

## LITURGY/SACRAMENTS TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Sacrament/s and the Global Church  
Convener: Lizette Larson-Miller, Graduate Theological Union  
Moderator: Rhodora Beaton, St. Catherine University  
Presenters: Gary Macy, Santa Clara University  
Anne McGowan, Yale University  
Richard McCarron, Catholic Theological Union

The 2012 CTSA convention theme of “Sacrament/s and the Global Church” lent itself well to the topic session devoted to liturgy and sacraments. Our three presenters approached the breadth of sacramentality within the historical and contemporary reality of global church in three distinct ways.

Our first presenter, Gary Macy, traced the historical practices and related ramifications of eucharistic elements originally culture-specific to the Mediterranean world of early Christianity and the shifts in practice and interpretation when the same elements are transferred to different cultures. “Mediterranean Meals to Go: the Globalization of the Eucharist” was a fascinating look at the wine and bread of the Eucharist as they move to other climates and cultures. Focusing primarily on wine, Macy cited a growing number of historical authors who acknowledged that grape wine was normal for eucharistic celebration but already either knew of exceptions to it (by the seventh century) or admitted of canonical variations in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. Macy speculated that the withdrawal of the cup from the laity may have been linked to the scarcity of wine in northern Europe, as well as the creative ways to stretch a drop of wine by changing the proportion of wine and water in the cup, as well as preserving wine for travel by soaking linen with wine. In addition, he asked what the theological ramifications of bread and wine which were normative for meals might be versus the later reality that the food itself was exotic and even magical. How would that change eucharistic theologies and perceptions of the eucharistic elements?

Our second presenter, Anne McGowan, spoke on “The Spirit’s Sending and the Sacraments: Insights from the Eucharistic Epiclesis for a Global Church.” Focusing on the past fifty years of liturgical renewal, McGowan drew her listeners’ attention to what it meant to borrow an Eastern Christian epiclesis and insert it into Western eucharistic prayer forms without consideration of the larger pneumatological context. Looking at the particular problems of a split epiclesis—separating what was originally a unity of epicletic praying in order to maintain a focus on the words of institution—McGowan speculated that, while epicletic praying is introduced into the Roman eucharistic prayers of Vatican II with the result that they invited greater reflection on the Holy Spirit, the structural arrangement changes and even compromises the articulation of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Building on the textual structural issue that emerged from the study of historical eucharistic prayers, McGowan then expanded her reflections on how preconceived ideas about the structure of a eucharistic prayer ought to be centered also says something about the dynamic image and power of the Spirit’s work in a global world. If the Holy Spirit changes the eucharistic elements, does that not also affect our understanding of how the Holy Spirit changes the church and the world in history and in contemporary society?

Richard McCarron, in the final presentation entitled “‘Yesterday’s Bread’: The Sacramentality of Food in a World of Hunger,” addressed the real and growing issue of how we understand the Eucharist as the bread for today (or tomorrow) in a world where one in seven

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people do not even have yesterday's bread. McCarron asks how sacramental theology can take the reality of massive food insecurity as a theological issue, exploring the specific questions of promised presence when confronted with regret and lament in world hunger. Asking questions from the perspective of hunger and sacramental theology invites looking anew at the miraculous feeding stories that start with scarcity—how are these to be understood in eucharistic narratives of abundance and excess (or even extravagance)? Or, in another set of examples, McCarron asked how hunger reality ruptures narratives and time by interrupting the focus on today's bread and reverses stories of feeding such as those found in Genesis? Moving these juxtapositions to a christological hermeneutic leads to the question: what does it mean that Christ offers his own flesh for us and that we are charged with offering ourselves in a second fraction rite, the dismissal to the world? If to live life today is to break the body of creation on a daily basis, how do we understand Eucharist as a template or symbol of that breaking and that rupture?

While all three presentations were quite different one from another, the ensuing discussion found common threads that enlivened the conversation concluding the session.

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