

“The Eucharist and Ministerial Leadership”

Moderator: Susan Secker, Seattle University

Reporter: Jim Pambrun, Saint Paul University, Ottawa

To open the conversation: Rosa Maria Icaza, Mexican American Cultural Center

The seminar proceeded as follows: first, Rosa Maria Icaza presented a resumé of Prof. John Baldovin's talk; secondly, Baldovin responded to written questions; thirdly, small group discussions took place followed by questions presented in open session to Prof. Baldovin. The discussions focused on such issues as (1) the meaning and role of ministry, (2) the foundations of different theological approaches to ministry, and (3) the major referents for a theology of ministry. This report is not a point by point account of the discussion. Rather, it identifies some of the salient points raised based on the three topics just identified.

First, discussion focused on the importance of the role of the priest in the celebration of the Eucharist. What does this role represent and what is the significance of this role given the entire action of Eucharistic celebration? The phenomenon of “priestless masses”, the question about the significance of concelebrated Eucharist, the meaning of the gathered assembly at Eucharist, and the question of the relationship among these different roles as they function within the celebration itself, all served to highlight the issue of the role of the priest. In responding to these questions, Prof. Baldovin re-emphasized the importance of identifying what the proper issues are and of attending to what is actually going on. Oftentimes, our questions are raised from the perspective of a restrictive understanding of the relationship between the role of the priest and a particular liturgical act. By contrast, he asked us to think of the relationship between ministry and leadership in community, of how leadership emerges, of the place where celebration takes place (architecture, surroundings, etc.) and of the role of the local celebrating community. This became the occasion to highlight the personal qualities called for in a minister, beyond simply asking about the validity of a particular act. It raised a question about the difference between concelebrating and co-presiding. Finally, this served to direct our attention to the diverse “functions” associated with ordained ministry and how these invite us to reconsider what is the unity and continuity with the Church which is symbolized by the ordained minister.

Secondly, some discussion took place around different approaches to a theology of ministry. This included a brief exchange between David Power and

Baldovin. Particular attention was given to a view of representation, how Baldovin's approach incorporates a nuanced understanding of this, yet, how Power distances himself from such a view. Beyond this, Baldovin also adverted to the value of taking the entire sweep of the liturgical action into consideration. Such a view requires that we ask new questions, for example, what is going forward in the liturgy? What is being transformed through the entire movement of the liturgical celebration (e.g., self-understanding and identity)? What is the importance of keeping the pastoral dimension in ongoing tension with theological reflection?

Baldovin appealed to the importance of the "berakah", its acknowledgment of the initiative of God's action, and the attention it gives to the structure of reality grounded in gift and the proclamation of the Word. Such an approach would invite renewed reflection on the meaning of "transformation", the kind of authority which is identified with the presiding minister, and the relationship between the ordained minister and the celebrating community.

Thirdly, Christology was a consistent referent throughout the discussions. For example, is there a risk of eclipsing Christ and Christological normativity in such a liturgical theology? Baldovin cautioned against identifying Christomonism, an attempt to ground everything in the will of Christ, with a Christocentric sensitivity, and cautioned against too quickly appropriating certain images of the relationship between Christ and community while not attentive to the theological implications of these images. More careful weight needs to be given, he suggested, to the strategies of meaning (e.g., use of metaphor) and their impact on the self-understanding of the minister and the community. This offered the opportunity for a couple of comments from participants. One member spoke of the eschatological dimension and the notion of finality this implies (e.g., the transformation of the community, or the interrelationship of Christ to assembly and assembly to Christ). Another member spoke of the pneumatological dimension, how this is incorporated in the Eastern tradition with respect to epiclesis and how this serves to de-absolutize the "moment of consecration." In this regard, Baldovin returned to the hermeneutical elements he identified in his plenary session paper which concerned "berakah" and its significance for renewing our understanding of the relationship between ministerial leadership and Eucharist.

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