

LATINO/A THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: Wounded Glory as Indictment and Vision of Another World  
Conveners: Leo Guardado, Fordham University  
Elaine Padilla, University of La Verne  
Melissa Pagán, Mount St. Mary's University  
Moderator: Lucila Crena, University of Virginia  
Presenters: Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry  
and Loyola Marymount University  
Roberto S. Goizueta, Boston College  
Respondent: Melissa Pagán, Mount St. Mary's University

In “Resisting Violence, Cultivating the Mystical-Political Dimension,” Nancy Pineda-Madrid explored how violence mars and destroys the lives of many women, their families, and communities. She emphasized that the danger it poses rests in its capacity to eviscerate who we are as *imago Dei* by inhibiting imagination and truncating human openness to a mystical-political dimension. After considering the nature and impact of violence using the work of John D. Carlson and Gloria Anzaldúa, among others, she explored practices of resistance that cultivate a mystical-political dimension of human experience that transforms/heals the destructive effects of violence. She framed these practices as expressions of a distinctly Latinx spiritual realism.

Specifically, Pineda-Madrid analyzed three practices that resist violence and cultivate the mystical-political dimension of life. First, the imaginative symbol of a pink cross used by mothers and other protestors resisting femicide in Ciudad Juarez and across the world—a symbol that continues to be a political and theological interruption. Second, the practice of creative writing in neplanta (Anzaldúa)—the space in-between two realities—that often arises in the midst of violence, which for Chicana and Latina peoples includes the racist rhetoric targeting Mexicans, migrants, the border, and the borderlands region. Third, the practice of theo-dramas that make possible the imaginative processing of feelings, traumas, losses, horrors, and the joys of life through a living interpretation of biblical stories. Among these theo-dramas are the posadas, the pastorela, the apparition of La Virgen de Guadalupe, and the Via Crucis. She argued that theo-dramas can be a kind of radical schooling in which participants learn to let go, to enter into the sacred space of the drama that demands full attention and participation. These practices among others are expressions of a spiritual realism that not only grapples with, but also attempts to subvert evil as it provides a credible account of hope to all who are victimized by violence.

In his paper, “‘Is the Universe Friendly?’: On Mortality, Walls, and the Possibility of Christian Faith,” Roberto Goizueta echoed Albert Einstein’s legendary question and explored how fear leads to the exclusion of the other and our self-isolation through the erection of barriers. He addressed the concept of the “denial of death” (Ernest Becker) as the root of our fear of “the other” and how the denial of death inevitably leads to a denial of life in all its gratuity. However, he emphasized that the powerless, vulnerable persons in our midst force us to be honest about the reality of death. In the broken countenance of the poor person we inevitably see reflected our own fundamental

*Consultation: Latino/a Theology*

brokenness, which we strive so mightily to repress. We avoid the poor not because we are afraid of them but because we are afraid of ourselves; we are afraid that we may not be as invulnerable as we think we are. Thus, we put the poor out of sight: on the other side of the tracks or the other side of the border, where we will never have to come across them.

Since the Christian notion of the option for the poor understands the other as the sacrament of Christ, he argued that the barriers we erect isolate us not just from the stranger but from Christ himself. Essentially, the option for the poor is a precondition of Christian faith. The option for the poor is thus not so much an ethical as a soteriological imperative, not so much an answer to the question “What must I do to be a *good* Christian?” as an answer to the question “What must I do to be a Christian at *all*?” As he said, *their* liberation is the precondition for *our* salvation.

Goizueta wants us to consider that the universe is friendly; to realize that we can embrace our common vulnerability as mortal creatures who, precisely as creatures, are beloved—not in spite of our vulnerability but because of it; and to embrace the wounded victim who reveals to us our common woundedness and, therefore, makes possible our common liberation.

In her response, Melissa Pagán provided insights from decolonial aesthetics (Adolfo Albán Achinte) to examine the practices highlighted by Pineda-Madrid, with particular attention to theo-dramas, and also raised the question of “how common is our common woundedness?” These insights led to a lively conversation about theo-dramas and common mortality during the question and answer portion of the session.

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