

cern for suffering. The Dominican response is formed via the integral relation of study, preaching, and truth. McManus observed that in Schillebeeckx's work truth—revealed in experiences of negative contrast—becomes liberative praxis. Finally, through the lens of Schillebeeckx's engagement with the critical communities of Holland in the sixties, McManus explored the implications of the critical communities emerging in North America for the theological task amidst today's crisis.

The audience posed evocative questions, and a lively discussion followed.

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ANALYZING WHITE PRIVILEGE

Topic: Theological Vocation and the Dismantling of White Privilege
 Convener: Laurie Cassidy, Loyola University of Chicago
 Moderator: Alex Mikulich, St. Joseph's College
 Presenters: Laurie Cassidy, Loyola University of Chicago
 Margaret Pfeil, Notre Dame University

In response to the convention's theme, this session was designed to provide an opportunity for critical reflection upon the tasks of analyzing and dismantling white privilege as constitutive activities of the vocation of white Roman Catholic theologian. This session intended to build on Meg Guider's convening last year of the session entitled "Coming to Terms with White Privilege and Racism: An Imperative for White Theologians."

Moderator Alex Mikulich introduced the session by setting it in context. He observed that the session intended to name the privileges of whiteness, which are often invisible to white people. For white people this activity of naming involves seeing the consequences of these privileges on the lives of people of color. Mikulich listed the names of young black men fatally shot by the police in the city of Cincinnati. He reminded the session's participants that the struggle for racial justice in Cincinnati was the immediate human context to understand the imperative of coming to terms with white privilege and the vocation of white Roman Catholic theologian.

Laurie Cassidy's paper, "'Becoming Black with God': Toward an Understanding of the Vocation of the White Roman Catholic Theologian in the United States," responded to M. Shawn Copeland's recent essay (*Spiritus* 2002), which called for a redefining of the vocation of the theologian in reference to racism. According to Copeland, in light of the lethal racism of American society a primary theological task must be understanding the reach and extent of white

privilege. Cassidy observed that this task poses a dilemma for white theologians. Utilizing the racial contract theory of Charles Mills, Cassidy demonstrated the epistemological blindness inherent in whiteness that disables white theologians in taking up the theological task of critically assessing and dismantling white privilege. Cassidy explored James Cone's notion of "Becoming Black with God" as a resource for developing a spirituality that nurtures the capacity of white theologians in overcoming the blindness of privilege and confronting racism. Cassidy argued that James Cone's metaphor "God is Black" holds a radically disclosive power. Cone's juxtaposition of God with Black is a theological lens allowing white theologians to see whiteness in stark contrast with the God of Jesus. The attendant ethical demand to "become Black with God" signifies a profound spiritual journey in which epistemological blindness is healed through God's drawing the white theologian into solidarity with the oppressed.

In her presentation "The Option for the Poor and Dismantling White Privilege as Part of the Theological Vocation," Margaret Pfeil correlated Ruth Franenberg's description of whiteness with historical examples of white privilege taken from both the Catholic Church and society in the United States. In the process, she argues that the option for the poor, in both its epistemological and activist dimensions provides a useful framework for naming and dismantling structures of white privilege as a constitutive part of Christian discipleship. More than vague compassion or superficial empathy, this task requires intellectual, moral, and spiritual conversion. Opting for the poor means that those enjoying the dubious advantages of white privilege in the Church and in society are called to put themselves in jeopardy, risking solidarity with those rendered most vulnerable to the systemic violence of white supremacist structures.

The discussion ranged from exploring practical pedagogical issues involved in raising awareness of white privilege among white faculty and students, to questioning the possibility of rewriting white racial identity. In addition, concerns were voiced about developing adequate forms of analysis that address the complexity of race in the United States, as Joanne Rodriguez commented analysis of white privilege must not remain about "black and white." Kevin Burke observed that one of the high costs of white privilege is being cut off from ethnic identity and therefore struggling to identify and maintain kinship bonds. Barbara Andolsen raised the issue of the ambiguity of being white. She commented that understanding white racial identity cannot be limited to addressing privilege but must also involve claiming the cultural traditions of kinfolk. Brian Massingale suggested the study of white "race traitors" as a resource for rewriting "whiteness." The session ended with a business meeting in which there was unanimous agreement to propose a developing group that would address analysis of white privilege as an imperative for white theologians.

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