

CONSULTATION ON HISPANIC LATINO/A THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Triune God as a Theological Response to the Church
Confronting and Resolving Community Fragmentation and
Violence
- Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
- Moderator: Ramón Luzárraga,
- Presenters: Carmen Nanko Fernandez, Catholic Theological Union
Bryan Massingale, Marquette University
Nichole Flores, St. Anselm College

The Consultation on Hispanic Latino/a Theology attracted a final total of forty-one attendees this year. We continued our alliance with the Consultation on Black Catholic Theology group, coordinating our programming to contribute to the conference topic of “Identity and Difference, Unity and Fragmentation.”

Nichole Flores began the session. Her paper was on the sexual abuse of migrant women and how trinitarian theology gives form to justice in relation to them. Criticizing what she described as the failure of the Church and the political community to respond to this issue, and blaming the cause of this failure on deeply entrenched tendencies to accept surrogate suffering in a political economy that benefits the privileged, Flores proposed a both/and trinitarian approach, or one that encompasses both the personal and social trajectories of trinitarian thought. She argued that such a strategy is necessary to respond to the sexual abuse of migrant women in this country by addressing both personal ethical behaviors and systems that rely on surrogate suffering that perpetuates their exploitation.

Bryan Massingale argued that, to critique and deconstruct systems of racial oppression, Catholic sexual ethics must engage in the critique and deconstruction of sexual objectification, marginalization, and violence, which is always integral to racism. Racial conflicts, hatreds, and antagonisms have been enacted and are still expressed, in no small measure, through sexual relationships and behaviors. Massingale, after defining the terms “racialized sexuality” and “sexual racism,” examined two instances of sexual racism as a form of violence, namely interracial pornography and sexualized police misconduct. He concluded by noting the silence of Catholic sexual ethics in addressing sexual racism, and how a trinitarian-inspired healthy eroticism, modeled by the mutual love of the Triune God (the “erotic Trinity”) might inform a more adequate ethical reflection and praxis in addressing this problem.

Carmen Nanko Fernandez wound up the presentations with one on the institutional racism of baseball. Using analytic strategies drawn from Latin@ theological and culture studies, postcolonial criticism, and critical race theory, she focused on the memorialization of both Jackie Robinson and Roberto Clemente—especially the former. That memorialization focused on both men’s heroism desegregating baseball while ignoring their suffering and the personal toll it took on them. In other words, they are made heroes and martyrs on the terms of white privilege, instead of their whole story being told as an authentically transformative lesson against racism.

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All three papers attracted strong attendance, with a free-ranging discussion that did not achieve a focus but engaged the papers presented. Discussion began with a closer examination of the details of Jackie Robinson's life, and what happened to that first generation of African-American and Hispanic players who desegregated major league baseball. It continued with discussion on whether the word "erotic" can be rescued from the very industry which has captured that word to describe the activity Bryan Massingale criticized. Most agreed an exposition of the multiple meanings of "erotic" can facilitate such a rescue, contributing to Massingale's project.

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