

MISSIOLOGY AND MISSION THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Continuing Committee on Common Witness:
Witnessing Together in the Coming Millennium
- Convener: Lou McNeil, Georgian Court College
- Moderator: Jeanne Evans, St. Peter's College
- Presenter: Robert Schreiter, Catholic Theological Union
- Presenter: Carl Starkloff, Institute for Jesuit Studies, St. Louis, MO
- Presenter: Mary McGlone, Congregational Leadership Team,
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

Robert Schreiter began the session with a brief review of statements on common witness and evangelization made between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches since 1970. His attention then focused upon statements and programs developed between the United States Catholic Mission Association and the Church World Service and Witness unit of the National Council of Churches between 1987 and 1998.

Schreiter outlined a common theology based upon the call to mission which arises from baptism and a common Scripture, and participation in the *missio Dei* of the Trinity. Since 1994, The United States Catholic Mission Association and the Church World Service and Witness unit of the National Council of Churches have undertaken a number of projects. Alongside witness to justice and relief and development work, common missionary orientation now occurs in some places.

What is the future for common witness? Perhaps the most important area is in peacemaking and in social reconstruction of societies. Here the unity in Christ and commitment to peace and reconciliation are key areas of common witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Carl Starkloff gave a summary of his article in the September 1999 issue of *Theological Studies*, entitled: "The Church as Sacrament of the Multicultural Common Good." Starkloff called for a discussion of how the Church is called to witness against various forms of individualism, common to the human race and particularly the United States. In the case of the United States he takes up Bellah's charge that our pilgrim forebears violated the covenant of freedom by excluding indigenous peoples of this new land. Thus they were guilty of cultural exclusivism. Starkloff argues that the vocation of the Church is twofold in the area of culture: "it should constantly purify itself of ideological biases that hinder the preaching and living of the gospel. Secondly, it should be a community that testifies through its actions to a universal community, to the 'common good,' that transcends biases and prejudices." He recommends that we focus on the ancient and biblical concept of *communio*, or *koinonia* (shared life) as a root metaphor for the mission of the Church within the public sphere. This metaphor speaks to both the universal and local level of culture and church and promises a theological avenue to overcome cultural exclusivism.

Mary McGlone developed the topic of common witness in terms of human rights and the Church in Peru. She presented a case study that focused upon the organization called the *Coordinadora* (Coordinating Committee) for Human Rights in Peru. It is a working consortium of approximately sixty human rights organizations in Peru and unique in its activism and make up for Latin America, if not the world. It has been able to unite the work and voices of a variety of Church (ecumenical) and political human rights organizations effectively to take up common tasks and speak nationally and internationally with one respected voice. All of this has occurred in the last two decades while Peru suffered terrorist and state-sponsored violence, division within the Churches and the destruction of a viable democratic political system. She suggests that the experience of *Coordinadora* provides a model for the alternative historical project that liberation theology sought to attain and that it exemplifies some of the dimensions of what Robert Schreiter and Orlando Espín call for as a "New Catholicity."

JEANNE EVANS

St. Peter's College

Jersey City, New Jersey