

religious pluralism in civil society articulated in *Dignitatis Humanae*. Second, the Decree on Ecumenism requires the fuller development of an ecclesiology of *Koinonia* begun in *Lumen Gentium* and more clearly focused and utilized since the 1985 Synod of Bishops. Third, the doctrine of reception, which was not explored by the Council, has proven to be an important catalyst for implementing its teachings and has promoted a richer hermeneutics of classical and ecumenical documents. Fourth, significant advances in relations between Catholic and Evangelical churches were highlighted. Although no formal processes of dialogue between Catholics and Evangelicals are currently underway, there have been numerous personal and collective efforts to promote greater mutual understanding, to identify areas of common belief, and in some instances to collaborate on social issues. These four areas offer abundant evidence of the opportunities and challenges facing the ecumenical work of the churches.

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#### MISSIO AD GENTES IN EL SALVADOR

Topic: The Witness and Legacy of Four American Churchwomen  
 Convener: Kevin F. Burke, Weston School of Theology  
 Presenters: Rosemarie E. Gorman, Fairfield University  
 Eileen Fagan, Fairfield University  
 Margaret Pfeil, St. Joseph's University

On December 2, 1980, four North American missionary women, Ita Ford, Maura Clark, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan, were brutally killed in El Salvador. For the third year in succession, the CTSA joined in solidarity with the church in El Salvador by honoring and reflecting theologically on a group of Salvadoran martyrs. In 1999, the Society held a special session focusing on the theology of Ignacio Ellacuría and, at the same time, honoring the memory of the six Jesuits and two women murdered at the University of Central America in 1989. In 2000, the Society convened a select group in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero. This year's session commemorates the 20th anniversary of the martyrdom of the U.S. Churchwomen by examining their commitment-unto-death as a "classic event" (David Tracy) which lends concreteness the Church's *Missio ad Gentes*.

Rosemarie Gorman ("Speaking Credibly about Resurrection: A Praxis of Nonviolence") opened this session quoting Maura Clarke: "If we desert people when they are suffering the cross, how can we ever speak credibly to them about the resurrection?" In her presentation, Gorman noted that the women stayed in El Salvador even though this exposed them to the dangerous violence engulfing that country. She linked their decision to stay to an option for nonviolent

discipleship (Thomas Merton). The missionaries were neither pacifists nor advocates of a rule-based just war position. Rather, they witnessed to the Reign of God whose praxis of reconciliation could best be grasped through narratives that illuminated a virtue ethic. As missionaries, they lived the tension between the preference for nonviolence and their recognition of the victim's limited choices. As Christian martyrs, they incarnated what it means to be a friend of God in the face of structural and social sin.

Eileen Fagan ("Allowing the Waters of Hope and Liberation to Flow: A Contemporary Interpretation of Martyrdom") explored the question: Does the witness of these four women invite the contemporary church to reinterpret martyrdom? In part I, she focused on the expansion of the concept of martyrdom that began with Thomas Aquinas and continued with Karl Rahner, Vatican II, Pope John Paul II, and liberation theology. In part II, she argued that the women fulfill the criteria for Christian martyrdom: (1) love of God and neighbor, (2) courageous willingness to face death, (3) practice of faith and justice, and (4) endurance of hatred of the faith. In part III, she expanded the notion of martyrdom to include not only those who die in defense of doctrine, but those who defend God's poor as well. She concluded that these women were indeed true martyrs who redefine the meaning of martyrdom in terms of solidarity, hope, justice, and liberation.

Margaret Pfeil ("Martyrdom as Reverse Mission: The Witness of the Four Churchwomen in the U.S. Church Today") began with the conviction that evangelization is the very heart of mission (*Ad Gentes*). These four missionaries were sent on mission "ex gentes," out of particular ecclesial communities in the U.S. Yet their lives and deaths hold lasting relevance for their home church, thus generating a reverse mission. They "crossed the threshold" and encountered the true meaning of Christian discipleship in their evangelization by and accompaniment of the poor. Now they evangelize us, inviting us to cross that same threshold. Specifically, their witness can be viewed as an existential break in the mimetic cycle of violence (René Girard). It invites the U.S. church to take up the evangelizing praxis of solidarity by naming and resisting mimetic structures of violence wherever they may be found, whether in the institutional life of the church itself or in society at large.

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