

MORAL THEOLOGY (II)—TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
Moderator: Christina Astorga, University of Portland
Presenter: Alessandro Rovati, Belmont Abbey College
Gigesh Thomas, KU Leuven
James F. Keenan, S.J., Boston College

The second session attracted twenty-eight persons. Alessandro Rovati, in “Mercy is Person: Pope Francis and the Christological Turn in Moral Theology,” argued that Francis’ emphasizes that Christian morality is born out of an encounter with Jesus. In light of that turn, theologians are invited to discover again that Christian morality surges from the discovery that the Gospel responds to the deepest human need satisfied through friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters. Christian morality should not be described primarily as following rules, but following Jesus Christ, who puts a face on the mercy of God.

Gigesh Thomas presented a paper entitled “Prophetic Intervention for Prevention of Farmer Suicide in India: A Dialogue with Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching,” on how poverty-induced shame has driven over a quarter of a million farmers in India to commit suicide because of an imminent or feared pauperization, an inability to provide for their families, and the perception of suicide as the only option in a shame-based culture. He articulated how Catholic understandings of mercy could combat this fatalism within Indian culture. And, to prevent this involvement as being viewed as naïve condescension and patronization, he employed Paul Ricœur’s concept of solicitous relationship.

A third paper, “University Ethics: The Problem, Proposals for Best Practices, and a Call for the Promotion of Justice across the Contemporary University,” by James F. Keenan, S.J., wound up the session with his argument for a university-wide ethic shared among faculty, employees, administrators, and trustees. Using the issues of race, gender and class, the employment of adjunct faculty, international students, and university athletics as portals into the problem, Keenan spoke on how the professional identity of the faculty and the “landscape” of the university’s many departments fortify a non-relational university in which transparency and accountability are avoided and thwarted. He concluded with some best practices to consider, to be integrated across the university.

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