual utterances. She proposed that what the act of singing does for and to the singing assembly is allow its members to situate themselves in relation to God and others while forming the imagination and affectivity of the worshiping community as voices are united in song. Therefore, the performative power of liturgical singing and ritual song as symbolizing activity can foster transformation over time as they persistently invite the assembly to shift its center of awareness and change its values.

In her presentation, "Towards a Renewed Appreciation of Eucharistic Grace: Insights from Eucharistic Tradition and the Phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas," Veronica Chiari A. Dy-Liacco considered the implications for eucharistic theology of a point of continuity between the Jewish and Christian traditions: people whose lives mirror the sacrificial offering are capacitated by God to bear God's grace and mercy to the world. Drawing on sources ranging from the Hebrew Scriptures, Rabbinic

Topic Session: Liturgy/Sacraments

commentaries, folk tradition, and the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic, Dy-Liacco pointed to a growing understanding in salvation history of a God who not only dwells among the chosen people but also suffers for and with them. More recently, the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas articulated a philosophical conception of the Jewish notion of vicarious suffering for sin in his phenomenology which emphasized the interconnection of spirituality and ethics. Dy-Liacco concluded by relating some of Levinas's insights about substitution to the incorporation into Christ's own redemptive suffering for humankind that Christians experience through the offering of the Eucharist. In the grace of the Eucharist, God comes to dwell in believers, revealing God's mercy and glory to the world.

The subsequent discussion focused on the symbolic aspects of liturgical celebration underscored by all three papers as well as the perceived gap between what theologians and church documents declare that liturgical rites do and the ability of particular liturgical celebrations to always effectively instantiate these ideals. The Convention's theme of grace at work in the world prompted conversation about how liturgy might inspire people in various ways to transcend their individual preferences for the sake of investing in community.

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