

GENDER JUSTICE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY (INSeCT)—INVITED  
SESSION

Topic: Gender Justice in Church and Society  
Convener: Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Boston College  
Moderator: Catherine Clifford, University of St. Paul  
Presenters: James McEvoy, Australian Catholic University  
Christina Astorga, University of Portland  
Carlos Mendoza-Álvarez, O.P., Universidad Iberoamericana

This invited session is CTSA's contribution to the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT)'s global research project entitled "A question of gender justice: the role of women in decision-making in different areas of church and society." This session advanced a conversation among the CTSA, the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA), and the Unión de Instituciones Teológicas Católicas en México, A.C.

In his paper, "'Recognition' and the Ministry of Women," James McEvoy situates the question of gender justice in contemporary history, arguing "that the language and practice of recognition can aid the challenge of overcoming patriarchy, and that the church today must see the recognition of women's ministry as a fundamental calling." McEvoy states that Charles Taylor's conception of recognition is productive through its attention to social and political life. A key problem here concerns the inherent complexity of the politics of equal recognition in two distinct senses: "a politics of universalism" with its emphasis on the "equal dignity of all citizens," and "a politics of difference" with its focus on, initially, the uniqueness of women's identity, and more recently, "the range of women's identities" in all their differences. For McEvoy, it is "the biblical vision of women and men being one in Christ Jesus" that requires the development of "ecclesial structures [that] enable women to participate fully in the life and leadership of the ecclesial community," and second, the transformation of those structures "so that women's culturally different ways of speaking and acting can be recognized and accommodated in the dialogue about the ecclesial community's future."

The premise of Christina Astorga's paper is found in its title, "Gender Inequity is at the Root of Gender Violence." She argues that this connection, once affirmed, foregrounds "the theology of prophetic lament and the ethics of gender resistance." She begins by elucidating three forms of gender violence against women as they are manifest in a few Asian countries and in Africa. She considers violence against women who suffer HIV/AIDS, abuse as domestic workers, and torture/rape in the practice of dowry. These examples set the stage for her subsequent discussion of how the Western construct of male-female dualism deems women subordinate and destined to be in a self-sacrificial role. Indeed, patriarchal culture strongly encourages women and girls to internalize their oppression as natural and normative, so much so "that even thinking about what it means to strive for freedom brings terror and trepidation to [women's] psyches." This experience of oppression makes violence against women appear less horrific and more acceptable, in some cases even "honorable." Astorga argues that our theo-ethical response must be one of lament to God which fuels work toward a transformed, more just world.

*Selected Session: Gender Justice*

In his presentation, “A Critical Approach to Gender Identities in the “Muxe” Case,” Carlos Mendoza-Álvarez investigates the impact of globalized neo-liberal capitalism which, is “sustained by the model of an *extractionist* State that subordinates the life we share in common (*res publica*) to the dominant economic, political, and patriarchal interests of 1% of the world population,” on sexually and culturally diverse populations (e.g., the *Muxes* of Oaxaca, Mexico). In short, he argues that “in times of globalization of an exclusion-based model of civilization—a model founded on a complex misogynous, homophobic and necrophilic system—the theology of gender diversity should be open to listening to the experiences, resistances, and alternative practices of sexually diverse [communities that exemplify] an inclusive model of intersubjective relationships.” The *Muxes* identify as a third gender human group linked to the Zapotec indigenous culture, and committed to a highly ethical way of life. They may offer the world a robust example of the capacity to imagine a different social order, one that conceives and manifests sexual diversity beyond the male-female binary. Mendoza-Álvarez sees in the *Muxes* an example of practices of resilience in the face of violence and necropower, as well as “glimmers of redemption” that break open “avenues of hope to all.”

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