

CHRIST—TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Colleen Carpenter, St. Catherine University
Moderator: Susie Babka, University of San Diego
Presenter: Karen B. Enriquez, Xavier University
Presenter: Jonathan Tan, Case Western Reserve University

The Christ Topic Session explored the mystery of Jesus Christ and the *sensus fidelium* through attention to the devotional artwork of two particular communities: the Philippines after 2013's devastating Typhoon Haiyan, and China in the pre-Communist early twentieth century. Attention to artwork in a variety of forms—including painting and sculpture, professional and amateur, spontaneous and catechetical—enabled the session to explore popular understandings of Jesus in a deep and rich way.

In her beautiful and moving presentation, “Rising from the Ruins: A Christology of Resilience and Hope,” Karen Enriquez examined the ways popular Filipino Christology has responded to Typhoon Haiyan. Beginning with an iconic image from the aftermath of the storm, an award-winning photograph of Filipino women marching in procession and carrying two popular statues of Christ (the Black Nazarene and the *Santo Niño*/Christ Child), Enriquez sought to understand the faith that gave these women such resilience and hope. By looking at interviews and statements from survivors as well as Church officials, and interpreting those in the context of Philippine culture and religiosity, Enriquez constructed a fascinating picture of the ways in which the response to Typhoon Haiyan revealed the survivor's belief in the ongoing incarnation of Christ, who is “one of them” even in the midst of terrible suffering. Perhaps the most surprising image of this connection between Christ and suffering Filipino people was the statue of “Jesus the scavenger,” which linked Jesus to those who scavenged in landfills by portraying Christ with a scavenging hook instead of the staff of the Good Shepherd, and adding a garbage sack in his other hand. This startling image invited those who survived by scavenging to see Jesus as truly “one of them,” truly human in a form appropriate to their context. Enriquez argued that this and other images and devotions expressed “a Christology of *damay*,” with *damay* being defined as helping one another because we sense the suffering of the other. It is a Christology of accompaniment and solidarity.

In his presentation, “Who Do You Say I Am? Uncovering Chinese *Sensus Fidelium* in Images of Jesus in Pre-Communist Chinese Catholic Devotional Art,” Jonathan Tan discussed the implications of popular devotional art as a tool of catechesis in early twentieth century China that enabled many new Chinese Catholic converts to grasp and express the *sensus* of their newly-embraced Catholic faith. Reviewing representative examples of paintings by Lu Hongnian, Hua Xiaoxian, Bai Huiqun, and Gao Tihan, Tan highlighted the creative synthesis of Confucian metaphysics with the artists' sense of the ethical and soteriological significance of Jesus Christ in their artistic oeuvre. He explained that the underlying Confucian sensibilities of these artists meant that they framed their artwork within the primordial vision of cosmic union and balance between heaven, earth, and humanity, and emphasized Confucian values relating to education, filiality, and proper manner of relating. He also examined the implications of these Confucian elements that led to many images of Jesus being filial to his parents, engaging in the act of studying or

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learning, interacting with others in his ministry, and the lack of images of Jesus suffering and dying on the cross. He pointed out that the traditional Confucian association of suffering and death with failure meant that these artists appeared to downplay the elements of suffering and dying in the Gospel in favor of its relational, ethical, and eschatological aspects in their paintings.

The two papers intersected in fascinating ways, especially in terms of the representation of suffering, and the discussion that followed the presentations was lively and substantial.

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