

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY TOPIC SESSION

Topic:	Sacraments and the Global Church in Postcolonial Contexts
Convener:	Susan Abraham, Harvard Divinity School
Moderator:	Brett Hoover, Loyola Marymount University
Presenters:	Shannon Craigo-Snell, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Amanda Quantz, University of St. Mary
Respondent:	Robert Schreiter, Catholic Theological Union

The following questions framed the papers and the response: (a) How do Catholics experience sacraments in light of questions of power and narratives of domination? Is the Eucharist always liberating? How might we flesh out an inclusive approach to experiences of the Eucharist that more fully engage the lived experiences of Catholics in the global south? (b) Is there a practical ecclesiology for a global church? How can sacraments and sacramental theological insights clarify rather than distort the relationship between the center and the periphery in the global church?

Craigo-Snell's paper, "Narrative, Performance and Power: Sacraments in Global Settings," focused on the notion of performance to analyze Christian practices in order to trace the manner in which power functions in the enactment of sacraments. She tracked how the category "performance" in performance studies has been the focus of current theological analysis, replacing the later twentieth-century emphasis on narrative. The emphasis on performance reveals the embodied and active elements of Christian faith and has been the focus of theological voices including Stanley Hauerwas, Samuel Wells, Kevin Vanhoozer and Serene Jones. Craigo-Snell cautions, however, that the "seemingly fluid progression from narrative to performance" ought to consider meanings of "performance" and situate it in context of time and place. Performance, moreover, is always a formative interaction between context and content. Finally, "doubleness" is a characteristic of performance in that the performer always holds a consciousness of an ideal performance. Craigo-Snell's argument is that if we were to take the concept of performance as more than metaphor, it would challenge conventional understandings of where meaning is located and who controls it. Thus, the performance of sacraments demands performance analysis in two ways. First, the sacraments exemplify the crucial roles of embodiment and community; the meaning of sacraments cannot be contained by text or narrative since they are events. Second, they are interactions and possess doubleness. Performance analysis thus honors the embodied and communal aspects of Christian sacramental enactment.

Quantz's "Eucharist and the Laity: Magisterial Injunctions, Implied Assent, and Mixed Messages," presented an analysis of contemporary views on the sacrament of the Eucharist. Her study drew on forty interviews including the following questions probing respondents' attitudes toward eucharistic theology: what picture, feeling or idea comes to mind when you imagine the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist? What are some of the cultural givens that have shaped your understanding of the Body of Christ? Who (else) would be invited to receive Communion in the Roman Catholic Church? Has your understanding of the Eucharist changed over time? Can you identify views and practices of the Sacrament of the Eucharist that you wish the Roman Catholic Church would adopt or change? How would you describe your most vivid encounter with Christ in the Eucharist? And finally, what, if anything would you like to tell the Pope or your local Bishop of your experience of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist?

Quantz's analysis reveals that, of the respondents (Midwestern and on the conservative end of the spectrum), only a bare handful believed in a strict policy of closed communion. About half of the remaining favored fully open Communion. Many also seemed to have a literal and shallow understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist and could not align its orientation to the Body of Christ in terms of justice or social issues. The sacrament seemed to be "locked" in place in a Church setting with hardly a sense that its effects are universal. There was a lack of engaged Catholic identity in the lukewarm assent to many of the Vatican's direct injunctions even though a number of respondents seemed to buck against the directive tone set in place. Quantz wondered why the sacrament of the Eucharist as currently practiced seems to encourage such acquiescence and passivity in an otherwise intelligent and receptive people. Quantz argued that a retooling of contemporary sacramental theology is necessary to bring to light the social and ecclesial dimensions of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Robert Schreiter responded, calling attention to Craigo-Snell's focus on performance, noting that this is getting more attention in evolutionary biology and cognitive psychology as these disciplines reflect on the origin of religion. He mentioned in particular Robert Bellah's *Religion in Human Evolution* and Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind*. Craigo-Snell's emphasis on doubleness in performance is a particularly promising area for investigating sacraments since sacraments are enactments of doubleness on a number of fronts. Sacraments enact a *semiotic* doubleness by situating themselves between the seen and the unseen. They also reveal a *decolonial* doubleness of power inasmuch as they both colonize and decolonize the imagination. Such colonization was explored by Quantz's report of her surveys. She called for a reclamation of the decolonizing potential of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as it evokes the suffering and death of Jesus at the hands of colonial power.

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