

GLOBAL INTEGRATION—INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Theology and the Challenges of Global Integration  
Conveners: Gemma Tulud Cruz, Australian Catholic University  
Mark Miller, University of San Francisco  
Moderator: Anne Arabome, S.S.S., Marquette University  
Presenters: James Caccamo, Saint Joseph's University  
Maria Pilar Aquino, University of San Diego  
Annemie Dillen, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

James Caccamo began the session with his presentation entitled “‘Let Us Build Ourselves a City’: Technology as the Catalyst of Global Integration.” Caccamo explored the dynamic interplay between technology and globalization, focusing on the morally ambiguous role of information and communication technologies in global integration. On the one hand, he argued, both have lived up to the liberative dream of technologists. However, on the other, they have fallen tragically short. To resolve this ambiguity and impasse, he advanced the idea that the moral character of future global integration lies in the hands of those who create and control the digital systems that empower economics, industry, social relations, warfare and policing, and culture.

The second presenter, Maria Pilar Aquino, focused on “Global Social Movement for Justice: Theological Contributions.” Beginning with the slogan “another world is possible,” she recalled how it encapsulated the thought and commitment of social and religious actors gathered at the World Social Forum (WSF) for shaping together alternatives and processes of constructive social transformation. She outlined the contribution of the WSF on Theology and Liberation, born within the WSF, to the contemporary global movement for justice and its intervention in developing critical theological approaches interested in supporting shared motivation and goals for actualizing the vision of another possible world. The sum of this process portrays a Christian perspective of liberation.

The third and final presenter, Annemie Dillen, titled her paper “Crossing Borders: Lived Religion and its Practical Theological Challenges for the Church.” The starting point of her presentation was the idea of “the liquidation of the church” coined by the Dutch Catholic sociologist and theologian Kees De Groot. Arguing from a practical theological perspective and in dialogue with her Belgian context, Dillen underscored the necessity and imperative of taking seriously this “liquidation of the Church” and contemporary forms of “lived religion.” She further explored and discussed various practical and theological questions related to newer forms of “lived religion.” The core of her argument demonstrated how spaces and time to nurture migrant children’s spirituality would be a practical and most needed form of supporting people, as spirituality and resilience are closely related, but also as a form of “being Church,” outside the church walls.

The ensuing conversation featured a brief interaction between the audience and the presenters. In summary, the following points are worth noting from the session’s presentations and discussion.

Regarding Caccamo’s presentation, it should be said that questions arising from our use of the internet and internet technology have arisen with other types of technology in the past. A historical look at other technologies can help us see the precursors to our questions related to the internet. Technology has a place and we need

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to consider its usefulness and the way it can help address questions of the common good. Coding is the new means of production, so we need to consider and look at the ethical questions of who creates and controls the code. Aquino's presentation emphasizes the importance of paying attention to communal acts and gatherings that attend to and resist suffering. Each movement has a unique and different knowledge to impart about the human condition and ways to resist suffering while shaping better alternatives for acting. We require not only action, but reflection on that action and action should be aimed at making change together. We make change as a community. Finally, Dillen's position raises a number of vital questions. Asking questions not about how to solve the problem of migration but rather how does migration affect a person or community's sense of self, change their understanding of their faith, religion, identity? What does it mean to be a middle or upperclass migrant? How do we understand that this is an embodied endeavor, where space matters and one is both displaced from a space and in a new space living with both realities at the same time?

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