

- Topic: The Fundamental Character
of the Local Eucharistic Worshipping Community
- Moderator: Phillip J. Linden Jr., Xavier University of Louisiana
- Presenters: Jerry T. Farmer, University of Louisiana
Monya A. Stubbs, Xavier University of Louisiana
Gerald M. Boodoo, Xavier University of Louisiana
Phillip J. Linden Jr., Xavier University of Louisiana

With Karl Rahner's theology of symbol as a basis, Jerry T. Farmer provided the defining characteristics of the local community as Event. The local worshipping community is "(the place) that the believer, joining and joined by fellow believers, existentially experiences conversion in a concrete, historical, social, and tangible way." The Church is, therefore, a dynamic, developing, reality in which salvation is already taking place but is not yet finished. As such, the local worshipping community becomes a symbolic structure making real the incarnate word in space an time, *Realsymbol*. Farmer concludes that the local worshipping community is itself a sacrament in which the most intense presence of God's grace is manifested not in an abstract generalized way, and not always in its fullest expression, but in the very tangible and concrete reality of life itself.

Monya A. Stubbs stated that the Eucharist as Event allows us to understand a "Body theology of Christ" suggested in 1 Cor. 11:17-33, as an appropriate symbol for the interdependence of Christians with one another. Consequently, one can advocate a biblical hermeneutics in which "body" is also an appropriate metaphor explaining the ministry of Jesus that concerned itself with the general welfare of humanity. In this light, Eucharist as Event is primarily a commitment to the well-being of the "body of Christ" community. Advocating the customs of Jesus consists of a commitment to the alleviation of human suffering and to the removal of its causes. Thus, the seriousness of the problem of the community's "eating without discerning the body" means not to proclaim or to advocate the customs of the body theology, until his return. It meant the physical and spiritual abuse of the poor by the rich causing a failure of the Church in its obligation to maintain the well-being of the community/body of Christ. On the contrary, the body theology refers to the "touching" or meeting of people in the midst of their situation, to say "no" to the oppressive norms of society that deny people's humanity. This advocating of the customs of Jesus represents the meaning of the Eucharistic as Event.

Gerald M. Boodoo acknowledged that a genuine depiction of the fundamental character of the local worshipping Eucharistic community as Event has been distorted in the development of modernity, postmodernity, and globalization. With modernity, new concepts of space and time evolve and abstract generalities hold sway over concrete particular things, putting the latter into the service of an all encompassing efficiency. Postmodernity is reflexive modernity dissolving the boundaries that existed between "reality" and fiction, leading to the importance

of culture and aesthetics as grounding factors in a fragmented situation. Globalization makes the mobility created by modernity more accessible carrying the projects of modernity and postmodernity forward. The result is the commodification of human existence and the creation of whole populations who can be forgotten or eradicated. In concluding, Boodoo raised the question of whether it is possible for the *realsymbole* to occur since the present context seems deliberately to deny the creation and sustaining of conditions which make it possible. He states that although understanding the Eucharist as Event is necessary, we are in danger of completely losing the historical conditions of *any* genuine human event that concretizes the Eucharist.

Phillip J. Linden, Jr. raised the possibility of the local Eucharistic worshipping community being a context for the confrontation of schemes of totalization produced by modernity, postmodernity, and globalization which sustain ideologies of oppression (evil). Linden stated that hope in the face of this kind of evil must be grounded in an analysis of the historical origins of the contemporary context in the United States understood from the perspective of the oppressed. This analysis understands the origin of the Atlantic world, simultaneous with the rise of the modern state, as an interplay of developing political regime regulated by reasoned based science, merchant class economics, and adjusted religion. It is understanding the secular nature of religion and its involvement in the process of dehumanization. Linden argued that it is only from this critical historical perspective that the worshipping community can understand Event as a space of confrontation engaged in the establishing of hope.

These presentations generated intense discussion and sparked a lot of hard questioning and debate.

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