

Lefebure also pointed to the theological context of Paul's eschatology. Dying and rising in Christ is experienced in the here and now. No longer I, but Christ who lives in me, finds connections in Buddhist spirituality. Lefebure noted that detachment and withdrawal from life, rather than clinging to it, is the way that one can most deeply and truly engage life, freeing us from fears and desires that distort our existence.

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MISSION TO EXILES, REFUGEES, AND IMMIGRANTS

- Topic: "To all those scattered throughout" (1 Pet 1:1). A theology and spirituality for a redemptive ministry and call to mission to exiles, refugees and immigrants in the United States.
- Convener: Alicia C. Marill, Barry University
- Moderator: Mary Jo Iozzio, Barry University
- Presenter: Alicia C. Marill, Barry University
- Respondent: Allan F. Deck, S.J., Loyola Institute of Spiritual Life

Alicia Marill began the session with the following remarks:

There is a new breed of missionaries in this country. A breed who carry the cross, not of gold or silver or fine wood. It is not embroidered or pinned on clothing. This breed of missionaries carry the cross enfleshed in their bodies and in their souls. This breed of missionaries embody the scars of the wounds of the Glorified Christ who appears to Thomas. A breed of secularly dressed women and men, old and young, witness to a culture of death and to a culture of life. They witness in their daily lives the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. These are the immigrants, the exiles, the refugees, those who seek asylum within the boundaries of this nation, the United States. Their presence in our midst is a challenge, an invitation, and a gift. To enter this experience may lead to the profession of faith of Thomas as we stand in awe and exclaim, My Lord, My God.

She then shared how her own painful Cuban exilic experience as well as her call to mission has led her to seek a method to read the narratives of displacement and dispossession as signs of the Paschal Mystery.

Marill critiqued the present models and programs of ministry which are of an assistant nature. These models presuppose a theology of ministry in which the exiles are seen as "lacking." They "need" orientation, money, legal status and health treatment. They will "receive" fulfillment, integration and contentment by entering the mainstream of the dominant society. Their faith-life will consequently consist of entering the established norms and programs of a Church that does not reach out to the heart of the stranger. The danger of this theology of ministry is that it imposes a model of cultural adaptation and assimilation to the neglect

of the experience and culture of the exile. It does not address the experience of suffering and experiences of God of these people. This ministerial praxis hides, silences and paralyzes the prophetic lives of an exilic people and thereby betrays an unwelcoming sinfulness.

Marill discussed the present U.S. Bishops letter "Welcoming the Stranger," concluding that this and other church documents poignantly express the missionary task of the exile, refugee or immigrant: "the foreign born constituency is a call to conversion, to community, to solidarity and to a new fervor in evangelization in the United States." John Paul II has named them "bearers of Good News." This experience in the book of Isaiah is a spiritual call to "gather all nations."

One million foreign-born people are said to enter the U.S. each year fleeing desperate life situations. As these people come into the U.S. Church communities, an encounter of cultures takes place. The U.S. Bishops claim this encounter should provoke a critical discernment of the strengths and failings of each culture in the light of the Gospel. It is in this scriptural and ecclesial framework that exilic people may fulfill the mission *ad gentes*. How is this discernment going to take place? What ministerial process is going to address the heart of the stranger, the soul, the "nephesh"? Few theologians have addressed the interior, spiritual process in the lives of people in exile.

From a contextual theological perspective it is within the stories, the lived experiences, the sacred narratives of an exilic people that the redemptive transformative spirit will be found. What constitutes the transformation is the critical consciousness and reappropriation of this exilic experience as mission and as a charism.

Marill articulated a theological method for this transformative process based on the "reconciliation arch" proposed by Robert Schreiter in his book *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. The narrative of lies and tragedy is inflicted by the nation states and international political alliances which have caused and continue to cause great violence and profound human suffering. Schreiter calls for a ministry that will provide for truth telling and the retrieval of narratives that aim to restore a destroyed selfhood. In this process a redemptive narrative may emerge and a call to mission may be embraced.

Marill delineated a method for reading the exilic narratives. She focuses on the inner dynamics of the heart where memories of victimization, torture and its implications reside, and in which heroic acts in defense of faith, family, justice, freedom and life are intertwined. The image of the arch helps untangle the web of the narratives to find there the redeeming narrative, the unveiling, awareness and appropriation of God's grace in the midst of chaos and pain in one's life.

In his response Allan Deck Figueroa, S.J. expressed agreement with Marill's thesis and appreciated the challenges voiced in the narratives of peoples who have been silenced. First, Deck-Figueroa noted the different voice of Marill, whose work "shatters" the way we do theology; passion and compassion marked

the presentation. Second, Deck-Figueroa considered the insight from the exile experience that life does indeed arise from death, even the death of the loss of a home. Third, Deck-Figueroa was struck by the correlation of Marill's work with Ignatian spirituality: the review of how God works in our lives leads us to mission is the experience of the exiles, who, rooted in faith, are broken by (social) sin, find love and life in another place, and commit to a ministry of compassion and justice to others.

During a lively question and answer period every member of the audience commented and pointed toward a broader application of such a theology to the great numbers of peoples on the move in the world today. Finally, discussion continued beyond the scheduled time on the subjects of sin, atonement, sacrifice and redemption.

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ECUMENISM AND THE MISSIO AD GENTES

Topic: Changing Prospects and Hopes for Ecumenism
 Convener: Bradford Hinze, Marquette University
 Presenters: Michael Fahey, Marquette University
 Bernd Jochen Hilberath, University of Tübingen
 Margaret O'Gara, University of St. Michael's College
 Jeffrey Gros, NCCB Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Michael Fahey, S.J. began the session by recalling highlights from the modern history of ecumenism. Symbolic acts of individual church leaders from various churches and the contributions of numerous scholars in formal dialogues and in the preparation of common statements were acknowledged. He went on to claim that many of the hopes instilled by these various ecumenical efforts have not been realized. Five reasons were explored. (1) Ecumenical study documents and declarations have not been disseminated and translated into common language and have not been cited in official documents and in local churches. (2) A centralist style of Church governance has weakened the ecumenical initiatives of international and regional synods of bishops and national conferences. (3) Estrangement between the hierarchy and theologians has contributed to ecumenical frustrations. (4) Eucharistic hospitality and intercommunion has been hampered. (5) The Orthodox churches in Russia and the Ukraine have been reluctant in pursuing ecumenical progress. The future of ecumenism is by no means clear, nor necessarily bright, but the next five years will be important.

Bernd Jochen Hilberath reflected on Vatican II and its aftermath. Initial enthusiasm about Church renewal and ecumenism has been followed by a period of disappointment. This partially reflects the process of reception that requires