

MORAL THEOLOGY (II) – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: “All You Who Labor...”: Theology, Work, and Economy
 Convener: Alessandro Rovati, Belmont Abbey College
 Moderator: Daniel Cosacchi, Marywood University
 Presenters: Luke Arredondo, St. Philip Institute of Catechesis and Evangelization
 Thomas Massaro, S.J, Fordham University
 Xavier M. Montecel, Boston College

Luke Arredondo’s paper, “Just Wages, Leo XIII, and Catholic Parish Salaries,” considered the significance of just wages for the church’s current employment practices. Based upon an ethnographic study of people working for the church in parish and diocesan settings that he conducted, Arredondo reflected on the discrepancy between Catholic Social Teaching’s instructions regarding the need for just wages and the reality of compensation typically offered in Catholic settings. His central argument was that while many people in the US are trying to argue for a higher minimum wage, many Catholic institutions seem to have abandoned the teachings of Leo XIII and his successors on these matters. The church’s witness against economic injustice is profoundly hindered by such forgetfulness. Catholic institutions have a duty to address this issue alongside their other numerous initiatives to address the needs of the poor and the vulnerable. After a thorough description of the church’s theology of just wage and the findings of his study, Arredondo concluded his remarks with a few practical suggestions that might help Catholic institutions better align their employment practices to their moral commitments.

Thomas Massaro reflected on “The Renewal of Catholic Labor Justice Advocacy under Pope Francis.” He pointed out that Pope Francis’ leadership in worker justice and the theology of human labor is admirable and exhibits novel features that call for careful theological analysis. Surpassing previous popes, Francis displays genuine solidarity with laborers, appeals for structural change favoring workers, and advocates for improved terms of employment. Massaro focused on Francis’ particular eye for the structural causes and dimensions of labor injustice, drawing especially on his impressive but often overlooked addresses to the three World Meetings of Popular Movements that he convened. Starting from a description of several paradigmatic episodes of Francis’s labor justice advocacy, Massaro probed passages addressing the dignity of labor and offering a structural analysis of work-related injustices in key papal documents. He then ventured an appraisal of the likely legacy of the Francis papacy for Catholic reflection on human labor by highlighting its novel elements supporting a renewal of the Church’s theology of labor and spirituality of work that might make them more adequate to the unprecedented challenges of our millennium.

Xavier Montecel presented a paper titled “Liturgy and Ethics: Weaving Together the Work of the People and the Work of Holiness” that examined how Christian theologians have linked liturgy, often called “the work of the people,” and ethics, the “work” of seeking holiness. Reflecting on the shift that happened after Vatican II that led the church to consider ethics as a discipline for the development of character through virtue and the pursuit of holiness in communion with others, Montecel highlighted the link between such new conception and the role of liturgy in Christian

formation. In doing so, he considered the principal ways in which theologians have conceptualized the connection between liturgy and formation by proposing a threefold distinction. First, Montecel described the correlational model, which interprets liturgy as encoding specific ethical values and calling for a moral response. Second, he portrayed the pedagogical model, which highlights how liturgy as a practice regulates moral subjectivity. Finally, Montecel analyzed the eschatological model, which expands on the insights of both approaches by placing the goal of moral development on a theological horizon realized sacramentally in the liturgy.

ALESSANDRO ROVATI
Belmont Abbey College
Belmont, North Carolina