

religious tradition. Okoye further cautioned against universalizing an "interpretive model," even that of liberation as recorded in Exodus. He suggests that the Covenant motif might be a more successful interpretive key for African Americans who need to place full trust in God, while at the same time seizing control of their destiny. Okoye suggested that the establishment of polycentric and multicultural communities and institutions need to be realized on the local parish and diocesan levels. The church understood as the inclusive "family of God" captures something of the African American soul.

Joseph Komonchak noted that the conciliar fathers did not speak directly of the social justice aspects of mission, but focused on church mission largely in terms of the encounter of cultures. The first two decades after the council were marked by an enormous emphasis on inculturation and overcoming "what was called Eurocentrism." The post-Vatican II Church acknowledged the wondrous variety of human cultures through the efforts of the church to embody itself in various cultures. He noted that a more recent shift in ecclesiology recognizes that catholicity is not simply a matter of acknowledging and treasuring cultural diversity. Catholicity is realized only when cultural and other forms of diversity are somehow integrated into a whole. Offering a cautionary note, Komonchak reflected on several contemporary instances in which insistence on cultural integrity has taken the bloody form of white supremacy or tribal and ethnic clashes (Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo). Komonchak suggested that perhaps the challenges of the historical moment rather than culture should be taken as the essential defining character of the local church. At times cultural integrity might need to be stressed. In other cases, the challenge will be to go beyond the cultural distinctiveness to a culture-transcending integration. A lively group discussion focused on multicultural churches; race and culture theory and the dialectic of cultural integrity and cultural transcendence ensued.

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LATINO/A THEOLOGY

- Topic: *Missio ad Gentes* in the Context of Latino/a Catholicism
Convener: Orlando O. Espín, University of San Diego
Presenters: Gary Riebe-Estrella, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago
Miguel H. Diaz, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary,
Boynton Beach, Florida

Each of the speakers made a presentation for about twenty-five minutes, followed by questions from, and dialogue with, those in attendance.

Summary of Riebe-Estrella's paper: "Missio ad Gentes: Who Are the 'Gentes' to Whom U.S. Latinos/as Are Sent?" Many of the ancestors of those whom today we call U.S. Latinos/as were the recipients of the "missio ad gentes." Among the main results of this mission for the indigenous of the Americas were political powerlessness, economic poverty and cultural devastation. But at the same time, and because of this social marginalization, the peoples of the Americas enjoyed a certain freedom to take the message which they received from the missionaries and to blend it with their pre-Columbian religious cosmovisions. This process, sometimes referred to as *mestizaje*, resulted in a synthesis of the religious world of sixteenth-century Spanish medieval Catholicism and the indigenous world. As is always the case in such a *mestizaje*, the results were both a synthesis and interstices (i.e., pieces of the original worlds which remained intact and were not synthesized). This process mirrors the transformation of Christianity in its long history in Europe as it moved out of the Middle East throughout the territories of the Roman empire and was reshaped by its encounter with the religious worlds of the Germanic, Gaulic, Celtic, Visigothic peoples. While in the 16th century in Europe this dynamic reshaping of Christianity was halted by the consolidation of doctrine, liturgy and order demanded by the Counter Reformation and which resulted in Roman Catholicism, in the Americas the reshaping continued and gave birth to a new form of Christianity, i.e., Latino/a Catholicism. The reshaping continued in subsequent centuries as Latino/a Catholicism came into contact with Euro-American Catholicism, and a new synthesis and new interstices were formed. What today we experience in the religious practices of many Latinos/as is not simply a devotional tradition but a different way of shaping the understanding of doctrine, liturgy and order. The hope of Latinos/as for those who engage in "missio ad gentes" is that they will allow, in new cultural contexts, the repeated reshaping of the Christian message rather than impose the dominant cultural variant. In this way the true catholicity of the Church might emerge more fully.

Summary of Diaz's paper: "Missionary Activity as Epiphany: Sacrament and Sacramentality in U.S. Latino/a Catholicism." In the decree *Ad Gentes*, Vatican II defined missionary activity as "nothing more, and nothing less, than the manifestation of God's plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and in history" (AdG, 9). The council maintains that through missionary activity God brings to conclusion the history of salvation, thereby perfecting "whatever goodness is found in the minds and hearts of human persons, or in particular customs and cultures of peoples" (AdG, 9). Vatican II understands missionary activity as a manifestation, an unveiling of God's salvific plan within historical and worldly realities. In order to realize the universality of God's salvific plan, the council underscores the need for the Church to be committed "in the way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances" of those with whom he lived (AdG 10).

As globalization today impacts society and Church by undermining the identity of numerous local communities, the new evangelization must affirm

against this threat the gifts of these particular human communities, and defend their existence as necessary for the catholicity of the faith. In the present paper it is argued that U.S. Latino/a popular Catholicism is a prophetic sacramental vision of reality that resists the contemporary tendency to separate Gospel (God's salvific will) from social, cultural, and other historical realities. Latino/a popular Catholicism is also a particular communal expression of faith, a sign-bearer of grace, that manifests God's salvific plan *for* and *within* a specific and historically constituted community.

At a time when the sociocultural identities of specific communities are threatened by globalization, Latino/a Catholicism offers a way to underscore a local, yet very catholic way of conceiving the encounter of one community with the life of grace. As such, Latino/a popular Catholicism offers the most fundamental, explicit, and religious sacramental expression of U.S. Latino/a participation in, and perpetuation of, the Church's missionary activity.

As a way of focusing the discussion, the author of the present paper highlighted the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe as a symbol of grace and as missionary. In the Guadalupan tradition the marginalized are the protagonists of the Church's missionary activity as a response to Guadalupe's own inculturated mission to them. Among U.S. Latinos/as, and specially among Mexican Americans, the Guadalupe devotion has served as the primary evangelical means of appropriating the essentials of Christian revelation. Commonly accepted Latino/a interpretations of this devotion are in continuity with conciliar and post-conciliar theologies that understand mission: (1) as an incarnation and epiphany of God's salvific plan within historical realities, (2) as an integral activity comprised of proclamation and action (especially on behalf of the poor and marginalized, and (3) as a renewal of, and prophetic call to, the social order (important today, given the social and ecclesial tensions brought about by globalization).

The author of this paper also offered some remarks on Karl Rahner's theology of mission and of the incarnational dynamism of grace (given Rahner's influence on the council's and on post-Vatican II theology of mission). Rahner's arguments can deepen the theological understanding of the missionary nature of U.S. Latino/a popular Catholicism and, in particular, that of the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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