

## THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION INTEREST GROUP

Convener: Linh Hoang O.F.M., Siena College  
Moderator: Kathy Cox, College of St. Benedict and St. John's University  
Presenters: Linh Hoang O.F.M., Siena College  
Gemma Cruz, Australian Catholic University  
Michael Downey, Diocese of San Bernardino

The Theology of Migration Interest Group concluded its third year with presentations on migration in a trinitarian dimension, migration and redemption, and a spirituality of migration. Linh Hoang presented a paper entitled "Migration in a Trinitarian Dimension." He stated that migration has occurred since the earliest time in human history. Today, it has affected many aspects of the globalized world from the side of the migrants to the sending and receiving countries. Migration challenges human cultures by urging them to react and to reflect on the reasons for the mass movements of people. From a Christian perspective, migration has always been part of history. In recent years, it has drawn more attention and the mission with migrants has varied depending on a particular church's involvement. An appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the discussion of migration will refocus the doctrine as central to Christianity while also stressing a practical application that of hospitality. Hospitality is not just the polite gesture of welcoming the stranger but the radical call to be with and to love the migrants. This "trinitarian hospitality" embraces the other as different but in communion while also showing God's love that is afforded to all of creation.

Gemma Cruz's "Migration and Redemption" explored contemporary migration as a sacrament of redemption. In particular, it explores migration as a heuristic lens for understanding the meaning of and quest for redemption today. The paper consists of four parts. It begins with a brief introduction followed by a discussion on migration as reflective of a redemption that is "not yet" and "already" realized. On the one hand migration is reflective of sin and its consequences in contemporary times, and on the other hand migration reflects and enacts the human quest for liberation today. Theological reflections centering on the idea of migration as "graced even in difficult circumstances" and, in particular, as a symbol of a Church working its way toward redemption follows the discussion. The paper then ends with a brief conclusion.

Michael Downey indicated he took the title of his presentation from a novel and briefly outlined the branches and methods of spirituality. He opts for a discussion of anthropology where the human person's experience functions in its own right to illuminate truths about human self-transcendence and spirituality. Using two novels to develop a theology of migrant spirituality, Michael Downey dismantles the master narrative of the universal immigrant experience of a better life. The first novel, by a Sri Lankan author Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*, explores the journey of Michael and his friends to a new land. Themes of power, hidden wonders, guides, folding old lives into new lives in a place not quite one's own, stifling alienation, a sense of permanent exile, and the capacity of some to adapt to a new place while others do not were all explored. The second novel explores the story of Lily, whose family was hounded out of Ireland in 1916. This novel explores the burdens women bear because of men and war.

Drawing on title of the second novel *On Canaan's Side* by Sebastian Barry, Downey challenges the illusion that all is well once Canaan is reached. While for some who journey there is adventure, curiosity, adjustment, and an embracing of a new land, focusing on the promises of

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the Promised Land ignores other experiences. The Promised Land also contains experiences of dislocation, alienation, institutional racism, a deep desire and wish to return home, as well as disappointment and heartache. What joins the novels and what is uncovered is the differences in the migrant experience and the spiritualities that accompany these differences.

After all three presentations, a lively question-and-answer period followed. Many of the questions focused on the implication of the importance of exploring migration in the complex world that we live in today. The session concluded with the group discussing the possibility of continuing the discussion of migration in other sessions at future CTSA conferences. The group believes that migration has been an important issue for theology and will continue to be so in the future.

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