
**The Catholic Theological Society
of America**

**PROCEEDINGS
of the Seventy-ninth Annual Convention**

Portland, Oregon
June 12–15, 2025

B. Kevin Brown, Editor
Gonzaga University
Spokane, Washington

Copyright © 2025
Catholic Theological Society of America

ISSN 0069-1267



PROCEEDINGS OF THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Volume 79 (2025)

Front Matter

2024-2025 CTSA Officers, Board Members, and Staffix

CTSA 2025 Convention Theme – One Baptism: Evolving Visions of
Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond, *Susan Abraham*..... x–xii

Advertisement

Library of Catholic Thought xiii

Plenary Sessions

Echoes of Nicaea: Ministry of the Baptized
in the Twenty-First Century, *Nicholas Denysenko*..... 1–8

A Response of Nicholas Denysenko’s “Echoes of Nicaea: Ministry
of the Baptized in the Twenty-First Century,” *Steven Battin* 9–13

That They May Be One: The Baptismal Call
for Radical Transformation, *Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar* 14–24

A Response to Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar’s “That They May Be One:
The Baptismal Call for Radical Transformation,” *Ish Ruiz*..... 25–28

The Baptismal and Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian: A Plenary
Conversation, Facilitated and Introduced by *Jacob Karl Rinderknecht*,
with responses from *Cecilia González-Andrieu* and *Elyse Raby* 29–36

Presidential Address

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Eruption of Evil,
and a Reckoning for Theology, *Nancy Pineda Madrid* 37–55

Invited Sessions

Catholicity with the Constructs of Colonialism and Place: Unity and Diversity in Negotiations of Religio-Cultural Identity across the Indian Subcontinent, <i>Deepan Rajaratnam</i>	56–57
Christian Theologians on Storied Lands, <i>Reid B. Locklin</i>	58–59
Deepening Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist Praxis for the Care of the Planet and People, <i>Rosemary P. Carbine</i>	60–61
Hope, Health, and the Nature of Healing, <i>Megan Heeder</i>	62–63
Reimagining Ecclesial Unity, <i>SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai</i>	64–65

Selected Sessions

American Exceptionalism: A Theological Evaluation of a Troublesome Notion, <i>Thomas Massaro, S.J., and Timothy Perron, S.J.</i>	66–67
The Disruptive Agency of Baptism: Reclaiming the Christian Call to Conversion, Dialogue, and Co-Responsibility, <i>Ryan McAleer</i>	68–69
The Least of These: People Suffering from Mental Illness, Law Enforcement, and Innovative Responses, <i>M. Cathleen Kaveny</i>	70–171
One Baptism – One Church? Baptism, Belonging, and the Contemporary Ecumenical Movement, <i>Kimberly Hope Belcher</i>	72–73
Reconfigured Finitude and Christian Belonging in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque, <i>Rohan Abraham</i>	74–75
Walking Together as a Synodal Church: Ministerial and Sacramental Prospects for Communion, Participation, and Mission, <i>Ty Paul Monroe</i>	76–77

Topic Sessions

Anthropology, <i>Tiffany Hartnell-Howden</i>	78–79
Bioethics/Healthcare, <i>Emma McDonald Kennedy</i>	80–81
Catholic Social Thought, <i>Peter Fay</i>	82–83
Catholicity and Mission, <i>Kevin Considine</i>	84–85

Christ, <i>Eugene R. Schlesinger</i>	86–87
Church/Ecumenism, <i>Elyse Raby</i>	88–89
Comparative Theology, <i>Laurel Marshall Potter</i>	90–91
Creation/Eschatology, <i>Daniel P. Scheid</i>	92–93
Fundamental Theology/Method, <i>T. Derrick Witherington</i>	94–95
God/Trinity, <i>Nancy Dallavalle</i>	96–97
Historical Theology, <i>Grant Kaplan</i>	98–99
Liturgy/Sacraments, <i>Benjamin Durheim</i>	100–101
Moral Theology (I), <i>David Kwon</i>	102–103
Moral Theology (II), <i>Leocadie Lushombo, i.t.</i>	104–105
Practical Theology, <i>Cynthia L. Cameron</i>	106–107
Spirituality, <i>C. Vanessa White</i>	108–109
Theology and Science, <i>Megan Loumagne Ulishney</i>	110–111

Consultations

Asian and Asian American Theology, <i>Min-Ah Cho</i>	112–113
Hans Urs Von Balthasar, <i>Charles A. Gillespie</i>	114–115
Black Catholic Theology, <i>Nicole S. Symmonds</i>	116–117
Christianity and Judaism, <i>Carol Ann Martinelli</i>	118–119
Latinx Theology, <i>Mauricio Najarro</i>	120–121
Lonergan, <i>Cecille Medina-Maldonado</i>	122–123
Karl Rahner Society, <i>Grace Agolia</i>	124–125
Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church, <i>Cristina L.H. Traina</i>	126–127
Thomas Aquinas, <i>Andrew Hofer, O.P.</i>	128–129

Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology, *Melicia Antonio* 130–131

Interest Groups

Disability Theology, *Mary Jo Iozzio and Miguel Romero*..... 132–133

Public Theology, *Rosemary P. Carbine*..... 134–135

Theologies of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence, *Leo Guardado and Eli McCarthy* 137–139

The Enduring Gift and Theological Challenge of Johann Baptist Metz, *J. Matthew Ashley* 140–141

Gun Cultures and Gun Violence, *Michael R. Grigoni* 142–143

Synodality, *Martin Madar* 144–145

Embodiment, Trauma, and Illness, *Jessica Coblenz*..... 146–147

Convention Meeting

Committee for Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups (CUERG) Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award, *Leo Guardado*..... 148–149

Pre-Convention Meeting

Textual Journeys: Comparative Theology Reading Group, *Shinjae Lee and Daniel P. Scheid* 150–151

Mid-Year Gatherings

Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Virtual Events, *Mary Kate Holman* 152–153

Reports

Secretary’s Report, *Hosffman Ospino*..... 155–207

Treasurer’s Report, *Patrick Flanagan, C.M.* 208–215

Appendices

Appendix I: President’s Letter on the
 Passing of Pope Francis, *Nancy Pineda-Madrid*216–217

Appendix II: President’s Statement on the
 Election of Pope Leo XIV, *Nancy Pineda-Madrid*218–219

Appendix III: Homily for the Convention Eucharist –
 The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: Humanity’s
 Dance with the Holy Trinity, *Nancy Pineda-Madrid*220–222

Appendix IV: John Courtney Murray Award
 Citation, *Nancy Pineda-Madrid*223–225

Appendix V: Tributes at the Memorial Service for Recently
 Deceased Members, *Layla A. Karst and Catherine E. Clifford*226–231

Appendix VI: Addendum to the CTSA Registry:
 New Active Members, *Hosffman Ospino*232–235

Appendix VII: Addendum to the CTSA Registry:
 New Associate Members, *Hosffman Ospino*236–238

THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

2024-2025

Officers of the Society

President	NANCY PINEDA-MADRID
President-Elect.....	SUSAN ABRAHAM
Vice President.....	CATHERINE E. CLIFFORD
Secretary	HOSFFMAN OSPINO
Treasurer.....	PATRICK FLANAGAN, C.M.
Past President.....	KRISTIN E. HEYER

Board Members

SIMONMARY ASESE AIHIOKHAI	ELSIE MIRANDA
DANIEL P. HORAN	LAURIE JOHNSTON

Executive Director

MARY JANE PONYIK

Editor of the *Proceedings*

B. KEVIN BROWN

* * * * *

<i>Office of the Executive Director</i>	John Carroll University University Heights, OH 44118
<i>Office of the Secretary</i>	Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry Boston, MA 02135
<i>Office of the Treasurer</i>	St. John's University Jamaica, NY 11439
<i>Proceedings Editorial Office</i>	Gonzaga University Spokane, WA 99258
<i>Proceedings Business Office</i>	John Carroll University University Heights, OH 44118

CTSA 2025 CONVENTION THEME

~

ONE BAPTISM: EVOLVING VISIONS OF CATHOLICITY FROM NICAEA TO VATICAN II AND BEYOND

“I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” (Nicene Creed)

While an ordinary jubilee year, 2025 is yet extraordinary, marking both the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the 60th anniversary of Vatican II. Following the powerful Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis has declared that the motto for Jubilee Year 2025 is “Pilgrims of Hope,” enjoining the baptized faithful, from east and west—and from diverse cultural and social global locations—to become pilgrims of hope.

The Nicene Creed declares that the sacrament of baptism is unambiguous in linking new life in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to the forgiveness of sins. Further, Vatican II understood baptism as the foundation and sign of ecumenical unity (in a lovely coincidence, Easter for both western and eastern Christians falls on the same day, on April 20, 2025). The authentic catholicity initiated for each of us in baptism thus proclaims that the very breath of God is lavished on each of us for a purpose beyond personal salvation, i.e. to become sacraments of global reconciliation and artisans of hope and peace for a world desperately in need of both.

In his 2025 Jubilee letter Pope Francis exhorts us to “fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.”¹ This only comes about by listening to the voices of the poor and all those who struggle to live lives of dignity. It also happens as we meet the profound challenge of forgiving the perpetrators of abuse, racism, sexism, and many other forms of wounding, by enacting the very forgiveness extended to all in baptism. How may a synodal church, suffused with the grace and power of the Holy Spirit become the “sign and sacrament of the union with God and the unity of the whole human race” as *Lumen Gentium* declares (LG 1)? How will the Holy Spirit animate the conversations and reflections of CTSA as we address the nature of Catholicity accorded by one baptism?

In the spirit of the global church’s jubilee year, the seventy-ninth annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America will gather in Portland, Oregon from June 12 to June 14, 2025. Nancy Pineda-Madrid will deliver the presidential plenary. The other plenary speakers will be Nicholas Denysenko, with a response offered by Steven Battin, and Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar, of the Oregon

¹ Francis, “Letter to the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization for the Jubilee 2025” (February 11, 2022), <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/02/11/220211c.html>.

Province of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of American, with a response offered by Ish Ruiz. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht will facilitate a plenary synodal conversation.

Our convening will take seriously the legacy of Nicaea's proclamation of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and will be animated by Pope Francis' jubilee letter. More specifically, this conjunction of Nicaean anniversaries and a year of jubilee invites consideration from the diverse perspectives offered by the many theological subdisciplines of the CTSA. What are the theological, practical, and spiritual implications of One Baptism that might nurture an authentic global catholicity, for now and the future, in the face of global woundedness.

Additionally, we may address the following questions:

- What does it mean for the baptized to become “pilgrims of hope,” refracted through the lens of the 2024 theme of *Social Salvation*?
- How may a revitalized theology of “One Baptism” animate new global discussions of pneumatology, Christology, theologies of ministry, peace studies, ecclesiology, and care for all creation?
- Given the rapid growth of technology (especially AI), and the challenges and/or opportunities it poses to theological notions of personhood and relationality, how may a renewed focus on baptism re-pristiniate theological anthropology?
- Can a renewed scholarly focus on the sacrament of baptism or initiation bring into greater focus Vatican II's emphasis on the church in the world?
- If the sacrament of baptism is a call to communal and corporate responsibility for the wellbeing of the newly baptized, is there an eschatological and future oriented meaning to the sacramental action of baptizing?
- How may the theological and spiritual idea of “One Baptism” create ecumenical common ground and a new understanding of catholicity in our struggle for Christian unity?
- How do we engage Eastern Rite Churches respectfully in Latin Rite majority contexts?
- How may a theology of “One Baptism” bring to fruition Pope Francis' vision of the church as a “merciful community” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 47)?
- Does the idea of “One Baptism” unify or polarize in the context of religious, theological, and cultural pluralism?
- What does it mean to “listen to all,” especially the wounded, such as victims of sexual and gender abuse, *and* its perpetrators, in a church that confesses one baptism?
- How may the theological framework of “One Baptism” inspire theological and pastoral strategies for centering the poor, migrants, refugees, and victims of war in our academy's work?
- What does the profession of one baptism contribute to fostering a commitment to the common good?
- How may recalibrating our understanding of the common baptism for the “forgiveness of sin” compel the combating of racism and xenophobia especially in church and secular institutions?

- Since the Nicene declaration does not recognize ordination or hierarchical orders, how does the pivotal ecclesial creed and confession of one baptism encourage the flowering of lay vocations for the new Catholicity (e.g., educators, theologians, preachers, formators, catechists, and lay leaders among others)?
- To what extent is the Nicene Creed’s only sacramental affirmation—of baptism—serve as an antidote to authoritarianism and clericalism with their chauvinist overtones so prevalent in the global institutional church? Conversely, how does “One Baptism” challenge secular culture’s propensity to a “cancel culture?”

SUSAN ABRAHAM
CTSA President-Elect
Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, California

Library of Catholic Thought

EXPLORE TWO MILLENNIA OF GLOBAL CATHOLIC THOUGHT

Part of Theology and Religion Online, the Library of Catholic Thought presents essential resources for studying the development of Catholic thought and theology. Bringing together monographs, primary texts, multimedia, and at its heart, the new fully revised third edition of the Jerome Biblical Commentary, it is the first digital resource to deliver cross-searchable access to nearly two millennia of global Catholic thought, tradition and culture.

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

- ▶ **The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century: Third Fully Revised Edition** – A new edition of this major reference work, digitally exclusive to Library of Catholic Thought.
- ▶ **A global approach** to Catholic thought, culture and history, with international coverage supplemented by licensing and newly commissioned articles.
- ▶ **Seminal reference works and primary texts** brought to the cross-searchable digital environment with updated prefaces, user guides, and specially commissioned content.
- ▶ **An eBook collection** featuring titles on Catholic theology, key thinkers, and socio-cultural concern.
- ▶ **500 images** featuring Catholic artwork, manuscripts, and other artifacts to help contextualize the global influence of Catholic thought across written and artistic cultures throughout the centuries.

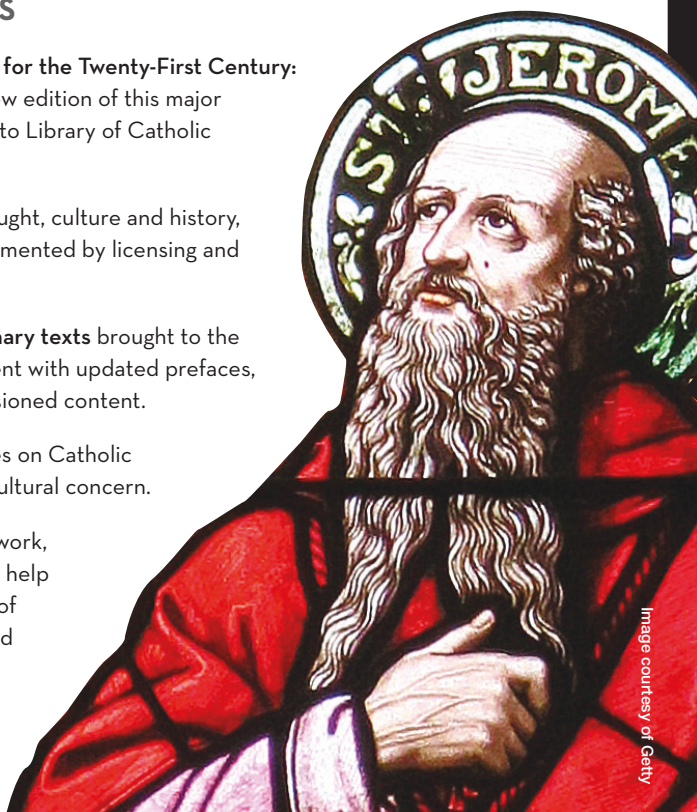


Image courtesy of Getty

Library of Catholic Thought is available for free institutional trials.

Please contact OnlineSalesUS@bloomsbury.com for more information on how to subscribe.

Discover more theology resources on www.theologyandreligion.com

ECHOES OF NICAEA: MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

NICHOLAS DENYSENKO
Valparaiso University
Valparaiso, Indiana

The Council of Nicaea convened to resolve an urgent crisis: defining Jesus Christ as truly God and truly human, the only-begotten Son of God. The fathers gathered at the council composed the first part of a Creed, which eventually became the global church's statement of faith. Fifty-six years later, the council of Constantinople finished the Creed, completing a rather long and theologically dense statement that confessed faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and also in the church, and in one baptism for the remission of sins.

Lost in the forest of theological controversies in the Nicene era are the pastoral issues pastors confronted. A pastor had to be a good teacher, able to precisely articulate that Jesus Christ is the Father's only-begotten Son, true God of true God, and to communicate this truth to ordinary people.

This presentation is designed to connect the echoes of the Nicene era with contemporary practices for the church's ministry to its people and the world. The primary area of focus is formation: how does the liturgical theology of baptism in the Nicene era, much of which has been retained or revived in the twenty-first century, address contemporary realities? A ministry offered by the church on behalf of all and for all, grounded in renewed eschatology, accounting for the state of the people's mental and emotional health, and the ministry of the traumatized for the traumatized are the topics I will develop today.

THE BAPTISMAL RITE AND COVENANT

What did Christian life look like for the newly-baptized?

One conceptual element stands out in the rites of baptism as we know them: the newly-baptized were to annul all associations with the devil and enter into a new covenant with God through Jesus Christ.¹ We are familiar with the history of these ritual components and their interpretation in the fourth-century mystagogues. In the mystagogical catechesis usually ascribed to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, consecrated bishop of Jerusalem in 350, he explains that the outstretched arm combined with the

¹ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, trans. and ed. Maxwell Johnson, Popular Patristics Series 57 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 103, 123.

renunciation of Satan severed the covenant with the evil one.² The turning to the east and confession of faith (“I believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit and in one baptism of repentance”) previews the content of the neophyte’s new life—one of worshipping and following the one true God.³

What exactly did the neophytes renounce? Satan—his works, pomp, his worship, and the “ancient league with Hades.”⁴ Nestled in between these explanations of renunciations is Cyril’s instruction on how the neophytes were to conduct themselves in everyday life. Renunciation of Satan’s pomp includes “mania for the theater and for the horse races,” hunting, and other vain things. The mania of the theater includes actors who perform “wanton and shameless acts” and men appearing as women in “frenzied dancing.” The horse races are described as spectacles that destroy souls. Cyril folds these specific instructions in between the renunciations and an extended admonishment to resist the temptation to resume one’s previous way of life. Returning to recreational activities and forms of entertainment subjects the neophyte to re-enslavement to the devil, whose rule will become even more embittered. Cyril uses fear as a motivator to remain steadfast in their new way of life: insincere renunciations would bring one a fate similar to Lot’s wife, whose desire to return to Gomorrah turned her into a pillar of salt.⁵

RITUAL RENUNCIATIONS AND BEHAVIOR

The rites themselves suggest that the church of the Nicene milieu saw a veritable metaphysical battle for humankind’s allegiance taking place.⁶ Knowing that the devil only wanted to enslave the humans in deep embitterment, God liberated them, and invited them into an eternal covenant they would share with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and the communion of saints.⁷ The church’s liturgical rites ensured a safe passage from the enslaved relationship with the devil to the free covenant with Christ.⁸ The people live in this covenant in the church, and also confess their faith in the church.

The combination of rituals and homilies helps us to see how the Nicene-era church viewed the kinds of challenges the neophytes would face in their new life in the church. When catechumens approached the church for baptism, pastors essentially told them that the devil had enslaved them into a life consisting of a vicious cycle of bitterness. Participating in the devil’s pomp—exultation in the activities of the theater, hunting, and horse racing, for example—likely delivered a temporary “high,” an elevation of excitement that was unsustainable when it declined and failed to fulfill participants.

² Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 86-9.

³ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 92-3.

⁴ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 88-93.

⁵ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 92-3.

⁶ See, for example, Paulo Nogueira, “Early Christianity as a Popular Religiosity in the Mediterranean World,” *Revista Teologia* 59 (2022): 62.

⁷ See Saint Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. Nonna Harrison, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 75-76 (from Basil’s homily “Explaining that God is not the cause of evil”).

⁸ See the interesting analysis by Constantin Oancea, “*Chaoskampf* in the Orthodox Baptism Ritual,” *Acta Theologica* 37, no. 2 (2017): 126.

The devil manipulated spectacle to dazzle neophytes and keep them returning for more—like a dopamine hit, or drug addiction, that has disastrous consequences when withdrawal settles in. Participation in emotionally intense activities—horse-racing, hunting, dramatic and musical performances—could lead participants to an emotional ceiling that eventually expires and results in a letdown. These exciting activities were unsustainable over the long run, and they did not address the fundamental problem confronting each person—the inevitability of death. Baptism in Christ and participation in his death and resurrection addressed the fundamental problem of death by referring repeatedly to the promise of eternal life for those who commit to the covenant in Christ.

Pastors faced a similar challenge when ordinary people requested baptism. Renouncing Satan and his pomp required a change of lifestyle—radical for some. Sustaining a commitment to a radical change of lifestyle was no easy matter, and pastors tended to use negative reinforcement to exhort initiates to remain faithful to their new way of life in Christ. John Chrysostom said that the initiates would face Satan in battle “from that day onwards,” referring to the demons’ aversion to the light shining from the anointing on the forehead of the initiates as they were preparing to enter the font.⁹

POST-BAPTISMAL REPENTANCE

We know that many of the newly-baptized did, indeed, lapse, by denying their faith or committing other grievous sins like murder or adultery. The church created a system of post-baptismal repentance that reconciled the lapsed with the church. The system evolved to account for categories of sins with amendments ranging from the recitation of psalms and prayers to periods of excommunication. The church continues to use this system in the present day, encouraging people to come forward for the sacrament of penance as often as possible. The sacrament of penance made amending one’s life possible after baptism, yet many continued to struggle with habitual sin.

RENEWED ESCHATOLOGY

The baptismal rites of the Nicene era initiate the neophyte into a life that bridges the two worlds of heaven and earth. The Byzantine prayer for the consecration of chrism states that the name of Father, the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit is imprinted upon neophytes in baptism.¹⁰ The prayer said before the anointing with chrism asks God to “keep,” confirm, deliver, and guard them—verbs denoting protection, which is necessary for people who remain vulnerable to the temptations presented on earth even as they have inaugurated their citizenship in heaven.¹¹ The final petition of this prayer asks that the newly-anointed would “become sons and heirs of your heavenly kingdom,” again depicting the destiny of the baptized. Again, they dwell in both worlds, completing their sojourn in this world while having already

⁹ Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 160.

¹⁰ Nicholas Denysenko, *Chrismation: A Primer for Catholics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 6-7, 11.

¹¹ Denysenko, *Chrismation*, 19-20.

received the name of God and the gift of sonship that belongs to the kingdom of God. In his catecheses on the sacraments, St. Ambrose of Milan, writing between 380-390 CE, instructed the neophytes to choose eternal life, in reference to the anointing with myron they received. His instruction shows that the transformation of human nature in the rites of baptism honors the freedom neophytes possess in exercising their will—they still have the power to choose a life compatible with the heavenly precepts and virtues while continuing their sojourn on earth.

Turning to our current twenty-first century context—the coronavirus pandemic and the political and economic turmoil that followed shed light on an existing truth that Christians have always held: humankind’s destiny is not infinite life on earth with all of its features and benefits, but God has recreated humans, in baptism and anointing, to pass through death into eternal life with him and the communion of saints. The pandemic also illuminated an existing societal crisis—the prolonged suffering of people who dwell on the margins.

Reinvigorated by the sober acknowledgement of the finite nature of the present life, today’s Christians must renew their pursuit of the kingdom of God with vigor. This pursuit entails a renewed eschatology and a pastoral focus on vigilance. The Christian community in the process of completing its earthly pilgrimage, with heaven as the destination, engages the core activities of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, holding all things in common while attending to the needs of the least of the Lord’s brethren, especially those on the margins.

A SOJOURN TO “THE MARGINS”

Who do we have in mind when we speak of those on “the margins?” The phrase is used colloquially to refer to people who are socially excluded and lack access to basic social services.¹² Various Christian communities have identified the marginalized as people whose living conditions demand that they receive Christian ministry, especially regarding the provision of basic human services. Christians throughout the world find themselves among the marginalized, especially those communities that are minorities in countries and regions with limitations on religious freedoms.

Christianity still carries exclusionary characteristics, especially in the churches with policies of closed Holy Communion. A pastoral strategy that reaches out to the marginalized must begin with an accounting for existing exclusionary characteristics and practices. A church that offers the liturgy “on behalf of all and for all” must learn how to see the marginalized in their midst and outside the borders the church constructs.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Public awareness of the mental and emotional health crisis afflicting the world was increasing when the pandemic heightened the urgency of the problem. The US Surgeon

¹² See, for example, “What is Marginalization? Definition and Coping Strategies,” LibertiesEU, Civil Liberties Union for Europe (October 5, 2021), <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/marginalization-and-being-marginalized/43767>.

General's report on the epidemic of loneliness in America revealed staggering statistics.¹³ Surveys found that nearly one out of every four adults suffers from loneliness, with 47 percent feeling that their relationships are not meaningful, and 57 percent of Americans reporting that they eat meals alone.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 70 percent of the global population will suffer a traumatic event at some point in their lives.¹⁴ Trauma contributes to a number of mental and emotional disorders, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁵ Gabor Maté argues that untreated trauma contributes to severe physical illnesses and prolonged substance abuse. Maté contends that many illnesses are expected consequences of abnormal circumstances and appeals for a global discussion on finding remedies to aid people in recovery from trauma.¹⁶

MECHANISMS FOR COPING WITH TRAUMA

Mental health professionals have quivers full of arrows for teaching people how to cope with trauma and its consequences. The church is a hospital and as the body of Jesus Christ has a role to play in ministry to the traumatized. Baptism and anointing are rites that refer to preservation, protection, and healing. Furthermore, the rites of baptism, anointing, and Eucharist are anchored in trauma narratives. Jesus Christ saved humankind through a series of traumatic events. The liturgical texts repeatedly testify to Christ's betrayal, passion, death, burial, and resurrection, but the events include his own experience of kenosis, loneliness, abandonment, and despondency. Jesus himself experienced trauma, even as an infant, given the threat on his life and his family's need to take refuge in another country. The events of his Pascha were traumatic for him and also the eyewitnesses who came to constitute the church, his apostles and followers.

When the presiding minister instructs a candidate for baptism to renounce Satan, immediately discontinue certain daily behaviors, commit themselves entirely to a new person (Christ) and his community, initiate them into a new life by requiring them to strip, receive an anointing, be immersed in water, and emerge with new clothing and a new anointing—and to interpret all of this as your participation in Christ's death and resurrection—it can rightly be called a trauma.

Many people of the church have experienced trauma and the church as a gathered community recalls Christ's trauma in the celebration of the Eucharist. Karen O'Donnell writes that the celebration of the Eucharist, in remembrance of Christ, is a form of non-

¹³ Vivek Murthy, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The US Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community* (Washington, DC: Office of the US Surgeon General, 2023), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," World Health Organization (May 27, 2024), <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/post-traumatic-stress-disorder>.

¹⁵ "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder."

¹⁶ Maté's definition of trauma is helpful: "An event is traumatizing, or retraumatizing, only if it renders one diminished, which is to say psychically (or physically) more limited than before in a way that persists." Gabor Maté, *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture* (New York: Avery, 2022), 24.

identical repetition.¹⁷ The ritual celebration itself is traumatic, even though it is not identical with its prototype. O'Donnell writes that the newly-baptized person is called to be something new in baptism and that time is ruptured during the rite because the future is coming into the present.¹⁸ O'Donnell argues similarly that partaking of Holy Communion ruptures time for the participant because of the entrance of Christ's body and blood into the physical bodies of communicants, another instance of a traumatic event.¹⁹

O'Donnell asserts that the creators of liturgical rites promoted trauma recovery, because this process includes taking refuge in a safe place (presumably the location of the church's gathering), constructing a narrative that makes sense of the trauma, and returning to society.²⁰

O'Donnell's depiction of liturgical participation as a possible means for trauma recovery is compatible with the legacy of the Nicene church in many ways. Baptism in the Nicene epoch envisioned a radical change of life, including death to some of one's previous associations. Most importantly, the neophytes were now living with feet in two worlds—earth and heaven—and were destined for eternal life with God in heaven. The sacramental event had, indeed, been a rupture in their personal timeline of life, and that breach remained as they prioritized their citizenship in God's kingdom over everything else.

In some ways, the twenty-first century church is not ready to receive its sacraments as events that promote trauma recovery. The church itself as a community leaves the door open to trauma when it sacralizes entitlement and privilege, justifies and attempts to conceal a variety of sins, and fails to use its prophetic voice to protect the traumatized and those vulnerable to trauma. Sometimes the church stigmatizes a variety of mental and emotional disorders, ranging from condemning suicide as an unforgivable sin to erecting obstacles to full acceptance in the church for people struggling to cope with their disorders.

MAKING SENSE OF SIN AND SPIRITUAL THERAPY

People afflicted by mental and emotional illnesses sometimes turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms to numb their pain.²¹ These mechanisms include substance abuse, eating disorders, sexual addiction, violence, digital media addiction, gambling, and emotional abuse. Many of these behaviors would fall under categories similar to the spectacles of the theater, hunting, and horse racing identified by Cyril of Jerusalem as the pomp of the devil Christians must renounce forever. If the church community learns about unhealthy coping behaviors, those who bear the burden of mental illnesses are easily stigmatized. The stigmatizing can drive them out of the church community and

¹⁷ Karen O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies: The Eucharist, Mary, and the Body in Trauma Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2018), 19-21.

¹⁸ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 171.

¹⁹ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 171.

²⁰ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 179-80.

²¹ See Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 31-38.

push them to the margins. Those who remain in the community can find themselves both sacramentally and socially excluded.

This penultimate section is an inflection point of my presentation, and a hazardous one at that. This point is not moving towards the identification of the Nicene era rituals or their interpretation as the cure for mental illnesses. The Nicene legacy of baptism speaks prophetically to our age in its sense of pastoral urgency: to embrace repentance as an urgent and radical change of life because the kingdom of God is at hand.

The issue for pastors is not so much whether or not people will sin, but how to address the kinds of behaviors that neophytes once had to renounce. People often renounce the very sins they struggle to resist and overcome, including substance abuse, sexual addiction, and self-harm. Physicians and psychologists have argued that many people engaging behaviors like alcoholism and sexual addiction are not trying to sin, but turning to activities and substances that numb their pain. The point here is to acknowledge that many people are steeped in lives of sin involuntarily.²²

The twenty-first century church can renew the Nicene legacy of the renunciation of Satan at baptism by renouncing many of the causes of trauma that are under our control. The church can renounce demonic lies and falsehoods that tell us that we have to endure ongoing physical, emotional, and sexual abuse at the hands of family members. The church can renounce bullying and emotional manipulation that runs rampant in workplaces and schools. The church can renounce the demonic falsehood that our physical appearance, weight, and clothing make us ugly and unwanted. The church can renounce the devil's whispers that upgrading to the next phone with its accessories and having the most followers on a social media platform defines our value. The church can renounce Satan's temptation of worldly dominion that provides life support to greed and catalyzes the drums of war. We can continue to renounce the most egregious demonic falsehood of them all—that we can deny almighty God because we ourselves can become his equals by creating cults of self-adulation.

In the rites of baptism, the sponsors make the renunciations together with the candidates for baptism. It is a short step to invite the entire community to utter these renunciations together with the candidates and their sponsors. One of the most important aspects of connecting some of the known causes of trauma and mental health disorders with Satan's service, pride, and pomp is naming the adversary.²³ The church would take an active role in asking God to remove evil influences that harm those seeking entrance into his kingdom via baptism and anointing. The activity is communal and it requires a commitment to an ascetical life where each person is attending to the care of their soul, along with their minds and bodies.²⁴

The baptized and anointed members of the community who are among the traumatized would be participating in this event—the traumatized ministering to the traumatized. Naming the causes of trauma and related afflictions is a continuous part of communal life. The traumatized minister to the traumatized by joining them in renouncing the harmful sources of their afflictions. The community folds the naming of the trauma into their liturgical traditions of petition and thanksgiving—asking God

²² See van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 31-33.

²³ See van der Kolk's comment on the power of language in van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 38.

²⁴ Saint Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, 96-98.

to deliver them from temptation and harmful vices while thanking God for deliverance and amnesty.

The twenty-first century retrieval of Nicene baptismal theology does not confuse the practices of renunciation, petition, and thanksgiving with the medical and psychological treatment that contributes to improved coping and healing. The contemporary retrieval I am proposing here honors God as the divine physician who heals all that is infirm through the pouring out of divine grace. God is the source of medicinal and psychological treatments that promote healing, and the Christian community promotes such practices in the spirit of *fides et ratio*.

Allow me a cautionary word about the renewal of Christian eschatology. It is a copout to simply defer to the promise of future salvation as a reason for tolerating wrongs that are not righted, illnesses that are not healed, and people who continue to return to their own sin. The point of the present time is to continue to seek God, to pursue the righteousness of God's kingdom while simultaneously confessing and lamenting the problems that keep us in sin—even when those problems are our own selves. Thanksgiving fits each situation—some are grateful for improved coping, others for healing, and still others for the company and encouragement of fellow Christians who refuse to abandon them while they struggle to become whole. One of the twenty-first century applications of the Nicene heritage is to sustain company and fellowship for all who struggle and to use punitive measures only as a last resort, to protect the vulnerable from harm. Abandonment is one of the most egregious causes of trauma. A church of the traumatized ministering to the traumatized, on behalf of all and for all, must remove abandonment from its pastoral toolbox, with the stipulation that the vulnerable must be guarded at all costs.²⁵

CONCLUSION: THE NICENE LEGACY TODAY, IN HIS ABSENCE

This presentation has reflected on how the twenty-first century church might retrieve the baptismal theology of the Nicene-era church. The essay asserts that the Nicene-era church emphasized the urgency of preparation to meet Christ in the next life, which is often found in pastoral admonitions to neophytes that they now dwell in two intersecting worlds—heaven and earth, yet are bound for heaven. A renewed sense of urgency to prepare for eternal life with God illuminates the responsibility of the Body of Christ—the church—to truly minister on behalf of all and for all by renouncing evils that cause trauma and providing companionship to the traumatized who suffer in the church and on the margins.

As the Body of Christ awaits the completion of its pilgrimage and reunification with Christ in the fullness of his glorified presence, it is assured that the one who was exalted in humility will be our most beloved and trustworthy companion as the we complete the journey on earth and make our final entrance into heaven.

²⁵ van der Kolk's assertion that "our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another" is applicable here (see van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 38).

**A RESPONSE TO NICHOLAS DENYSENKO'S
"ECHOES OF NICAEE: MINISTRY OF THE
BAPTIZED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"**

STEVEN BATTIN
Xavier University of Louisiana
New Orleans, Louisiana

Thank you Rev. Dr. Denysenko. And thank you to the 79th CTSA Convention President, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, and President-Elect Susan Abraham for inviting to me to respond to such a wonderful and thought-provoking plenary address.

My remarks this evening are divided into three categories: the appreciative; the clarificatory, relative to the past; and the exploratory, relative to the present and future.

CATEGORY ONE...THE APPRECIATIVE

First, in drawing our attention to the baptismal practices and theology of the Nicene era, Denysenko reminds us that tradition encompasses more than doctrine. By way of this expansive sense of tradition I read Denysenko as offering a kind of *ressourcement* with respect to baptismal theology. It is important to understand that during this 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, there is something else equally important from that period of time that we can retrieve and learn from. But what Denysenko proposes is not a simple or naïve assimilation to the past. What is retrieved from the past is dynamically interpreted through and also adapted to the present. Often deployed from the center of the modern/colonial world-system, promoters of theologies of retrieval *have been known* to be at odds with prophetic theologies advocated from the margins. Denysenko, however, avoids this pitfall by guiding us in a remembering of Nicaea-era baptism that operates as a retrieval of pastoral urgency in a prophetic key, precisely because it is an urgency for healing the trauma of those within the church, so that—I presume—they may be equipped to do the same also for those outside of the church. To that end, Denysenko offers us a baptismal theology of trauma recovery and healing.

CATEGORY TWO...THE CLARIFICATORY (RELATIVE TO THE PAST)

While strongly affirming Denysenko's call for renewal of the early church's liturgical theology of baptism, I would like to raise a question of clarification about reframing the periodization of this baptismal theology of trauma-healing. Specifically, I wonder whether or not Denysenko is pointing us toward a need for retrieval of pre-

Nicene rather than Nicene baptismal theology. Focusing on Nicene-era baptismal theology invites us to consider it in relationship to the baptismal theology of the pre-Nicene and post-Nicene periods. In my proposed periodization, I locate the Nicene era between 313 CE, with Constantine’s decriminalization of Christian *religio*, and 381 CE, when Emperor Theodosius I convened a meeting of 150 bishops in Constantinople to confirm the Nicene Creed. Accordingly, the pre- and post-Nicene eras fall before and after the proposed start and end dates, respectively.

If we situate the rite of baptism as the culmination of a larger initiatory process into Christian life—that is, a process of conversion from one way of life to another—we can trace continuity and change between these periods a bit more clearly. The work of Mennonite scholar and church historian Alan Kreider is helpful here. Kreider observed that in the early church conversion entailed change of belief, belonging, and behavior, and that the conversion process seems to have occurred in four stages. Stage one, *evangelization*, involved conversations with non-Christians.¹ Stage two, *the catechumenate*, “seems to have concentrated on a reshaping of the converts’ behavior.”² Stage three, *enlightenment*, in which catechists focused on imparting “orthodox teaching” and catechumens received exorcisms and preparation “culminating in the baptismal rites.”³ Stage four, *mystagogy*, was introduced in the fourth century, the Nicene era, and involved catechists explaining the meaning and experience of baptismal and eucharistic rites to the new initiates a week after Easter.⁴ Stage two is where we see the most significant differences between the pre- and post-Nicene periods, so I will focus our attention there.

During the pre-Nicene period, before admission into the catechumenate, catechetical instructors performed a thorough “scrutiny” of the prospective candidates’ character, requiring a promise not to kill if they were in the military or other compromising careers; and expelling soldiers who did take a life and catechumens who joined the legion. In the post-Nicene period, admission into the catechumenate is no longer difficult. In some places, the sponsor and/or candidate only needed to fill out a boilerplate form letter.⁵ During the pre-Nicene era, stage two was the longest stage, entailing a daily catechesis that could last as long as three to five years! In the post-Nicene era, stage 2 is much shorter. For instance, by the first quarter of the sixth century, in Arles (in southern France), only seven to ten days were dedicated to baptismal preparation.⁶ In the pre-Nicene period, aristocrats like Cyprian of Carthage experienced the long process of conversion as a liberation from the addictions and compulsions of wealth, enabling them to carry out their baptismal vocation.⁷ On the post-Nicene side of the timeline, we find Augustine informing the aristocrat Volusian that “conversion would not require a fundamental change in aristocratic behavior (*Epp*

¹ Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 21.

² Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 22, italics in original.

³ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 22.

⁴ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 22.

⁵ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 40.

⁶ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 73.

⁷ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 8–9.

137–38).⁸ Finally, while stage two in pre-Nicene baptismal preparation emphasized change in behavior, in the post-Nicene era, the emphasis of stage two instruction was on belief; specifically, familiarizing the candidates with the various heresies they must avoid.⁹

Another important feature of the post-Nicene epoch at odds with the pre-Nicene period is what we might call here a baptismal theology of compulsion. Early in this period, Christians increasingly express gratuitous approbation for compelled baptism and disenfranchisement of the non-baptized within wider late antique society. Could the pre-Nicene Christians—formed into one body through a baptism that enabled them to receive the eucharist and perform the kiss of peace, who repeatedly emphasized that their distinctiveness was in that they prayed for their enemies, whose initial scrutiny rejected the soldier or the catechumen who joined the military—could the Christians formed in the baptismal theology of that era have said with Augustine, “For long Christians did not dare answer a pagan; now, *thank God*, it is a crime to remain a pagan?”¹⁰ Or could the pre-Nicene Christians have truly been comfortable with Bishop Avitus I of Clermont’s message in 576 to the city’s Jewish inhabitants, after a Christian mob had burned down their synagogue: “I do not use force nor do I compel you to confess the Son of God. I merely preach to you. . . . If you are prepared to believe what I believe, then become one flock, with me as your shepherd. If not, then leave this place.”¹¹ Such sentiment is expressive of a tendency that culminates in the tradition of medieval and early modern violent evangelization. While heralded by militant conquering Catholic Christians as a source of salvation, post-Nicene baptism was undoubtedly a source of trauma for the forcefully baptized, from the Saxon tribes in late eighth-century western Europe to the Taino peoples in the Caribbean region of the Americas in late fifteenth-century. It is difficult not to assess this development as a direct countersign of a baptismal theology of trauma recovery and healing as proposed by Denysenko and intimated in Kreider’s account of pre-Nicene baptismal preparation.

Given the significant discrepancies between pre-Nicene and post-Nicene baptismal preparation as well as the drastic difference in attitude toward Christian violence against the unbaptized, the Nicene period seems to be a hinge point. Nicene-era baptismal theology has features from the era that preceded it. But while keeping the form of the process and the rites, traditional emphases were slowly morphed during this period, such that the baptismal experience of the post-Nicene epoch manifests a significantly different ethos than that of the pre-Nicene era. If I am correct in my suggestion that the Nicene era is a turning point for baptismal theology, advancing a change in direction we see fully only in the post-Nicene church, then do we need to reclassify Denysenko’s proposed period for retrieving the most effective trauma-sensitive baptismal theology as pre-Nicene rather than Nicene?

⁸ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 67.

⁹ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 43–47.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms* 89 (Kreider’s translation).

¹¹ Kreider, *Change of Conversion*, 89.

CATEGORY THREE...THE EXPLORATORY (RELATIVE THE PRESENT AND FUTURE)

If we engage Denysenko's proposal seriously—as I believe we should—how do we begin to put baptismal theology of trauma healing into constructive conversation with the various insightful responses to the multitude of trauma-inducing problems today? For instance, how might we engage with Denysenko's retrieval from a decolonial, global church, or intercultural perspective? In each of these areas, we run into the dynamic of retrieval and inculturation. If retrieval implies an unchangeable form, can our one baptism avoid cultural imposition? If retrieval implies an unchangeable purpose preserved through perhaps wildly diverse adaptations of form, how would the established churches epistemologically, theologically, and practically “manage” a multiplicity (or pluriversity¹²) of forms to the baptismal rite?

Furthermore, we might ask: How does “one baptism” that responds to trauma interact with non-Western cultures that already have longstanding rituals that aid in various forms of healing. Take, for instance, the San Bushmen's healing dance, in which several members of the community—both men and women—dance themselves into a trance state, enabling them to heal community members who are present.¹³ Or consider the Sun Dance practiced by many indigenous peoples of the Great Plains and Canadian Prairies. This ceremony involves physical trauma to the persons performing the dance, as they are connected to a sacred pole by rawhide thongs that pierce their flesh. Yet, this ritual-physio-trauma is also arguably embedded within a larger ceremonial process of trauma prevention, reduction, and recovery, a process that engenders “one people” as does the trauma-responsive “one baptism” Denysenko describes. As Native American theologian George “Tink” Tinker, a member of the Osage Nation and an ordained Lutheran minister informs: “As the community gathers to cut down the tree marked for use in the center of a Sun Dance, the community members collect their thoughts so that the people might have *a single heart and a single mind* among themselves.”¹⁴

¹² “Pluriversity” is a prominent idea with decolonial theory and practice. See, Janet Conway and Jakeet Singh, “Radical Democracy in Global Perspective: Notes from the Pluriverse,” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2011): 689–706, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.570029>. They provide an instructive sense of its meaning: “Notions of the pluriverse imply multiple ontologies, multiple worlds to be Known—not simply multiple perspectives on one world. Universalist discourses and globalist projects are grounded in a unitary ontology and imperialist epistemologies which assume that the world is one, that it is knowable on a global scale within single modes of thought, and is thus manageable and governable in those terms” (701).

¹³ See, Megan Biesele, Kxao =Oma., and /'Angnlaio /'Un, “Peace Technologies from the San Bushmen of Africa,” in *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, ed. Melissa K. Nelson, (Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2008), 75–83. Sharing her experience among the San Bushman, Biesele writes: “What people have told me about what's going on in these beautiful dances is that it's a technology of opening the heart so that healing energy can enter and so that people's hearts will be revealed to each other and any problems or enmity will go out from between them. ...I kept finding that everything comes back to the healing dance” (77).

¹⁴ George “Tink” Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 39, my italics. In Tinker's brief description of the

Are Christians from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions to say that the one baptism in its trauma-reduction aspects are universally sufficient and superior to non-Western, non-Christian cultural and regional ceremonies that may perform similar functions, and some of which may be older than Christianity? Do we encourage or at least not discourage synthesis of the one baptismal ritual and other pre-existing rituals? Do we begin to see baptism into the church as an initiation rite into a Christian community that does not demand the abrogation of other traditional rituals, especially if these rituals contribute to healing trauma within these communities? And how do we reckon with the fact that such a turn goes against the grain of most of Christian history?

Lastly: MaryCatherine McDonald, a researcher in the philosophy of psychology who specializes in the psychology of trauma, argues that we oversimplify the complexity of healing when we think a singular mode or method of intervention for trauma healing is sufficient.¹⁵ She proposes we think in terms of a toolbox containing several tools that assist the healing process. In light of his recentering the pastoral urgency of baptism through the recovery of its originary and intrinsic contribution to trauma healing, I would be curious to hear if Denysenko thinks of baptism as one “tool” among many available within the Christian tradition, and if so, does it stand as the ritual *par excellence*, in this regard? Additionally, is there something about our one baptism, when understood in intrinsic relation to trauma-healing, that opens us up to accepting the existence and legitimacy of multiple trauma-healing ritual tools developed by non-Western, pre-Christian cultures? Ultimately, I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Denysenko for inviting us to consider our one baptism in relation both to healing the trauma of Christians within the church and for responding effectively to the trauma of the world—and perhaps particularly the trauma Christian churches have caused in the world.

ceremony, the reason for the sacred manner in which the chosen tree is cut down can be interpreted as healing trauma: In a worldview that promotes harmony and balance (or equilibrium and homeostasis), the innate violence of felling the tree requires acknowledgement, as well as explanation and thanksgiving to the tree. Importantly, the men catch the tree so as to not let it fall violently and irreverently to the ground, an act that reduces the trauma the tree experiences and thereby also mitigates the trauma to the land (local, living place) and, by extension, to the world (cosmic whole).

¹⁵ MaryCatherine McDonald, *Unbroken: The Trauma Response is Never Wrong* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2023), 5.

THAT THEY MAY BE ONE: THE BAPTISMAL CALL FOR RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

BISHOP LAURIE LARSON CAESAR

*Oregon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Portland, Oregon*

Thank you for the invitation to be here with you. I'd like to begin by thanking you for your important and often under-appreciated work. My life was transformed as a young adult when I met a Catholic theologian named Jon Sobrino. His integrity, insight, moral courage and shimmering emotional generosity revealed some things to me, including the notion that the Divine can use any vocation for the building up of the Beloved Community. It came to me in a brief visit with him that my life didn't have to be the fulfilling of my parents' dreams for me, or anyone else's for that matter. I've been a bit inclined toward you Catholics and theologians ever since and I have been blessed to know some brilliant ones.

My name is Laurie Larson Caesar, and I serve as Bishop of the Oregon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I'm not exactly sure how *I* ended up speaking before you, but I have some idea. For more than two decades, a Lutheran–Roman Catholic church called Spirit of Grace nurtured me as a leader and called me “Pastor Laurie.”

At Spirit of Grace in Beaverton, just over those hills, I served alongside some of the finest priests in the Roman Catholic Church. All of them were shaped by the Second Vatican Council, with its commitment to the dignity of all people, to the renewal of our religious institutions, to our profound need for dialogue and understanding across walls that divide us, and to our unity in Christ. All of them taught me more about my own faith, my Lutheran faith tradition and the significance of one baptism than any traditional Lutheran scholar could possibly have. When I would hold an infant, and the priest would pour the water and say, “I baptize you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” there was no clearer sign of our shared faith, our shared life, our shared need for forgiveness and our shared invitation to love what God loves. Holy Spirit was working on us in those moments, I believe, to trust in that final prayer of Jesus: “That they all may be one; ... as you, Abba, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that *you* have sent me” (Jn 17:11b, 21b). When we walk with one another, eat with one another, and take one another seriously on the ground as well as in the rarified air of decades-long ecumenical councils, in other words, we are a manifestation of God's wildest, craziest and more profound hopes for a witness to Jesus' liberating love.

The congregation is a wonder of wonders, really. Every Sunday a lay leader opens the service with something like this, “We are ‘one community with two faith traditions,

Lutheran and Roman Catholic, with members seeking to grow and mature in our relationship with both denominations, and you are welcome here.” The notion of “Synodality” anchors its collective life. The church was born in the moment of rising intentional Catholic communities. But what makes it distinct is that we Lutherans were invited in. It demonstrates, perhaps, what my vet might call “hybrid vigor.”

Forty years later, it still exists and it’s growing.

The lay members of Spirit of Grace interview and vote on all calls of their clergy. They create their own budgets, set their own vision, and try to listen to one another and to Christ in the spirit of St. Benedict, with the “ear[s] of [the] heart.”¹ Through the years, of course, they’ve faced some challenges from the larger institutional church. And yet, they continue to live into Christ’s paschal mystery of life, death and resurrection, grounded in the essentials of a deep and abiding unity in baptism in Christ. In those waters, of course, we are equal before our Creator—neither “Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Gal 3: 28), Catholic nor Lutheran, but all one in Christ Jesus our Lord. Their fearless faith inspires me still, six years after I have moved on and into a call as Bishop of the Oregon Synod.

Mission of the Atonement, as it was known in its early years, was born in the 1980’s in the afterglow of the Second Vatican Council. The small, intentional community came together out of necessity. The Lutheran congregation, Atonement, was surrounded by larger Lutheran churches to the north, east and west, and, although full of vitality, was shrinking in membership; they could afford a full-time pastor no longer. The Catholic parish down the street, St. Anthony’s Parish, was bursting at the seams, with four services a Sunday, and needing perhaps one more. As things happen, the ecumenical officer of the Archdiocese of Portland was an old friend of the retiring Lutheran pastor. The Lutheran pastor happened to have been raised Catholic, and had attended a Catholic seminary before converting to Lutheranism. Urban legend says that the two of them had a beer together, and Spirit and suds took over and they began to talk and to dream. So a call was put out to St. Anthony’s Parish in Tigard, and the next Sunday, 200 families showed up after morning Mass to learn more about this possible ecumenical venture.

When the most interested lay leaders finally came together, in a meeting room in the Benedictine Retreat Center at Mt. Angel Abbey, Lutheran and Catholic folks both called it a discernment gathering. The assumption from all the powers and principalities was that they would use the same Lutheran church building, but gather at different times for two different Sunday services. Yet, God in Her wisdom seemed to have other ideas.

Not insignificantly, no priest, pastor or bishop was able to attend that discernment retreat.

Those who did gather spoke powerfully of how God’s Holy Spirit was so present in that upper meeting room that they knew they *had* to proceed. “It was an Acts of the Apostles experience,” some of them would later say. “We all felt it—called to remember, and to embody, the earliest hopes of the disciples. To be grounded in what is essential and not what is superficial. To gather shoulder to shoulder around a simple

¹ Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry, trans. J. Neufvillen (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981, 2019), 15 (v. 1).

table and be fed for the journey together. To baptize our children and our neighbors together, into the same waters of love and grace, of justice and peace.”

But how? They had no Lutheran pastor. (He had retired.) They had no priest. They had vague permission from the Lutherans. (The man who served as the assistant to the bishop at the time in the American Lutheran Church shared with me years later that in their office they thought this experiment wouldn't last five years.) They had tacit permission from the archbishop, and full prayer and support from a few key leaders in the archdiocese. And they had, perhaps, some residual inspiration from prayers and dreams lifted up during Vatican II and in the many ecumenical statements of the Lutheran Church. And so, they gathered many curious, faithful, and fearless members.

These folks stepped in and did God's work. The Catholics joined the Lutherans in their humble sanctuary on Scholl's Ferry Road and weekly reminded themselves that THEY were the church, not the bishops or church authorities. They sang, prayed, were fed the Body and Blood of Christ, heard and held the Word, invited others into small group relational meetings, and realized that they actually *could* become one community with two faith traditions, respecting both denominations and yet maturing and self-differentiating in their relationship with those judicatory bodies.

The interwoven group of Lutheran and Catholic lay leaders found pulpit supply pastors and guests priests for most Sundays of a month, but not quite all—three of four on average. So, after a few months, when they discovered they couldn't fill them all, they simply shrugged: “We can have one lay-led Service of the Word each month, with the homiletical responsibility shared among us lay folk over the course of the year.” Why not? Roman Catholics felt far freer to prepare a homily than the Lutherans did at first, I'm told, with the Lutheran expectation of rigorous exegesis for all sermons intimidating the majority of the Lutherans, but most rose to the challenge. More assumptions were shed and glimpses of liberation tasted and in those homilies they shared stories of faith in daily life and work, or their spiritual ah-ha moments, or the gifts in parenting, or the social justice work they'd engaged in and why, or when their hearts had been broken open and how they'd found healing. After that monthly Service of the Word took hold, they realized that they could gather for a shared meal and “break bread” together after the final Sunday lay-led worship in a common supper. In a way, this could help them live into their understanding of Christianity's earliest house churches and might replicate more closely the Eucharist services of the early church anyway.

One important point: most of those gathering in the early days were not theologians or even conversant in much contemporary theology. They were public school teachers, police officers, postal workers, therapists, nurses, small business owners, government administrators, volunteers. A few were former priests or nuns, but not many. Some were ecumenical families who lived with the heartache of no shared sacraments, and a larger number were not. Many had young children. Most had busy lives. They were incredibly diverse as a group. And yet, they had experienced Spirit moving in their midst and they were willing to listen and to take that seriously. To be one, even as Christ and Creator are one, and not to have to be the same.

A few familiarized themselves with deep years-long dives the Roman Catholic and Lutheran ecumenical agreements. Some wrote new entire liturgies or biblical dramas for the Service of the Word. Some crafted more contemporary and inclusive verses to

traditional hymns. Some made casseroles or babysat the children. And they made their own way, with guest priests and pulpit supply Lutheran pastors for months and months and months. And they grew in faith and understanding to know in their bones that this community was theirs, not the bishops’. “We believe that *we* are the Church, the people of God, and we are called to be Christ’s Body—blessed, broken and given for a hungry world. And we are called to do so, radically and faithfully, together.”

Back to the 1980s: Eventually a Franciscan priest committed to low-income housing stepped in half-time—Father Matt Tumulty. And a Lutheran pastor was called after that - Pastor Dale Jamtgaard, also half-time. The work was agonizingly slow, imagining together what had hardly ever been done before in the history of Christianity. Cultures continued to clash, styles and politics and definitions of things. Volunteer energy waxed and waned, some visions and expectations of the community were not allowed by the larger institutions, and the demands of this “experiment” began to add up. Hopes had been so high in the first months that many of the first few elected presidents of the congregation quit the entire project when their term ended.

Yet, God’s Spirit continued to move and nudge within them. They could anchor their worship on a common Ordo, the unifying Nicene Creed and one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, a growing number of shared hymns and prayers, and the radical Jesus of Nazareth who invites them again and again into the waters of grace, toward a table of life and out into a world of need. As you can imagine, after years of this kind of leadership and engagement with their own faith lives, they still are some of the most theologically fluent, politically active and liturgically sensitive lay people I’ve every met.

Of course there were bumps in the road. The first time the community went away on a Saturday day-long all-parish retreat, for example, the Catholic members took their journals and prayer books, and the Lutherans brought their Bibles and volleyballs. They navigated questions like - What music shall we sing? Catholics would ask, “Do we have to sing every single verse of every single hymn?” Lutherans wondered if guitar was the only instrument any Catholic knew how to play. And, the Lutherans wondered aloud about Catholic things they’d heard about - like transubstantiation and Papal infallibility. The more they encountered the other, the more they understood about one another, and themselves.

For the first ten years or so, mass took place in the sanctuary, with both priest and pastor behind the same altar sharing in the words of institution, and membership lining up in two lines down the aisle to receive from their denominational leader. It was messy, human, embodied and reverent. Both piano and guitar led singing. They sang, “One Bread, One Body” often, with a need to dip into that “one cup of blessing which we bless.”² Confirmation and first communion classes were always held together. (An incredible challenge and gift for me, since much of my own Confirmation instruction in Montana had focused on why medieval Catholics were wrong and how and why Luther was right.)

Baptisms were soaked in the sacred, done in community at a Sunday service with the understanding that Christ, through the entire community, blesses and baptizes the child. On those Sundays, the baptism would anchor the entire service. By the time I

² John Foley, “One Bread, One Body,” in *Wood Hath Hope: Liturgical Music by John Foley, S.J.* (Lake Oswego, OR: The Oregon Catholic Press, 1978).

arrived in 1996, we would begin the baptism rite with a song reminding us of the sacredness of the shared land, water and the other. Promises were made and stories shared about names, birthing, fears and hopes. At the pouring of the water, the pastor not officially baptizing would hold the baby or the hand of the catechumen, and the baptizer would cup water, lead the baptism, make the sign of the cross and impose the oil. Then we would sing a “Welcome, Welcome” song with the entire body welcoming the new Christian as they would be walked throughout the space.

Throughout the years, four archbishops made in-person visits to the community, usually for an evening prayer service. Over coffee, lemonade and homemade cookies, much listening and learning took place. Carefully. The first time, very few Lutherans and a certain number of Catholics had ever met an archbishop, much less asked questions or shared perspectives with one. Synodality, on the ground. Many remember the look of shock and insight on an archbishop’s face when a young Lutheran mother married to a Catholic man looked the bishop in the eye and with wavering voice recounted the pain of years of not being able to commune with her husband and children, side by side.

Eventually, Archbishop William Levada visited and made clear that the Eucharist would need to take place in separate rooms with two separate altars. Even homilies would need to be offered in two different rooms, he declared, since Roman Catholics would be best served by hearing Catholic preaching, and Lutherans, Lutheran preaching.

Eventually, the time of separating or “traveling” became one key part of the overall Ordo. Gathering, Word, Traveling, Meal, Sending. For the Traveling time, after prayers and the Our Father, the congregation would turn and face the central aisle and sing a blessing over one another. “Shalom, Haverim,” a blessing song, or a short hymn about unity, usually. Then one part of the community would travel to the hospitality hall, where a second altar was set and ready to receive them. Both denominations took turns so as to make sure the fellowship hall experience was shared equally. By the time I got there, around the tenth anniversary of the congregation, tears were still not unusual at the time of the separation. We lived on the razor’s edge of unity in Christ, prisoners of reality and pilgrims of hope. The reality of that “already-not yet” proleptic nature of our shared lives escaped very few.

In 1996, when I interviewed through the typical ELCA call process, Fr. Matt and I took a walk and he told me that the community usually stayed together for the homily and traveled, to honor the archbishop’s requirement, but traveled as late into the service as possible. “I thought Archbishop Levada had said that a shared sermon was to only happen on special occasions,” I asked, confused. “Well,” he sighed and smiled, “We have many special occasions.” Every Sunday was indeed a little Easter.

In the process of my call vote, when I was interviewing and we were all discerning, most of the Catholics were thrilled to have a say and to be able to vote on a pastor. Yes, we also had to be careful. Lutheran ballots at the congregational meeting were one color, I’m told, and Catholics’ were another. Many of the members, especially the Catholic members, were excited to call a woman. Of course, a few left because they’d called a woman. The first Sunday I helped lead worship, we gathered with only about twenty-four souls in the sanctuary, including children. I remember the curiosity, the

kindness, the sense of humor, and the sense of DIY about everything, including the omnipresent dust-bunnies.

But I couldn't have had a richer formation site in those early years. Former priests and nuns populated my office with their hopes and visions, and divorced Catholics or traumatized First Communion survivors would join me for coffee or a long walk. Intellectually curious Christians, Lutherans yearning for a more participatory and less clerical home parish, others seeking a rich and meaningful worship experience that sent them into the world to live lives of faith, justice and peace all formed me as a leader. People ask sometimes why my bishop-style is so open. I was formed by the "bored, burned and bitter" of Christ's church, absolutely. Sometimes through clenched teeth or thoughtful sighs, they detailed their stories, their theology, their exclusion, their sorrows, their hopes, their doubts and their faith and their hearts.

I learned much from Fr. Matt Tumulty, my first co-pastor. "Why do you offer private confession, but not every week? Once or twice a year in Lent and Advent. Over coffee at an old church table in a dusty church office. It doesn't seem traditional, yet it does seem traditional."

Matt honestly loved these questions. "I believe that the heart of this sacrament is a confessed life," he said. "The confessional booth itself isn't necessary. Nor the weekly nature. What is important is that no part of our lives goes so far underground that we haven't been able to share it with even one other person. That someone doesn't NEED to be a priest, Laurie, but I'm happy to be that someone when it helps someone." Matt ended up speaking of it so eloquently and meaningfully that Lutherans sometimes wanted to participate in confession. He elevated our shared sacramental lives, reminding us often that baptism and no other sacrament is the primary force that unites us all. In baptism we are equal before our Maker, loved radically by our Redeemer, and invited into transformation and into co-creating a Beloved Community by Holy Spirit.

So what does any this have to do with the baptismal call for transformational unity in Christ? Below, I've identified five themes woven throughout the fabric of my ministry, both in the parish and in the Office of the Bishop, that stand out from my own Lutheran theological perspective.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Theology is Embodied and Relational

Martin Luther was an Augustinian priest and a lover of the Hebrew Bible's gritty, revelatory earthiness. He was formed by that tradition of belief which held that the body and soul are intrinsically linked. He was also a pastor, formed by relationships in a parish, and much of his significant thinking was a reaction against the Scholasticism of his time, with its abstractions, doctrine and dogma.

Theology is embodied and relational. When I was pregnant as a young pastor at Spirit of Grace, the Catholics loved to tell their Catholic friends that their pastor was pregnant. When I was breastfeeding that child, my body would remind me at the end of worship with leaking milk, that a certain human body needed me again. And she, Sophia, needed the arms and love of that list of Catholics and Lutherans who signed up to hold her during worship.

Unlike the lawyer John Calvin, Martin Luther found in scripture and even more in his own life the power of paradox, partially because he attended to his body and his everyday life. As he sat at table with his wife Katie and children, for example, while also preparing liturgies, lectures and homilies as a priest, he couldn't help but see scripture and the holy life through a lens of flesh, blood, bone, mucus, friendship, and sexual love.

This emphasis on relationship is reflected in our shared ecumenical work. Nearly all of our shared ELCA Lutheran–Roman Catholic statements on justification, holy communion, baptism, and ministry end with calls to move from remote theological analysis to “active engagement” with one another. Listening. Remaining curious. Seeing in the other the capacity to also be a theologian. In that way, in embodied encounter, our hearts can be cracked open to God's Word.

I found this to be consistently true at Spirit of Grace. One long-term Lutheran member of the congregation told me, “I didn't even realize what it meant to be Lutheran until the Catholics came. We Lutherans really do prioritize community, fellowship hour, and shared singing. Christ meets us in the body. And I've come to love these other Catholic bodies more and more as we've gone along.”

Another, an older feisty Catholic woman who demonstrated pastoral care in her life more than any ordained pastor I've ever met, insisted on breaking with tradition if she and I were to find ourselves in a Catholic Mass together in another parish. If the presiding priest made clear that non-Catholics were not invited to receive the Eucharist, she'd get her hackles up. “You are meant to be at that altar just as much as I am,” she would say as she'd smuggle one-half of her host to me, back in the pew. She knew that Christ's table is a table of unity, diversity and radical love. “Body of Christ,” she'd smile as she gave it me.

Relational and embodied theology.

Crossing Borders for the Sake of the Dignity of the Other

It is no coincidence that our larger culture is fascinated and inspired by stories of crossing borders. There is profound power in being blessed across what we've been told are impassable walls. Christ crossed boundaries constantly, of course: blessing the Syro-Phoenician woman, speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well, dining with tax collectors, refusing to stone the sinner or turn away the hungry or the child.

Perhaps the moment of my finest blessing came from a young Catholic girl, maybe eight or nine years old, “When I grow up, I want to be a priest like Fr. Laurie.” No higher praise than this!

After Archbishop Levada required our separating for Eucharist, and Catholics from many places began joining the community as word spread, sometimes we'd have only about one-third or one-quarter of the services congregants at the Lutheran communion after we'd “traveled.” We went through seasons of Catholic influx. One member, a gentle former priest noticed this, and when that was the case, he would make a special effort to travel or stay with the Lutherans. I asked him why. “I don't want you to feel like you are in any way ‘less than’ the priest,” he'd shrug. “I'm happy to travel with you on those Sundays. Christ is fully present at both tables. Your dignity matters.”

Fr. Matt Tumulty and Fr. Neil Moore consistently recognized and affirmed my calling and dignity as well. Both refused to concelebrate or be near a Catholic altar

during mass unless I was invited to be up near the altar as well. Do you how powerful that kind of solidarity can feel like?

Borders crossed. Expectations upended.

Perhaps because things were rarely easy or straightforward at Spirit of Grace, and the responsibility for the collective life is shared, the community has ended up being a cauldron of leadership formation. Encouraged to think for themselves theologically and liturgically, numerous members have felt a call to seminary or to new vocations to something new that is true vocation. It has been clear from the beginning that spiritual practice is meant to lead us to activism in the world, and that action is meant to invite us again to spiritual grounding. And why would the priest or pastor be the only one to see moments of opportunity for that?

One Saturday retreat of the leadership board, held at the now-closed Franciscan Renewal Center, was led by a Lutheran church consultant, and within an hour he said, “I’ve been doing this for a long time and have worked with more churches than I can count. You are an unusual group. When I ask you a question about your congregation, all eyes don’t go to the priest or pastor. You think for yourselves. If you believe that what makes you unique is that you’re both Lutheran and Catholic, you don’t have the full story. You are up to something beautiful and rare. You are forming real Christians with real agency in their spiritual lives.”

Borders crossed. Expectations upended.

Holy Envy

The Lutheran New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl was a mentor of mine at Harvard Divinity School, and he spoke often of “Holy Envy”—the exquisite sense of finding yourself admiring in another’s tradition something so profound that in that moment you wish you could claim it as our own. In walking alongside another, serving the world and attending protests with the ecumenical neighbor, coming to love them as we love ourselves, really, and encountering their ways and liturgies no longer as strangers, we are also invited into a fresh perception of our own faith. This, of course, invites a deeper articulation of our personal theology and wider lens on our daily lives of discipleship.

Through years of coming to love a huge, colorful variety of God’s people who call themselves Roman Catholic, I came to love learning about the saints as they shared the stories, and Mary as they shared her often intimate meaning for them, and the power of a wider number of sacraments as they spoke of the freedom and also the discipline embedded in that. I saw in my Catholic friends an assumption that the Gospel has social and political implications, when so often my Lutheran siblings held a much safer political quietism. The humility required in acknowledging the authority of the Pope, or the poverty and celibacy vows of my ordered friends, inspired and astounded me.

Catholics at Spirit of Grace, on the other hand, would talk about how much they admired Lutherans’ familiarity with scripture, and our expectation of a polity of collegiality in crafting budgets and calling pastors—or, in the primacy of the individual conscience. And, of course, our seemingly endless love of Baroque hymns and four-part harmony.

Holy envy.

I'll never forget one Reformation Sunday, the final Sunday of October in which Lutherans remember Martin Luther's nailing of the Ninety-five Theses on the church door in Wittenberg. It has become through the years one of the high holy days for Lutherans - a blend of Lutheran theology, Reformation history, Bach hymnody and sometimes overly sweet nostalgia. It frequently serves as Confirmation Sunday for a worship as well.

One year, with the final Sunday of October approaching, a Catholic lay member named Linda offered to preach and construct our Reformation Sunday worship service. "I'm so honored," she offered. "Growing up Catholic, and going to Catholic school, I was taught almost nothing about Martin Luther—except that he was a heretic. Dangerous! A man whose teachings were NOT to be explored" she shared. "And yet, in the lives and passions of my friends in this congregation, I have discovered this saint I love! Luther's affirmation of the body and elevation of marriage has helped me see more clearly Christ in my own marriage, my aging body, my friendships. I knew growing up as a Catholic girl in the 50s and 60s that I would never be invited to offer a homily or receive much theological formation. Yet here, alongside Lutherans, because of Lutherans, I've discovered my voice as a preacher and a theologian. I WANT to encounter scripture, to think about grace, to read church history and theology, to attend to my spirituality so that I can better listen for Christ's voice in my messy miraculous life. I would never have found these gifts without my Lutheran sisters and brothers, and without the love they've shown me in the name of a Christ who loves all of us!"

Holy envy.

Mutual Accompaniment

The Lutheran theological tradition was born out of schism, with all the intensity and high emotion of a Taylor Swift break-up. I've learned over the years that one primary challenge within an ecumenical parish is that most of us have been, as Fr. Matt Tumulty would say, "catechized to be right." For myself, I know that my first instinct is often to argue, judge, find new ideas inadequate or wanting.

The tradition of a shared potluck once a month after the Sunday morning Service of the Word, and soup suppers during the seasons of Lent and Advent, surely helped build our unity in Christ as relationships grew and the fabric of the shared communal life thickened. As we broke bread regularly, year after year, we learned one another's stories, sat with one another's children, celebrated one another's successes and grieved one another's heartaches.

A friend of mine visited Spirit of Grace once for a Mother's Day worship service. The homilist, a lay leader, shared about her own journey into motherhood after surviving a childhood with a narcissistic mother of her own. She briefly offered details of abuse and neglect, and how the Holy Spirit of Life and Hope helped her find counseling, friendships, a supportive spouse and enough healing to eventually want to mother children herself. "That was absolutely unlike any Mother's Day worship service I have ever experienced," my friend announced afterward. "Not a lot of saccharine."

One Sunday a former priest married a Catholic woman whose first husband had at some point begun to deal with gender dysphoria and had come out as trans after years of their marriage. As the glorious middle-aged couple smiled their way down the short

central aisle, her ex stood to the side in an elegant dress and high heels, serving as the official wedding photographer.

Isn't that the kind of accompaniment, mutuality and openness to radical transformation that Christ calls us to? Is not this the baptism which John the Baptist offered Jesus of Nazareth? Real. Earthy. Full of impossible love.

In this we are transformed.

Mutual accompaniment.

CONCLUSION

Everything I've been about in my role as Bishop of the Oregon Synod has been shaped or influenced by my accompaniment of a congregation united in their one baptism. Transformed by their encounters with one another. Empowered by their belief that God's call is first to tend seeds of life and hope and truth and not first to tend institutions.

My audacious dream from the beginning of my call to serve as *obispa* is that our work can help people across the state and across faith traditions to find their most prophetic and authentic voice—in whatever institution best becomes their home. We have a lot of people who love to call themselves Lutheran-adjacent. I am so grateful to serve a synod full of people of faith who understand me when I say that.

About a year and a half ago, in the early winter of 2023, the current Archbishop of Portland informed the five Catholic priests regularly saying Mass at Spirit of Grace that they must cease doing so. Without warning, this effectively excommunicated Spirit of Grace from the larger Catholic communion after almost forty years of ministry. We all found ourselves completely disoriented. The lay and ordained leadership of Spirit of Grace reached out to the chancery, in shock and anger, and were told that a letter had been sent to the congregation but that it must have been lost in the mail. My phone calls to the archbishop were not returned.

Since that time, Spirit of Grace has had to discern its Catholic identity anew. Who are we now? Who have we been? Who are we called to be? Through more than a year of intentional conversation, prayer, education about other alternatives and more, the entire membership was invited into the conversation. How important to us is our Catholic identity? Should we become simply a Lutheran congregation, with its wider range of liturgical freedoms, and release our other identity? What about the Old Catholic Church, or other independent communions? Or something more contemporary like affiliated with the Roman Catholic Women Priests?

Just last month, May 3, 2025, after more than a year of discernment on her part as well, the faith community officially ordained their Director of Catholic Ministries, Vinci Halbrook-Paterson, a Roman Catholic Woman Priest. I was honored to participate. Streams of women priests from all over the Pacific Northwest joined with tributaries of progressive Catholics and Lutheran clergy from the Beaverton area and members of Spirit of Grace and beyond, and again, God's Spirit was there.

It is so clear to me: the future of our Christian faith is lay-led. The future is ecumenical and interfaith. The future is international. The future is likely to be what Douglas John Hall has said - a chance to learn from our Jewish neighbors in the US how to be a faithful remnant.

It is then and only then, I believe, with beautiful holy envy, deep accompaniment, messy stories, hard truths, and hidden prayers that we can be open to God's dream for us. Together, we are such a shimmering tapestry capable of a lot. And I've come to believe that our more radical call to transformation in Christ is made known to us in baptism—called to be ministers of the impossible, walking Christ's Way of radical transformation together.

**A RESPONSE TO BISHOP LAURIE LARSON
CAESAR’S “THAT THEY MAY BE ONE:
THE BAPTISMAL CALL FOR RADICAL
TRANSFORMATION”**

ISH RUIZ
*Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, California*

Thank you, Bishop Laurie, for your prophetic witness. Let’s see what vision of catholicity emerges from a conversation between a queer Puerto Rican Catholic theological ethicist and a female, formerly pregnant, Lutheran bishop.

In response to your remarks, I want to offer four points.

First, I am struck by the title and central theme of your remarks: That they may be one. The topic of unity is contentious in our church and was a hot button issue during the last papal conclave. On the eve of the conclave, several conservative cardinals called for a pontiff that would promote unity in the Church. As reported by *The New York Times*, these prelates were juxtaposing the concept of unity against the concept of diversity (a false dichotomy in my opinion). Cardinal Gerhard Müller, a sharp critic of Pope Francis, described Pope Francis’ reforms with these words: “That is his style, to divide. All dictators are dividing.” Similarly, Cardinal Sarah warned, “if we introduce ruptures and revolutions, we destroy the unity that governs the holy church across the ages.”¹ In last year’s Ecclesiological Investigations conference at Chicago Theological Seminary, Bryan Massingale asked the following questions: “At what price do we preserve ‘unity’? Who is being asked to pay the price and shoulder the burden of unity while we wait for a consensus to appear?”²

As a queer Catholic in solidarity with women priests, those who are divorced and remarried, and many others who are marginalized in the church, I am suspicious about these calls to unity. Unity here, is code for uniformity—specifically uniformity under a Eurocentric, patriarchal, heteronormative, and cisnormative vision of church. This unity manifests as the smaller purer church that has never and should never exist.

¹ Jason Horowitz, “As Cardinals Prepare to Elect a Pope, One Motto Is ‘Unity.’ That’s Divisive.,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 2025, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/27/world/europe/cardinals-church-conclave-pope.html>.

² Bryan N. Massingale, “Unity at What Price? And Who Pays? LGBTQ+ Inclusion in the Catholic Church and Lessons from African Enslavement” (Plenary Address, Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network Fifteenth International Conference, Chicago IL, June, 27, 2024).

Similar calls for unity have echoed the halls at CTSA (though much more well-intentioned). I have heard folks lament that certain theologians “from across the aisle” do not feel welcome here. It’s all very triggering to me because, frankly, no one is kicking conservatives out of our academy—and Pope Francis was not dividing the church. What is happening is that the church and the academy are gradually becoming more welcoming spaces toward people like me, like us. And some people have a real issue with us. I am all for unity amidst disagreements, but, in the words of Robert Jones, Jr., “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”³

It seems to me that Catholics are in need for a model of unity that does not seek to erase differences or compromise values of justice. And here, I express gratitude for your testimony. Because in your ecumenical community, Unity is not about sameness—but about togetherness. Unity is grounded in the fundamental recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of every person. At Spirit of Grace, unity under dignity gives way for a celebration of diversity—diversity of identity, of religious affiliation, and of theological viewpoint. And when we prioritize dignity, God’s grace flows in abundance, as evidenced by the fruits of solidarity and spiritual insight that Lutherans and Catholics derived from each other through their shared baptism.

This is the heart of synodality. Synodality is not just about the walking together; but rather, it’s about the wonders that we begin to grasp when we open ourselves up to learning what God is communicating to us through each other. In the words of Polish theologian Grzegorz Strzelczyk, “In its very essence, synodality is associated with the possibility of an epiphany of the Holy Spirit. . . . Moreover, expectation of this epiphany should be the reason for such a gathering.”⁴

The real bravery of the synodal way is not so much in being able to walk with someone who is different. (That only seems like bravery for those who are part of a dominant group—as if it is so mind-blowing to suddenly realize there is diversity in our Church.) The real bravery of the synodal way is the openness to being radically transformed by the Holy Spirit through encounter.

This is what your community experienced over the course of forty years—synodality. And it is something I believe our Synod on Synodality attempted to articulate in its final document when it talked about pluriversality.⁵ Unfortunately, the reason synodality often fails is because we can fake it. We can walk together with diversity and refuse to let ourselves be radically transformed by it. However, if we can let ourselves be transformed by the diversity of the *sensus fidelium* that surrounds us, we can begin to celebrate it. As a Catholic, I am grateful that your Lutheran Church exists—because I am happy to witness a community with leaders like yourselves. I am

³ Ryan Williams-Jent, “Robert Jones Jr. Cultivates Community with ‘Son of Baldwin,’ ‘The Prophets,’” *Watermark Out News* (blog), February 25, 2021, <https://watermarkonline.com/2021/02/25/robert-jones-jr-cultivates-community-with-son-of-baldwin-the-prophets/>.

⁴ Grzegorz Strzelczyk, “Synodality: An Epiphany of the Spirit,” *Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej* 5 (March 28, 2020): 144, <https://doi.org/10.15290/std.2019.05.12>.

⁵ Francis, “Final Document – For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission” (October 26, 2024), §43, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf.

grateful to the Spirit of Grace Community—for being a witness of unity under dignity and for being witnesses of the bravery of the synodal way.

Second, I am inspired by the active lay leadership of your congregation. I was raised in the Marianist Order. I attended a Marianist High school in Puerto Rico and am a proud graduate of the University of Dayton and Chaminade University of Honolulu—both Marianist universities. The founder of the Marianists, Father William Joseph Chaminade, sought to revive the church in post-revolution France but, since priests had been either exiled or killed, he relied on lay leadership and lay communities to jumpstart the church. The Blessed Mother became a model of leadership for these lay communities.

Lay leadership in the church is grounded in our baptism. And taking seriously our common baptism means recognizing that lay Christians are active participants in the church through our common call as priests, prophets, and kings (well, “queens” in our case—Happy Pride Month, CTSA!). In the words of Ormond Rush, “Full and active participation of all the faithful means appropriate participation by the laity in the teaching, sanctifying, and governing of church life, and in the mission of the church in the world, since the whole People of God, ‘from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful’ share in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ.”⁶

To me, lay leadership also rests on a particular power—and that is the power of authenticity, which we heard shine clearly in your testimony. Not only do lay people have a profound sense of the daily lives of diverse Christian communities, but we also have the ability to take up space in the church and transform it through our witness even in the face of rampant clericalism. As a lay leader myself who advocates for queer inclusion in Catholicism, I obviously face a significant number of obstacles ranging from condemnation to erasure and to lukewarm partial welcome with an expectation that I accept something less than full inclusion in the church—which I consider my right through the one baptism. In those moments, I dwell on the words of the founder of the Marianists, Fr. Chaminade, who said “I am like a brook that makes no effort to overcome obstacles in its way. All the obstacles can do is hold me up for a while, as a brook is held up; but during that time it grows broader and deeper and after a while it overflows the obstruction and flows along again. This is how I am going to work.”⁷

As a queer lay person, the greatest power I have is authenticity. When I am held up as a brook is held up, all I can do is simply be myself in place and force the oppressors to contend with my humanity and my dignity. This is what the Blessed Mother did: she stood as a witness throughout Christ’s life even at the foot of the cross. The Spirit of Grace Community does the same. Despite the archdiocese attempting to pull away its male priests, you continue to authentically live into your ecumenical mission and your one baptism. You are a witness of the Roman Church as it should be. Your witness powerfully overflows any obstruction. Perhaps that’s why the Catholic archdiocese ignored your calls—because they couldn’t contend with the powerful authentic witness of your community.

⁶ Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004), 82–83.

⁷ William Joseph Chaminade, “I Am like a Brook,” NACMS, September 8, 2010, <https://www.nacms.org/epubs/i-am-brook>.

Third, I admit to constantly feeling holy envy. I felt holy envy when I saw two gay friends getting married in an Episcopal Church. I felt it when I heard the sermons of a trans Methodist pastor and a female Lutheran bishop. I feel it at Pacific School of Religion, when I see my students freely craft beautiful liturgies that come from their hearts. And I feel it when I see church structures that incorporate synodality by giving governing power to lay leaders. In those moments, I am grateful for our one baptism that allows me to participate in these inclusive communities. Thankfully, as a Catholic I don't always feel envy, but sometimes I do.

As you well said, I wish our church had the humility to utilize our holy envy as a compass for learning and growth.

I do feel holy envy when I see you, Bishop Laurie. I envy your congregation because they get to listen to you and be led by you. I envy all of those denominations that get to listen to the wisdom of women from the pulpit on a regular basis. As a sidenote, I ask that you join me in congratulating Bishop Laurie for being elected to another six-year term as bishop. After several rounds, the election required a two-thirds majority vote of the body of delegates, in which lay people must comprise at least 60 percent of all voters. Bishop Laurie was elected by 74 percent of the delegates. Talk about synodality. And talk about holy envy!

I have arrived at my fourth and final point, which is holy anger. I am very angry at my church leaders for how they have hurt your community. I am angry at how they ignored you and separated you. I am angry that they ignored the oneness of our baptism and the commonality of our creed. I am angry at their misguided belief that they somehow know better than your community about what is good and right, and I am angry that they chose liturgical rigor over ecumenical unity. I am angry that they became the proverbial fools who, as Confucius warned, looked at the finger when the wise persons in your community were pointing at the moon.

As I hear you, I am even angry because someone like you would not be allowed to serve as bishop in our Roman Catholic Church (if it's any consolation, a gay man like me wouldn't be allowed to do so either). While holy envy can operate as a compass, holy anger can become the fuel for hope-filled action. Anger is problem-solving energy; it is sometimes a gift from God in the face of injustice. So, I encourage everyone here to, every once in a while, lean into your holy anger. And, then, develop the courage to do something about what angers you. Neutrality in the face of injustice is complicity. In the (perhaps apocryphal) words of St. Augustine, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are and the courage to ensure they do not remain as they are."

Thank you, Bishop Laurie for being a beacon of hope, of holy anger, and of courage to our Catholic Theological Society of America. One last time, please join me in expressing gratitude to the incomparable Bishop Laurie.

**THE BAPTISMAL AND ECCLESIAL
VOCATION OF THE THEOLOGIAN:
A PLENARY CONVERSATION**

FACILITATED AND INTRODUCED BY

JAKOB KARL RINDERKNECHT
University of the Incarnate Word
San Antonio Texas

~

RESPONSES FROM

CECILIA GONZÁLEZ-ANDRIEU
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles California

ELYSE RABY
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

The Third Plenary at this year's Catholic Theological Society of America meeting was a conversation about the ecclesial and baptismal vocation of the theologian. Attendees were seated at tables of ten, and the bulk of the session was dedicated to table conversation, prompted by five questions:

1. Do you experience being a theologian as a vocation? Can you name experiences or communities that have shaped how you approach this question?
2. What questions or methods in theology today excite you? What areas are you skeptical of? Can you name what experiences contribute to these senses?
3. How have you experienced the theological guild(s), academia as a whole, your universities, and the church as connected? Are there particular experiences in your history that are important to you and your sense of how they do or should relate?
4. What practical tasks are you feeling called to approach out of your theological or baptismal commitments?
5. Who are the people that contributed to your sense of 1–4 above?

Table conversation was lively, and participants afterwards described the gift of being able to get to know other members and their senses of their vocations better.

The session was introduced by Jakob Karl Rinderknecht, of the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, with Cecilia González-Andrieu of Loyola Marymount University and Elyse Raby of Santa Clara University listening to table conversations and providing responses to what they heard. What follows reproduces the introduction and the summations offered.

JAKOB KARL RINDERKNECHT – AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Susan Abraham for the invitation to be with you this morning, and by thanking our respondents for their generous willingness to think with me and with you all about these questions. I am indebted to both of them for helping shape what I will say and I am looking forward to what I hope will be a vital and generous conversation.

I will first provide a very brief introduction to what we are going to be doing today, followed by about forty-five minutes of table conversation. If you are at a table that is not very populated at this point, please consider combining with another table. And, if you are moving, I would encourage you to have a conversation with someone you do not know as well.

There are questions on your table, to help get your conversation going today, once we start. During these conversations, Dr. González-Andrieu and Dr. Raby and I will be listening in. After about forty-five minutes, we will summarize what we have heard and begin a larger group conversation.

I should start by noting that this opening can only be from my own perspective. My questions and concerns are my own, and I am guessing that you all come to this conversation with some that rhyme and some that differ. Hopefully it can be a productive conversation in which we both listen and learn.

The topic for today's conversation is "the baptismal and ecclesial vocation of the theologian." As you are all aware, our shared vocational path has changed dramatically within living memory. The majority of us in the room today are living a theological vocation which simply did not exist in our grandparents' eras. Structural remnants of this recent change are all around us: within our lifetimes, the church, the university, and the society have undergone several related sea changes along with plenty of ongoing pushback—and understanding the implications and working out the details has lagged (as has, we should be honest, the actual promise of justice that those sea changes sought to embody).

Our guild has worked (and struggled) to define this new vocation in a truly ecclesial way. We have not always been successful in engaging with the hierarchical church (or with the parish or religious churches) in ways that respect the proper vocation of each. I am not casting blame here. There is plenty of misunderstanding to go around. And we really have tried.¹

We also stand in an era where the clerical assumptions of the past are (slowly) being rewritten. Jurisdiction is no longer as closely tied to the Sacrament of Order as it

¹ The longstanding project of inviting bishops to gather with theologians for food and discussion is one project I have in mind here, along with the many coordinating committees and engagements cosponsored with the College Theology Society, ACHTUS, BCTS, INSeCT and other theological guilds.

once was.² The recent Synod on Synodality has provided a means for a wider variety of voices to be heard (if not always listened to). And it seems that with the election of Leo XIV, the hierarchical church has renewed its commitment to the path of synodality. We shall see, of course. And we know that our own US church is not exactly at the forefront of this movement. There is yet room to foreground the shared baptismal vocation within the church.

Many of us are sidelined from official engagement with the official church due to suspicions arising from our writing or our research, or from our belonging, our identities, and our marriages. Our location in the US academic structure both protects and divides us. We often still act as if the accident (in both the Thomistic and the common sense) of where we teach is a real predictor of the importance of our work, rather than a central factor contributing to what part of the work we are allowed to spend our time on, or what opportunities we are invited to and which we have the resources to participate in. Truly gifted and challenging colleagues are left behind every year when there simply is not a sustainable position for them to work in anymore.

And—beyond all these structural difficulties—*what the questions for theology today are* is itself a question about which we do not necessarily agree. And that’s okay. It has probably always been the case. But when it is loaded on top of all of the uncertainty I have pointed towards, it becomes a thing that we fight over, or over which we simply stop listening to each other.

I would like for us to have a conversation about our overlapping vocations. In doing so, I would like to make a couple of requests. There are many ways to approach such a conversation, and for most of us, the shift to theory, to the third person, is habitual. But for today, because what I believe that we need is to develop a shared sense of the data about which we are thinking together, and this is a question in which we are all personally implicated, I would like to ask you to share with each other from the first-person perspective about the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [theologians] of this age”.³

In doing so, I am inviting you into a kind of dialogue that carries a number of descriptors in various theological circles, but is described within ecumenical theory as “the first-person method.”⁴ I learned this method from Fr. Kilian McDonnell, from his history of conversation between Catholics and Pentecostals. It foregrounds experience over theory, and asks participants to not jump immediately to understanding of difference, but to describe what they value and carry from their experience.

Let me start by saying something about why speaking about ourselves and our experiences might be theologically valuable to us as a group—especially when many of us were trained to approach theological questions in the “sapiential” mode of the

² Francis, *Praedicate Evangelium* (March 19, 2022), Art I §10, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/20220319-costituzione-ap-praedicate-evangelium.html.

³ *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), §1, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁴ “First-Person Method,” Collegeville Institute, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://collegevilleinstitute.org/about-us/our-story/first-person-method/>.

medieval scholastic model, in which the important questions are supposedly disinterested, third-person, arguments often without admitted context.⁵

But there is actually an older theological model that prioritized the personal work of self-knowledge as a necessary precursor to understanding others and God clearly. The Desert Fathers and Mothers, building on the philosopher's call to "know thyself," spoke about the self as the lens through which all relationships (with self, other, God and world) are shaped. The difficult work of self-knowledge was required to avoid being deceived by the various "thoughts" that can warp our perception and prevent us from understanding ourselves, others, and God.⁶ The reason that they claimed that sitting in the cell would "teach you everything" was precisely because it fostered the confrontation with the self that allowed the monk or nun to come to know the self that actually is, not the self that they wished to be or pretended to be to the world.⁷

This radical self-honesty that they called humility allowed for the pursuit of a truthful engagement in the world that was "whole hearted" and more able to eschew sin and build authentic relationships.⁸ There are real ties here to what we heard and discussed in the first plenary, and in the second. Now, this is not a unique insight. As I said, the desert mothers and fathers built on Greek philosophical practices, and the basic idea gets carried along through history into scholastic thought and the *devotio moderna*, through Jesuit spirituality and into the contemporary world in all kinds of ways, broadening as it goes—especially as we have come to appreciate the importance of differences in culture, and other ways of belonging as central to how people understand the world. The contemporary Lonerganian summation of this, of course, is the insight that "genuine objectivity is the fruit of an authentic subjectivity," a quote that I have heard many of you in this room use.⁹ And I thank you for it. It captures the heart of the monastic insight.

Now, beyond individual self-understanding, if our Society is to work together meaningfully, we need to renew our communal self-understanding, an authentic common subjectivity that does not sideline or ignore or not know about other parts of our society. Sometimes, in our conversations with each other, we sometimes do not take the time to speak about the subjectivities that sit behind and inside and alongside

⁵ See also Otto H. Pesch, "Existential and Sapiential Theology—The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas," in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 61-82. Of course, many contemporary forms of theological engagement also foreground the location of the theologian as a key aspect of theology. I am grateful to our many colleagues in the CTSA, for helping us a a society to consider this important aspect.

⁶ See John Cassian, "Conference V," in John Cassian, *The Conferences*, ed. and trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Newman Press, 1997), 183-204.

⁷ The most repeated among the apophthegmata of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, "sit in the cell and the cell will teach you everything," is found with several variations throughout the sayings. See Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975).

⁸ See, among many others, as a helpful introduction with primary attention to the psychological aspects of the desert tradition, Anselm Grün, *Heaven Begins Within You: Wisdom from the Desert Fathers* (New York: Crossroads, 1999). The monastics saw their project as cultivating the wholeness, or "purity of heart" referenced in the Beatitude found in Matthew 5:8.

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 272.

our conversations. We sometimes try to pretend that these things do not matter, or are already understood, or are less important, less theological. Foregrounding first person dialogue may help us to, over time, renew our "first-person plural" self-understanding, as we come to know the actual joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties which we bear.

As you have your table conversations, I would encourage you to attend to where they are going, and should they get too far into the "third person" to guide them back to the realm of conversations about this shared experience. Less "Catholic theology must center sacramental thinking, because . . ." and more "the sacraments have always been an important font of my theological thinking because. . ."

Within this conversation, we are talking about experiences, which can differ without one being "wrong." Our goal is understanding. When experiences differ, they do not necessarily contradict each other. The fact that it is raining in San Antonio does not mean that the same is true in Portland, or even in another part of San Antonio. All of those experiences together are part of what we are doing. We cannot properly theorize together about what we are and should be doing until we have a better understanding of what it is that is happening in the lives of theologians, lay and ordained, differently gendered, formed in a variety of cultures, active in the parish and not, central and peripheral to the public life of the church.

We should remain attentive to how questions of gender, race and culture, lay and clerical state, and our various working positions affect the subjectivity that we bring to these questions. But, let me flag one more difference that we less often—in my experience in CTSA—attend to. Generational patterns matter for not only our understanding of what is happening, but also our sense of how the pieces of culture, theology, and church fit together. And especially for what the experience of being in the theological academy is like. The last seventy years have been times of regular, continuing change, and the experience of our colleagues who entered the academy in the seventies is different from the nineties, let alone today. It seems that the length of time between generations in this sense is shrinking, with major changes coming in response to changes in church, including papal and synodal changes, in the world, including the shifts in the shape of the academy, and in society as a whole. Already twenty years ago, when I lived in intentional religious community, generational difference was one of the most difficult aspects to manage in community life, and I think that this is getting more, not less, difficult. Especially as there are several key before-and-after moments in our common US academic life in recent memory. Just to name a few among many: we might consider how 9/11, the 2008 crash, the 2016 election, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2024 election have each divided our world into a "before" and an "after." And how each affected people's experience differently depending on where in their career they were when it happened.

We have not always been as welcoming as a society to new members, or to newer ways of asking and answering questions. I have, over the last couple of years, heard a number of colleagues, say that much of what the CTSA is doing now "is not theology." On the other hand, I have heard from some of you that in your departments, colleagues may be skeptical of theology itself as a project and want us to focus more completely on religious studies or other related methodologies. Who we are and where our vocation/s calls us are themselves questions today.

As a final complexity, we are a society that approaches many questions by many different methodological routes. We will not always be equally polished in our

applications as we figure it out, and some of them will last better than others. And this application will take us work and time to do well. So, we may need to bear with each other for a bit when something in particular does not work. We cultivate our discipline together, as a shared “practice”—which means sometimes not being perfect. As my favorite Karl Rahner quip about theology goes: “is the attempt to jump over a ditch only interesting once the jumper has cleared the trench and we can be certain that he will not fall into it?”¹⁰

I have certainly presented papers here that I later understood to be flawed. I am sure most of us have. And it does not mean that we cannot or should not critique each other’s arguments. But “that isn’t theology” shuts down the conversation rather than opening a path to better understanding. So, in first person dialog, we might instead ask, “Why is this important to you? And, what theological work do you see it doing?”

My last encouragement is to be attentive to your emotions during this conversation. Emotions are data about experience—and worth considering not only so that we are not entirely driven by them in ways that might make a conversation more difficult, but also because they are warning signs about things to attend to, engage with, and not miss.

I cannot claim to know what will come out of this conversation, but I hope that it will help us to fund later more theoretical conversations about what we are doing together and what we want that to look like in the future.

On your table you will find some questions to get you started.¹¹ Please do attend to rooting your conversations in experience and listen for what your table mates are saying. In the large group conversation at the end, I will ask you to primarily report what you heard other people saying, rather than sharing your own insights.

Thank you.

CECILIA GONZÁLEZ-ANDRIEU – RESPONSE

To listen attentively does not only include hearing but also observing the dynamics at work in a group. Accordingly, my first observations have to do with group dynamics, which are often subtle, but which clearly affect the outcome of conversations.

During this exercise a significant number of people self-selected into racially/ethnically homogenous groups. This revealed two things. First, that cross-cultural conversations are difficult and most of us value the relative ease of being with members of our own community. And second, those present at this session of our CTSA convention were majority White. The tables of colleagues of color were two or three at the most. We must attend to the urgency of ethnic and racial issues in an atmosphere where most of the gains of the last decades have been erased.

I also observed that there was a tendency to defer to senior people to intervene first and more extensively in their remarks. I do not think this was purposeful on the part of senior colleagues wanting to dominate the conversations, but rather the hesitancy of early career colleagues to take a lead in speaking. There was also acknowledgement by some White/male/clergy colleagues that their experience of privilege might make them

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, *An Ecumenical Priesthood, the Spirit of God and the Structure of the Church*, trans. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2022), 3.

¹¹ Reproduced in the introduction at the beginning of this plenary.

less sensitive to the scarcity and precarity of our field right now. We must attend to the power dynamics and differences in privilege associated with the academy.

Generational differences and their consequences were also apparent, as sharing of the "*memoria histórica*" of our vocation and profession needs to be nurtured and preserved. I heard the richness of listening to the stories of women religious and how decisions of some of their superiors nurtured the first wave of women theologians who came largely from the ranks of religious congregations. The study of theology was understood by these women as a deepening of the baptismal call. As vocations to religious life continue to dwindle, how might we purposefully encourage preferential options for supporting the education of women scholars?

The relationship with the institutional church also came up often, with questions regarding CTSA's relationship to bishops, individually and as a conference, and how we might strengthen those relationships, especially because most theologians are now lay people.

In terms of identities and vocations. Some colleagues expressed how, even if they were ordained, their identity as "teacher-scholar" was fundamental and primary. However, younger colleagues working at secular institutions brought up the resistance to theology as a discipline in their universities given theology's commitment to constructive work (not just deconstruction) and to retrieving and using sources from the tradition (not just discarding them). To confront this treatment of our field as not sufficiently rigorous or objective, it is most helpful to gather as theologians and support each other as scholars at conferences and also as people of faith beyond academic settings.

Additionally, there was a sense that continuing to be tethered to our communities, their devotions and ways of expressing faith keeps our theological work grounded and nourishes it. It is especially fruitful to accompany communities from the peripheries, where the view of what is happening is much clearer than it is from the center. Although some had initially been hesitant to leave their direct service pastoral work for advanced studies, it eventually became clear that this was a both/and with the ecclesial experience enriching the academic questions and vice versa. A word of caution was sounded at the fallacy of prioritizing difficult scholarly discourse in our publishing because this makes the important issues we are discussing inaccessible to the communities we should be serving.

Who and how we serve students was also a question, as some noted that there is a crop of recent students who identify as staunch traditionalists and arrive with a mindset of certainty that makes intellectual growth difficult. This rise in traditionalism and the current political climate are also in direct conflict with the work and specialties many of us, especially theologians of color and women, are doing.

Colleagues from places where Christianity is a minority expressed the salutary effects of interreligious dialogue and the way this stretched their scholarship. There was also an observation that due to the growing evidence that religious commitments and questions are at play in a multiplicity of disciplines, colleagues in those disciplines outside of theology might ask for our help initially and such collaborations can be fruitful. However, there is also the danger that theology faculty positions might be lost, as other disciplines claim expertise in religious questions.

As some spoke about urgent issues such as immigration, climate change and animal rights, colleagues foregrounded the urgency of starting with the questions our

communities are asking. Our students need to be met where they are, even if that is a very unstable place. There was also an appreciation for the sometimes exhausting complexity of our role in that we might have to question, prod and critique in multiple ways: our communities of faith and their unexamined preconceptions, the positions and priorities of the institutional church, and also the position and priorities of our own educational institutions.

In the end, it was clear that at least a majority of those participating in this session saw being theologians as a vocation and not merely a job. There was a commitment to having a “plan B” as resources dwindle, which would make our talents and training available beyond academia, in teaching at other levels, with other communities and helping with community organizing. Even if our field seems precarious right now, our commitment to this work is robustly anchored in a desire to serve.

ELYSE RABY – RESPONSE

1. What stood out to me from Jakob’s opening remarks is simply how vulnerable we all are, or feel. Even setting aside the current political context which makes many among us vulnerable to political and physical violence and discrimination. *All* of us likely feel the precarity of the future of higher education, the humanities, and the place of religion and theology in curricula.

2. I think a response to vulnerability, one that perhaps underlies our conversations about who we are and what theology is, is a desire to feel *valued*. We all want to know that we as scholars, and that our scholarship, is *valued* by the communities for which we write *and by the academy*. That sense of being valued can be expressed in many forms—having articles accepted to top journals, having your book reviewed, having paper proposals accepted. It also means seeing work that is *like* yours being welcomed and celebrated in these venues. We want to know that our work might be valuable even if we are still doctoral students, or early in our career, or not on a tenure line. We want to know that our work might be valuable even as we age, and even after our names have been read at the CTSA memorial service.

3. As I listened in to table conversations, I heard three themes. First, the affirmation of our work as a vocation and a gift. I heard one person say “I love, love, love this.” I heard others describe the initial joy in realizing that theology has a place for them—whether that original spark of joy was five years ago or fifty years ago. Second, we experience a multiplicity of vocations at the same time. Most of us function as scholars and as teachers at the same time. These are distinct vocations with distinct demands. Third, we experience a multiplicity of vocations over a lifetime. I heard stories of teaching careers that began in seminaries or other ministerial contexts but now are focused on undergraduates; I heard stories of focusing on teaching early in one’s career and rediscovering being a *learner* again later; I heard that subject areas, interests, and methodologies change over time as we do our work. As a final note, I heard that a lot of us do this work of teaching and scholarship in a culture that does not value a common search for truth and in educational institutions that don’t always value theology/religious studies.

Presidential Address
BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE ERUPTION
OF EVIL, AND A RECKONING FOR THEOLOGY

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

Some twenty years ago my mother asked me, as she does each year, what I wanted for Christmas. Through the grace of God, I asked for a copy of my baptismal certificate. After framing it, I hung on the wall in my university office at Boston College and, more recently, at Loyola Marymount University, there alongside my framed diplomas. It is as important as any other credential for my work as a theologian. My baptismal certificate serves as a living symbol and constant reminder that I have committed myself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, as one among the priesthood of all believers.

* * *

This year has seen a growing sense of uncertainty, angst, and even anger; many of us feel as if tectonic plates are shifting beneath our feet. Yesterday, June 14, 2025, here in Portland, as well as in several major cities across this country, there were large ongoing “No Kings” protests and demonstrations. Such brings to my mind Pope Francis’ 2023 apostolic letter, *Ad Theologiam Promovendam*. In it, Francis urges theologians to consider that, “To promote theology in the future, we cannot limit ourselves to abstractly re-proposing formulas and schemes from the past. Called to prophetically interpret the present and to see new itineraries for the future, in the light of revelation, theology will have to deal with profound cultural transformations, aware that: ‘what we are experiencing is not simply an era of change, but a *change of era*.’”¹ His words read presciently in our moment when we may feel that our world is in the midst of a *change of era*. Are we living at the dawn of a crucible of theology?

To be sure, we live in a time when it is no longer possible to ignore that *all* theology carries political dimensions. Without question this is so because all theology attempts to shape and direct human action. As we develop theological claims, we must confront the question, “Whose interest do specific theological doctrines and ideas

¹ Francis, *Ad Theologiam Promovendam* (November 1, 2023), § 1 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378710067 AD THEOLOGIAM PROMOVENDAM On Promoting Theology - English Translation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378710067_AD_THEOLOGIAM_PROMOVENDAM_On_Promoting_Theology_-_English_Translation).

serve?”² While always important, this question takes on greater significance in a human context of rapid, consequential, and multivalent societal change. Indeed, as theology continues to offer interpretations of God and if they are to be relevant, then the societal context in which such interpretations are offered matters immensely. As we know, theology invariably “reflects and reinforces just or unjust political arrangements,” and, thus, we must be critically aware of and strive to expose the ways in which “theological discourse reproduces inequalities of class, gender or race, and [accordingly, we must strive] to reconstruct theology so that it serves the cause of justice.”³ If we do not ask ourselves, *whose material interest is being served by our theological constructs*, then our work will end up inadvertently reproducing the social conditions of the context in which it was created.⁴ While the question, *whose interest*, is always important—with the intensifying and expanding attacks on human dignity and the common good—this question is preeminent.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit rightly commands greater theological attention in our time as evil continues to erupt and proliferate in our world. Evil today takes form in the manifold destruction of our social bonds. Baptism in the Holy Spirit emboldens Christian disciples to subvert such evil, thus making, what I call, the *charism of shared life* more potent in our world. In brief, the *charism of shared life* is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, it is the gift of love for the great community of all human beings—past, present, and future—and of love for the great community of all that comprises the natural world, again, past, present, and future. The *charism of shared life* is the potent manifestation of the reign of God in the here and now.

The first section of what follows clarifies the distinctiveness and significance of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the ways in which it ignites passion for realizing the *charism of shared life*. Through the development of a *pneumatological imagination*, zeal for the *charism of shared life* grows. However, the recognition of and foundation of our shared life is being thoroughly undermined today by the fracturing of our social bonds, the focus of the next section. This fracturing of social bonds evinces the presence and proliferation of evil. The third and final section argues that in the face of this evil, the whole of theology finds itself at the threshold of a crucible, a time in which the nature of theological work unavoidably confronts the most severe of tests. Baptism in the Holy Spirit points the way forward. Baptism in the Holy Spirit emboldens disciples to subvert the spreading evil, making visible and affirming our love for the great community of all human beings and all of God’s creatures. In brief, what follows

² Marsha Aileen Hewitt, “Critical Theory” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 455.

³ William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott, “Introduction,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 3. Or, said another way by Metz when he wrote, “Since the theology of the world is not a mere theology of the cosmos nor a mere transcendental theology of the human person and existence, but a theology of the emerging political and social order, the theology of the world must be a political theology.” Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 96.

⁴ Hewitt, “Critical Theory,” 455-56, italics in the original. In this quotation Hewitt is citing Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 316, 315.

examines three questions: In this moment, is a greater focus on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit needed? Are we being confronted by an escalating intensification of evil? Does this time of reckoning demand of theology a reordered account of itself?

I. THE OUTPOURING OF BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the gospels, Pauline epistles, and especially in Acts of the Apostles, Baptism in the Spirit is regularly named as related to yet also somewhat distinct from baptism with water. For example, in each of the synoptic Gospels there are passages such as "John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'" (Lk 3:16, NRSV, used throughout). In Mark, Jesus asks his disciples, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mk 10:38-39) In the Gospel of John, the Baptizer shares "I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 1:33). And later, Jesus explains to Nicodemus, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (Jn 3:5). In addition, throughout the Acts, Baptism in the Holy Spirit remains a constant theme, such as in the passage that reads, "For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5; 11:16). Each of these suggest a relationship as well as a distinction.

Relatedly, the theme of the Holy Spirit and oneness or communion is evident in the Epistles. In 1 Corinthians we read: "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). And elsewhere in the epistles, baptism implies an entry into Jesus' death and resurrection: "When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). These passages imply that Baptism in the Spirit portends a greater weightiness or intensity.

Before turning to the questions, 'What does Baptism in the Holy Spirit mean?' and, 'How is it particularly significant today?' recall that the scriptures impart that during the fifty days after Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, and before Pentecost, the disciples are fearful, doubtful, uncertain, and even timid. They hid behind locked doors (Jn 20:19-29). Yet, on the day of Pentecost, when they are gathered in one place waiting, wondering, and praying, the Spirit is poured out on them. They receive the Holy Spirit and are transformed. The disciples begin to act boldly, with zeal and courage. The fear that paralyzed them no longer does. They are fearless in the face of death, fearless in the face of evil (Acts 2:14-40, 4:8-12).

What is more, Acts teaches that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is *not* a one-time event but is recorded as a recurring event throughout Acts. Both Luke and Acts make clear that the coming of the Spirit is to be "understood as a divine promise that is realized progressively, but only partially, in Acts as a whole."⁵

⁵ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986), 29-30.

Accordingly, the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has and will continue to occur throughout history and until the second coming.

This plenary affirms that Baptism in the Holy Spirit refers to a deep personal encounter with the gifts of the Holy Spirit *already received* through the sacraments of Christian initiation, Baptism and Confirmation, yet it indicates a more mature reception of these gifts. With this deep personal encounter often comes a preeminent experience of Jesus as God incarnate as well as a personal experience of God's overflowing love that heals and liberates. This personal encounter may be accompanied by a powerful and more visceral awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit working within one's life. According to Ralph Martin: "If we were to be more precise, we would not talk of *receiving* the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but of *renewing* the Baptism in the Spirit."⁶ He identifies this interpretation as, "Baptism in the Spirit and Christian Initiation."

Yet, this is not the only interpretation of Baptism in the Spirit. Some theologians, for example Francis Sullivan, among others, hold that it refers to "A Special Sending of the Spirit, Distinct from Christian Initiation." This interpretation indicates that some of the baptized receive special graces from the Holy Spirit and others do not, even though all have received the sacraments of initiation. Indeed, this interpretation seems to suggest that only a select few are being sent forth by the Holy Spirit and thus, not every baptized Christian.

A third interpretation, one advanced by Peter Hocken, can be titled, "An Eschatological Outpouring for World Evangelization in Light of the Lord's Return." This interpretation focuses on the outpouring of the Spirit as signaling the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies to Israel and the culmination of the age in which we are living. Obviously, much more could be said of each of these three interpretations.⁷

To go deeper, the first interpretation, Baptism in the Spirit and Christian Initiation, affirms the Spirit as present and ready to encourage, prod, guide, and inspire us in our desire to know more of God. It recognizes "a release or renewal or actualization of the graces given in baptism and confirmation that have hitherto remained dormant,"⁸ and affirms that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have remained limited in their effects because many who are baptized have a limited understanding, desire, and/or will for God.

The substance of this interpretation has been also articulated and supported by Yves Congar, notably in the initial chapters of the second volume of his magisterial work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, where he affirms that

it is not disputed that there is only one 'baptism' and that this baptism, given and received in faith, in the name of Jesus, communicated the Spirit. What, then, is involved here?" He further confirms that "'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' is not something replacing baptism and confirmation. Rather it may be seen as an adult re-affirmation and renewal of these sacraments. An opening of ourselves to all their sacramental graces. The gesture of 'laying on of hands' which often accompanies 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' is

⁶ Ralph Martin, "A New Pentecost? Catholic Theology and 'Baptism in the Spirit,'" *Logos* 14, no. 3 (2011): 18, italics added.

⁷ Martin, "A New Pentecost," 21-36.

⁸ Martin, "A New Pentecost," 36.

not a new sacramental rite. It is a fraternal gesture of love and concern, a visible sign of human corporeality (K. and D. Ranaghan, op. cit., p. 20).⁹

In addition, Baptism in the Spirit raises the additional questions, what is the mission of the Spirit? and how is this mission to be interpreted and discerned? The mission of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit are wholly consonant with one another and functionally united, and yet, according to Congar, each expresses their mission in a particular way. The mission of the Word, the Son, is visible in that the Son "who was an expression of the being of God the Father (Heb 1:3), was a human appearance of God," that is, "the personal and substantial reality of the Word made flesh,"¹⁰ and there are also "invisible missions of the Word in the effects of grace through which God expresses himself and makes himself known. In the same way, there are also invisible missions of the Spirit in the effects of grace by which God gives himself in order to make himself love and to make us love all the things of his love: 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us' (Rom 5:5)."¹¹ Significant here remains the particular way the Holy Spirit expresses her mission, making God's love known to all.

If God gives of God's self in love to all that is, to all of creation, then, all that is is interconnected through the outpouring of God's love. God's love is the origin, source and summit of the interrelatedness of all that is. The Holy Spirit expresses her mission by incessantly encouraging all human beings to love all that God loves. Accordingly, the Spirit strives to move, evoke, prod, animate, and vivify all human beings, heightening our awareness of and love for the whole of God's interconnected creation, yet acting on our love in the specific context of our lives. The unceasing and insistent movement of the Spirit strives to magnify our recognition of and appreciation of our interrelatedness extending to the interrelatedness of all that is.

Moreover, throughout the Catholic tradition many towering theologians have recognized and examined the interrelatedness of all that is. Often the Spirit is acknowledged for her essential role in animating us to make obviously visible the communion of all. For example, in his work, Irenaeus (125-202 CE) emphasizes the unity of all things in heaven and on earth, and he claims that the Spirit is the "co-instituting" principle of the church.¹² For Origen (185-253 CE) creation *is* the Word incarnate, a claim that leads him to describe a universal *apokatastasis*, or universal reconciliation, again affirming the interrelatedness of all that is.¹³ Another example, in his *De Trinitate*, Augustine (354-430 CE) elucidates the Spirit as love, as both giver

⁹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, tans. David Smith, orig. pub. 1979-80 (New York: Crossroad Herder Publishing, 2015), 198. The Ranaghans have provided a clear answer to this question. The quote within this quote was taken from Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), 148.

¹⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 8.

¹¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 8.

¹² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 9. Congar draws on Irenaeus' *Demonstration (or Proof) of Apostolic Preaching*, 41.

¹³ Origen, *On First Principles*.

and gift, and as actively furthering the trinitarian communion.¹⁴ Much more recently, theologians as diverse as Dietrich Bonhoeffer,¹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar,¹⁶ Víctor Codina,¹⁷ and Elizabeth Johnson,¹⁸ among others, all affirm and examine the interrelatedness or communion of all that is.

Because the Spirit's mission is to encourage a consciousness of the interrelatedness of all that is, the Spirit is, accordingly, co-creator of the church. In discussing the Spirit's work of co-creation Congar makes a key clarification in how we are to understand this work, noting that through the Spirit, Jesus remains actively present to us throughout history and does not leave us orphans. Moreover, he claims: "This activity of the Lord with and through his Spirit cannot be reduced to a mere making present of the structures of the covenant proposed by Christ while he was on earth, that is, before he ceased to be visibly and tangibly present. *It is the source of a new element in history.*"¹⁹ Congar invites us to consider: what is this *new element* in history? Throughout Part I of his second volume, he argues that the "The Holy Spirit Makes the Church One" and that the Spirit "Is the Principle of Communion."²⁰ Relatedly, he argues that the Spirit is central to each of the four marks of the church from the Nicene Creed, as we know, "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." Even so, since Vatican II there remains an outsized emphasis on the ecclesial dimensions of the Spirit. Even Congar's magisterial work, argues Codina, comments almost exclusively "on the action of the Spirit in our personal lives and in the Church."²¹ Yet, several biblical passages suggest that the Spirit moves in history and in the cosmos.²² Indeed, the Holy Spirit continually acts in the world, in history, and in the cosmos, as a source animating communion, animating forgiveness and resurrection.²³

Relatedly, the Holy Spirit acts dynamically through the imagination bringing about greater communion with God, with one another, with all of creation. In John McIntyre's words: "The Holy Spirit is God's imagination let loose and working with all the freedom of God in the world and in the lives, the words and actions, of the men

¹⁴ Saint Augustine, *The Trinity – De Trinitate*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), Book XV.

¹⁵ John de Gruchy, "Introduction: The Development of Bonhoeffer's Theology," in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ*, ed. John de Gruchy (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1987), 4.

¹⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, Vol. III: Creator Spirit*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Víctor Codina, *Creo en el Espíritu Santo: Pneumatología narrativa* (Bilbao, España: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1994).

¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson. *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Elizabeth A. Johnson. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

¹⁹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol 2, 12 italics is mine.

²⁰ The first quote is the title of Part I of the second volume of Congar's *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. And the second is a portion of the title of Chapter 2 of Part I.

²¹ Víctor Codina, *No extingáis el Espíritu: Un iniciación a la Pneumatología* (Bilbao, España: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2008), 161.

²² Codina, *No extingáis el Espíritu*, 162.

²³ Codina, *Creo en el Espíritu Santo*, 25.

and women of our time."²⁴ The Spirit works by incessantly prodding all human beings to develop a more capacious *pneumatological imagination*, an imagination that arises from encounters with the dynamism of the Holy Spirit and an imagination that ardently loves the great community of all that is.

Said differently, the Spirit, who infuses the world and animates all creatures, including human beings, may be understood as the *Interpreter Spirit* who constantly seeks to reconcile all of us to one another through ongoing processes of interpretation, bringing all into greater communion with God, with one another, with all creation. In other words, the Interpreter Spirit incessantly seeks to build the *beloved community*, another term for the Reign of God.²⁵ In sum, the mission of the Holy Spirit is to encourage greater consciousness of, commitment to, and love for our interrelatedness, by animating the development of a *pneumatological imagination*, an imagination that enables humanity to realize and actualize the *charism of shared life*. Indeed, the *charism of shared life* is not simply one among many gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is *the* gift of the Holy Spirit that holds pride of place. Baptism in the Holy Spirit animates an ardent desire to concretely realize the *charism of shared life* in this time and in this place.

While the Holy Spirit animates the *charism of shared life*, this charism is actualized most consequentially in the face of evil, evil in the form of forces that seek to destroy community, destroy human beings, and destroy all that constitutes the common good. A discussion of this evil follows.

II. BREAKING SOCIAL BONDS, THE ERUPTION OF EVIL

Since we met in June of 2024, many among feel as if they no longer recognize the world we live in, a kind of dread and for some even outrage has set in, brought on by escalating injustice. As mentioned above, it is as if we *all* live on a geological fault line, with tectonic plates rapidly and roughly shifting beneath our feet. The varied and numerous changes have come on so fast that it is difficult to make sense of and effectively respond to what is happening. The numerous changes collectively are leading to the destruction of our *social bonds* and, thus, the destruction of our *trust* in social institutions and in one another. For those who live in the *periferias*, in the peripheries of our world, acute suffering is escalating. Four examples illustrate this point.

First, throughout 2025, US government attacks on immigrants have sharply increased in intensity and become far more numerous and widespread, destroying families and traumatizing children. The US government has targeted Latina/o immigrants, as well as other immigrants, using them as scapegoats for all manner of social problems. This has resulted in Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE's)

²⁴ Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 123. The quote is from John McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1987), 64.

²⁵ Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, orig. pub. 1918 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 121-142, 297-319. See also Daniel G. Lang, "Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, Jr., "Christian Realism, Pacifism, and the Beloved Community," *International Relations and Diplomacy* 8, no. 1 (2020): 1-13.

militarized style of workplace raids in businesses in Los Angeles and elsewhere,²⁶ in the random, unlawful deportation and incarceration of immigrants like Salvadoran Kilmar Abrego Garcia, among others,²⁷ and in the terrorizing and abuse of children.²⁸ This echoes and amplifies the reign of evil, terror, and death that began with the US government's family separation and detention of tens of thousands of migrant children at our southern border which reached a new level of terror in the late 2010s. During this time, US officials separated Mexican and Central American children from their parents and families, traumatizing these children certainly for decades to come, perhaps all their lives.²⁹ These attacks severely damage children and, further, they sow seeds of suspicion and hatred targeting immigrants, creating the perception that immigrants are a social pariah to be scorned and that they are essentially criminals.

Second, our social bond with all creatures of the natural world and with planet earth have been under attack for some time. For decades now, scientists and scholars have called our attention to the ways human expectations and patterns of consumption shaped by unrestrained capitalism have seriously damaged planet earth, limiting and compromising its life sustaining processes, including its ability to sustain human life. Indeed, today the term "Capitalocene" signifies the onset of the climate crisis produced by the ongoing expansion of unbridled capitalism. More recently, a change in US government policies have destroyed much-needed environmental protections that took decades to achieve.³⁰ Now, at an accelerated rate, planet earth continues to grow warmer and these higher temperatures have led to much more severe weather patterns around the globe and a much dryer climate.³¹ For example, in January of 2025, the city of Los Angeles experienced apocalyptic wildfires, fourteen in all, the two largest

²⁶ See, for example, Kim Tong-Hyng and Russ Bynum, "Raid nets 475 people at Hyundai site in Georgia," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 2025, A5; Andrea Castillo, "Region's migrant arrests top 1,600 in June," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2025, A5; Brittny Mejia, "'You're scared to be brown,'" *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2025, A1; Raul A. Reyes, "Alligator Alcatraz, the Florida concentration camp," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2025, A11; Melissa Goldin, "Numbers dispute Trump's claim that he targets 'worst' immigrants," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2025, A1; Zurie Pope, "ICE raid map finds racial profiling," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2025, B3; Jenny Jarvie and Gabrielle LaMarr LeMee, "L.A. raids go beyond 'worst of the worst,'" *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2025, A1, among many other articles.

²⁷ See, for example, Robin Abcarian, "The absurd persecution of Kilmar Abrego Garcia," *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 2025, A15; Brittny Mejia, "Deaf, mute, terrified – and shipped to Texas by ICE," *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 2025, A1; Wendy Fry, "ICE release deaf immigrant after months," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2025, B2, among many other articles.

²⁸ See, for example, Marsha Griffin, Alan Shapiro and Julie M. Linton, "Family separation 2.0 compounds the trauma on children," *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 2025, A13; Jenny Gold, "In response to L.A. raids, parents prepare for the worst," *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 2025, A1, among many other articles.

²⁹ Jacob Soboroff, *Separated: Inside an American Tragedy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021).

³⁰ One group that has worked for over twenty years on environmental issues, *Catholic Climate Covenant*, has seen much of their decades long work to protect the environment rolled back with the current administration's policies. See <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>. I am grateful to Elizabeth A. Johnson for bringing this to my attention.

³¹ Ian James and Sean Greene, "Fresh water is disappearing and much of the world is getting drier," *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 2025, A1.

burning for twenty-four days straight. The Palisades Fire began on January 7 and by the twenty-seventh of the month, it was still only 94 percent contained. At that time, more than 23,400 acres had been burnt and more than 6,800 structures destroyed. The population living in the area that was burned was more than 121,000 people. The other large fire, the Eaton Fire, began on January 8 and by the twenty-seventh, it was 98 percent contained, with more than 14,000 acres burnt and more than 9,400 structures destroyed. The population living in this area was more than 141,000 people.³² In response to the Los Angeles wildfires, those with the means to do so can at least potentially attempt to rebuild their lives in Los Angeles or elsewhere as they wish. However, the poor have few choices; they either end up homeless or are forced to relocate far from Los Angeles. Relatedly, the air quality for those living in Los Angeles has declined because of these fires, and, of course, this impacts the economically poor more severely. The blessings of the earth, like clean air, are no longer available for everyone to enjoy.

Moreover, our social bonds are increasingly strained between generations. Many middle aged and older adults have enjoyed the benefits of a mature capitalist economy, and this older population will, for the most part, pass on well before the damage done to planet earth severely impacts their quality of life on earth. In contrast, younger adults in their twenties and thirties will inevitably confront the consequences of climate change and a damaged earth, one far less able to sustain flourishing lives for human beings. Today, younger adults are questioning what kind of world will exist in twenty or thirty years. Will there be a world that can sustain them, much less any children they may have? Will the world of the future be able to sustain children born today? Is bringing children into an increasingly diminished world an expression of love for them? Is it compassionate to have children? While these may seem vexing and even absurd questions, many young adults consider them to be prudent and deserving of consideration.³³

A third example is found in the US government wholesale attack on US universities and colleges and their commitment to academic freedom and critical thinking. These attacks break down our social bonds in that they undermine the free and open pursuit of research contributing to the growth, improvement, and prosperity of humanity. This kind of research is undermined through the government's weaponizing of the availability of research grants. Increasingly, government grants funding various university research projects are only available to those universities and

³² See, for example, Laura J. Melson, "24 Hours That Changed Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 2025, A1; Hannah Fry and Brittny Mejia, "Altadena's Black residents hit harder by fire, study says," *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 2025, A1; Corinne Purtill and Rosanna Xia, "Blazes may worsen ocean pollution," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 2025, A1; Tony Briscoe and Ian James, "Safety worries amid toxic cleanup," *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 2025, A1; Nathan Fenno, Melody Gutierrez, and Paige St. John, "Escape from the Palisades," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 2025, A1; Ian James, "How climate change worsened wildfires," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2025, B1.

³³ Timothy Wainwright, "Living Faithfully in an Age of Ecological Crisis: A Maximus-Inspired Vision for Gen Z," (master's thesis, Loyola Marymount University, 2025).

projects which support the current administration political agenda.³⁴ Accordingly, universities (and other types of institutions and businesses) with a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Anti-Racism (DEI/AR) are losing millions of dollars.³⁵

In addition, the banning of books has been yet another strategy employed by the US government. This strategy has been used to target books advancing critical race theory, gender studies, studies in racism, critical readings of history, LGBTQ+ studies, and more. Indeed, former CTSA president, Bryan Massingale had his book, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*,³⁶ banned from the US Naval Academy Library. Furthermore, 381 books addressing gender, sexual identities, and racism have been banned from this same library.³⁷ The Naval Academy's library, at the order of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, has decided that Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is banned, while Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is not. The library is keeping on its shelves all books that defend white power and white supremacy.³⁸ Again, these attacks sow seeds of hatred and distrust targeting any person who is not white, causing a serious breakdown of US society and its diversity. These strategies encourage and support a US version of apartheid or the encroachment of an even more nefarious outcome.

Fourth and finally, violence against woman because they are women represents one of the most malevolent attacks on our social bonds. Women of color disproportionately experience these attacks. There exists a social imaginary or tacit mindset that ranks human beings, ensuring that men and women experience being human as part of a human hierarchy. The Christian tradition has played an outsized role in influencing the so-called legitimacy of this ranking. As Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite makes clear,

The Christian theological contribution to violence against women was specifically to charge women as 'disproportionately responsible for sin.' While Genesis origin stories imply this, it is the New Testament narratives where this particular theological connection is

³⁴ Jaweed Kaleem, "Trump order stokes campus anxiety," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 2025, B1; Michael Casey, "Plaintiffs in suit say Trump's campus crackdown has silenced scholars," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2025, A14.

³⁵ Byron Tau, "Education crackdown at commuter college," *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2025, A6; Jonathan J. Cooper, "How Trump is weaponizing the government," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 2025, A2; Erwin Chemerinsky, "Why California universities must fight Trump in court," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 2025, A13

³⁶ Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010)

³⁷ John Ismay, "These Are the 381 Books Removed From the Naval Academy Library," *New York Times*, April 4, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/04/us/politics/naval-academy-dei-books-removed.html>; John Ismay and Kate Selig, "Naval Academy Takes Steps to End Diversity Policies in Books and Admissions," *New York Times*, March 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/28/us/politics/naval-academy-diversity-affirmative-action.html>.

³⁸ John Ismay, "Who's In and Who's Out at the Naval Academy's Library?," *New York Times*, April 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/11/us/politics/naval-academy-banned-books.html>.

made, such as in 'First Timothy 2:12-14' that reads, 'I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men. They must keep quiet. For Adam was created first and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and broke God's law.'³⁹

The impact of this mindset has found expression in varied forms. Indeed, the work of John Paul II in his theology of the body presumes that a benevolent patriarchy can encourage respect for women that is sufficiently beneficial for all. What his work does not critique is the operative ranking of human beings implied in a benevolent patriarchy. Indeed, this work attempts to sanitize the ranking of human beings. Such ranking can and has contributed to minimizing the heinous evil known as of femicide, the systematic killing of women because they are women. Femicide is *the* most extreme form of gender-based violence; it is the killing of women in large numbers; it is a form of killing that is notably brutal and sexualized; and it is killing in which perpetrators routinely experience impunity. It almost exclusively targets Brown, Black, Indigenous, and Asian women. What is more significant, femicide functions symbolically as a threat to all women, in particular any woman of color who challenges the very existence of a human hierarchy.

The evil of femicide exists in the United States as well as around the globe.⁴⁰ In the United States, femicide remains an invisible evil. Small pockets of scholars, some activists and a handful of communities are working to bring femicide in the US to public attention, but generally the US public remains unconscious of this US violence and killings motivated by gender. Such killings are, for the most part, perceived to be a problem in other countries but not in the United States. For example, in the United States as a whole, 60 to 71 percent of all Native Americans and Alaska Natives live in urban or rural areas that are *not* tribal land. Murdered and missing Native American women are *not* primarily reservation tragedies. The 2018 publication, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: A Snapshot of Data from 71 Urban Cities in the United States*, was written by Annita Lucchesi (Southern Cheyenne), a University of Arizona doctoral student, and Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), and produced by the Urban Indian Health Institute, a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board. It acknowledges more than 5,700 reports of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, yet "the US Department of Justice missing persons database has only reported 116 cases. The majority of these murders are committed by non-Native people on Native-owned land. The lack of communication, combined with jurisdictional issues between state, local, federal, and tribal law enforcement, make it nearly impossible to begin the investigative process."⁴¹ As a result, femicide continues with little to no public awareness or outcry. Reliable demographic information is difficult to come by.

³⁹ Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 129.

⁴⁰ For a theological discussion of femicide, see Nancy Pineda-Madrid, *Theologizing in an Insurgent Key: Violence, Women, Salvation*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2022); Nancy Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011)

⁴¹ Annita Lucchesi (Southern Cheyenne), PhD-c, and Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), MA, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: A Snapshot of Data from 71 Urban Cities in the United States*, Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board (October 2018),

It spreads because perpetrators conclude that some women's bodies are economically more valuable dead than alive, or, that women are, in the words of Achille Mbembe, "a species of life whose value is extra-economic, the only equivalent of which is the sort of death able to be inflicted upon it. As a rule, such death is something to which nobody feels any obligation to respond. Nobody even bears the slightest feelings of responsibility or justice toward this sort of life or, rather, death."⁴² The eruption of femicide is a quintessential example of necropolitics.⁴³ Femicide destroys the shared humanity of women and men, breaking our social bonds at the most fundamental level.

While the onset of any one of these four examples can significantly damage our social ties, collectively, they encourage one overarching goal. The goal is the breakdown of our social bonds and of society, the destruction of our shared humanity. Any strategy that foments distrust, discord, fear, and chaos, and that brings on the collapse of long-trusted social institutions, encourages within each of us an enmity toward one another and distrust of each other. Distrust amplifies differences among us and deepens the entrenched divisions separating us. Of course, there are many *other* current examples of societal breakdown, each deserving attention, each equally urgent and terrifying. As always, entrenched divisions lead to greater suffering for the *anawim* among us, that is, the poor, the lowly, the humble, and the vulnerable whose trust in God remains steadfast even amid more heightened difficulty.

Collectively these four examples signify an ongoing *sociocide*. Sociocide means destroying society, particularly by killing the social institutions, conventions, and infrastructure that create and sustain society in both public and personal spheres, as I have argued elsewhere.⁴⁴ In the 1980s, Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, coined the term, "sociocide," which he understood to be the intentional destruction of a society's social infrastructure. It refers to the killing of the social. Sociocide, while related to widely recognized terms such as "suicide, homicide, fratricide, regicide,...and,...genocide," does not necessarily mean the killing of one or many human beings. Sociocide, according to sociologist Keith Doubt, "means to kill society. [It] is the murdering of the social encompassing matters pertaining to human solidarity:

<http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>; See also Indian Affairs Department of the State of New Mexico, *New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force Report* (December 2020), https://www.iad.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NM_MMIWR_Report_FINAL_WEB_v120920.pdf.

⁴² Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran, orig. pub. 2016 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 38.

⁴³ Definition of Necropolitics: "To a large extent, racism is the driver of the necropolitical principle insofar as it stands for organized destruction, for a sacrificial economy, the functioning of which requires, on the one hand, a generalized cheapening of the price of life and, on the other, a habituation of loss. This principle is at work in the present-day process by which the permanent simulation of the state of exception justifies "the war against terror" – a war of eradication, indefinite, absolute, that claims the right to cruelty, torture, and indefinite detention—and so a war that draws its weapons from the "evil" that it pretends to be eradication, in a context in which the law and justice are applied in the form of endless reprisals, vengeance, and revenge." Taken from Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 38.

⁴⁴ Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 61-62, 113, 132, 137, 144.

family, social institutions, gender, ethnic, racial, and national identity."⁴⁵ Overall, Doubt's research on sociocide focuses on its relationship to wars.

More recently, in his 2025 book, sociologist Charles Derber clarifies sociocide specifically in relation to what is transpiring in the United States. He describes it as the destruction of "the personal and social relations in the workplace, household, and civil society—that support democracy and preserve the very existence of social life. Sociocide is an existential threat to the very survival of society itself, breaking down social connections, networks, and associations—forms of social capital—that are the fabric of a society and the foundation of democracy."⁴⁶ He further argues "that sociocidal forces are impacting people of all classes, races, and gender orientations in America, where sociocide has become a universalizing systemic threat."⁴⁷ In our national context, we are experiencing a "melt down [of] our collective social institutions like the workplace, the family, and the community. . . [that is a] burning down the social bones that keep a society together. The result is sociocide, an increasingly disconnected society lacking a 'we' and focused on the survival of the 'me.' It opens the door wide to political authoritarianism...[brought on by] the breakdown of social cohesion and civil society essential to democracy."⁴⁸ Derber's work addresses sociocide in relation to the political, or better said, in relation to *policide*, the destruction of the political. My own work on sociocide has been in relation to femicide and the development of a theological response.

Societies can thrive when members share a widely held commitment to a normative orientation such as *justice* or the *Golden Rule*. Broadly speaking, a normative orientation serves to establish trust among members of a society which, in turn, helps to preserve social order.⁴⁹ For protection against force and fraud, people within a given society give up, or at least significantly limit, their right to use force and fraud. Short of this kind of exchange human life becomes brutish and violent, accordingly life spans are shortened. When society is destroyed what is demolished is people's trust in their shared normative orientation and the security it provides.

Sociocide, the destruction of society, is advanced by attacks against not only specific groups of people but also by attacks on bonds of trust between people, by attacks on our *humanitas*, our disposition toward compassion and sympathy for others, by attacks on our shared pursuit of what is true, good, and beautiful, and by attacks on our drive to know more of ourselves, more of one another and more of our world. Sociocide breeds fear, mistrust, isolation, loneliness, and suspicion. It advances through the fomenting of ever greater experiences of chaos that overwhelm. With so many attacks on so many fronts happening relentlessly and rapidly, a kind of paralysis sets in leaving most human beings exhausted and unable to respond. Over time, chaos, exhaustion, and the enduring threat of terror and trauma can leave many longing for

⁴⁵ Keith Doubt, *Sociocide: Reflections on Today's Wars*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021), 1. See also Keith Doubt, *Understanding Evil: Lessons from Bosnia* (New York: Fordham University Press), 2006.

⁴⁶ Charles Derber, *Bonfire: American Sociocide, Broken Relations, and the Quest for Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2025), 1.

⁴⁷ Derber, *Bonfire: American Sociocide*, 1-2.

⁴⁸ Derber, *Bonfire: American Sociocide*, 3.

⁴⁹ Doubt, *Sociocide: Reflections on Today's Wars*, 3.

order and peace, ready to compromise democratic freedoms, thereby paving the way for an authoritarian, autocratic leader and for a police state that re-establishes order and seeming calm.

Of its very nature, sociocide signifies the intensification of evil. Recall that Augustine, Aquinas, and most Catholic theologians claim that evil is not something in itself but rather is the privation of the good. Therefore, as sociocide grows and gains momentum, becoming more entrenched, this phenomenon represents an escalation of evil. Obviously, the experience of evil invariably causes suffering, which likewise surges with the varied attacks on our social existence. Notably, sociocide represents a sustained assault on every one of the ten principles of Catholic Social Teaching.⁵⁰ This escalating and multifaceted destruction of our social existence is *the* predominant evil of our time. And arguably, nothing provokes terrifying uncertainty like the experience of evil.

Every time humans are confronted by evil, it demands some reckoning of us, yet to attempt as much represents a problematic challenge for two fundamental reasons. First, evil of its nature resists complete comprehension. As Richard Bernstein observes: “Interrogating evil falls in the space between two extremes. We cannot give up the desire to know, to understand, to comprehend the evil that we confront. If we did, we would never be able to decide how to respond to its manifestations. But we must avoid the extreme of deluding ourselves that total comprehension is possible.”⁵¹ Evil’s capacity to entice and command human attention results, in part, from its incomprehensibility. We stand transfixed in our disbelief, frozen, seemingly unable to respond until we fully understand the evil growing all around us, a pursuit which always frustrates.

Second, the banality of evil, that is, the experience of evil arising from thoughtless and/or bureaucratic-rule making and enforcement that renders evil’s appearance as neither monstrous nor demonic. The import of this insight is that, in the end, *it is not necessary for human beings to be motivated by evil in order to commit evil acts*. Hannah Arendt has much to teach on this point. As Dana Villa clarifies, Arendt’s

notion of the “banality of evil” was no pithy attempt at characterizing either the Holocaust or the actions and motivations of the perpetrators in general. It was, rather, a descriptive concept she was “put into possession of” when confronted by Eichmann in the flesh at his 1961 trial in Jerusalem. It was, in other words, the product of her *judgment of a particular* ---Eichmann. ... [S]he drew the following conclusion: extreme wickedness, pathology, or ideological conviction are not necessary for an individual to aid the

⁵⁰ The ten principles of Catholic Social Teaching are: (1) Dignity of the Human Person; (2) Common Good; (3) Solidarity; (4) Preferential Option for the Poor; (5) Stewardship of Creation; (6) Subsidiarity & the Role of Government; (7) Participation; (8) Rights & Responsibilities; (9) Economic Justice; (10) Peace. See Kenneth R. Himes, et. al., eds., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

⁵¹ Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Investigation* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 228.

performance of *infinite* evil. It was Eichmann's "extraordinary shallowness," his one distinguishing characteristic, which led Arendt to name an evil that required neither exceptional wickedness nor depravity, but only a profound lack of thought and judgment. "The banality of evil" named *Eichmann's* evil, not the evil of the perpetrators or the Holocaust in general.⁵²

What is important here is the numbing of the mind which allows for the cooperation of many thoughtless, bureaucratic minded people in the escalation of extreme evil, such as sociocide. Indeed, returning to Arendt's paradigmatic example of Eichmann, who is "a bureaucrat who claimed in his trial that he was just following orders and whose primary motivation was to move up the hierarchy."⁵³ Such a common motivation shared by so many of us can serve to numb the mind. One of the architects of the Holocaust, Heinrich Himmler, developed and frequently used axioms or catchphrases to convince subordinates that what they were doing was the right thing. He numbed his subordinates' minds with phrases like "My honor is my loyalty" or "These are battles which future generations will not have to fight again." Or with notions, such as a call to fulfill one's duty. Relatedly, the banality of evil challenges us to consider how the inadvertent participation in the escalation of evil later comes to be perceived as a "necessary evil" or an evil of lesser concern. The 2023 film, *The Zone of Interest*, illustrates this tenacious conundrum by focusing on the idyllic life of a family who lives in a beautiful home with a lovely garden just outside the walls of Auschwitz, a family whose livelihood is sustained by Auschwitz. But for Auschwitz, this family aspires to live a good and wholesome life. As Arendt presses,

It is indeed my opinion now that evil is never "radical," that it is only extreme[.] ... It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is "thought-defying," as I said because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its 'banality.' Only the good has depth and can be radical.⁵⁴

The enigma of evil requires that those who attempt to take the reality of evil seriously and then work to lessen evil's grip, must first take notice of the formidable challenge of evil's presence in sociocide. What is more, because evil defies comprehension and expands as a result of its banality, theological resources found in solitude and the development of our interior lives are necessary to resist attempts at numbing the mind, and to act publicly on behalf of our God-given social existence.⁵⁵

⁵² Dana R. Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 40-41. Larry Gordon provided insight concerning Arendt's often misunderstood notion of the banality of evil.

⁵³ Caludio Marcelo Viale, "Royce and Bernstein on Evil," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 10, no. 1 (2013): 82.

⁵⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 251.

⁵⁵ Mark Aloysius, "The Limits and Achievements of a Politics of Conscience in Hannah Arendt" (unpublished manuscript, March 19, 2024).

III. A RECKONING FOR THEOLOGY AND REALIZING THE CHARISM OF SHARED LIFE

Theologians must confront the crucible of sociocide. A failure to do so means the consequential nature of our work diminishes. Yet, to confront this evil means we must ask ourselves: how does theology remain awake to this moment's intensification of evil and its terrifying consequences? And, particularly in this time of an expanding abyss of despair, how will theology remain awake, at this same time, to the gift and practice of hope?

The contemporary crucible of sociocide means that theology finds itself in a time of reckoning. This reckoning presses theologians to seek out the *kairos* interruption in the midst of this moment; we must give an account of *where* Catholic theology stands and *what* Catholic theology stands for. Our time is not simply one of political reckoning but also one of theological reckoning, a time to focus more decisively on workings of God in the midst of the many eruptions and attempts to destroy all that constitutes our social bonds.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit holds the clue for this moment. In the early church, when the disciples feel understandably frightened and fearful after witnessing the gruesome crucifixion of Jesus, they open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit who transforms how they regard their place in the world. Our own time has echoes of the fright and fear experienced by the early disciples. Baptism in the Holy Spirit rightly deserves greater theological attention because the gifts of the Holy Spirit inspire and encourage those who strive to stop the destruction of our social bonds. It is the movement and unrestrained flow of the Holy Spirit that feeds within us a desire for the flourishing of our shared life, a greater compassion and empathy for others, and a willingness to sacrifice ourselves for the greater good, encouraging the ascendancy of the greater good. Again, the Holy Spirit cultivates and nurtures the *charism of shared life* in those who remain open to the Spirit's promptings.

The disciples' experience, as recorded in Acts, offers lessons and wisdom concerning their conversion from fear that overwhelms *to* an ability to act with bold courage. Acts portrays the world as most often overrun by violence and the threat of violence and by widely held presumptions that violence, killing, and destruction is the normal and necessary means for the establishment of a new world of peace, stability, and order. Such a presumption is made to appear normal and obvious. Yet in his commentary on the Acts, Willie James Jennings captures well the contrasting vision advanced by the movement of Holy Spirit:

The Acts of the Apostles is about aesthetics before it is about ethics. It is about a God whose weapon of choice is the divine desire placed in us by the Spirit. That desire has the power to press through centuries of animosity and hatred and beckon people to want one another and envision lives woven together. Such a life never asks people to forget their past or deny their present, but to step together into a future that will not yield to the given order of isolations, but yields to the Spirit that is poured out on all flesh. ... We need people of faith who will yield to the Spirit in this present moment. God fills the world with God's own life. God fills the disciples of Jesus, and

they speak the languages of others. God fills Gentiles as well, as they too speak words of peoples not their own. God drives some into the lives of others for the sake of Jesus and the hope born of love. This is the Book of Acts for us. Welcome to the real.⁵⁶

The real means there is no shying away from hatred and violence. That said, in Acts, the disciples come to recognize that their *desire* to see God's will realized carries transformative power.

What matters most is what God wants to see happen which is not what the disciples in Acts, or disciples today, might envision for the future.

In Acts, the Spirit of God truly directs, speaks, guides. If in the Gospel of Luke, God reveals the divine life in the Son, then in Acts the Spirit of God is making perfectly clear divine desire. Luke-Acts places us in the desire of God revealed in the Son's own yielding to the Spirit. His life of yielding becomes our life of yielding. God desires the interweaving of peoples, Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, male and female, into one through the Son and in the Spirit.⁵⁷

An authentic desire for communion with God unavoidably means a desire for the "interweaving of peoples," and not simply peoples with whom we share a vision for the world but rather, a desire for peoples with whom we would not choose to spend time, if left to our own devices. Indeed, the Spirit presses us in a direction that takes us across borders and boundaries not of our choosing.⁵⁸

Our fears often tempt us to ignore the Spirit's call to live in authentic communion with God and others. First, we struggle with the powers and principalities of our time, that is, with all the monied interests and the socio-political powers that give definition to our lives and to our habits of living, all in the context of an economic empire that promises the possibility of a secure future for ourselves and our children. Yet, such a future comes about through ruthless competition with others who are deemed lesser and are killed or cheated or destroyed, a kind of necessary evil if the empire we know is to survive. The end result is sociocide for the sake of empire and the standard of living the empire provides. The struggle remains in our willingness to turn away from empire. Second, we struggle with our own internal conundrum, namely, will we or will we not yield to the Spirit? Life in the Spirit means the draining of unjust powers and privileges that are often taken for granted. In many respects, yielding to the Spirit and the authentic life in the Spirit is a function of imagination and of humility. Can we imagine for ourselves the good life independent of what empire affords only a select group of us? Can we step into the stunning vision of the world that the Spirit encourages, one centered on our lives in communion with one another, communion even with the significant differences evident among us?⁵⁹ Such a life together subverts

⁵⁶ Willie James Jennings, *Acts*, Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 12.

⁵⁷ Jennings, *Acts*, 254.

⁵⁸ Jennings, *Acts*, 11.

⁵⁹ Jennings, *Acts*, 6-7, 355.

sociocide. Such a life is what the Holy Spirit animates and is the *charism of shared life*, the Spirit's preeminent gift.

This *charism of shared life* requires a conversion if this new way of envisioning the world is to break forth. The gift of shared life means a yielding to the Spirit such that overtime we develop a pneumatological imagination, an imagination that erases the invisibility of women and of every marginalized group. The humanity of every marginalized group is shown in the bright light of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ Notably, it is the victims of the world's injustices who are invariably the primary subjects of this different vision of reality, of our shared life, and, therefore, the primary subjects of the hope that is God's protest against suffering. In Jon Sobrino's words, "the hope that has to be rebuilt now is not just any hope but *hope in the power of God over the injustice that produces victims*."⁶¹

To advance the *charism of shared life*, despite intensifying evil, requires great personal sacrifice, at times, even the ultimate sacrifice. The dangerous work of subverting evil means refusing to allow evil to have the last word; such action affirms evil's limit. For example, calling out and undermining the evil of femicide is dangerous work. Activists, protestors, and journalists have either lost their lives, had their lives seriously threatened, or had the lives of their family members threatened. For more than twenty-three years, Norma Andrade, has publicly protested femicide. In 2001, she lost her seventeen-year-old daughter, Lilia Alejandra García Andrade, to femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Andrade responded by choosing to publicly speak out against femicide. As a vehicle to protest these killings, to demand that they end, and to seek justice for all the daughters lost to this evil, Norma Andrade founded the group, *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (May Our Daughters Return Home). For the public work she did, in 2011 she was shot five times and miraculously survived. She then moved to Mexico City where she was again attacked, this time by a man who slashed her face. She was targeted for her work to document the hundreds of unsolved murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, including that of her daughter. Femicide continues because impunity for perpetrators exceeds 95 percent. Between 2001 and 2024, more than 50,000 girls have been murdered in Mexico.⁶² While individuals like Andrade may not claim to have experience with Baptism in the Spirit, nevertheless, her willingness, at great personal cost, to act on behalf of others, is consonant with those who yield to the Spirit's movement.

As such, Norma Andrade's work, along with that of many others, exemplifies the realization of the *charism of shared life*. Her work is so that others might live. The suffering she has endured as a result of the assassination of her daughter and the later attempts on her life propelled her to see the world differently. She saw, and still today

⁶⁰ Willie James Jennings, "Afterword: Liquid God," in *Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Linda M. Maloney and Ivoni Richter Reimer, Wisdom Commentary Series, vol. 45 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2022), 358-359.

⁶¹ Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 42, emphasis in original.

⁶² Brigitte Leoni, "In Mexico, a mother's fight against femicide," *United Nations' Spotlight Initiative: To Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls*, December 9, 2024, <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/news/mexico-mothers-fight-against-femicide>. See also Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 101, 104.

continues to see, that many other daughters and many other families are at risk. They need, and are worthy of, her courageous leadership. Without this leadership, many of them will suffer what she has suffered. Through Andrade's example, we come to see that it "is not those innocent of evil who [experience the fullness of] the life of God, but those who in their own case have experienced the triumph over evil."⁶³ And, in this case, have done so at great personal cost. While the world will never be fully rid of evil, evil can be subordinated. The subordination of evil is the realization of the *charism of shared life* because it is an enacting of "the life of the common in the Spirit," a standing for the greater whole, and not simply for me and mine.

History provides numerous examples of theologians and leaders whose actions on behalf of the greater community of all exemplify the realization of the *charism of shared life* accompanied by the practice of hope. What follows are but a few. **Karl Barth** (1886-1968), principal author of the 1934 Barmen Declaration, insisted that the church was not in any way subject to the state and, by so doing, critiqued Nazi ideology and its claim of superiority for the Aryan race exclusively. He acted on behalf of the greater community of all. **Gustavo Gutierrez O.P.** (1928-2024), by developing a method for theological meaning making that was centered on the poor and most vulnerable, also ensured a vision of theology inclusive of the greater community of all. The impact of his theological method has transformed theology around the world, expanding the vista of theological concern to include all. **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** (1929-1968), was committed to and worked tirelessly to create the greater community of all through his numerous sermons, speeches, and protest marches. On April 3, 1968, his "I have been to the Mountaintop" address in Memphis, Tennessee, offered a stirring vision of God's reign and King's fearlessness in the face of evil. The next day he was assassinated. **Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN**⁶⁴ (1931-2005) a dual citizen of the United States and Brazil, spent much of her life defending the rainforest in Brazil against deforestation, ever mindful of the dire impact the rainforest's destruction would have on all. She was assassinated for her work on February 12, 2005. **Rosemary Radford Ruether** (1936-2022), through her writings, consistently pushed the theological boundaries by critiquing the exclusion of voices from the peripheries. Her work demanded the inclusion in theology of not only women's voices and concern for planet earth, but also the inclusion of peoples of color, peoples of other faith traditions, peoples who are differently abled, among many others at the margins. Of course, there are many more equally deserving of mention. Each of these examples reflects a life in which some measure of fear was transformed into bold courage resulting in the subversion of evil, enabling all to see more clearly and to experience more ardently our interrelation with all others, that is our shared life.

The lives of these figures, and many more, reflect an intimate experience of the Holy Spirit, one which arguably reflects Baptism in the Spirit. Their witness illuminates the *charism of shared life* and hints at what is needed today in the endeavor to subvert the evil of sociocide.

⁶³ Josiah Royce, "The Problem of Job," in *Studies of Good and Evil: A Series of Essays Upon Problems of Philosophy and of Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), 23, 24.

⁶⁴ Sister of Notre Dame de Namur

CATHOLICITY WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTS OF COLONIALISM
AND PLACE: UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN NEGOTIATIONS OF
RELIGIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY ACROSS THE INDIAN
SUBCONTINENT – INVITED SESSION

- Topic: Catholicity within the Constructs of Colonialism and Place: Unity and Diversity in Negotiations of Religio-Cultural Identity Across the Indian Sub-continent
- Convener: Deepan Rajaratnam, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
- Moderator: Hansol Goo, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
- Presenters: Deepan Rajaratnam, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
Akhil Thomas, Harvard University
- Respondent: Rohan Abraham, KU Leuven

In response to the convention's theme, "One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond," these three invited papers interrogated catholicity within cultural families by focusing on the place that is the Indian subcontinent. Collectively, the panel not only surfaced the ongoing impact of colonial legacies on religious identity and catholicity in place but also provided a way to consider catholicity within other cultural families with similar legacies.

Deepan Rajaratnam from the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University opened the panel with his paper, "[Grace in the Context of Colonialism: A Multi-Generational Account of Inculturating Tamil Catholicism](#)." Rajaratnam argued that Tamil Catholics draw on Tamil Hinduism to reimagine and relativize the European character of their popular saints and in so doing, the Tamil people not only subvert the legacy of colonialism but also reinscribe colonialism's legacy. Drawing on the ethnographic work of Selva Raj in Tamil Nadu, India and autoethnography from Rajaratnam's own Sri Lankan Tamil family, Rajaratnam argued that Tamil Catholics draw on Tamil Hinduism to reimagine and relativize the European character of their popular saints. Punctuated with pictures illustrating his family's multigenerational Catholic practice and its entanglement with the broader history of European colonialism, Rajaratnam further contended that Tamil practices of popular piety successfully subvert the legacy of colonialism even as they reinscribe this legacy into their aesthetic and religious imagination.

Advancing the examination of catholicity within cultural families, Akhil Thomas from Harvard University turned to Malayalam Catholicism with his paper, "Poetics of Displacement: Malayalam Catholic Verses in Hindu Metres in 18th Century Malabar." Examining the poetry of Jesuit Johann Ernst Haxleden, Thomas argued that the use of Hindu poetic forms intended to adapt Christianity to a culture influenced by Hinduism instead produced a poetics of displacement that continues to significantly shape Indian Catholic identity. To this end, Thomas teased out the relationship of Haxleden's work in relation to Indian literary classics, particularly the Malayalam Ramayana and the devotional poem Jñana Pāna. With its own poetic character and delivery, Thomas' paper connected the implantation of Catholicism in the context of colonialism to the adaptation of American diaspora to convey the complexity of layered legacies of identity. In this way, Thomas' paper foregrounded the problematic of colonially

constructed literature designed to acculturate the Malayalee people now used as a focal point to resist acculturation in the context of the American diaspora.

Rohan Abraham from KU Leuven concluded the presentations with a formal response paper that brought methodological points to the fore. Abraham pressed Rajaratnam on the definition of “culture” and the relationship between culture and grace at work as Tamil Catholics negotiate the remnants of colonial ideology through the practice of popular piety. Abraham also identified Rajaratnam’s interweaving of ethnographic detail, ancestral history, and theological history as itself a work of inculturation. In response to Thomas, Abraham asked who speaks in poetry as it is read and recited across contexts and centuries. In raising this question, Abraham exposed the tension between authorial agency and the community’s interpretive agency as reader. Abraham also pointed to the form of Thomas’ work itself—the blending of narrative, poetry, and historical reflection—as one that makes tangible the intersections of the poetic and the theological in the production of culture. With this response, Abraham teased out the ways that colonial remnants and identity negotiations were at play across both Tamil and Malayalee Catholicism and provided a launching point for the ensuing discourse around catholicity within cultural families.

Bringing her how her own personal and scholarly expertise around culture, migration, and liturgy from the Korean context, Hansol Goo from the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University moderated a lively, critical, and wide-ranging discussion. Some participants asked whether leaving unique cultural concepts untranslated would allow readers and listeners to construct meaning distanced from their own cultural frames. The conversation also teased out the parallels between the dynamics of colonialism, inculturation, and catholicity in the Indian sub-continent and other cultural frames. Finally, participants also noted the significance of this panel to the Society both in terms of its noteworthy theological contributions and the cultural identity of Tamil and Malayalee panelists themselves—both of which were unimaginable even two decades prior.

DEEPAN RAJARATNAM
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John’s University
Collegeville, Minnesota

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS ON STORIED LANDS – INVITED SESSION

Topic: A Dialogue on Portland with LaCugna Award Winners
 Convenor: Reid B. Locklin, University of Toronto
 Moderator: Megan Hopkins, Boston College
 Panelists: Craig Ford, Candler School of Theology
 Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education
 David Turnbloom, University of Portland

In this invited panel, three recent winners of the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award for New Scholars discussed Indigenous histories of the Portland area and considered the significance of this storied land for the CTSA as a site of theological reflection.

In his paper, “Rethinking Church and Solidarity in a Queer, Indigenous Key,” Craig Ford explored the underexamined role heteronormativity has played in the struggles of Native populations in the contemporary United States. Foundational to such a consideration is understanding heteronormativity as a “social formation in which coupling, procreation, and homemaking take on a particular shape exemplified by the nuclear family.” Ford argued, following Mark Rifkin, that heteronormativity supplied an important rationale undergirding not only the forced displacement of Native communities but also the forced integration these same communities under laws like the 1817 Civilization Fund Act. Though the devastating effects of settler-colonialist tactics disenfranchising Native communities are well known, paying attention to the operation of heteronormativity can help one understand the extent to which the forced reconfiguration of Native intimacies in the direction of bourgeois homemaking concomitantly disabled the *political* organization of Native communities. In view of this, Ford challenged the church to examine the ways in which its operative theologies continue to legitimate the exploitation of Native communities (but not only Native communities) by regarding the nuclear family as an icon of socio-cultural legitimacy and normalcy.

Cristina Lledo Gomez’s paper was entitled, “Doing Theology on the Stolen Native Lands of Oregon,” and it focused on the specific histories of Indigenous dispossession in the Portland area. Lledo Gomez started with an historical narrative, drawing on the work of Oregon State University historian and citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde, David Lewis. In 1853, Indigenous nations of Western Oregon held 14 million acres of land. Beginning in 1856, these lands were significantly reduced and the peoples subjected to assimilation pressures, until most of the treaties were unilaterally dissolved in 1954-1956. Though some lands and rights were restored in the 1970s, Indigenous peoples of the land are still rendered invisible. In the paper’s second half, Lledo Gomez noted the importance and difficulty of learning these histories and facing our settler identities, as well as ways that the corporate setting of CTSA meetings promotes unhealthy competition and discourages connection to the land. She concluded by reflecting on one of the most expensive toilets in the world, built for tourists on the Gorge River—Cowlett sacred land—as symbol of the desacralization of Indigenous peoples themselves. This echoes the irony of doing theology for the poor and being oblivious to the actual poor and marginalized.

Finally, David Turnbloom narrowed the focus still further in his paper, “Reflecting on Baptismal Theology in Light of the Forest Grove Indian Training School.” This presentation examined Catholic baptismal theology through the lens of the Forest Grove Indian Training School (1880-1885) in Oregon. The Forest Grove school, modeled after the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, forcibly assimilated 384 Indigenous children from over forty tribes using the philosophy, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” The founder Richard Henry Pratt explicitly compared this process to baptismal immersion, saying he believed in “immersing the Indians in our civilization.” Turnbloom argued that baptismal theology’s emphasis on “killing the sinner” and dying to one’s old life was thus weaponized for cultural erasure and violence. When Indigenous or immigrant people undergo baptism today, these traumatic histories cannot be ignored—symbols carry the weight of their oppressive past uses. Drawing on James Cone’s connection between the cross and lynching tree, the essay calls for liturgical practices that honestly confront their complicity in cultural genocide while remaining open to transformation. The dangerous memories of oppression should create “liturgical anxiety” that questions whom the church seeks to save—and whom it seeks to kill.

Subsequent discussion touched on practical strategies for changing the relationships of the theological academy to Indigenous peoples and the land, at the CTSA, at other Catholic societies and at our home institutions. The importance of focusing on local connections was noted, as well as risks of voyeurism and unhealthy romanticism of Indigenous peoples on the part of settler scholars. Indigenous, Hispanic, Black and other racialized communities all have to respond somehow to whiteness; the challenge is doing so in collaboration and solidarity.

REID B. LOCKLIN

*St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario*

DEEPENING CHRISTIAN, HINDU, AND BUDDHIST PRAXIS FOR THE
CARE OF THE PLANET AND PEOPLE – INVITED SESSION

- Topic: Deepening Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist Praxis for the Care of the Planet and People
- Conveners: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
Rosina H. Simon, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
- Moderator: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
- Presenter: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
Rosina H. Simon, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
Michelle Voss, Emmanuel College of Victoria University in The University of Toronto

This invited session addressed prominent twenty-first century challenges, namely ecological devastation, mental health issues, and interfaith relations through innovative theological praxis and religio-cultural comparisons. Expanding on Vatican II's view of unity (with the divine and with humanity) and sacramentality (signs of reconciliation, hope, and peace) in *Gaudium et Spes*, this session aimed to foster global catholicity via multi-religious praxis and hope in times of interpersonal, structural, and ecological harms. Collectively, these papers highlighted important insights and practices from Hinduism and Buddhism that parallel and deepen Christian visions and praxis to care for the planet and people in the contemporary world.

In "Sacramentality in Soil and Seeds: Catholic and Hindu Ecofeminist Imaginaries and Communities," Rosemary P. Carbine synthesized Vatican II with feminist and womanist theological perspectives to propose that sacramentality not only signifies divine presence and divinely-endowed dignity, sacrality, and interrelationality of the world, but also includes embodied emancipatory witness to actualize a new more just world. From this anthropological and eschatological perspective, sacramentality encompasses signs, both personal and political, that enhance interconnective relations with the divine, one another, and a more liberative future. Taking this theologically expansive view of sacramentality as a starting point, Carbine engaged in a comparative study of salient Catholic and Hindu ecofeminist imaginaries and communities, illuminated by ecojustice theologies and practices to build more just and livable worlds particularly among US Catholic green nuns and Hindu eco-activist Vandana Shiva's Navdanya. Catholic and Hindu ecofeminists embrace integral eco-visions and enact nonviolent eco-practices to cultivate and vivify the common and cosmic good for thriving religious, cultural, and biodiversity. Catholic and Hindu feminist ecological imaginaries and praxis, grounded in what Carbine interpreted as the sacramentality of soil- and seed-based ecologies, revitalize a feminist approach to social and eco-belonging and solidarity in and with the Earth Community as well as for Earth Democracy.

In "When Buddhist Mindfulness Meets Christian Watchfulness," Rosina H. Simon addressed how contemporary research and practices increasingly point to the interconnectedness of body and mind and consequently engage Buddhist mindfulness-based interventions for psycho-somatic healing. Simon showed how Christian hesychastic spirituality offers a remarkable parallel with Buddhist mindfulness

meditation, especially in its emphasis on the essential sequence of “watch and pray.” Hesychasm’s embodied prayer cultivates stillness and watchfulness through breath, body, thoughts, and passions as preparation for the Jesus Prayer. Similar to Buddhist mindfulness, hesychasm involves inner stillness (*hesychia*) and watchfulness (*nepsis*) as integral parts of spiritual practice. Drawing on these two traditions, Simon elaborated a comparative theology of healing toward a therapeutic model of salvation by highlighting elements of Buddhist mindfulness and Christian watchfulness in attending and responding to sensations, thoughts, and feelings that may hinder spiritual growth toward albeit distinct goals in the two traditions (cessation of desire, union with God).

The prior two papers addressed ecological and health challenges at the intersections of diverse religions, and thus invited in the third paper some further theological reflection about how to practically and soteriologically connect across religious traditions, given the colonial history and effective history of interreligious relations. In “A Comparative, Trauma-Informed Soteriology for Interfaith Praxis,” Voss expanded on her prior work which engaged in a comparative theological exercise with non-dual *Śaiva* (Hindu) views of the human and cosmos as mirrors or reflections of the divine to offer a constructive Christian vision of the image of God in humanity that is multiple, fully embodied or material, and inclusive of limits. In this paper, Voss further developed this vision in relation to salvation from multiple different wounds within colonialist, racist, and ecologically destructive systems that western Christians have perpetuated. Voss imagined embodied soteriology on an interfaith level by critically and constructively reinterpreting healing as holistic re-membering through images of the divine, of wounds, and of salvation within Hindu and Indigenous Latin American religious traditions particularly in light of the works of Latina decolonial and queer feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa.

After the three presentations concluded, the fifteen attendees participated in small group discussion of major insights and questions inspired by the panel. The subsequent open-ended discussion among attendees and panelists focused on practices for living in and into a reimagined *imago Dei*, for reclaiming religio-cultural contexts of diverse ecological and prayer practices, and for engaging in multi-religious comparison that decolonizes Christian supremacy and resituates Christianity in a religiously pluralistic world.

ROSEMARY P. CARBINE
Whittier College
Whittier, California

HOPE, HEALTH, AND THE NATURE OF HEALING – INVITED SESSION

Topic: Insights from Disability and Trauma Theologies
 Convener: Megan Heeder, The University of Scranton
 Moderator: Berit Guidotti, Boston College
 Presenters: Stephanie Edwards, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium
 Miguel Romero, St. Louis University
 Madeline Jarrett, Boston College

This invited session featured three papers that engaged disability and trauma theology to offer insights on hope, health, and healing.

Stephanie Edwards from the Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium in her paper, “Hope in the Darkness: Trauma Healing beyond the Colonial Curative Model,” addressed colonialism’s impact on healing in light of faith’s hope in three movements. First, Edwards established the distinction in disability theology between cures and healing. She recognized that both health and the integrity of the body are goods, but that pursuing a “perfect” body and mind can remove the possibility of embracing persons with differences that render them “imperfect” in a curative colonial view. Edwards then reflected on the work of indigenous scholar and mental health practitioner Renee Linklater to highlight the need to take up “the journey back to oneself;” framing trauma in the context of community is central to this journey. Third, Edwards used psychologist Laura Brown’s work to offer theological insights on decolonizing mental health practice by placing the act of listening and responsiveness over the all-too-human need to feel competent in providing care.

Miguel Romero of St. Louis University presented on the aid Thomas Aquinas offers in reading the Gospel healing narratives, particularly in light of the potential to correlate disability in these narratives with sin or unnatural differences. In his paper entitled “Aquinas on Disability, Original Sin and the Healing Ministry of Christ,” Romero began by arguing that vulnerability is integral to human nature, allowing a person to recover their (right) status as a creature. In the Thomistic view, human limits are not penalties, or corruptions of human nature. Understanding disability as a “bad-difference” is a failed presumption because it allows sin’s consequences to become mingled with humanity’s created nature. This distinction, Romero argued, is fundamental to Aquinas’s anthropology, which allows one to read the healing narratives as achieving a genuine good without making those who are not healed “moral strangers” to the people of God or “ontological strangers” to humanity. In the end, Romero concluded that in the healing narratives Christ understands human fragility and limitation as a “canvas for glory” that reveal Aquinas’s claim that grace perfects nature.

Madeline Jarrett of Boston College presented a paper titled “Disabled Agency and the Contours of Healing.” She articulated that disabled bodies do not necessarily need medical correction, but that the socio-cultural narratives about them do. Jarrett located uplifting disabled agency as a key component of constructing a vision of healing that is not rooted in a medical reality, but rather involves political and cultural changes coupled with individual and communal agency that can help counter the damage done by harmful perspectives on disability. Understanding the ways in which agency is

present in those with disabilities challenges the traditional paradigm of what one can give to or do for a person with disabilities. By way of example, Jarrett noted this agential paradigm in Christ's encounter with the man at the poolside in Bethesda (John 5:1-15). In sum, authentic healing is nurtured by recognizing and cultivating disabled agency in response to reductive societal narratives.

The discussion that followed included affirmations of the cohesive insights of all three presenters on addressing the effects of colonialism so that faith's promises can be fulfilled, reading the Gospel's healing narratives in light of disability theology (especially an accurate theological anthropology and understanding of the consequence of sin) and prioritizing disabled agency, respectively. The cohesiveness of the paper themes offered participants opportunities to reflect on Romero's insights from Aquinas alongside Jarrett's corrective suggestions for preserving agency. Edwards shared in her paper that her theological insights were shaped by an experience the prior week with theologians who participated in a listening exercise with a (self-named) medicine woman, and one participant followed-up on this experience in light of her desire to root out colonialism's effects in her life and theological work. Participants asked all three presenters about navigating the possibility (and hope) of physical healing alongside their theological contributions, and named the challenge (and necessity) of embracing the messiness of grace and the mystery of God.

MEGAN HEEDER
The University of Scranton
Scranton, Pennsylvania

REIMAGINING ECCLESIAL UNITY – INVITED SESSION

Topic: Reimagining Ecclesial Unity
 Convener: SimonMary Asele Ahiokhai, University of Portland
 Moderator: SimonMary Asele Ahiokhai, University of Portland
 Presenter: Mary Follen, Spirit of Grace Ecumenical Community, Beaverton, Oregon
 Juan Carlos La Puente Tapia, Spiritual and Theological Mutual Accompaniment International Network
 Thomas Mason, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish, Lake Oswego, Oregon

Mary Follen’s paper, titled “Thirty-year Worship Journey and Struggle of an Ecumenical Community,” provided the historical origins of the Spirit of Grace Ecumenical Community in Beaverton, Oregon. The community constituted of Lutherans and Catholics who wanted to pray together. Over time, members of both denominations sought permission from their ordinaries to celebrate the Eucharist together. The permission was granted for them to celebrate the liturgy of the word together and then to separately celebrate the liturgy of the Eucharist. This was the operating policy until 2020 when the Catholic Archbishop of Portland, Most Rev. Alexander Sample, withdrew the permission. The community continued to gather and to pray together. In 2023, the community had one of their members ordained as a woman priest who now leads the community. Follen called attention to how the Catholic members who constitute this community are seeking answers to matters they feel are exclusionary in their tradition. For example, the lack of women priests in their tradition.

Follen’s presentation was followed by that of Juan Carlos La Puente Tapia, whose paper was titled “Spiritual and Theological Mutual Accompaniment.” He described his work as an associate of the Oregon Synod Bishop of the Ecumenical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), even though he is a Catholic. In his capacity, he has established a global network of ecumenical communities that promote mutual spiritual and theological support for its members. They organize ecumenical retreats and theological reflections aimed at bridging the divides that exist among the religious communities.

La Puente Tapia’s presentation was followed by that of Thomas Mason, whose presentation was titled “Emergent Reflection Regarding Understanding of Authority and Its Guiding Means for Walking Together.” Mason, an active member of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish in the Catholic Archdiocese of Portland, spoke of the work being done on the parish level to promote a culture of synodality. He called attention to some divisive policies in the Catholic Church, especially as they play out in the Archdiocese of Portland. These policies and practices include the lack of ministerial support for endangered gay members of the Catholic Church and the continued culture of erasing female voices in the administrative life of the church.

After Mason concluded his presentation, the session transitioned to addressing the questions from the audience members. The session ended shortly after the questions and answers.

SIMONMARY ASESE AIHIOKHAI
University of Portland
Portland, Oregon

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM: A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
OF A TROUBLESOME NOTION – SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: American Exceptionalism: A Theological Evaluation of a Troublesome Notion
- Convener: Thomas Massaro, S.J., Fordham University
- Moderator: Timothy Perron, S.J., Fordham University
- Speakers: Thomas Massaro, S.J., Fordham University
SimonMary Asele Ahiokhai, University of Portland
David DeCosse, Santa Clara University

Thomas Massaro presented a historical analysis of the notion of American Exceptionalism—a loose (indeed, maddeningly imprecise) bundle of concepts that dates back to a 1630 sermon by John Winthrop. That Puritan pastor and eventual governor of the fledgling Massachusetts Bay colony portrayed his community as “a city set upon a hill,” aspiring to fulfill a mandate of Jesus in Matthew 5:14 to serve as a light to the world. The notion of a distinctive status and special (even divine) mission belonging to what would become the United States inspired subsequent activities of many sorts. Massaro critiqued the triumphalistic versions (such as the self-aggrandizing and murderous Manifest Destiny school of thought) and the demonstrably false claims (such as the notion of easy upward social and economic mobility portrayed by the phrase “the American Dream”) associated with American Exceptionalism that have echoed down throughout U.S. history.

Yet, in line with the oft-heard claim that the inherited cultural myth of American Exceptionalism is a double-edged sword, carrying great peril as well as great promise, Massaro expressed a desire to salvage the positive aspects of this plank of the national creed and its civil religion. The Marshall Plan after World War II and the many humanitarian programs launched by the Kennedy administration to extend a hand of friendship to global partners reflect the constructive possibilities of American Exceptionalism, especially when it is purified of all arrogance and hubris, in favor of modesty and self-restraint. A theological evaluation of this phenomenon benefits from many of the resources of Catholic social thought. These include the calls to pursue a universal benevolence found in social encyclicals from *Pacem in Terris* to *Populorum Progressio* to *Fratelli Tutti*, including appeals for a cosmopolitan spirit of social concern to guide international politics.

Massaro called attention to the chastening assessments of the possibilities and limitations of a supposed divine national mission to promote liberty and democracy found in Reinhold Niebuhr (the Protestant “father of Christian realism”) and John Courtney Murray (with his commitment to broad social dialogue in a situation of irreducible pluralism), but noted that neither of these towering twentieth-century architects of public theology despaired of projects that would reflect the best of American Exceptionalism and its attendant moral standards for national behavior. For his part, Jacques Maritain expressed a marked confidence in the ability of America (his beloved adopted homeland) to serve the wider human community, thus echoing many of the tenets of American Exceptionalism (even while avoiding the precise phrase in favor of careful circumlocutions). While acknowledging the considerable tension that

perdures between the oft-exaggerated claims of specialness affirmed by the most exuberantly patriotic proponents and the Christian affirmation of human equality captured in the conference theme of “one baptism,” Massaro nevertheless proposed a continuing constructive potential for American Exceptionalism.

The first respondent, SimonMary Aihokhai, foregrounded two critiques of Massaro’s presentation but also concluded that thinking of one’s own country as exceptional is not an inherently unfortunate (nor rare) outlook. The first critique was that nation-states are deeply committed to their own interests, and for the United States, this very much includes the perpetuation of its own global hegemony. Further, it is necessary for powerful countries in particular to acknowledge their own capacity for evil before reaching out a helping hand to others. The second critique highlighted how the notion of universal concern for others needs to be more critically assessed. This project should rely upon grassroots solutions, abandoning a “scarcity mindset,” and moving away from a view of American Exceptionalism that denies the agency of other nations. However, Aihokhai concluded that it is still acceptable to see one’s own country as exceptional as long as other countries are not imagined as mere pawns. Ultimately, American Exceptionalism should be viewed as a polyphonic ideal that is carried out in concert with the voices of other nations.

The second respondent, David DeCosse, first noted the virtues of Massaro’s paper, including its appeal to “our better nature,” its employment of Catholic Social Teaching principles, and the recounting of the historical interventions of multiple American theologians. DeCosse pointed out that some of the more recent renditions of American Exceptionalism inaccurately reconstruct ideas from the past. For example, John Winthrop (the seventeenth-century Puritan who imagined America as a “city on a hill”), did not advocate American freedom as we often hear in today’s political discourse, but rather the practice of loving others with a pure heart. Further, he proclaimed that we are all accountable to God. This is a far cry from the individualistic notions of freedom that are often trumpeted today. DeCosse concluded by making certain suggestions to remedy harmful versions of American Exceptionalism. For instance, he proposes embedding Catholic social ethics more deeply in the social imaginary of our present culture and highlighting the role of empathy deeply imbued throughout Catholic spirituality. The ensuing conversation prompted by questions from many members of the audience was both rich and enlightening.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J.
Fordham University
New York City

TIMOTHY PERRON, S.J.
Fordham University
New York City

THE DISRUPTIVE AGENCY OF BAPTISM: RECLAIMING THE
CHRISTIAN CALL TO CONVERSION, DIALOGUE, AND
CO-RESPONSIBILITY – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: The Disruptive Agency of Baptism: Reclaiming the Christian Call to Conversion, Dialogue, and Co-Responsibility
 Convener: Ryan McAleer, KU Leuven
 Moderator: Bradford Hinze, Fordham University
 Presenters: Ryan McAleer, KU Leuven
 Maria Cimperman, R.S.C.J., Catholic Theological Union
 Kim Mendoza, KU Leuven

In response to the conference theme of “One Baptism,” this selected session explored the active agency of the baptismal calling through the lenses of conversion, dialogue, and co-responsibility. Reclaiming the fundamental importance of baptism for both personal faith and ecclesial life through such perspectives qualifies this agency as necessarily disruptive. Indeed, the vision of a synodal, appreciative, inclusive, communitarian and ecumenically-oriented church requires a fresh understanding of the baptismal calling that would disrupt, for example, hierarchical structures that monopolize church governance and participation, or paradigms of revelation theology that see faith as a merely passive reception of divine truths. The three papers featured in this panel engaged with insights from sacramental theology, fundamental theology, ecclesiology, and moral/spiritual theology in the examination of the topic.

Ryan McAleer’s paper, “Initiation into the Divine–Human Dialogue,” opened the session by offering a fundamental theological exploration of divine revelation as an intersubjective dialogue that elicits genuine, active agency on the part of the baptized. The journey to faith and illumination of divine mystery, not least the witness thereof, was framed as emerging from the process of various, often difficult, encounters with the other (cf. Jn 9). The disruptive dynamic that marks this process comes to the surface when one acknowledges the mutual, shifting asymmetry that is involved in every authentic, ethical dialogue. While God’s revelation continually surprises and renews us, and notwithstanding one’s prophetic calling to disrupt a world ignorant of the gospel, McAleer suggested, given the dialogical dynamic of revelation, that Godself is interrupted in this divine–human dialogue through history. Baptism is understood, then, as initiating personal dialogue with God as well as providing the faithful with “disruptive agency” in the church and the world. What becomes paramount is one’s responsibility before the transcendence of the other, divine or human: openness to the other, willingness to respond without presumption, allows the Spirit to work and the voice of God to be heard. This largely theoretical paper set the stage for the more praxeological-ecclesiological perspectives of the subsequent papers.

Kim Mendoza’s contribution, “Co-Responsibility and Hierarchical Communion in Church Governance,” problematized the implications of lay co-responsibility in church governance that is constituted within, and made permissible by, the structure of a *hierarchical communion*, exclusive of the ordained. Having outlined the connection between the baptism of the people of God and their co-responsibility, the paper explained how a complication arises in their role, shifting from being passive “objects”

to active “sharers” in governance, which requires disentanglement in more theological and canonical terms. The paper analyzed that the operation of a hierarchical communion challenges the theological coherence of incorporating subjects that lack the juridical requirements (both competency and domain of action) to fully exercise their act of co-responsibility. In her conclusion, some notable theological implications that emerge were described. These include the need to structurally articulate the faithful’s share in the threefold office of Christ, as well as theologically account for the transition of their ecclesial functions, notwithstanding the distinctive role of ordained ministers. Mendoza argued that authentic co-responsibility requires a “polyhedric reconfiguration” of communion that fosters genuine agency, thus enhancing the full and active recognition of the faithful’s baptismal dignity.

A final paper from Maria Cimperman titled, “Baptism and the Call to Ongoing Conversion, with Implications for Communal Discernment and Healing,” explored some issues that need to be amplified and implemented on the part of theologians following the Synod on Synodality. Building upon Jos Moons’ work on “baptismal ethos” and the conviction that baptism and synodality both draw meaning from one another, Cimperman reframed the spiritual-mystical dimension of baptism in terms of virtues: the practices and dispositions needed for a tangible, ongoing, synodal conversion. In reference to the Final Document of the synod, a fully participatory and missionary church can only come about through, not just structural reform, but spiritual renewal. Two necessary virtues brought to the fore by the paper were listening and silence. Listening is essential for a church in search of conversion and renewal—a listening that brings to the center those often left at the margins, listening for what we can learn as a church. Silence animates this authentic listening allowing what the other has said truly sink in; silence grounds us in the Spirit. As a theologian who participated at the recent synod, Cimperman was able to share some insightful narratives from her experience in Rome that peppered her paper— anecdotes of participants’ ‘conversions’ to humility, listening, and transparency—and grounded her call for ongoing conversion.

Following the papers, Bradford Hinze moderated an engaging period of questions and answers. Issues discussed included: the extent to which the current exercise of power by lay judges/administrators can be considered church governance by the laity; the need for decolonial perspectives when it comes to exploring the concept of dialogue, voices that are often not truly heard; the virtue of courage as an important supplement to listening and silence; the need to learn lessons from ecumenical (*ad extra*) dialogue for the church *ad intra*; acknowledgement of one’s cultural context and links to lived practice in our theologies.

RYAN MCALEER
KU Leuven
Leuven, Belgium

THE LEAST OF THESE: PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM
MENTAL ILLNESS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND
INNOVATIVE RESPONSES – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: People Suffering from Mental Illness, Law Enforcement, and Innovative Responses
Convener: M. Cathleen Kaveny, Boston College
Moderator: Shaun Slusarski, Boston College
Presenters: Peter Fay, Villanova University
Tobias Winright, St. Patrick’s Pontifical University, Maynooth
Meg Kaveny, Portland Police Bureau

This session was selected by the CTSA administration to focus on the response of law enforcement who encounter people suffering from mental illness in the course of their professional duties.

Peter Fay, Sienna Teaching Fellow at Villanova University, illustrated how people with serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are too often “de-baptized”—that is, deliberately excluded from communities such as families, friend groups, churches, and society at large. Fay argued that the Catholic theology of baptism offers an alternative vision in which people with serious mental illness—as intrinsically dignified and relational—are integral to the Catholic community. Baptism requires the Catholic community to respect the dignity of people with serious mental illness and to enact solidarity, justice, and love for and with people with them, by, for example, welcoming and befriending them and by advocating for improved policies for and with them. In turn, baptism requires people with mental illness to live with faith, hope, and love as best they can. Finally, Fay maintained that Thomistic virtue ethics offers resources for developing a Catholic account of the faithful, hopeful, and charitable living of people with mental illness that considers pre-onset virtuous formation, age of onset, severity of illness, and degree of clinical recovery.

Tobias Winright, Professor of Moral Theology, St. Patrick’s Pontifical University, Maynooth, drew upon his previous experience working in the criminal justice system as a corrections officer, a reserve police officer and a police ethics instructor. He described the increasing contact that police officers have with persons with mental illness, noting they are disproportionately likely to be involved in a police incident, including those that result in arrest or even an officer-involved shooting. To account for this state of affairs, Winright referred to criminological studies showing that a military, or warrior, model of policing tends to destabilize and escalate encounters between officers and persons suffering from mental illness. He pointed to other models of policing, such as a social peacekeeper model and community policing. Winright then discussed some cities and communities where policing reform is taken seriously, including Seattle, Dallas, Minneapolis, and Newark. He also highlighted the collaboration between the police department and the mental health first-responders organization CAHOOTS in Eugene, Oregon. In this collaboration, civilian mental health workers take the lead in interactions with mentally ill persons, with police officers providing backup if necessary. Winright concluded by proposing police reform

according to these non-military models to help rather than harm persons suffering from mental illness.

Meg Kaveny, a social worker who works with the Behavioral Health Unit of the Portland Police Bureau, spoke about her experience on an interdisciplinary team that includes both law enforcement and trained mental health clinicians. She emphasized the practical nature of their work—finding people with mental illness places to live, making sure they get to their doctors’ appointments, and engaging them as individual people rather than as statistical problems. She noted that not all police departments operate in the same way. In Portland, for example, all police officers are required to take substantial mandatory training in crisis intervention (CIT). She also discussed how this practical attention to the “least of these” is an outgrowth of her Catholic commitment to the dignity and equality of all human beings.

The ensuing discussion critically examined the breadth of the category of “mental illness,” its relationship to disability rights theories, and other possible approaches to minimize violence in the interactions of law enforcement with the public more generally.

M. CATHLEEN KAVENY
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

ONE BAPTISM – ONE CHURCH? BAPTISM, BELONGING, AND THE
CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT – SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: One Baptism – One Church? Baptism, Belonging, and the Contemporary Ecumenical Movement Selected Session
- Convener: Kimberly Hope Belcher, University of Notre Dame
- Moderator: Anna Petrin, Mount Angel Seminary
- Presenters: Benjamin Durham, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John’s University
Tom McLean, St. Patrick’s Pontifical University, Maynooth
Theresa Rice, University of Notre Dame

One Baptism – One Church? A History and Theology of the Reception of Baptized Christians (Kimberly Belcher, Nathan Chase, and Alexander Turpin, Liturgical Press, 2024) is a mixed-method ecumenical treatment of the reception of baptized Christians across ecclesial boundaries in the Eastern and Western churches, from third century North Africa to the present. The book is especially attentive to the sociological motivations that hinder ecumenical commitments, such as threatened communities that fail to recognize shared baptism despite the more ecumenical theologies explicitly espoused by the central authorities of their churches. The invited panelists commented on and expanded the argument of the book using diverse methods from three different ecclesial locations.

Benjamin Durham of the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University, in his paper, “Actions Matter: On the Liturgical (Mis-)Recognition of a Common Baptism,” observed that in rural Roman Catholic parishes he has studied, as in historical frontiers like ninth-century Bulgaria examined in the book, attitudes towards other Christians are dominated by “exactly the Catholic pieties that tend to distinguish or even distance Catholic practice from that of other Christians,” and “find[ing] a way back home to the Roman Catholic Church” is considered the proper exercise of sacramental ecumenism. Durham contextualized this sociologically: the maintenance of boundaries embodies the “dogged resilience” of rural precariousness and also responds to threats of marginalization and closure by the community’s own central authorities. Supplementing Mary Douglas’s cultural theory, used in the book, with Margaret Archer’s critical realist sociology, Durham argues that “what is real in liturgical expression is not only what we observe, but also the forces (social and otherwise) that led to the manifestation of what we observe,” such as the pressures on rural or other low-grid communities. In other words, our ecumenical commitments must be structurally elaborated into social relationships and repeated liturgical embodiment to be theologically real.

Tom McLean of St Patrick’s Pontifical University presented “A Personal Matter: Autoethnographic Reflections on Crossing Denominational Lines,” which also explored the contrast between notions of reception of baptized Christians and the real, localized experience of the church. Centering ecclesial belonging in the form of “being the Lord’s people sharing at the Lord’s table in thanksgiving for and participation in the Lord’s saving deeds,” McLean noted that he has been admitted to eucharistic participation in the British Methodist Church, the Church of England, and the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium before having been formally received into membership in

any of the three. The practical discontinuity between eucharistic participation and formal reception depends on the ambiguous role of confirmation and local or widespread eucharistic hospitality. These experiences blur the boundaries between initiation and reception, and raise questions about the shared recognition of baptism. In the spirit of receptive ecumenism, then, McLean proposed adopting a non-sacramental liturgical rite like that used in British Methodism that receives new people into the local church (whether they are coming from a community in communion with their new local church or not, and whether they are eligible communicants or not). Such a rite would explicitly support participation and belonging in the local church, without implying doctrinal statements about initiation status.

Theresa Rice from the University of Notre Dame presented “Dialoguing with the Past: Reflections on the Role of History in Ecumenism and the Reception of Baptized Christians.” Attending to the ongoing need for formation in ecumenical concern of Roman Catholics, Rice argued for the necessity of history pursued as an ecumenical “dialogue [with a] partner separated by time rather than ecclesial location.” This permits the inescapable authenticating factor of past practice to be grounded in the whole spectrum of Christian practice, so that the imagination has “the tools to envision a common past for the sake of a unified future.” Practically, Rice asks how contemporary reception of baptized Christians and a broadened historical embrace of penance might support the visibility of the “ecclesial wound” as the order of penitents did in the early church, while inviting “those Catholics as yet unaware of their own concern for Christian unity ... toward ecclesial repentance.”

The ensuing discussion continued the tension, explored in each of the papers, between the abstract doctrinal commitment to ecumenism and the lived practice of ecclesial boundaries. The lived experiences of a number of participants surrounding the reception of baptized Christians were shared and explored.

KIMBERLY HOPE BELCHER
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

RECONFIGURED FINITUDE AND CHRISTIAN BELONGING IN THE
THOUGHT OF EMMANUEL FALQUE – SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: Reconfigured Finitude and Christian Belonging in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque
- Convener: Anthony Godzieba, Villanova University
- Moderator: Colby Dickinson, Loyola University Chicago
- Speakers: Rohan Abraham, KU Leuven
Trevor B. Williams, Villanova University
Colby Dickinson, Loyola University Chicago

This panel explored the theological and phenomenological implications of finitude, sacramentality, and identity in the work of Emmanuel Falque. Each paper engaged Falque’s project of methodological crossing—between philosophy and theology, anthropology and Christology, doctrine and existential experience—through distinct but intersecting themes. The conversation developed around how Falque reconfigures finitude not simply as a limit to be accepted, but as a site of metamorphosis that reshapes what it means to belong, believe, and be transformed.

In his paper, Rohan Abraham explored Falque’s philosophical anthropology through the sacramental lens of baptism. Moving beyond ecclesial boundary markers, he reimagined baptism not as a completed rite but as an existential and ongoing “crossing”—a site of vulnerability, transformation, and exposure to others. Drawing from *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, and *Crossing the Rubicon*, Abraham argued that Falque’s method of phenomenological theology opens baptism to new anthropological possibilities. He underscored the asymmetry of finitude (birth vs. death), the Eucharistic logic of incorporation, and the need to recognize not only *ad intra* (internal) transformation but also *ad extra* alterity—those outside Christian confession. Abraham critiqued Falque’s lack of attention to pedagogical formation and ritual deferral, suggesting that baptism marks not mastery but the beginning of shared interpretive vulnerability. Referencing thinkers like Paul Ricœur, Jean-François Lyotard, and Viktor Frankl, he concluded that baptismal existence is a journey of continual metamorphosis shaped by others, rather than a sealed sacramental identity.

In his paper, Colby Dickinson argued that Falque routinely explores how unconscious dimensions converge with conscious doctrinal positions, thus providing a fuller depiction of our human being. His theological method of bricolage initiates the reader into a collage of images, words and associations that subvert traditional forms and dualities (e.g. word and image, conscious and unconscious, animal and human). Dickinson contended that, in the context of Falque’s redefining of baptism and Eucharist, these unique associative juxtapositions between theory, image and doctrine present us with a theology of profound psychological depth. He further proposed that Falque’s work illuminates a previously undisclosed psychology of theology.

Finally, in his paper, Trevor Williams argued that Falque frequently appeals to Søren Kierkegaard and Blaise Pascal as two Christian thinkers who embody his methodology. His recent book *La chair de Dieu* (2023) advances his distinction between the anxiety of sin and the anxiety of death, which in his 1999 book *The Guide to Gethsemane*, proved to be useful when grappling with Martin Heidegger’s critique

that Christianity cannot authentically face death. Falque often associates sin with despair, but very quickly, brackets the topic. This practice extends to other areas, notably in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, where he brackets bestiality—the potentially disordered or sinful aspects of human embodiment—to better speak of animality. Falque rarely returns to describe sin after setting it aside, but in *La chair de Dieu*, he offers a slight correction. He argues that Christians are not just capable of reckoning with death but that they bear their own doubled sense of anxiety because of sin. He cites Kierkegaard and Pascal to describe an anxiety peculiar to the believer in that sin can rupture the baptismal alliance with God. Christians do not just experience the anxiety of death, they can also experience its intensification.

The question-and-answer discussion began with a question about the continuity between *Crossing the Rubicon* and Falque's later works, particularly *The Flesh of God*. The concern was whether Falque's methodological reflections remain stable or are reconfigured in light of his engagement with trauma and Christological descent. Williams emphasized *The Loving Struggle* as the most revealing of Falque's method, describing it as a practice of mutual transformation rather than fixed doctrinal stance. Abraham added that in later works, particularly *La Chair de Dieu*, theology begins to intervene directly in the space of philosophical finitude—Christ enters suffering to transform it—raising concerns about a possible slide into ontotheology.

Another question addressed the use of “metaphysics” in Falque's thought. Abraham responded that Falque reworks metaphysical categories phenomenologically, passing through them (*metaphusis*) rather than asserting them. His concern is with transformation through flesh, not abstract systems. Dickinson noted that Falque's method resembles a collage or bricolage: images, experiences, and citations form a composite vision of embodiment, which itself constitutes a new kind of metaphysical operation. Williams added that Falque bypasses classical debates in order to reclaim certain theological terms (like “pure nature”) in radically reinterpreted ways rooted in finitude and vulnerability.

A third set of reflections turned to whether Falque's emphasis on the body might be read as a reconfiguration of the Kantian transcendental turn. Abraham suggested that Falque is best understood not as a transcendental thinker but as operating in a post-subjective mode akin to Jean-Luc Nancy's work on community and being-with. Dickinson compared Falque's project to Slavoj Žižek's “transcendental materialism,” noting how both thinkers reframe subjectivity through the carnal body. Williams acknowledged that Falque's work is intentionally ambiguous, open to neo-scholastic, mystical, and postmodern readings alike.

The final question focused on baptism. Specifically, whether Falque's Eucharistic logic of incorporation could inform a phenomenology of baptism. Williams affirmed that Falque's language of unconscious receptivity resonates with infant baptism, even though the topic is underdeveloped in his work. Abraham, however, emphasized the importance of preserving baptism as an open, pedagogical event rather than a closed sacramental incorporation. Baptism, he argued, names not just belonging, but the beginning of a vulnerable journey shaped by others across confessional lines.

ROHAN ABRAHAM
KU Leuven
Leuven, Belgium

WALKING TOGETHER AS A SYNODAL CHURCH:
MINISTERIAL AND SACRAMENTAL PROSPECTS FOR
COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, AND MISSION – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Walking Together as a Synodal Church: Ministerial and Sacramental Prospects for Communion, Participation, and Mission
 Convener: Ty Paul Monroe, Assumption University
 Moderator: Megan Efron, University of Notre Dame
 Presenters: Grace Agolia, Boston College
 Deepan Rajaratnam, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John’s University
 Ty Paul Monroe, Assumption University

In keeping with the Convention theme, “One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond,” this panel sought to address questions of synodality, ministry, and sacramentality.

Grace Agolia from Boston College opened the session with her paper, “Proclaiming ‘One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins’: The Future of Ministry in a Synodal Church,” in which she argued for the central soteriological focus of baptismal incorporation and ecclesial participation. She then showed how this soteriological framing brings to the fore the need for liturgical formation for synodality, with particular implications for ministry. In short, as “the primary expression of the church’s mediation of grace, the liturgy shapes the practice of ministry.” In light of these two claims, the need for a relational approach to ministry becomes clearer, since it enables the baptized to engage fully in symbolic action grounded in the paschal mystery and ordered toward mission in the world. Agolia traced her reframing efforts back to the Second Vatican Council’s understanding of the church as a sacrament of salvation and of baptism as the basis for ecclesial participation, before showing how this perspective continues to unfold in the synodal efforts recently inaugurated. Agolia proposed a further deepening of this sacramental vision by recalling that at its heart, the church aims to mediate the transformative power of divine grace and mercy. After addressing certain stumbling blocks—e.g., conflating ministry and mission and “instrumentalizing” sacramental grace—Agolia looked to Pope Francis’ understanding of “authentic liturgical formation” as a helpful resource. Lastly, she turned to Richard Gaillardetz’s notion of “ecclesial re-positioning” to promote a more relational understanding of ecclesial ministry and sacramental efficacy that enriches our understanding of the church’s mission.

Deepan Rajaratnam of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University turned his attention to matters liturgical, ministerial, and canonical in his paper, “Disciple by Baptism, Minister by Call: Reframing the Theologian’s Vocation in Light of Synodality, Locality, and Catholicity.” Noting recent developments regarding instituted ministries—i.e., women can now be installed as lectors and acolytes (*Spiritus Domini*, 2021) and the lay ministry of catechist has recently been established (*Antiquum Ministerium*, 2021)—Rajaratnam sought to reappraise the role of the professional theologian in relation to the local ordinary and to the wider local church. In particular, he argued, this would help correct an overly juridical bishop–theologian relationship that tends also to dislocate the theologian from the broader church

community, one framed in large part by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Installing the theologian as a minister in the local church with a requisite rite would, Rajaratnam argued, give ecclesial recognition to this person in a manner that rightly highlights their synodal, relational, and ministerial identity.

Ty Monroe of Assumption University concluded the formal presentations with his paper, “Synodality, Sacraments, and the Church as the Prolongation of the Incarnation in History.” He argued that Francis’ and the Synod’s language concerning synodal participation frames this undertaking in thoroughly sacramental terms. By fully appreciating the church’s very identity as a “sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium* §1), Monroe argued, we can more fully appreciate the genuinely transformative nature of sacramental grace, which would, in turn, deepen our understanding of synodal participation as more than merely a procedural or structural reform. Such a shift in thinking would, however, make way for important procedural and structural changes by situating them within a broader theological, soteriological, and specifically sacramental change of mindset. These concrete concerns include issues such as Eucharistic participation for the divorced and remarried and a return to seeing communal discernment as integral to the process of clerical ordination.

A lively discussion moderated by Megan Effron explored questions of practical, lexical, and theoretical import. Several questions were raised about the concrete conditions of local churches and existing approaches and relationships between bishops and lay theologians. Terminological questions aimed to parse important differences between, e.g., “instituted” and “commissioned” ministries, “ministry” and “mission,” and the like, and these discussions examined how to articulate the particularity of ministerial vocations while still advancing the synodal emphasis on the contribution of all of the baptized. Panel participants were able to draw interesting and fruitful lines of agreement and complementarity between the broad outlines of their proposals.

TY PAUL MONROE
Assumption University
Worcester, Massachusetts

ANTHROPOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Relationality, Anthropology, and Baptism
 Convener: Tiffany Hartnell-Howden, Boston College
 Moderator: Adam Beyt, Loyola Chicago University
 Presenters: Brianne Jacobs, Emmanuel College
 Arun Joseph Chakkalakkal, KU-Leuven
 Bede Ukwuije, C.S.Sp., Duquesne University

In response to a call for papers the three selected proposals addressed the topic of baptism and relational anthropologies highlighting examples and counterexamples of authentic relationality and the possibilities inherent in baptismal grace.

Brianne Jacobs of Emmanuel College presented a paper entitled “Infinite Generation: Relationships and Baptism in the AI Age,” in which she argued that while artificial intelligence (AI) is advertised as a generative technology it is in fact a form of autoeroticism and consumes and reduces rather than produces authentic relationships. Drawing on Karl Rahner, Jacobs argued that by virtue of our baptism human beings are called to open ourselves to others and to transcend self, an authentically generative process which bears the fruits of faith, hope and love. The applications of AI as a replacement for authentic relationship in a therapeutic or romantic context cut off the possibility of self-transcendence and, citing Augustine, trains the user to be “curved in on oneself.” The grace of baptism can counter this tendency.

Arun Joseph Chakkalakkal of KU-Leuven presented a paper entitled “Relationality and Anthropology: Weaving Towards a Participatory Relational Ontology,” in which he argued that there is a way to avoid the inherent dualism of modern relational and participatory ontologies, exemplified in the theologies of John Zizioulas and Hans Boersma respectively. In his paper, Chakkalakkal traced the lineage of classical versions of relational and participatory ontologies from Aristotle to Anselm and Aquinas, highlighting the significance of each along the way. The modern shift to the individual and the separation of creation from the Creator introduced the problem of an autonomous self in relation to a distant God which classical ontologies cannot account for. While Zizioulas addresses the problem of modern dualism by arguing that creation relates to the Creator like the persons of the Trinity relate to one another and Boersma argues that all of creation participates in Christ, each tend toward the extremes of absolute autonomy or absolute dependence. As a solution, Chakkalakkal resourced Irenaeus’ *analogia entis* as a middle way—creation participates in the life of God analogous to the participation of the persons of the Trinity. This ontology is not simply relational nor participatory but incorporates the strengths of each and seeks to avoid absolute distinction and absolute absorption.

Bede Ukwuije, C.S.Sp. of Duquesne University presented a paper entitled “*Memoria Christi* in the Amistad Story: Transforming the Memory of Race through the Memory of Grace,” in which he argued that re-membering history through the lens of grace has the potential to heal wounded memory and resolve contemporary problems of polarization. Drawing on the example of the Amistad story, Ukwuije pointed to the role of “*Memoria Christi*” as a common source of grace and solidarity for the liberated

enslaved Africans and American abolitionist missionaries alike. The upshot of recognizing the common woundedness of humanity enabled the communities to see one another clearly as made in the image of God and facilitated collaboration rather than opposition. Thus, the Amistad story can serve as a model for healing the wounds of race-based animosity today.

The subsequent discussion explored the limits of AI relationships, the role of myth and story in actualizing liberation, and the fundamental conditions and form of fruitful relationships. Jacobs was asked whether human–AI relationships might be beneficial for individuals who suffer from debilitating illness or isolation. She responded that there is still little research evidence for the benefits of AI therapy but argued that given the self-transcendent needs of humanity, it is more likely to cause further isolation. In response to a question on the difference between “fruitful” pleasure and instant pleasure, Jacobs commented that relationships are not primarily ordered toward pleasure but rather producing something more of which human–AI relationships are not capable. On a related question regarding the productive role of failure in relationships, Jacobs affirmed that AI does not provide the necessary “push-back” or friction for authentic human growth and Ukwuije added that as an example, the common ground of vulnerability and finitude between the American abolitionists and the freed Africans was conducive to growth as well. A participant challenged Ukwuije on the mythological and thus not actually realized quality of the Amistad story, arguing that the collaboration described in the story did not ultimately lead to abolition. Ukwuije contended that the story mobilized people toward abolition and drew in those who were otherwise on the margins or uncertain about the movement. A final question for all participants inquired to what degree relationship with God, others, or AI might be understood in terms of asymmetrical reciprocity. Chakkalakkal responded that a relational participatory ontology fits this mode of relationality and added that AI might be a form of “intensive imagination” to which Jacobs responded that interaction with AI is more passive than active.

The session was concluded with a fifteen-minute business meeting during which the new member Brienne Jacobs was included in a brainstorming session on the 2026 convention theme of synodality.

TIFFANY HARTNELL-HOWDEN
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

BIOETHICS/HEALTHCARE – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: One Baptism
Convener: Dan Daly, Boston College
Moderator: Emma McDonald Kennedy, Villanova University
Presenters: Michael McCarthy, Loyola University Chicago
Leah Wakefield, Marquette University
Megan Heeder, University of Scranton

The three papers presented in the bioethics topic session addressed the convention theme of “One Baptism” and its intersections with methodological and applied issues in theology and healthcare ethics.

Michael McCarthy of Loyola University Chicago presented the paper, “Bioethics and the Principle of Mercy: Baptism and the Style of Jesus’ Healing Ministry.” In it, McCarthy outlined the need for additional conceptual development to ground Catholic bioethics as it continues to be in conversation with secular bioethics and society more broadly. Framing his focus on mercy in relation to the convention theme of baptism, McCarthy turned to scholarship on mercy from liberation theologian Jon Sobrino and moral theologian James Keenan to describe the foundational principle of mercy enacted in Gospel narratives of Jesus’ healing. Suggesting that Jesus’ healing ministry exemplifies engagement with society and specifically with human suffering, McCarthy applied Keenan’s well-known definition of mercy as “the willingness to enter into the chaos of another” to the context of healthcare, sketching an account of Catholic bioethics with mercy, with its attentiveness to human suffering, at the center. He concluded by considering how a focus on mercy might complexify analysis of key issues in Catholic bioethics, focusing specifically on racial disparities in end-of-life care and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare.

In “Harm Reduction, Catholic Medical Ethics, and Catholic Social Teaching,” Leah Wakefield of Marquette University argued that syringe service programs, which are community-based, harm reduction interventions that provide sterile syringes and facilitate safe disposal of used syringes, promote the common good, honor the dignity of the human person, and support stewardship of resources—all key elements of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). She also connected the USCCB’s Ethical and Religious Directives to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) directives on harm reduction to suggest that syringe service programs, as part of a broader community-based public health effort, would improve Catholic healthcare systems’ responses to public health issues including drug overdose and infectious disease transmission. Citing evidence that supports the effectiveness of these interventions in meeting these public health goals without increasing the use of illegal drugs, Wakefield also challenged objections that frame syringe service programs and harm reduction strategies more broadly as promoting drug use.

Megan Heeder of the University of Scranton presented “The Christian Baptismal Call: Shaping a Bioethical Response to Poverty and Race’s Role in Eating Disorders.” In it, Heeder drew on principles of CST to describe and critique structural inequalities related to race and socioeconomic status that shape disparities in access to healthy food,

to diet and nutrition information, and to healthcare for eating disorders. Linking the convention theme of baptism to CST's recognition of rights and duties through the example of Milwaukee's Kinship Community Food Center, Heeder argued that our incorporation into the Body of Christ in Baptism calls the Christian to work for justice in solidarity via care for the other, especially in response to issues of poverty and race and the development and treatment of eating disorders. Heeder concluded by arguing that CST and our shared baptismal call prompt Christians to work to eradicate food deserts, promote equitable access to nutritional specialists and accurate nutrition information, and forge relationships of mutual care and accompaniment with individuals and communities through the sharing of meals.

The discussion following the three presentations continued to engage thorny issues in and beyond Catholic moral theology and bioethics—particularly, 1) the relationship between academic theology, ecclesial institutions, and Catholic healthcare institutions in ethical responses to healthcare challenges and 2) the relationship between individual agency and social forces. Regarding the first issue, a participant with extensive experience in ethics and mission integration within Catholic healthcare systems invited Wakefield to comment on whether any Catholic hospitals have adopted harm reduction strategies discussed in her paper; Wakefield's impassioned response emphasized the inattention of Catholic hospitals and the USCBB to issues of overdose and infectious disease related to drug use, noting especially their lack of engagement with harm reduction strategies. Questions of individual agency and broader structural forces were raised most directly in response to Heeder's presentation and its focus on poverty and race. In her response, Heeder affirmed the importance of recognizing individual agency and structural factors, and additionally surfaced cultural factors, including social media and beauty standards promoted online, as significant contributors to the development and intractability of eating disorders. Both discussion topics demonstrated the ongoing linkages of applied issues in bioethics and healthcare ethics to broader questions in secular bioethics, moral theology, and ecclesiology.

EMMA McDONALD KENNEDY
Villanova University
Villanova, Pennsylvania

CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: One Baptism
Convener: Peter Fay, Villanova University
Moderator: Xavier Montecel, St. Mary's University
Presenters: Jens Mueller, Notre Dame of Maryland University
Shaun Slusarski, Boston College

In “*Laudato Si’* and Baptismal Renewal: Embracing Ecological Conversion for the Jubilee Year 2025,” Jens Mueller contended that the coincidence between the Jubilee Year of 2025 and the tenth anniversary of Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’* provides a ripe occasion to renew commitments to environmental responsibility and ecological conversion as requirements of baptism. After reviewing the encyclical’s teachings about the ecological, social, and cultural dimensions of the environmental crisis (e.g., global warming, throwaway culture, and the technocratic paradigm, respectively), Mueller proposed that the encyclical’s theme of integral ecology is a foundation for the necessary ecological conversion. Mueller incorporated the work of theologian Vincent Miller, who argues that integral ecology acknowledges the fact of interdependence (and thereby overcomes a culture of indifference) and encourages attentiveness and solidarity with God, others, and all creation. Thus, integral ecology generates a theological anthropology that recognizes human interrelatedness with all that exists and a sacramentality that understands that one’s treatment of the common home that humans share with God shapes one’s relationship with that same God. Next, to develop jubilee’s spiritual and ethical dimensions into concrete action for ecological conversion, Mueller turned to the work of agrarian writer Wendell Berry, who notes the dangers of the liberal reduction of freedom to autonomy and the connections between ecological conversion and holiness. Mueller cited the work of philosopher Albert Borgmann on focal things, which impel action that, however seemingly small, can carry forward hope. Reading jubilee ecologically led Mueller to call for penance and reparation for the environmental crisis, pilgrimage toward sustainability, and renewal of stewardship.

In “Pope Francis, Catholic Social Teaching, and Prison Reform,” Shaun Slusarski evaluated Pope Francis’s teachings on criminal justice. Francis did much to support people who are incarcerated through informal remarks, visits to prisons, symbolic gestures (e.g., washing inmates’ feet during Holy Thursday liturgies), advocacy for humane and rehabilitative approaches over retribution, declaring the death penalty to be inadmissible, and indicting life sentences. Slusarski cited empirical evidence to substantiate Francis’s castigating life sentences as a covert death penalty. Despite respecting the dignity of the incarcerated and opening space for their ethical transformation, Francis’s teaching on life sentences remains unclear and incoherent. For example, it sometimes refers to life sentences as impermissible but other times casts it as questionable. Furthermore, though Francis stated that the magisterium condemns life sentences, he, in fact, was the first pope to address this issue. Even the strongest censure of life sentences (i.e., *Fratelli Tutti*) remains underdeveloped and lacks the systematic clarity that is a hallmark of Catholic ethics. Whereas previous teachings affirming the legitimacy of the death penalty would have posed challenges

to papal efforts to change the teaching on capital punishment, there are no previous teachings about life sentences and, therefore, none that would have circumscribed Francis's more unequivocal prohibition of them. Slusarski recommended that future magisterial teaching ought to reject retributive approaches in favor of non-carceral ones. Insofar as incarceration is an anti-baptism that ruptures community, induces stigma, and dehumanizes, Slusarski concluded that baptism's promise of new life obliges the church to counter the death promised through incarceration.

These presentations prompted much discussion. One set of questions pertained to the resources, especially concerning personhood, politics, society, and the state, upon which future magisterial teachings about criminal justice might draw, with the suggestion that earlier eras of the church's history (e.g., Augustinian humility) will need to be critically retrieved over the dominant Thomistic approach that construes punishment as natural. A second set of questions inquired about the overlap between incarceration, the environmental crisis, and other challenges and a framework that can hold together their interrelations. Responses suggested the need to identify the carceral logic that undergirds the school-to-prison pipeline and to oppose these with restorative justice. Thinking with René Girard's mimetic theory, a third question worried that social cohesion might, in fact, require the scapegoating of criminals, which led to the submission that a cultural shift on criminal justice will entail critically interrogating the Catholic logic of eternal punishment. Perhaps the most sustained set of questions concerned how best to inaugurate the changes envisioned by the presenters on the ground. Responses ranged from endorsing synodality; teaching and forming students; building and fortifying organic connections between parishioners and those who, because of incarceration, cannot travel to parishes; finding and developing stories that humanize; resisting stigma; inspiring conversion and hope; and sitting with despair.

PETER K. FAY
Villanova University
Villanova, Pennsylvania

CATHOLICITY AND MISSION – TOPIC SESSION

- Convener: Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
- Moderator: Kevin Considine, Catholic Theological Union
- Presenters: Margaret Mary Moore, Theology and Life Institute
David de la Fuente, Fordham University
Ramon Luzarraga, Saint Martin's University

The three presenters in the Catholicity and Mission Topic Session delivered relevant and engaging papers, all of which meaningfully connected with the session's trajectory to explore:

the multiple meanings conveyed by the concept of 'baptism' in relation to the concepts of Catholicity and Mission, including the historical violence enforced upon indigenous persons and lands in the name of Christ, the contemporary reality of decreasing numbers of persons baptized into Catholicism and rather identifying as nones, and the ongoing debates within Catholicism about authentic belief and practice creating polarizations within.

For her paper, "De-coding the so-called Doctrine of Discovery," Margaret Mary Moore suggested that the Doctrine of Discovery was never a "doctrine" of the church. She showed how the ideas began with papal bulls in the sixteenth century authorizing Spain and Portugal to colonize new territories and to baptize countless numbers of Indigenous peoples along the way. She suggested that by de-coding this "doctrine," we can reevaluate the meaning of the sacrament of baptism, offer a healthy ecclesiology to our fellow Christians, and have a deeper appreciation of the healing and empowerment of self and others that baptism intends. Moreover, she suggested that understanding this harmful theology as something other than "doctrine" can offer a pastorally effective strategy for ministry among Indigenous youth in the United States, especially in light of the heightened awareness in recent years of the scandal of the Catholic-run Indigenous boarding schools in Canada and the United States.

In his presentation, "Pentecostalizing Catholicity and Mission: Jennings and Yong on the 'Baptism of the Multitude,'" David de la Fuente explored a "Pentecostalization" of the Catholic theology of baptism and its attendant missiology by drawing first on the writings of Willie James Jennings on baptism, and second on the missiology of Amos Yong. He showed how Jennings expresses a theology of baptism that is anti-oppressive because it is "Pentecostal" and connected to unity-in-diversity in the Spirit. He then showed how Yong offers a Pentecostal theology of missiology that is rooted in Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit and yet is expressed inclusively so as to edify the church catholic. He concluded that both thinkers contribute to a Pentecostalized vision of the "baptism of the multitude" that can actualize the theology of baptism itself as empowering and liberating.

Ramon Luzarraga's presentation, "The Box Score of Baptism: US Catholic Missionary Christianity in the Caribbean" explored how the Catholic Church in the Anglophone Caribbean was administered by one religious congregation in charge of

each territory and the interplay between local and colonial power and cultures in creating something new. The drive to administer baptism and other sacraments in these territories exposed a tension within these congregations. The number of persons baptized and receiving other sacraments was quantified by these congregations to justify the mission as something worthy of support by their donors, but their clergy fell short in enculturating themselves in Caribbean life. Despite that, their legacy in the Caribbean thrived under native leadership, with baptism and the sacraments understood by Caribbean people as God confirming their unique identity as such.

From questions posed by attendees, a lively discussion followed the presentations. Much of the conversation focused on ways to interpret the Doctrine of Discovery, both in historical context and in contemporary intercultural contexts. Notable questions revolved around “heresy,” intercultural hermeneutics, de-colonization, the definition of doctrine, the hierarchy of truths, the role of land in identity formation and empowerment, and the distinct ways that Caribbean Catholicisms provided an alternative theological praxis of Christian life through empowerment of local peoples. Larger questions included: What language do we use to describe a theological praxis whose effect is horrific violence even though it is not based in “official” doctrine? How do we name a theological praxis when teachings of lesser magisterial authority are manipulated as if it was doctrine for nefarious purposes? How do we theologically communicate for the common good in intercultural and de-colonial contexts to form a more just ecclesial body?

KEVIN P. CONSIDINE
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois

CHRIST – TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Eugene R. Schlesinger, Santa Clara University
Moderator: Robert Lasalle-Klein, Santa Clara University
Presenters: William Orbih, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary
Brandon Peterson, University of Utah
Michael Costas, Boston College

This session consisted of three papers, each approximately twenty minutes long, that explored the convention theme of “One Baptism” and evolving visions of catholicity in connection to Christology through a variety of approaches. Each paper was followed by a question-and-answer period, and the session concluded with a wider discussion of emergent themes from the papers.

William Orbih's paper, “The Risen Christ is the Resisting Christ: From Nicaea to Postcolonial Africa,” proceeded from a recognition that among the effects of coloniality is a tendency to convince Africans that any resistance is always unethical. In view of this, Orbih argued that African theology needs to develop a theology of “a Savior who offers salvation and inspires resistance to the colonial status quo.” He did so by appeal to Athanasius's account of Christ as both divine and human, constructing a Christology that is “faithful to the creed” and also “relevant to Africans.” Recognizing Jesus's resistance to the injustices of his own time, the same injustices that crucified him, Christians should recognize the resurrection as his vindication, and their own baptism as an invitation to uncompromising and courageous resistance to colonial structures. A key component of this Christology is its distinction from the notion of Christ as “liberator,” which Orbih suggests lends itself to a “cargo mentality,” which reproduces colonial structures by priming Africans to view their salvation as something to be received from outside, rather than a reality informing their own agency.

Brandon Peterson's contribution, “One Gospel, Many Nations: The Torah, the Covenant, and Christian Supersessionism,” took as its starting point the distinction proffered by Jewish theologian David Novack between “hard” and “soft” supersessionisms. The former views the Christian church as a replacement of Judaism, while the latter views it as a culmination and fulfillment without suggesting the obsolescence of Judaism. Peterson situated several relatively recent contributions, ranging from Joseph Ratzinger to Matthew Levering, from so called Christian Seders to identifying Jesus as the “living Torah” within this typology, and suggested a third category of “firm” supersessionism may also be needed to fully account for the viewpoints. Often lost in the discussion is the distinction between the Israelite religion of the Hebrew Scriptures and post-Christian Judaism. Following Amy Jill Levine, Peterson suggested that Christianity and Judaism might be better understood as children of Ancient Judaism, rather than as “mother” and “daughter” religions. In moving towards a conclusion, he suggested that the category of “covenant” may be more fruitful than such concepts as “Torah” for articulating Jesus' and Christianity's relationship to the elder siblings.

Finally, Michael Costas offered his paper, “Living Up to Our Baptism,” which explored the ways in which this unrepeatable sacrament can be continually

reappropriated by Christians, whose life remains a fundamentally baptismal reality. He developed this question principally in conversation with Thomas Aquinas, along with categories derived from Bernard Lonergan, arguing that baptism is a sign which brings about what it signifies, imparting upon its recipients a character and priming them for lives of worship lived according to the law of the cross. Baptism has a “developmental intelligibility” insofar as its effects are deepened across the span of one’s life. The classic categories of sacramental baptism, the baptism of desire, and the baptism of blood provide a framework for articulating this developmental intelligibility. Doing so requires some shifts from Thomas’s framework, proceeding principally from baptism’s effect, rather than its administration. The life of grace ordinarily begins with the heart’s desire (baptism of desire), proceeds to public commitment (sacramental baptism), and reaches its culmination by sharing in the law of the cross in one’s concrete living (baptism of blood). The baptismal reality of Christian life unfolds through a series of affective breakthroughs, culminating in charity.

The discussion following each paper and the session as a whole was stimulating, with questions ranging from the difference between resistance and liberation, to how baptismal liturgies could more effectively emphasize the political dimensions of Christian commitment.

EUGENE R. SCHLESINGER
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

CHURCH/ECUMENISM – TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University
Moderator: Mary Kate Holman, Fairfield University
Presenters: Amanda Osheim, Loras College
Flora x. Tang, University of Notre Dame
Carol George, KU Leuven

The Church/Ecumenism session took place Friday morning, June 13. Approximately twenty-five convention attendees joined the session, not including the presenters and administrative team. The three papers presented engaged the conference theme of “One Baptism” in distinctive ways.

Amanda Osheim presented her paper entitled “Born into Vulnerability, Baptized into Kenosis: Towards Ecclesial Examinations of Conscience.” Osheim compared various accounts of vulnerability (ontological, situational, baptismal), arguing first that through false identities, those with social privileges insulate themselves from vulnerability, and in so doing, exacerbate the situational vulnerability of others. In contrast, through baptismal identity, Christians are called to imitate Christ’s vulnerability and kenosis, understood as refusal to grasp at being God *and* letting go of received assumptions about others (e.g., Jesus’s encounter with the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7). Osheim argued that the Holy Spirit calls and empowers Christians to imitate Christ’s kenosis more fully through ongoing conversion. Ecclesial examinations of conscience can aid Christian communities in becoming aware of their collective involvement in social privilege and structural sin both within and beyond the church. These examinations may also help to inspire communal imagination, action, and collaboration in imitation of Christ’s kenotic vulnerability.

Flora Tang presented her paper entitled “Baptism on the Potawatomi Trail of Death: An Ecclesiology of (Limited) Solidarity for a Decolonizing Church.” Her paper focused on the Log Chapel in Notre Dame, Indiana, where the largely Catholic Indigenous Potawatomi Tribe prayed immediately before their forced removal from Indiana to Kansas in 1838; today, the chapel is primarily used for infant baptisms. Tang asked, what does it mean to be baptized into a church where both European missionaries and Indigenous Catholics are our ecclesial ancestors? What can the belief in one baptism do for a church where colonial-racial power differences seem to foreclose solidarity and true communion? Tang presented her archival research of a historic Indigenous Catholic congregation and their French-American missionary priests to demonstrate how the three priests participated in acts of limited yet embodied solidarity with the Indigenous community despite their continued anti-Indigenous and racist dispositions. Tang ultimately argued that “one baptism” does not make colonial divisions or racist ideologies disappear; nonetheless, baptismal grace does enable an ecclesial space where possibilities of imperfect communion and limited solidarity emerge.

Carol George presented his paper entitled “Unity in Diversity: Reciprocal Dynamism of Synodality and Receptive Ecumenism.” George argued that in an era of increasing diversity within the church, synodality and receptive ecumenism offer transformative pathways to unity. Synodality, the journey of the entire people of God

in mutual “listening,” aligns with receptive ecumenism, which promotes openness to diverse Christian traditions through active “listening.” By admitting the diversities within the church, synodality becomes a platform for mutual dialogue and communal decision-making. Concurrently, receptive ecumenism calls for humility and openness to learn from the richness of traditions outside one’s own, creating an environment where unity transcends uniformity and fosters a harmonious coexistence of differences. By allowing each of these methodologies and practices to enrich the other, a synodal church can recognize the *sensus fidelium* in others and strive for enrichment, even if not agreement. George ultimately argued that by embracing the reciprocal dynamism of synodality and receptive ecumenism, we can build bridges and cultivate a more vibrant and united “One” Body of Christ.

After each paper, a few minutes was allowed for brief questions for the presenter. After all three papers, more substantive discussion and question-and-answer took place. Attendees noted similar themes of the challenge of vulnerability, and the concomitant need for humility, to *hear* the pain of the church, the people of God, in various times and places (including in our own historical/political moment). Questions were also posed regarding the formation for communal examinations of conscience, how the Potawatomi remember their history vis-à-vis Catholic missionaries, and the state of ecumenical dialogue today.

ELYSE RABY
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Conveners: Julius-Kei Kato, University of Toronto
 Laurel Marshall Potter, University of St. Thomas (Minnesota)
 Moderator: Domenik Ackermann, Universität Paderborn
 Presenters: Axel Oaks Takacs, Seton Hall University
 Joyce Konigsburg, DePaul University
 Shinjae Lee, Boston College

Resulting from a broad call for papers, this Comparative Theology session reflected on the convention theme “One Baptism” in conversation with Islam, Hinduism, and the reality of religious pluralism in general. The panel stressed that, although baptism may mark Christian belonging and commitment, it can also serve as a point of connection, dialogue, and learning with members of other traditions.

The first paper, by Axel Oaks Takacs, was titled “Tradition and Propriety of Rituals in the (Omnipresent) Face of God: Ordinary (Supernatural) and Extraordinary (Natural) Means of Experiencing the Divine Presence.” Provoked by assertions from the *nouvelle théologie* (primarily Henri DeLubac) about nature as oriented to the supernatural and as medium of grace, as well as Jacques DuPuis’s subsequent articulation of an open-inclusivist theology of religions, Takacs identified a tension in conciliar Catholic theology between God’s omnipresence (a progressive, inclusive “spirit” of religiosity) and “the soteriological centrality of the Church and its sacraments” (a conservative, exclusive “letter” of religious practice). How, Takacs asked, do Catholics affirm the importance of normative sacramental practice—for example, the celebration of baptism—as meaningful for salvation, while also affirming God’s real presence in all of creation? In thinking through this tension, Takacs turned to parallel discussions among post-classical Sufis and Muslim legal experts on the validity and propriety of the *ṣalāh*, or the canonical daily prayer. Drawing on the work of Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī and his interpreters, Takacs presented both the Quranic affirmation that “*whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God*” (Qur’ān 2:115) and the legal requirement of facing the *qiblah* during *ṣalāh*, especially due to *adab*, propriety and courtesy to Muhammad, his behavior, and his revelatory dispensation. Ultimately, Takacs’s descriptions of and reflections on the fruits of ordinary Islamic practice confirmed the paper’s thesis that it is *through* ordinary ritual practice that the spirit of religious teaching—the omnipresence of God—is accessed.

The second paper by Joyce Konigsburg, “One Baptism: From Unity in Diversity to Diversity in Unity,” describes how baptism can promote both unity and diversity on Catholic, ecumenical, and interreligious scales. Within Catholic tradition and ecumenically, Konigsburg described how the baptized are primarily drawn into unity with each other as the Body of Christ across denominations. In relationship to members of other religious traditions, Konigsburg described how the baptized are called to participation as one among many, with a value for diversity as a starting point. In pluralist societies, the baptized are called to engage in comparative dialogue and learning in search of shared religious values that may help members of all traditions unite for ethical ends. Ultimately, the theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year, “Pilgrims of Hope,” served as an ideal for how Konigsburg imagines a unified body of the baptized

to engage with members of the world's diverse traditions in establishing justice for all beings.

Finally, Shinjae Lee presented his paper, "Reimagining Spiritual Equality: A Comparative Analysis of Dayananda Sarasvati's Vedic Reform and the Concept of One Baptism in Dalit Theology." At the heart of Lee's presentation was the question of how baptism, a sacrament of equality, might more powerfully speak to a church "still haunted by caste." For a comparative understanding of the potential for equality among castes, Lee turned to Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, who spearheaded a return to the Vedas as a means of purifying Hinduism, rejecting caste-based discrimination, and advocating for a monotheistic worship of a formless God. Lee noted that while Sarasvati promoted ontological sameness across members of all castes, he also promoted a hierarchy of people based on merit and contained some proto-Hindu nationalist tendencies. Nevertheless, evidence of ontological equality across caste from within Hinduism should, Lee asserts, help churches, too, move towards full equality for Dalit members through the celebration of baptism. Lee notes some enduring tensions, for example, that baptized Dalits are "twice discriminated" by virtue of their Dalit and Christian status, and that Dalits believers who do not choose baptism should also be treated equitably. Ultimately, however, both Lee's Hindu sources and Christian reflection suggest that equality must be made a habitual pedagogy of both traditions in consideration of their Dalit members.

LAUREL MARSHALL POTTER
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

CREATION/ESCHATOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: Orthodox–Catholic dialogue in honor of the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea
- Conveners: Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
Paul Schutz, Santa Clara University
Kathleen McNutt, Marquette University
- Moderator: Aristotle Papanikolaou, Fordham University
- Presenters: Jack Pappas, Fordham University
Sarah Livick-Moses, Gannon University

In response to the conference theme of “One Baptism,” this panel focused on Orthodox–Catholic dialogue in honor of the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Unfortunately, Anne Carpenter was not able to attend the convention, so the session consisted of two papers and a lengthy discussion afterwards.

Jack Pappas from Fordham University presented a paper entitled “‘In My End is My Beginning:’ Creation and the Image of God in Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor.” Pappas begins with a common theme in Catholic and Orthodox theology, the radical otherness of God the Creator from creation. This general understanding, he proposes, is often rooted in the Nicene doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son. Instead, Pappas contends that within the Eastern Christian theological tradition there is a basis for articulating a protological and eschatological identity between the Creator and creation. Pappas focuses on the figures of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, who each understand the whole of creation not as an abstract or self-enclosed reality in which God intervenes, but as the very unfolding of the relation between the Father and the Son within time. In doing so, Pappas demonstrates how Eastern theologies of creation can potentially offer a corrective to classical Western accounts of the relationship between Creator and creature that is both in continuity with the shared conciliar tradition and resonates with the work of more recent Roman Catholic and Orthodox thinkers.

The second panelist was Sarah Livick-Moses, Assistant Professor at Gannon University, who presented her paper entitled, “The Drama of Creation: Bulgakov, Balthasar, and the Promise of Ecumenical Ecotheology.” Contemporary ecological concerns offer a particularly fertile ground for dialogue between Orthodox and Catholic theologians as they both retrieve and reinterpret the doctrine of creation. In her paper, Livick-Moses explores how the theologies of Sergius Bulgakov and Hans Urs von Balthasar illuminate creation as both divine gift and human responsibility. Bulgakov’s Sophiology and Balthasar’s Christological aesthetics converge in a vision of creation that is sacramental, dynamic, and deeply participatory—especially around the category of kenosis. A theology of creation rooted in kenosis opens up ecumenical dialogue at both doctrinal and constructive levels. In both Bulgakov’s Sophiology and Balthasar’s theodrama, *creatio ex nihilo* grounds a shared commitment to creaturely participation in God and provides a promising avenue for thinking ecotheologically across ecumenical boundaries. By drawing on both historical and contemporary theological perspectives, Livick-Moses considers how a renewed theology of creation

can contribute not only to doctrinal and theological collaboration, but also to a shared Christian response to the ecological crisis.

Our guest moderator for this session was Aristotle Papanikolaou, who is the co-founding Director of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University. There was a spirited discussion afterwards, with many who were well versed in Orthodox theology generally and in the figures of Gregory, Maximus, Bulgakov, and Balthasar particularly. Given Carpenter's absence, Papanikolaou was able to intervene and pose detailed questions on the evolution of Bulgakov's thought, specific points of disagreement between Balthasar and Bulgakov, and how modern theologians differed in their reading of the Patristic fathers. The session proved not only a robust appreciation in the CTSA for the doctrine of creation and how it has been expressed in various historical periods, but also for a candid dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox theologians on points of consensus and divergence.

Thanks to Jack Pappas and Sarah Livick-Moses for their assistance in summarizing their arguments.

DANIEL P. SCHEID
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY/METHOD – TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Nicholas Olkovich, St. Mark's College
 Moderator: T. Derrick Witherington, Loyola University Chicago
 Presenter: Jack Nuelle, Loyola University Chicago
 Respondents: Ryan Duns S.J., Marquette University
 T. Derrick Witherington, Loyola University Chicago

This year's Fundamental Theology/Method Topic Session was a lively conversation on the role of baptism in overcoming structural sin.

The conversation began with Jack Nuelle presenting his paper, "One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins: Symbolic Efficacy, Encounter, and Structural Sin." Nuelle began with a critical presentation of how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* understands sacramental grace. His primary critiques of the *Catechism's* position were that it limits the human response to grace as a binary assent/not assenting, and that it ignores the role of a human person's yearning for God (after Augustine) as well as the Rahnerian supernatural existential, that human beings are always-already hungering for God as their true supernatural end. Following Rahner's insistence that grace *is* God, Nuelle claimed that the model of grace as presented in the *Catechism* is insufficiently existential, de-emphasizing the role of grace as a transformative encounter with the person of Christ. Insofar as Christ reconciles humanity with God, understanding grace as both separated from the person of Christ and as something that is presented to the human person by divine *fiat* rather than as being existentially encountered, Nuelle claimed that this places a chasm between grace and the experience of being forgiven. As a corrective to this, Nuelle utilized insights from Edward Schillebeeckx and Louis-Marie Chauvet, namely the former's emphasis on sacraments as being Christocentric events of existential encounter and the latter's theology of symbols which presents grace as effecting a personal transformation on the part of the participant in the sacramental rite. Returning to the topic of forgiveness, Nuelle engaged Jacques Derrida and John Caputo on the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of forgiveness and how being forgiven gives one a new interpretation of one's past, enabling one to discern for the presence of grace all along. In conclusion Nuelle commented upon the connection between grace and the gift in Chauvet and how Chauvet's "return-gift of love" as being the only proper response to the reception of the gift of grace could be seen as an invitation to look at our past harms and enter into a place of graced-forgiveness.

Derrick Witherington offered the first response to Nuelle's paper and focused on his reading of both Schillebeeckx and Chauvet. Witherington noted that Nuelle had insufficiently focused on the role of the church in Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology and how the existential encounter with God in Christ through them happens by means of concrete and ecclesially sanctioned sacramental rites, words, and symbols, and not in spite of them. Moving onto Chauvet, Witherington noted that Nuelle's allusion to Chauvet's understanding of the return-gift of grace was insufficiently critical and that this omission risks discrediting Nuelle's critique of structural sin. Noting Daniel Franklin Pilario's critique of Chauvet on this issue, Witherington commented upon Chauvet's use of the language of "obligation" when describing the

return-gift and whether or not this risks understanding grace in a dominating way, reducing the freedom of the human person to naught. Witherington then suggested that Nuelle engage Chauvet's writings on sacrifice to respond to Pilario's and similar critiques, understanding the return-gift as the sacrificial gift of love which is oriented to the making of an existential-spiritual gift on the part of the participants in the sacramental rite. Rather than obligation being seen in a dominating way, the obligation is itself an obligation of love similar to how family members are called to love one another.

Ryan Duns' response then turned to Nuelle's understanding of grace, suggesting that it represents a too limited reading of the *Catechism* and suggested that in his concern with combatting an extrinsicist understanding of grace, Nuelle has made grace appear to be equivalent with the human longing for it. Noting that the documents of the Second Vatican Council do not seem to advocate for a purely extrinsicist understanding of grace, Duns went on to note that Nuelle should focus on the role of agency within sacramental rites. Rather than focusing solely on the human being's role in receiving and responding to grace and becoming agents of reconciliation, it is equally important to recall that it is Christ who acts in the sacraments. Neglecting this, we risk overemphasizing passivity or overestimating human agency, not realizing that God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, is the one who takes the initiative to reveal in concrete ways the order of grace. Finally, Duns suggested that Nuelle's use of Derrida and Caputo, risks destabilizing the very reality of forgiveness affirmed in the Creed and enacted in baptism. Duns suggested that an engagement with thinkers more firmly embedded in the church's sacramental worldview would offer a firmer theological ground for the idea of forgiveness Nuelle was trying to express.

After hearing these two responses, Nuelle responded affirmatively and thankfully to the respondents before the floor was opened for further discussion. The remainder of the discussion centered around the role of the church in the bestowal of forgiveness and the general efficacy of sacramental rites in the face of personal and structural sin. What resulted was a lively, collaborative, and memorable session on a topic of continued relevance and importance.

T. DERRICK WITHERINGTON
*Loyola University
Chicago, Illinois*

GOD/TRINITY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Trinitarian Theology and the Faith of Nicaea
 Convener: Nancy Dallavalle, Fairfield University
 Moderator: Robin Landrith, Loyola University Maryland
 Presenter: Paul DeHart, Vanderbilt University
 Respondent: Elizabeth Groppe, University of Dayton

Engaging the conference theme, Paul DeHart of Vanderbilt University offered a paper titled “The Economic Trinity and the Nicene Faith —Learning from Schleiermacher.”

DeHart argued that a careful reading of the Trinitarian theology of the great nineteenth-century Protestant thinker Friedrich Schleiermacher offers useful insights, even for Catholic theologians committed to the orthodox creedal doctrine Schleiermacher rejected. For him, Jesus of Nazareth is that being in whom the universal pre-thematic awareness of God common to all human beings, while always hindered and distorted by the individual and collective privileging of world-consciousness, breaks through into a perfect ordering and expression of our world-consciousness which is at the same time consciousness of the creator. Thus, beyond the creator’s presence upholding the world as a whole, this consciousness in Jesus is a new and radical presence of the creator within the world, a presence that can be communicated to others. Where a community exists that disseminates the power of Jesus’s triumphant God-consciousness to its members, there, too, in the human collective (the church), comes to be another mode of divine presence in the world, dependent upon the first but just as real. Schleiermacher’s doctrine of the Trinity bases itself on this triad of modes of divine presence in the world.

From an orthodox perspective, DeHart observed, the key deficits of Schleiermacher’s theology are, first, an exaggerated fear of anthropomorphism that undermines his own centralization of human mediation of God’s redeeming presence in the world; second, a hostility to eschatology that cannot accommodate the divinizing soteriology that underpins the Nicene approach; and third, a view of incarnation that does not allow Jesus himself to speak and act as a divine (as well as human) person. These result in his modalist rejection of eternal persons in God. On the other hand, DeHart continued, the strong points of his theology that highlight essential conditions for Nicene retrieval include, first, rooting the discourse of the Trinity firmly in the economy of salvation; and second, situating trinitarian claims within an overarching and rigorous theory of God as creator with the limits this imposes on our language and conception.

Turning to more recent work in trinitarian theology, DeHart argued that the attempts by Schleiermacher’s immediate heirs to go beyond his modalism resulted in an unfortunate division of “immanent” and “economic” Trinities that has been a problem ever since.

Elizabeth Groppe’s response to DeHart’s paper raised four points. 1) Observing Schleiermacher’s own reflections on love, she wondered whether creedal language should reflect not only “light from light,” but also “love from love,” given the procession of the Holy Spirit “as love?” DeHart acknowledged that “love” is not central

in the creedal language, but cautioned that any “augmentation” of the creed would create ecumenical hurdles. He also observed that this move would not in itself address the need to understand and “experience divine love as the essence of all our doctrinal discourse.” 2) Groppe raised Catherine LaCugna’s response to Schleiermacher’s reservations about trinitarian language, noting that she favored the early framing of *theologia* and *oikonomia* as preferable to the economic/immanent distinction, DeHart found this framing useful. 3) Responding to Groppe’s question about Schleiermacher’s use of “person,” DeHart clarified that while S. was appropriately wary of the modern use of “person” for the earlier “hypostasis,” he found this use “necessary,” to the notion of the incarnation “as the Word’s assumption of humanity.” 4) In closing, Groppe’s response lifted up DeHart’s “doxological” observation that Schleiermacher seemed to understand that the economy is an “analogical conduit by which our love and liturgy truly enter into what surpasses our knowing.” DeHart appreciated this, as for Schleiermacher, he claimed, “our relation to God’s triune redemption” goes beyond the conceptual due to the “basic role of ‘feeling’ or ‘immediate self-consciousness’ in every moment of our apprehension of God.”

A general discussion followed, lifting up additional questions about both Groppe’s consideration of the word “love” and about the issues involved in the retrieval of the *theologia/oikonomia* distinction.

Opening the session, convener Nancy Dallavalle observed with regret that a planned second respondent, Darren Dias (University of Toronto), was unable to attend this year due to new and restrictive border policies between the United States and Canada.

NANCY DALLAVALLE
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University
 Moderator: Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University
 Presenters: Justin Coyle, Mount Angel Seminary
 Michael J. Petrin, Mount Angel Seminary
 Joseph Flipper, University of Dayton

The panel began with introductions by Grant Kaplan and then proceeded with presentations by each of the three presenters to an audience of roughly twenty people. This occurred during the first of the concurrent sessions on Friday, June 13.

In the first paper, “Once Again on Theology at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy,” Justin Coyle challenged the view—prominent in the historiography—that Orthodox theology at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (KMA) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was “Thomistic” or deficiently Orthodox. Much of the historiography, Coyle argued, is inaccurate because very little of it actually references the manuscript evidence we possess from that period. Coyle shared portions of the text he is currently editing from Stefan Yavorskyi, among the first to offer a theological course at the KMA, to challenge historiographical assumptions. Yavorskyi’s text in fact appears to defend Eastern Orthodox theology by drawing heavily from Spanish scholastics like Francisco Suárez. Coyle closed his paper by highlighting how much more editorial work needs to be done on KMA texts before any general conclusions can be drawn.

Next, Michael J. Petrin presented a paper entitled “Grace, Imitation, and Transformation: The Baptismal Theology of Gregory of Nyssa.” He examined a provocative claim that Gregory of Nyssa makes in the *Oratio catechetica*: namely, that in certain cases, the life of sin that is lived by a baptized person is in no way different from the life of sin that preceded the ritual washing, “the water is water,” as the gift of the Holy Spirit is nowhere to be found. This claim, Petrin noted, stands in tension with Gregory’s well-known exhortations not to delay baptism due to fear of post-baptismal sin. Petrin argued that properly interpreting this area of Gregory’s baptismal theology requires careful attention to his rhetorical training and practice. In particular, Petrin demonstrated that Gregory’s exhortations not to delay the reception of grace through baptism are typically accompanied by exhortations to live a transformed way of life after undergoing the ritual. He then contended that Gregory’s claim that “the water is water” should be read as an example of rhetorical *hyperbolē* with a hortatory purpose—and therefore as fundamentally consistent with the baptismal theology that is found elsewhere in Gregory’s corpus.

The third paper, “Black Catholicity: Universalism and African American Catholicism in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” was delivered by Joseph Flipper. He complicated Albert Raboteau’s description of Black Catholics in the US as a “minority within a minority”—a religious minority among African Americans and a racial minority among Catholics—experiencing a double consciousness arising from double minoritization. Flipper argued that “minority within a minority” fails to capture Black Catholic self-understanding during this period. Drawing from Josef Sorett’s notion of “racial Catholicity,” Flipper observed that for many Black Catholic intellectuals, Catholicism supplied resources by which they could make “a claim on the universal.”

Blackness also offered resources for Black Catholics to make a claim on Catholicism. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Black Catholics were increasingly networked among one another. In addition, numerous Black Catholic writers and artists found themselves at the pivot of a transnational intellectual exchange and looked to the African diaspora to reframe their Catholic identity. Flipper contended that many Black Catholics understood themselves not as minorities in an American Catholic Church, but as part of a global Black Catholicism.

Following the delivery of these three papers, Kaplan moderated a lively discussion for roughly thirty minutes. Coyle responded to a question about recent Orthodox challenges to the neo-patristic paradigm and how his work contributed thereto. Petrin responded to a question about the difference between ancient and modern perspectives on sin, as well as another question about the relationship between rhetorical variability and systematic consistency in Gregory of Nyssa's theology. Flipper was asked about certain experiences of African Catholicism that migrated across the Middle Passage and helped form Black American religious consciousness.

GRANT KAPLAN
Saint Louis University
Saint Louis, Missouri

LITURGY/SACRAMENTS – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: One Baptism
 Convener: Benjamin Durham, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
 Moderator: Kayla August, Boston College
 Presenters: Anne McGowan, Catholic Theological Union
 Christopher O'Brien, Catholic University of America
 Lauren Warner, Boston College

The selected papers for this topic session addressed the topic of One Baptism from three distinct methodological starting points, responding to the call for papers in ways representative of the diverse approaches that find their home in liturgical and sacramental theology.

Anne McGowan from Catholic Theological Union presented a paper titled "Baptized in One Church? Capacities and Challenges of Multi-Church Collaborative OCIA Processes." Employing an ethnographic approach, McGowan studied a number of Catholic churches located near one another who worked together to craft a shared experience of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). In McGowan's view, while some aspects of this collaborative approach had significant potential to be liturgically and pastorally beneficial (such as new members becoming familiar with more local church communities than just the specific one they join), a number of challenges complicated these benefits (such as new members remaining still relatively unknown to the church community they are joining, due to the OCIA process unfolding as relatively sequestered from other aspects of parish life).

Christopher O'Brien from the Catholic University of America presented a paper titled "Reintegrating Baptism and Eucharist: A Case for Communing Baptized Infants in Roman Catholicism." Combining liturgical-historical study, sacramental-theological argument, and narrative, O'Brien crafted a five-point case for complete Roman Catholic sacramental initiation of infants. First, O'Brien traced the history of initiatory practice in the Roman West. Second, he argued for the sacramental-theological coherence of unified initiatory rites, including for the very young. Third and fourth, O'Brien laid out the connection between the theological dictum that "the Eucharist makes the church," and young persons' desire for communion participation (and their understanding of what they are doing, "according to their capacity"). Finally, O'Brien noted that such a full initiatory practice for infants would be a step closer in ecumenism both to partners in the East and the West.

Lauren Warner from Boston College presented a paper titled "Harmonizing the Waters: Music as a Celebration of Baptism and Unity in Catholic Liturgy." Drawing extensively from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord* and liturgical-ministerial practice, Warner argued that music crafts a shared liturgical space where unity can coalesce in celebrating rites like baptism. Beyond simply being a catalyst for liturgical celebration or a non-essential add-on, the exercise of liturgical music is a proper ministry ordered toward ecclesial and liturgical unity. To make music together, as Warner presented it, is to play a part in making the church together.

The discussion which followed the paper presentations drew connections between the authors' work, such as a connection between children's participation in music and their participation in sacraments, and a connection between shared OCIA processes and initiatory rites for children and infants. Overall, the roughly twenty-eight persons gathered to engage the papers were quite appreciative in their questions and comments, and the presenters followed the flow of questions to more fully flesh out their arguments and the implications embedded in them. A consistent theme in the discussion was unity, especially as it finds facilitation in the experience of music (even musical traditions that may be unfamiliar to some or many in a congregation), challenge in the navigation of particular church characters and traditions when they collaborate liturgically, and some level of ambiguity when considering full sacramental participation of children and infants. Altogether, it was an edifying and illuminative session.

BENJAMIN DURHEIM
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

MORAL THEOLOGY (I) – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: One Baptism
 Convener: David Kwon, Seattle University
 Moderator: Megan McCabe, Gonzaga University
 Presenters: Marc V. Rugani, Saint Anselm College
 Federico Cinocca, Emmanuel College

In response to the call for papers, four selected proposals explored the theme of *One Baptism* across two coordinated sessions. Moral Theology I examined this theme through the lenses of human capabilities, social ethics, and intersectionality. Moral Theology II, as detailed in a separate report, turned to questions of global solidarity.

This first session featured two distinguished presenters—Marc V. Rugani and Federico Cinocca—whose papers investigated how moral theology can critically engage traditions of sacramentality and justice through the frameworks of human dignity, narrative, and grace. Both offered constructive theological proposals that challenge the church to listen more attentively to those at the margins and to imagine a more expansive vision of hope and grace today.

Marc V. Rugani’s paper, “*Capax Dei: Living Out Christian Hope Through Capabilities Expansion*,” employed the capabilities approach—developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum—as a dialogue partner with Catholic Social Teaching (CST). In response to Pope Francis’s call in *Spes Non Confundit* for Catholics to be “tangible signs of hope,” Rugani argues that human beings, though wounded, remain *capax Dei*—capable of receiving and embodying the life of God. Expanding human capabilities, he contends, is not only a developmental or policy concern but a moral and ecclesial imperative grounded in the call of baptism.

Rugani demonstrates how CST and the capabilities approach share overlapping concerns—particularly human dignity, justice, and flourishing—despite differing epistemological foundations. He explores three case studies—gender, disability, and nationality—as “corrosive disadvantages” that constrain the realization of human dignity and divine likeness. Drawing on disability ethics, *Fratelli Tutti*, and the capabilities approach, Rugani advocates a more inclusive theological praxis—one that affirms difference as a locus of grace. The Jubilee year—already underway since December 24, 2024—invites the Church to recommit to a baptismal vision of a diverse yet unified Body of Christ, especially by centering those historically excluded from ecclesial life.

Federico Cinocca’s paper, “Boundless Grace: Exploring Sacrament’s *Sucedanea* from Baptism to Marriage for Same-Sex Couples,” offered a theological proposal rooted in the Catholic tradition’s doctrine of *sacramentorum succedanea*—substitute means by which grace may be received when formal sacramental rites are unavailable. While traditionally applied to baptism, Cinocca examines how this doctrine might be analogically extended to same-sex unions, especially in light of the enduring faith and witness of LGBTQ+ Catholics.

Cinocca traces the theological roots of *sacramentorum succedanea* from St. Ambrose and Peter Lombard through the Council of Trent and the International Theological Commission. Drawing on Bridget Burke Ravizza, James Keenan, and

Linda Hogan, he proposes that some same-sex couples exhibit spiritual dispositions—faith, charity, sacramental desire, and fidelity—that mirror the grace operative in sacramental marriage. He offers four provisional criteria for discerning sacramental grace in such unions: baptism, authentic desire for the sacrament, a life of communal service, and steadfast faith amid ecclesial marginalization.

While acknowledging theological objections—especially those related to sin and canonical form—Cinocca contends that a grace-centered moral theology rooted in conscience and communal discernment must challenge rigid exclusions. His presentation called the church to engage LGBTQ+ persons not only with pastoral care, but with theological seriousness—trusting in the Spirit’s presence beyond institutional boundaries.

The discussion that followed was both deeply engaged and wide-ranging. Participants raised theological and pastoral questions about extending sacramentality analogically, particularly in relation to ecclesiology, canon law, and the boundaries of liturgical form. Several attendees expressed appreciation for Cinocca’s proposal to retrieve and reimagine *sacramentorum succedanea* as a way to recognize grace already operative in the lives of same-sex couples. This sparked rich conversation around conscience, fidelity, and the importance of moral theology that listens closely to the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ Christians.

Participants also reflected on how Rugani’s use of the capabilities approach and Cinocca’s theology of *succedanea* both surface grace and human dignity in spaces where ecclesial norms have often failed or excluded. Many noted how these frameworks affirm baptism not as a static identity but as a dynamic vocation—calling the church to deeper accompaniment, justice, and hospitality.

In connection with these themes, the session highlighted the contributions of scholars advancing this work, including Meghan Clark, Anna Rowlands, Christina Astorga, and Bryan Massingale. Their respective uses of capabilities theory, political theology, liberationist ethics, and intersectionality help reimagine moral theology as more expansive, justice-oriented, and responsive to the Spirit’s presence at the Church’s margins. The conversation also touched on the theological risks and pastoral urgency involved in integrating such frameworks into ethics today. Ultimately, the session modeled a hopeful and theologically rigorous vision for a Church attuned to the Spirit’s movement beyond conventional boundaries.

DAVID KWON
Seattle University
Seattle, Washington

MORAL THEOLOGY (II) – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: One Baptism and Global Solidarity
 Convener: Leocadie Lushombo, i.t., Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University
 Moderator: Barbara Anne Kozee, Boston College
 Presenters: Hilary O. Nwainya, Saint Thomas University
 Amanda Rachel Bolaños, Duke Divinity School

In response to the moral theology topic session’s call for papers on the topic of “One Baptism and Global Solidarity,” the two proposals addressed the communal virtue ethics needed to affirm the vision of a people of God sealed in One Baptism.

Amanda Rachel Bolaños, from Duke Divinity School, presented a paper titled “The Virtue of Solidarity: A Baptismal Account of Reclaiming Charity.” In this paper, she offers a close analysis of the virtue of solidarity as a prescription to help repair the potentiality of what the virtue of charity ought to be and look like. She turns to *mujerista* and other Latina feminist theologians, using the method of *lo cotidiano* as a means of practicing accountability within the overarching virtue of charity, arguing this through the lens of a baptismal grounding. She specifically engages Ada María Isasi-Díaz’s claim that the virtue of charity, a term often associated with love for one’s neighbor, has mainly been expressed through one-sided giving, typically a donation of what we have in excess. Charity has been overused and must be replaced by the virtue of solidarity. She agrees with Isasi-Díaz’s resort to solidarity, but Bolaños argues that charity is not to be replaced by solidarity because charity is not the problem. The one-sided giving to the least off out of the better off’s abundance suggests a significant lack of genuine relationality in the way the virtue of charity is currently practiced, which she considers both problematic and unethical. She argues that the issue is not charity itself but mislabeling certain behaviors as charity when they are merely a semblance of it. She agrees with Isasi-Díaz’s emphasis on solidarity; she believes that by focusing on the virtue of solidarity, we can gain a clearer understanding of the concepts of relationality and friendship that the true essence of charity calls us to embrace. In exploring solidarity through the lens of *lo cotidiano*, which she develops throughout the paper, we can restore charity to its rightful place, enabling Christians to actualize it and reclaim charity as a sustainable theological virtue.

Hilary O. Nwainya from St. Thomas University presented a paper titled “Towards a National Ethos of Recognition: Leveraging ‘One Baptism’ to Address Ethical and Social Fragmentation in Nigeria.” Drawing on Ephesians 4:3-6, this paper advocates for cultivating a culture of recognition as a means to embody the reality of “One Baptism” and African communitarianism. African communitarian values, particularly those rooted in the palaver tradition, foster inclusive dialogue and consensus-building. These principles can inspire participatory governance, restore justice, and rebuild social trust. By integrating “One Baptism” with African palaver ethics, we can foster a shared identity and promote national unity. In highlighting Nigeria’s social fragmentation, he described how continuous misrecognition continually denies Nigerians their dignity. Nwainya argues that affirming “One Baptism and Global Solidarity” requires embracing a comprehensive, sustainable, and purposeful culture

of recognition. He confirms that the non-recognition of others as equal subjects is a component of what we call original sin, regardless of the context and forms of this non-recognition. He draws attention to the need to recall the historical failures of non-recognition to move forward in the practice of “one baptism in solidarity.” He calls for “One Baptism” as bridging the divide, promoting communal harmony amidst diversity, and advocating mutual recognition, interconnectedness, and collective identity. Reviving a culture of recognition in modern Nigerian society can powerfully shape initiatives that address sectionalism, identity politics, religious intolerance, nepotism, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and terrorism, fostering unity and progress. He advocates for the integration of theological and traditional insights to encourage the consideration of diversity as an asset for recognition. He suggests an African participatory tool known as the palaver as one way to build a culture of recognition, considering that the palaver system fosters open expression, empowering individuals to voice their concerns, testimonies, and insights boldly. This tool for dialogue not only reinforced communal solidarity but also deepened collective understanding and resolve, allowing recognition to take shape.

The ensuing discussions critically raised questions about the need to deepen the vision of *lo cotidiano* and palaver in the context of “One Baptism and Global Solidarity,” as they respectively encompass the grace and messiness of daily life and aim to enhance the ethics of recognition toward a shared destiny of justice, peace, and human flourishing. Another line of questioning discussed the role of palaver in refugee settings and the need to consider how people’s voices, including refugees and women, can be excluded, silenced, or truncated from the start. Palaver can truly affirm One Baptism in solidarity if it does not overlook the structural conditions of exclusion.

LEOCADIE LUSHOMBO, I.T.

*Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University
Berkeley, California*

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Baptism and Unity?
 Convener: Cynthia L. Cameron, University of St. Michael's College
 Moderator: Jennifer Owens-Jofre, Loyola Marymount University
 Presenters: Marc DelMonico, St. Luke Institute
 Tiffany Hunsinger, University of Dayton

In response to the call for papers, the two selected proposals addressed the topic of “One Baptism” by exploring understandings of baptismal unity.

Marc DelMonico from the St. Luke Institute presented a paper entitled “Baptismal Ministries”: A Synodal Embrace of Lay Ministry ... or is it?: Synod ‘Vocabulary’ and the Relationship Between Baptism, Lay Ministry and Co-Responsibility.” In the paper, he explored questions raised by documents from the Synod on Synodality and their language of “co-responsibility” between ordained and lay ministers. He argued that the Synod documents, particularly those from the United States bishops, missed the opportunity to center the lay ministry movement, rooted in a common baptismal ministry, in the implementation of the synodal process. Indeed, lay ministry was only sporadically mentioned and was inconsequential in the US documents. Using an inductive text-based analytical method, DelMonico argued that ideas around baptismal ministry and lay ministry receive far less attention in the US bishops’ writing than do ideas around clergy, priests, and priestly ministry. He suggests that the US bishops’ documents contain a pragmatic and issues-focused approach to synodality and do not explore the theological foundations of synodality. In the Synod’s 2024 final document, *For a Synodal Church*, DelMonico found more evidence of a theological description of synodality and a desire to describe the interrelationship between ordained and baptismal ministries in the articulation of the church’s mission.

In her paper, “Catholicism and Indigenous Hawaiian Spirituality: Navigating a Legacy of Forced Conversion,” Tiffany Hunsinger from the University of Dayton explored the relationship between Indigenous Hawaiian communities and the Catholic Church. In particular, she described the practice by Christian missionaries of forced conversion and suppression of native spiritual traditions, rooted in the colonial history of Hawaii, and how these experiences have shaped the religious identities of contemporary Native Hawaiians. Using an ethnographic and case study approach, Hunsinger describes the ways that baptism and other Catholic sacraments are reclaimed as symbols of resilience and unity. She highlights the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu, St. Benedict’s Painted Church in Kona, and the Maka-Hiki Festival as examples of ways that Indigenous Hawaiians have navigated the tension between ancestral spiritualities and Catholic faith. With the aim of decolonializing religious practices in Hawaii, Hunsinger offered insights into how a reclaimed understanding of baptism can help the Catholic Church incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing.

The ensuing discussion explored details surfaced in each paper. For example, the ongoing tensions between Indigenous Hawaiians and westerners, as Hawaiians try to reclaim their culture, and the role of Western Catholic saints (Damian of Molokai and Marianne Cope) in Hawaiian Catholic faith practices were discussed. Hunsinger noted

that there have not yet been any canonizations of Indigenous Hawaiians and that questions of Hawaiian sovereignty and spirituality are related. In addition, the relationship between clergy and lay ministers was further explored, with questions arising about attempts to suggest a separation of the roles of lay and ordained ministers in the Synod documents. DelMonico noted that the documents themselves describe an interdependence between lay and ordained ministers; while challenges in these relationships exist, they ought not be overstated. In response to a question, DelMonico also noted that the documents make very little mention of the role of theologians in understanding the exercise of lay ministry. The role of women in ministry is mentioned as well, but not fully explored through the lens of baptismal ministry. Schools and parishes as locations of lay ministry were also explored in the conversation, as were contemporary movements at the intersection of Indigenous Hawaiian spirituality and Catholic faith.

CYNTHIA L. CAMERON
University of St. Michael's College
Toronto, Ontario

SPIRITUALITY – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: One Baptism
 Convener: C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
 Moderator: Michael Rubbelke, Saint John’s School of Theology and Seminary
 Presenter: Simeiqi He, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology
 Presenter: Emmanuel Osigwe, Mount St. Mary’s University
 Respondent: Hansol Goo, Saint John’s School of Theology and Seminary

The Spirituality Topic Session featured two papers and a response on the theme of “One Baptism.” Michael Rubbelke as moderator gave a brief introduction of the theme and the presenters.

What followed first was Simeiqi He’s presentation. She gave a detailed paper on the topic of “One Baptism, One Life and One Love: Spiritual Convergence between the East and West.” Using the work of French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, He looked at the theme of baptism through Teilhard de Chardin’s concept and writings on original sin. She stated that Teilhard rejected the original writings of original sin and saw the theological necessity of baptism as a soul’s reawakening into life. He also gave light to the influence of Asia on the writings of Teilhard, specifically the influence of China, where he spent over two decades during the time of war, conducting geological, archaeological, and paleontological work. He saw the merging of the East and the West as essential so that the “earth can be complete. Besides focusing on the work of Teilhard, He also turned her attention to the contributions of Asian scholar Fang Dongmei, one of the most renowned Chinese philosophers of the twentieth century, who brought Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Christianity into a creative synthesis, while invoking many Teilhard’s concepts. She stated that both Teilhard and Dongmei agreed that the concept of original sin in its original rendering can no longer address the realities of the modern world.

Emmanuel Osigwe looked at the perspective of one baptism from the context of the spirituality and experience of African indigenous initiation rites. He opened his remarks by looking at the significance of Vatican II’s (*Gaudium et Spes, Nostra Aetate, Ad Gentes Divinitus*) articulation of the importance of culture in renewed interest in the understanding and dialogue between Christian and non-Christian religions. As he stated in his presentation “the council adopted a salvation history approach that sees these older religions as *preparatio evangelica*, with inherent goodness or elements of goodness. We can properly see cultures as a locus of the divine.” He particularly saw as important, the council’s reinstatement of the catechumenate with its emphasis on formation. Ultimately Osigwe’s presentation focused on the intersection of faith and culture, from the perspective of identity creation through the initiation processes of indigenous African culture and the Roman Catholic Sacraments of Initiation. This shift in appreciation of the richness of diverse cultures to the understanding of faith has been welcomed by the African communities. Osigwe stated, “For the Churches in Africa, this new openness to cultures represents a paradigmatic shift.” He continued, quoting Laurenti Megasa, a Kenya theologian who states, “Contact between Christianity and African religion has historically been predominantly a monologue, bedeviled by assumptions prejudicial to the latter with Christianity culturally more vocal and

ideologically more aggressive.” This new appreciation and understanding of cultural difference have contributed to a greater openness to African initiation rites. Osigwe, specifically looks at the Ikwerre initiation rituals which are deeply rooted in their spirituality and are largely similar to Christian initiation rites. As Osigwe stated, “Located in the southern part of Nigeria, the traditional religious spirituality of the Ikwerre is the fulcrum of life of the people.” Osigwe gave a brief synopsis of the initiation of Ikwerre into adulthood into age sets or groups from an early age. Within these rites, the individuals are welcomed into the community and serve the purpose of rejuvenating the whole group. This is a time of immense joy and celebration. Osigwe related many similarities between Christian initiation rites of baptism and confirmation with the Ikwerre initiation rites into adulthood. Some of these include the importance of telling the story of the communities, the selection of a “guardian” or “sponsor” with these communities to watch over and guide the person who is to be initiated, also a time of seclusion or retreat as the person prepares to be initiated. Osigwe’s conclusion focused on the importance of inculturation as one looks at the journey of initiation.

Hansol Goo gave an eloquent response in light of the two papers given. Time was then given for questions and clarifications in light of the two papers and response.

C. VANESSA WHITE
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois

THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond
- Convenor: Megan Loumagne Ulishney, Boston College
- Moderator: Benjamin J. Hohman, Salve Regina University
- Presenters: Taylor Nutter, Mount St. Mary's University
 Monica Marcelli-Chu, Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University
 Alexander Klee, Boston College

This session solicited papers addressing the conference theme of “One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond” and, at the same time, engaging topics at the intersection of Theology and Science. The session included three twenty-minute presentations, followed by a period of questions and answers following each individual paper.

Taylor Nutter, in his paper entitled “AI, Death-Time, and Baptismal Hope,” critiqued the view of artificial intelligence (AI) as an “inevitable” feature of modern life. To develop his argument, he drew from a creative array of sources including Cyril O’Regan’s genealogy of modernity, Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*, Karl Marx, medical ethicist Harriet Washington, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, and others, to illuminate the entanglements of AI development with Gnosticism, surveillance capitalism, antiblackness, and labor exploitation. Far from being a neutral technological innovation to be navigated with resigned prudence, Nutter argued that AI poses fundamental threats to creaturely life and flourishing that must be resisted wholesale. He juxtaposed the “death-time” of AI with the temporality of “baptismal hope.” Drawing from Elizabeth Freeman’s notion of “queer temporality,” Nutter presented baptismal hope as contained within the “temporality of the resurrected Christ,” which is a “queer temporality,” insofar as “Christ orders past, present, and future, and is, therefore, not ordered by them.” Baptismal hope is a promise of real presence that renounces the “cruel optimism” of AI.

In her presentation entitled “Grace-in-Flux and a Changeable Self: Conceiving an Ecological Theology of Grace,” Monica Marcelli-Chu brought Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of grace into conversation with an ecological understanding of “flux.” Introducing the concept of flux from the context of ecology enabled Marcelli-Chu to develop an “ecosystem-centric rather than organism-centric” approach which provided a pathway to consider the concept of grace from the perspective of integral ecology. Marcelli-Chu proposed a view of grace as “both singular and diverse,” and as “infused and flowing.” Considering grace in these terms allowed for a reconceptualizing of human agency as not focused on singular acts or habits, but rather, on the reality of “flow.” From this consideration of grace, Marcelli-Chu turned to a particular problem raised by neurobiology concerning the notion of a “self.” Marcelli-Chu noted that neurobiology emphasizes the various processes that coalesce into self-awareness, in contrast to more colloquial understandings of the self as a distinct and static entity. She noted that the suggestion of the “non-existence” of the self raises problems especially for ethics, since some form of a self is required for that self to have ethical obligations to one’s neighbor, the earth, etc. Marcelli-Chu then connected the problem of the self

with her earlier arguments about grace-in-flux. She suggested that one could consider the self as “in-flux,” and both “continuous and changeable, in relation and singular.” Finally, she argued that the creation-in-flux presented in the paper reflects a divine likeness, even as the simplicity of the divine draws everything into the unity of itself.

In the third presentation, “Original Trauma: Epigenetics as a Solution to the Issue of Evolution and Propagated Sin,” Alexander Klee took up anew the perpetual puzzle of the doctrine of original sin in a post-Darwinian milieu. Klee focused, in particular, on the problem of the transmission of sin. He interpreted the premodern Western church as forming a consensus that sin is inherited (in a bodily way) rather than being spread through imitation. He then examined a modern interpretation of the transmission of sin as found in the works of Piet Schoonenberg to demonstrate that a common tendency in post-Darwinian approaches—namely, to locate the transmission of sin in culture rather than nature—strays too far from the “classical consensus.” From his critique of Schoonenberg, Klee turned to developments in the emerging field of epigenetics for a solution that allows for both bodily and cultural transmission of sin, thus retaining the core of the classical consensus without losing important insights about the influence of culture on the human person. Epigenetics provides, for Klee, a powerful analogy for considering the ways in which sin can be transmitted both through bodily inheritance and cultural learning. Indeed, epigenetics troubles a simplistic dichotomy between culture and nature. Using epigenetics as an analogy, Klee emphasized that humans are born into sinful and traumatizing situations that hinder human flourishing in all aspects of life, including biology, which may make sin more likely in many circumstances. A key emphasis, though, of epigenetics is not only a negative one—that we traumatize one another. Epigenetics also illuminates the positive impacts of our relationships with each other, and reasons for cultivating baptismal hope.

MEGAN LOUMAGNE ULISHNEY
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

Topic: “One Baptism” in Asian Theology
 Convener: Min-Ah Cho, Georgetown University
 Moderator: Shinjae Lee, Boston College
 Presenters: Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College
 Victoria Basug Slabinski, University of Virginia
 Zachary R. Dehm, Loyola University (Maryland)

The Asian and Asian American Theology Consultation brought together thirteen participants to explore the theme of “One Baptism” in Asian theological contexts. Since Cecilia Francisco Tan was unable to attend the conference this year, Shinjae Lee from Boston College graciously facilitated the discussion, providing wonderful leadership throughout the session.

The consultation began with Linh Hoang’s presentation titled “Baptism in Asian Theology in light of the Climate Crisis: Water Accessibility and Scarcity.” Hoang examined the sacramental significance of water in baptism as representing new life, while addressing how the climate crisis affects this fundamental element. Drawing connections between the theological understanding of “one baptism” in Christianity and the mandate to protect all of God’s creation, Hoang focused particularly on water accessibility issues in Southeast Asia, a region severely impacted by climate change. The presentation highlighted the Asian Catholic bishops’ call for intercultural and interreligious dialogue to address the situation of the poor, and examined current efforts by Asian secular and religious leaders to engage with *Laudato Si’* as motivation for climate action.

Victoria Basug Slabinski followed with “Re-Narrating ‘One Baptism’ towards the Healing of Colonial Wounds.” Slabinski confronted the colonial histories of baptism in the Philippines, where Christianizing and civilizing efforts reconfigured bodies according to European colonial hierarchies and displaced Indigenous peoples from their traditional cultures and lands. The presentation argued that when baptism is narrated as initiation into such colonial processes, it participates in creating colonial wounds. However, Slabinski proposed that “one baptism” might be reimagined to address global wounds. Drawing from Bruce Morrill’s liturgical theology of communal healing and Jennifer Mullan’s work on colonial trauma, she offered a re-narration of baptism as entry into the solidaristic healing ministry of Jesus, oriented toward healing colonial wounds.

The final presentation by Zachary R. Dehm was titled “‘One Baptism’ in the Vision of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences.” Dehm explored how the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences understood baptism from their earliest meetings, even when it was not explicitly discussed in their documents. He demonstrated that their understanding was shaped simultaneously by the ecclesiological innovations of Vatican II and by unique insights emerging from Asia, the most religiously pluralistic continent. The FABC’s approach to baptism reflected their emphasis on the local church as both inculturated and incarnate in culture. Dehm argued that through their statements, the FABC provided a foundation for a genuinely inclusive understanding of baptism into a diverse church.

Following the three presentations, participants engaged in a rich question-and-answer session that allowed for deeper exploration of the themes presented. The conversation revealed the interconnected nature of ecological, colonial, and ecclesiological concerns in Asian theological reflection on baptism. Participants discussed how Asian contexts offer unique perspectives on sacramental theology that can contribute to global theological discourse.

The consultation concluded with a business meeting to discuss plans for next year's theme and session format. The administrative team expressed gratitude for the robust participation and the quality of theological reflection demonstrated throughout the session.

MIN-AH CHO
Georgetown University
Washington, District of Columbia

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR – CONSULTATION

Convener: Charles A. Gillespie, Sacred Heart University
 Moderator: Charles A. Gillespie, Sacred Heart University
 Presenters: Daniel A. Rober, Sacred Heart University
 Kristen Drahos, Baylor University

The Hans Urs von Balthasar Consultation held both our annual breakfast gathering and an experimental session on recent Balthasar scholarship. Both conversations emphasized new and wide-ranging opportunities for Balthasar scholarship and the intellectual and camaraderie welcomed by the Balthasar consultation of the CTSA.

Following our custom for the last few years, the Balthasar Breakfast featured a common reading to anchor our reflections. This year, inspired by the convention theme, we looked to Balthasar’s essay “The Christian Form” from *Explorations in Theology IV* (Ignatius, 1989). Our breakfast discussion traversed how Balthasar’s account of form—particularly the relationship of the Christian form to the human and to ecumenical relations—might be able to aid our discussions about human flourishing, non-human animals and salvation, and artificial intelligence and cybernetic technology (like Neuralink). We also took the opportunity to reflect together on the state of the field of Balthasar studies, higher education and academic publishing, how to support junior faculty, and a collaborative conversation about plans for the future of the Balthasar Consultation.

The consultation session focused on recent and new Balthasar scholarship engaging a characteristically Balthasarian interplay between theology, phenomenology, and literature. This year, the consultation attempted an experimental format loosely inspired by Balthasar’s frequent calls for a “kneeling theology”—that is, a theology attentive to its response to God from the posture of prayer. We took that both literally and figuratively. First, the session began with a period of prayerful reflection and interpersonal greeting that invited all attendees to share Balthasarian themes that influence and impact their current work. Then the session engaged in a dialogical presentation where both presenters and audience could interrupt the flow of presentation for immediate dialogue. The result of this format transformed two different genres of brief prepared remarks into springboards for ongoing synthetic conversation rather than talks with questions and answers. (The reader should note that the format of the *Proceedings* implies a traditional panel, but this was an intentionally experimental session that did not list “presenters” in the program.)

Daniel A. Rober of Sacred Heart University turned our attention to two examples of recent Balthasar scholarship that treat Balthasar in respectively direct and indirect ways. First, Rober responded to *A Symphony of Distances* by Christopher Hadley, S.J. (Catholic University of America Press, 2022) by turning our focus to the role of Balthasar in shaping Jean-Luc Marion’s recent forays into what Rober identified as more explicitly theological territories. Rober put Hadley’s book into conversation primarily with Marion’s *Revelation Comes from Elsewhere* (Stanford University Press, 2024). Metaphors of distance served to open questions about Balthasar’s Trinitarian theology, Marion’s icon/idol distinction and theory of the erotic phenomenon, the

relationship between philosophy and theology, and the status of recognition for revelation and gift.

Kristen Drahos of Baylor University offered a sketch of a new project that will put Balthasar's iconic image of the mother's smile into conversation with the literary fiction of Shusaku Endo. Drahos offered theo-drama readings of some complicated images of mothers from Endo's fiction—*Deep River* (New Directions, 1995) and *Portraits of a Mother* (Yale University Press, 2025) as well as a new translation of a famous sequence at the conclusion his novel, *Silence* (Picador, 2016). These images—ranging from a tour guide's account of a suffering goddess mothering oppressed communities in India to a retranslation that shifts an imperative command into an invitational surrender—prompted new ways to image the Christ-form in Balthasar and to discern theology in and through Endo. This love develops maternal care in the form of wounded love that we see in thinkers like Julian of Norwich. It acts as an inversion of and complement to the maternal love of Balthasar, widening and complicating understandings of divine love as maternal, dialogic love.

The session concluded its experimental format by inviting participants into an exercise that responded to the ideas raised in the conversation through bodily movement. Silly, strange, and occasionally insightful, physical gestures opened a final round of prayerful reflection and expressions of intellectual and spiritual gratitude.

CHARLES A. GILLESPIE
Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, Connecticut

BLACK CATHOLIC THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: Baptism, Blackness, and Ecology: Exploring Water's Role in Black Catholic Theology and Political Resistance
- Convener: Nicole S. Symmonds, Columbia Theological Seminary
- Moderator: Byron Wratee, Villanova University
- Presenters: Jeanine Hill Fletcher, Fordham University
 Paulinus Odozor, Notre Dame University
 Kayla August, Boston College

Considering the conference theme, the Black Catholic Theology Consultation focused on the particularity of baptism in the Black experience with our session, “Baptism, Blackness, and Ecology: Exploring Water’s Role in Black Catholic Theology and Political Resistance.” The consultation was interested in how baptism practices have historically formed and deformed Black people and expressions of Blackness. Furthermore, because water is an integral element in baptism, the consultation also considered ecology, considering how ecological issues tend to have the most significant effect on marginalized populations, including Black and African people. The session included three papers delivered in order by Jeanine Hill-Fletcher, Kayla August, and Paulinus Odozor, each presenting for twenty minutes, concluding with a question-and-answer session where roughly over a quarter of the twenty-one attendees participated.

In “Enslaved and Enslaving Catholics in the Waters of Renewal,” Jeanine Hill-Fletcher time-traveled to St. James the Greater Catholic Mission in South Carolina, where she studied the archives of baptism rolls that revealed the relationship between the enslaver and the enslaved. She stated that the rolls showed evidence of baptismal paradox, that is, that for the enslaved, baptism was an entrance into death and/or an invitation to new life. Integral to this claim is Hill-Fletcher’s utilization of Saidiya Hartman’s “critical fabulation” method, which combines historical and archival research with critical theory and fictional narratives to fill in the lacuna in historical records. In exploring the baptism rolls of St. James the Greater and the West African origin of the community, she demonstrated how those experiencing baptism as a death-dealing practice in the North American context had life-giving baptismal practices from Kongolese Catholicism. Of this, Hill-Fletcher said, “In the waters of renewal, in the nineteenth century South Carolina Catholicism of St. James the Greater, baptism may have been a ritual that unified Black and White Catholics and simultaneously created two distinctive Catholicisms, one life-giving African-inflected, and one maintaining its death-dealing White-Eurocentricism.” Hill-Fletcher’s paper was a reminder of the importance of the archives and critical fabulation in piecing together silenced voices, in helping Catholics reckon with the baptismal paradoxes that may still exist in their parishes.

Kayla August presented her paper, “Give Me that Old Time Religion: The Lessons We Learn from the Lay Enslaved Preacher,” in sermonic form with five signature movements that provided historical evidence of how Catholic priests offered salvation through the sacrament of baptism but failed to practice what they preached in giving religious instruction. Instead, lay leaders fulfilled the role of religious instruction.

August began with a brief survey of historical records of Protestant and Catholic enslavers that revealed laws and codes regarding baptizing the enslaved. These records show that up until the nineteenth century, Protestant plantation owners were hesitant to baptize the enslaved due to a fear that a Christian could not own another Christian by English law, although they often still baptized the enslaved. On the other hand, French and Spanish Catholic slave codes mandated the baptism of the enslaved, and enslaving people was accepted in US Catholic communities despite Pope Gregory XVI's condemnation of slavery in 1839. With Christian contradictions abounding, particularly in fulfilling the religious education after baptism, the enslaved lay preacher began to play a pivotal role in the religious formation of other enslaved people. August passionately and cogently argued that the enslaved lay leaders preaching in the community created a dialectic through the sermonic moment. The preacher and the community co-constructed the sermon through call and response and other audible affirmations in the preaching moment. As such, the participant proclamation became as important as the preaching proclamation, as the community participated in making God known. August offered, "In this method, we assume communal involvement, not as optional, but as essential. Allowing all community members to go from mere spectators to necessary participants in making God known. This partnership is essential as we sit in new questions, consider new pathways, and make claims about the mandate of the Word in our current context."

In "Environmental Degradation in Africa: Issues, Implications, and Solutions," Paulinus Odozor explores how ecological issues literally and figuratively impact the waters of baptism. In this interdisciplinary essay, Odozor used history, sociology, and theology to narrate the effects of climate change events in places such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Africa. He identified the aspects of environmental abuse in Africa in conversation with *Laudato Si'*, centering his explorations of the effects in the key passage from the encyclical, which states, "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." This quote paired with data pointing to the effects of population explosion in Kinshasa that increased levels of toxins in human waste, the food insecurity and vegetation degradation in South Africa, and the environmental challenge of the DRC, which houses much of the tropical forest in Africa. Odozor noted that there is a paradox of ecological challenges the continent is facing due to economic growth, which is sometimes connected to detachment from the natural environment. With the data contextualizing environmental degradation in Africa, Odozor reminded us that it is not just a scientific, economic, or technological problem but a moral issue. As such, Odozor posited that if *Laudato Si'* is a call to action, Africa is often rendered invisible in that call, and that must change. He reminded us that environmental degradation is a human problem that requires human response and action, especially in Africa, because caring for the earth and its humans is not an act of mutual exclusion but a mutual responsibility.

NICOLE S. SYMONDS
Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM – CONSULTATION

Topic: Christology and the Mystery of Israel After *Nostra Aetate*
 Convener: Carol Ann Martinelli, Independent Scholar, Detroit, Michigan
 Moderator: Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Boston College
 Presenter: Matthew Tapie, St. Leo University
 Respondent: Mary Doak, University of San Diego

In acknowledgment of the convention theme of One Baptism, together with recognition of the seventeen-hundredth anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the sixtieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the consultation addressed Catholic belief in the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ combined coherently with belief in the never revoked covenant of God with Israel.

Matthew Tapie, presenter, began by pointing out that the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) affirmed fundamental elements of Nicaea in its 2015 document, “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable,” with the teaching that the God of Israel is Jesus Christ, the universal mediator of salvation and that there cannot be different paths to God’s salvation. Such affirmations of classical Christology may be read as undermining the church’s positive affirmation of the election of the Jewish people in *Nostra Aetate*. Tapie argues, however, that Romans 11:25-26, as interpreted by the Council fathers means that the salvation of the Jews is a mystery beyond human understanding and an eschatological promise. He points out that scholars have overlooked that the Council drafters of *Nostra Aetate* appealed to a theological interpretation of Romans 11:25-26 in their rejection of the proposal that *Nostra Aetate* should express a hope for Jews to enter the Church.

Tapie proposes that ideas from within the “Paul within Judaism” school of biblical scholarship and Pope Benedict XVI’s exegesis reinforce the Council’s interpretation of Romans 11:25-26. God has a mysterious plan for salvation of the world involving the continued existence of Jews as Jews at least until the eschaton. As a part of this consideration Tapie delves into the English text’s translation of the Greek word which is translated as “hardening” having come upon Israel, noting that the word with its negative disposition distracts from the overarching point of Romans 11:25-26. Recent scholarship has determined that a correct translation of the Greek word used in the text is not a negative attribute, but rather intended as a protective and healing interpretation meaning a “callus.” This interpretation lends itself to the olive tree analogy immediately preceding Romans 11:25-26, referring to a callus formed for the protection of the injured branches of Israel. Tapie proposed that the mystery of the callus leads to recognition of God’s positive will that Jews maintain a distinctive existence.

Catholics in accordance with a theological interpretation of Romans following *Nostra Aetate*’s drafters and Pope Benedict XVI’s exegesis, must not have a mission toward conversion of Jews and instead serve the dialogue between Jews and Catholics and wait patiently for an eschatological fulfillment of Romans 11:25-26.

Mary Doak, respondent, recognized Tapie’s scholarly contribution as significant, enabling explanation on theological grounds that Catholics have no mission to convert Jews. She noted that he demonstrates that the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*, though its

message was clouded by the document, “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable,” was strongly clarified by Pope Benedict XVI as rooted in an appropriate exegesis of Romans 11:25-26. Doak suggested that Tapie’s analysis might be benefitted by more explicit attention to biblical interpretation as developed in Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum*. She noted that Tapie does follow a Catholic approach to scripture as he includes historical and canonical criticism and a living tradition of the whole church in his study. In following Pope Benedict XVI’s argument, Tapie achieved the difficult task of bringing three forms of interpretation and resulting insights into balance with a harmonization of the best from each. She cautioned, however, that Tapie may not want to refer to the refusal of a mission to convert Jews as a part of the deposit of faith inasmuch as that suggests a permanency and clarity rather than a development of understanding, though his work demonstrates strong biblical and theological support. Tapie clearly shows a genuine case of the church growing in understanding as it addresses the meaning of revelation.

For Doak, Tapie’s work points to several additional areas for further theological exploration including learning the value of persisting diversity through prayerfully exploring the gift of our mutual engagement; considering a divine will for other religions and working to avoid a new form of the teaching of contempt and developing more nuanced race and colonial theories. Doak pointed out that “...all good theological work raises more questions than it answers and this is excellent theological work!”

CAROL ANN MARTINELLI
Independent Scholar
Detroit, Michigan

LATINX THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond
- Convener: Mauricio Najarro, King’s College London
- Moderator: Ish Ruiz, Pacific School of Religion
- Presenters: Ben Groth, Claremont School of Theology
Xavier Montecel, Saint Mary’s University
- Respondent: Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Fordham University

This session was comprised of two papers, each approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes in length, followed by a respondent and question-and-answer session that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In his paper, “One Baptism, Many Races,” Ben Groth explored how baptism and its documentation helped construct and enforce racial categories across the Spanish Empire. He argued that baptismal records were not just religious documents but also legal instruments of colonial racial governance. Drawing from the oldest continuously kept parish records on the Canary Islands, dating to around 1498, Groth detailed how these baptismal registers—recording names, ancestry, and racial designations—were used in legal disputes over social status and rights. Especially for individuals not considered white, these records had lasting consequences. Groth showed that people of color in places like New Orleans often challenged these racial labels to gain higher status, though church courts ultimately retained authority over these claims, intertwining ecclesiastical and colonial power.

Groth traced this system to the Canary Islands, the first Atlantic territories conquered by Spain, where consistent baptismal recordkeeping emerged alongside colonization and the enslavement of Africans and Indigenous peoples. These practices spread throughout the Americas. He also examined gender dynamics, noting that while midwives frequently performed emergency baptisms, the church restricted their ritual authority and excluded women from keeping official records. Ultimately, Groth argued, this archive of race was “implicitly and explicitly stamped with God’s approval,” reflecting how theology and bureaucracy converged to sustain colonial racial hierarchies.

In his paper, “Not Being for Others: An Exploration of Sin and Baptism *Latinamente*,” Xavier Montecel critically examined baptism within Hispanic theology. While Western theology traditionally emphasizes original sin and individual guilt, Hispanic theology resists these frameworks, highlighting community, liberation, and cultural richness. However, Montecel cautioned that this emphasis can sometimes reduce baptism to a cultural ritual, detaching it from deeper moral and spiritual commitments. Drawing on thinkers such as Antonio González Dorado and Juan Luis Segundo, Montecel argued for a fuller understanding of baptism as a collective commitment to grace and liberation that engages both cosmic and social dimensions.

To develop this view, Montecel analyzed three theological understandings of sin: Peter Abelard’s notion of sin as consent, James Keenan’s definition of sin as “the failure to bother to love,” and Ada María Isasi-Díaz’s *mujerista* theology, which defines sin as “not being for others”—a lack of solidarity with the marginalized. While

acknowledging the importance of social sin, Montecel contended that a personal account of sin remains essential. Baptism, he argued, calls for transformation that addresses both systemic injustice and individual complicity. Sin is not just wrongdoing, but a privation—a failure to love and act in solidarity. Baptism, then, becomes a radical commitment to “be for others,” particularly the oppressed, and a movement from the void of sin to the creative life of solidarity in Christ.

Respondent Natalia Imperatori-Lee offered a series of reflections that invited deeper engagement with both papers. “The waters of baptism are brackish,” she noted, “symbolically, they, and we, are fresh and salt water—not entirely potable, not completely cleansing, not totally healing.” Baptism, she argued, is both a sacred rite and a site of colonial violence—personally transformative yet historically compromised. Her response also praised Montecel’s integration of familial and ecclesial belonging, his dual focus on personal and social sin, and his framing of baptism as a “threshold” between death and new life. She also raised concerns about the potentially gendered burden of theological ideas like “being for others,” especially for Latinas and gender-nonconforming individuals socialized into self-erasure.

Turning to Groth’s paper, Imperatori-Lee reflected on baptismal archives as instruments through which colonial powers codified racial hierarchies under the appearance of divine authority. She called for deeper reckoning with the church’s role in legitimizing whiteness and exclusion, and highlighted the need to confront the mixed legacies—racial, cultural, and spiritual—left in the wake of colonialism. Her response urged listeners to embrace repentance, reparation, and radical love.

The discussion that followed brought these themes into contemporary focus. Cecilia González-Andrieu asked how the baptism of undocumented people might serve as a means of recognition amid pervasive state violence. Ramon Luzarraga drew historical and cultural parallels between the churches of the Canary Islands and those in New Orleans. The session concluded with a compelling conversation on whether sacraments themselves might be in need of redemption.

MAURICIO NAJARRO
King’s College London
London, United Kingdom

LONERGAN – CONSULTATION

Topic: One Baptism, Hope, and Development
 Convener: Jennifer Sanders, St. Louis University
 Moderator: Brian Himes, St. Louis University
 Presenters: Joseph Mudd, Gonzaga University
 John Dadosky, Regis-St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology
 Patrick Nolin, Regis-St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology

Three papers were presented at this session in response to a call for papers on the conference theme, One Baptism. The presentations centered on hope and ecclesial development and a fruitful discussion followed.

First, Joseph Mudd of Gonzaga University presented a paper titled “Transposing Sacramental Character: Metaphysics and Meaning in an Ecumenical Theology of Baptism.” In his work, Mudd proposed transposing the traditional ancient/medieval theology of sacramental character with Bernard Lonergan’s categories of meaning. He began by juxtaposing two understandings of the effects of sacraments, relying on St. Augustine of Hippo’s effects of baptism and Joseph Martos’s resistance to the idea that sacraments produce immediate changes because the metaphysical system that much of sacramental theology relies on is confusing. Mudd asserts that in Lonergan’s concept of a world mediated by meaning, sacramental character resides outside the mind in intersubjective encounter, aesthetics, incarnate meaning, and ritual; Lonergan’s categories of meaning reveal a better framework for understanding the effect of sacraments. With baptism in particular, a new principle of a higher life emerges. This principle finds its analogy in friendship with Christ, wherein the baptized actively and passively participate in Christ’s death and friendship. This move toward friendship is a move away from what Martos criticizes as “magic thinking” but maintains that there is a change produced by sacraments.

Second, John Dadosky of Regis-St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology presented a paper titled “Ecclesia, Theology, and Canon Law: Reflections on a Post-Vatican II Integration.” In his presentation, Dadosky addressed the place and role of canon law in the church vis-à-vis Ladislav Örsy’s theological work and his incorporation of Lonergan’s *Method in Theology* to his own contributions on canon law. Dadosky suggested reshaping canon law through a theology of charity and an application of Lonergan’s theology. Canon law provides structure to the Catholic community of believers, and as human persons we are limited by our nature. While these limitations have created rigidity around canon law, where it is difficult to reform or change the law, Dadosky, following Örsy’s interpretation, suggested Lonergan’s Law of the Cross, where forgiveness is greater than retaliation. This introduces a new horizon in which orthodoxy can emerge with a more charitable shape. The theologian’s task in all this is to seek understanding and guide orthopraxis. In this the theologian provides theory, and good theory will be practical while bad theory will lead to inaction.

Third, Patrick Nolin of Regis-St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology presented a paper titled “Transcendental Infrastructure in Creating Narratives of Hope.” In his presentation, Nolin argued that Lonergan’s transcendental infrastructure

for human subjectivity provides a framework for narratives on Christian hope by engaging with the work of Paul Ricœur and Robert Doran, primarily in the categories of memory and psychic conversion, respectively. Nolin summarized Ricœur's narrative as semantic innovation, where the plot in one's narrative seeks organization of events and is not mere passive remembering. The symbolic nature of the narrative gives rise to thought, which leads to a philosophy crafted by myth; this results in the assertion that there is no philosophy without presuppositions. Nolin then discussed symbols as central to understanding narrative and memory, wherein symbol interpretation needs hermeneutics to be successful. Within symbols there are both a theological nature and an archeological nature; memorial symbols are contacts of one's narrative. With this Nolin incorporated Doran's work on psychic conversion and *memoria*. Nolin stressed that Doran's understanding of *memoria* and psychic conversion is not limited to dreams and dream interpretation, but ultimately symbols. Nolin finished his presentation by tying memorial symbols with psychic conversion, which transforms those symbols and reworks one's narrative.

The discussion that followed began with the practical dimensions of the presentations. One participant asked Mudd of the practical implications of his work and he proposed lifting a theology of friendship from Lonergan's works, balancing this against the church's mission of friendship. Another participant asked to expand on friendship, and Mudd proposed adopting Jesus' life and ministry as model for friendships and building community. The proposal of friendship also fostered questions on the validity of sacraments that occur outside the church, and the benefits that a theology of friendship could give to other sacraments, such as reconciliation. Further questions centered on canon law and compassion. One participant asked how mercy plays into canon law and Dadosky replied that mercy and compassion are both needed, while another participant commented that mercy is difficult to extend when there are perpetrators of violence in the Church.

CECILLE MEDINA-MALDONADO
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY – CONSULTATION

Convener: Grace Agolia, Boston College
 Moderator: Madeline Jarrett, Boston College
 Presenter: Youngpa Kwon, Institute for Theology, Sogang University
 Respondent: Michael Rubbelke, St. John's University, Colledgeville

In her paper, “Bridging *Beisichsein* and Prehension: Toward a Metaphysical Theology of Evolution,” Youngpa Kwon brought English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) into conversation with German theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984). She argued that Whitehead’s process metaphysics “gives flesh” to Rahner’s *Beisichsein*, “showing that every moment of becoming is simultaneously an act of Being and knowing.” Her overall aim was to advance dialogue between theology and science on evolution by extending Rahner’s insight into material self-transcendence to all of creation. Two passages from Rahner’s work served as Kwon’s point of departure. The first, from *Spirit in the World*, defines knowledge as the “being-present-to-itself [*Beisichsein*] of Being,” which, in turn, “is the Being of any entity.” The second is from *Foundations of Christian Faith*, where Rahner probes further into the active self-transcendence of matter to spirit, “the process whereby material, living, and spiritual beings come to be.” Rather than a problem to be dealt with, evolution is central to Rahner’s theological vision. In his “Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World,” the self-transcendence of matter unfolds toward the dynamism of the human spirit and its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The Incarnation is the focal point of the world’s history, of God’s self-communication unfolding in time.

Kwon then compared Rahner’s notion of *Beisichsein*, “the identity of Being and knowing,” with Whitehead’s account of “prehension.” Distinctive to Whitehead’s metaphysical approach is its dynamic structure marked by a threefold teleological process. In Kwon’s reading of Whitehead, God “enables and shapes the self-creative advance of every actual entity.” Each actual entity, guided by an internal directive toward a particular form of unity, “prehends” its “datum” and emerges through “concrecence.” Through repeated cycles of datum → prehension → concrecence, reality continually generates itself. This representation of “becoming” was Whitehead’s attempt to integrate the discoveries of quantum mechanics and relativity in a way that metaphysical frameworks marked by seemingly more static concepts of space, substance, and time could not capture. For Kwon, Whitehead’s metaphysical account of generation in which every moment of being is simultaneously an act of knowing is a material enactment of Rahner’s *Beisichsein*. She proposed that this “processual *Beisichsein*” grounds a metaphysical theology of evolution in which every creature participates in God’s self-communication through self-transcendence: “every act of becoming—from the simplest datum to divine self-revelation—manifests the identity of Being and knowing in one self-present act.”

In his response, Michael Rubbelke expressed appreciation for Kwon’s emphasis on the “deeply relational and dynamic structure of Rahner’s epistemology,” a contribution that he described as “a gift to all Rahner scholars.” Her comparison of Rahner and Whitehead’s thought in understanding “all evolutionary advances

according to a central metaphysical pattern” has opened new directions for dialogue between theology and science. The convergences between their approaches illuminates Rahner’s *Beisichsein* as “*analogously present* throughout the whole ordering of the cosmos.” The similarity and dissimilarity in the way that all creation reflects the self-transcendence and integration of human knowing invites us to view “the cosmos as a kaleidoscopic presentation of this pattern of spirit and matter,” revealing the manifold presence of God’s glory. In this vision, “God is intimately joined with created causality, neither miraculously ‘filling in’ for creatures nor absent from the created world. God’s creative action and evolutionary causes work harmoniously together.”

Rubbelke then raised two questions and suggested two avenues for further exploration. The first question concerned Whitehead’s view of human freedom, whether he, like Rahner, understands human beings as having a unique role in “shepherding the cosmos to its destiny in God.” The second question concerned Whitehead’s view of divine causality, whether God is the highest cause among causes within the world or a transcendent cause on a different level altogether. The two avenues for future Rahnerian studies were, first, animal self-consciousness to concretize Rahner’s view of analogous self-presence, and, second, non-human difference, the dissimilarity between human beings and the non-human world, pertinent to critiques of Rahner as anthropocentric. For Rubbelke, inquiring into the distinct “characteristics of different and analogous levels of non-human self-presence can help Rahner speak more convincingly to our ecological crisis today.”

The conversation that followed was an event of *Beisichsein*. This was apparent in the active self-transcendence of those who sought clarity on the differences between Rahner and Whitehead’s views of primary and secondary causality and the vertical and horizontal finality of evolution. The discussion extended to how this research could benefit interreligious dialogue, Kwon’s own experience of returning to faith after encountering process theology, and her desire to communicate to younger generations that “one need not lose faith by looking at facts.”

GRACE AGOLIA
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS IN THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH – CONSULTATION

Topic: Interactive Discernment Session
 Convener: Cristina L.H. Traina, Fordham University
 Moderator: Cristina L.H. Traina, Fordham University
 Presenters: Megan K. McCabe, Gonzaga University
 Daniel P. Horan, Saint Mary’s College (Notre Dame, Indiana)

For the fourth and final meeting of this consultation, the committee held a synodal-style conversation to discuss how we could ensure that the sex abuse crisis would continue to have a substantive impact on the exercise of theology, both intellectually and institutionally. The session began with brief analyses of Robert Orsi’s “What Is Catholic about the Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis?”, offered by Daniel Horan, and Tina Beattie’s “Theological (De)Formations? The Sex Abuse Crisis in the Context of Nuptial Ecclesiology and the Theology of Priesthood,” offered by Megan McCabe. The articles call in different ways for an expansion of theological reflection beyond the usual topics of ordination, clericalism, and sexual ethics. It continued with an *examen* of our scholarship and teaching followed by synodal-style discussion of concerns and hopes. About fifteen members attended.

Themes that arose frequently in our initial discussions included sexual abuse as primarily an abuse of power, which we must confront and to which we must respond more effectively. And, sexual abuse continues to demand secret-keeping.

Attendees suggested several concrete strategies, some institutional and some individual. Their intent is to routinize the issue in theology and in church life, just as theologians have routinized (for example) the preferential option for the poor and are attempting to routinize a stance against white racism. The suggested strategies are bulleted below. The consultation will communicate directly with CTSA leadership about the items suggested for its attention.

- At the level of individual teaching and scholarship, normalize the conversation in these ways:
 - Refuse secret-keeping, and explore with students the questions “Why do we skirt and avoid this issue?” and “How can we make abuse part of our ordinary conversation?”
 - Listen to survivors’ stories, being open to the change they will work in us and in our thinking.
 - Teach courses or segments of courses about sexual abuse; invite survivors to speak.
 - Matter-of-factly tell stories of abuse in our teaching and writing rather than implicitly perpetuating secret-keeping.
 - Honestly address the intersectional factors in victimization.
 - In all peer reviews of books and articles, ask about the theological and moral implications of the work for the sex abuse crisis and/or about what victims’ perspectives might bring to a critique of the work. Also point out any issues with gendered ecclesiology or theologies of sacrament and relationship, as well as uncritical embrace of inequalities of power.

- Examine the spiritual and psychological roots of our reluctance to address sex abuse—shame, for example.
- Take the risk of being personally vulnerable in our teaching and writing generally, and examine the gendered dimensions of our understandings of vulnerability.
- At the level of the Society, institutionalize the question in these ways:
 - At a regular interval (perhaps every 5 years), the board and staff could review and report on the CTSA’s progress on this issue both with regard to policy and practice and with regard to scholarship. They could adapt the *examen* provided for the conference.
 - Invite a survivor to address the society in a plenary.
 - Hold a society-wide discussion of the kind of formation that can foster the virtues necessary to create a community in which addressing sex abuse is routine rather than exceptional.
- Within the US Catholic Church there is an attitude of “Enough, already! Aren’t safe-keeping policies an adequate answer? Can’t we finally move on?” We argue that overcoming a culture of secret-keeping, discomfort with the issue, and focus on perpetrators rather than victims indicates that many tasks remain. Among them, we must make these changes in ecclesial practice, informed by the theological questions above:
 - Review and renew the formation of seminarians, especially with regard to sexuality, abuse, gender, power, and a habit of open discussion of all four. In particular, help seminarians to reflect on the meaning of masculinity and on how to live a healthy, holy life that accepts rather than ignores their sexuality and their need for emotional intimacy and also helps them consciously account for their power over others, even when they themselves do not feel powerful.
 - Listen to survivors and make reparations.
 - Change the church’s culture of clericalism among both clergy and laypeople.
 - Cultivate and normalize parish-level conversations about abuses of power, including sexual abuses.

CRISTINA L.H. TRAINA
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

THOMAS AQUINAS – CONSULTATION

Convener: Greg LaNave, Dominican House of Studies
 Moderator: Dominic Langevin, O.P., Dominican House of Studies
 Presenters: Zane Chu, Saint Mary's College of California
 Scott Roniger, Loyola Marymount University

In response to a call for papers, the two accepted proposals addressed the topic of One Baptism for the Thomas Aquinas Consultation.

Zane Chu's "Common Baptism, Common Doctor: The Basis of the Order of Theology in Aquinas" explored the basis of the order of theology, what Aquinas calls the *ordo disciplinae* in the prologue to the *Summa theologiae*. This order has three components, corresponding to the three parts of the *Summa*: God, morals, and Christ. Chu argued that this order emerges from or is founded upon the practice of the sacrament of baptism. This helps us respond to the question of why Christ is deferred to the third part of the *Summa* and, by showing how Aquinas's thought is informed by practices, to postmodern emphases on signs and signification. For Aquinas, baptism signifies Christ's humanity and divinity, and moral teaching effects this signification. It is the beginning *as to us* of scientific theology, which then puts things in order from their causes, i.e., divinity, humanity, and morals. But for a preparation that must return to Christ so as to preach him well and hear confessions as his minister, it was fitting for Aquinas to put Christ in his humanity, as well as his sacraments, at the end, presupposing a beginning in the sacrament of baptism, lived out and co-interpreted by the practice of the church and its reading of scripture, which itself is at the beginning of teaching in the Dominican convent and university. Chu suggested that the *Summa* is a mystagogy that presupposes Christ at the beginning in practice and deepens this signification through scientific ordering that properly positions Christ at the end to return to practice. Christ at the end is the same Christ at the beginning in the scripture and sacraments that signify him and effect what they signify.

Scott Roniger presented on "The Soul of the State in Catholic Political Thought." In recent Catholic political thought, the use of the relation between soul and body to shed light on the proper relationship between the Catholic Church and the state has played an important role. The claim that the church should relate to the state as the soul does to the body is made by Pope Leo XIII, but it has a long history that predates Leo, and there is an interesting historical development of the soul-to-body analogy that extends from Leo to the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. In order to get a handle on the question of the soul of a polity, Roniger turned first to classical Aristotelian and Thomistic thinking about the nature of political life, and he then covered some of the answers that have been put forward throughout the history of Catholic social thought, broadly conceived. Roniger traced the history of this comparison of soul-body to church-state from the ancient Letter to Diognetus, to St. Thomas Aquinas, and through the Middle Ages up to Leo XIII. He then showed the ways in which Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, basing themselves on Leo's social doctrine, shifted the "soul of the state" language away from the church, which paved the way for Vatican II to return to the patristic sense of the analogy first articulated in the Letter to Diognetus. This development enabled Pope St. John Paul II to move beyond the analogy and to further

specify the proper relation between church and state. Finally, Roniger showed how Ratzinger built upon John Paul II's thought, and he argued that the modern development from Leo to Ratzinger brings social teaching back into line with the philosophical insights from Aristotle and Aquinas on the nature of political life.

After each talk, a short period of questions and answers followed in a spirit of unity and collegiality.

ANDREW HOFER, O.P.
Dominican House of Studies
Washington, District of Columbia

WOMEN'S CONSULTATION ON
CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: Indigenous Experiences of “One Baptism”
 Conveners: Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education Margaret Mary Moore, Theology & Life Institute
 Secretary: Melicia Antonio, Anahuac University Mexico
 Treasurer: Stephanie Edwards, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium
 Award
 Convener: Taylor Ott, KU Leuven
 Steering
 Committee: Elissa Cutter, Georgian Court University
 Annie Selak, Georgetown University
 Moderator: Stephanie Edwards, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium
 Presenters: Zara Surratt, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Julia Canonico, University of Notre Dame
 Respondent: Doris Kieser, University of Alberta

This panel explored the conference theme of “One Baptism,” focusing on the experiences of Indigenous communities in North America, with a particular emphasis on communities located in the Pacific Northwest. A total of forty-nine people were in attendance for the panel session and over fifty for the presentation of the Ann O’Hara Graff Award.

The first paper was presented by Zara Surratt, a descendant of Shoshone peoples and German immigrants, who recently completed her doctorate in Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her paper, titled “Ugly Baptisms and Child Welfare: Histories of Non-Consensual Baptisms at Indigenous Boarding Schools and the Catholics who Performed Them,” retrieves Indigenous boarding school history, contrasting “ugly baptism” at the schools with the presupposition of baptism as good and beautiful. Stories told from the Indigenous point of view reveal that conversion-centric theologies were employed to usurp the role of Indigenous parents and “undermine Native experiences and interpretations.” Surratt encouraged the audience to think of how “assumptions around sacramental processes can make us miss cues of abuse, exploitation, and deception,” among which were the destruction of children’s bodies and spirits, the separation of families, and the labeling of Indigenous cultures as incompatible with Catholic tradition. In response to the disconnectedness historically promoted by the schools, Surratt proposed prioritizing Native dignity and rights in future Catholic-Indigenous encounters, specifically through listening to their perspectives on religious identity.

The second panelist was Julia Canonico, a descendant of the Lummi Nation of the Pacific Northwest, and a PhD candidate in Theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her paper, “Inculturation, Incarnation, and Indigenous Experience,” drew from her liturgical participation growing up on the Lummi Nation Indian Reservation. Through prayer steeped in the Lummi worldview, she experienced a “robust baptismal identity,” an inculturation, or the “translation of the Christian faith into the language and symbols of a local culture.” Yet inculturation is not a straightforward process, given that

elements of Lummi culture have been historically suppressed by authorities and effectively lost; in addition, many indigenous people today also have European ancestry, making them descendants of both oppressed and oppressors. Given this complexity, Canonico proposed understanding the integration of native and Catholic identity through the lives and legacies of saintly Indigenous Christians. Her two examples were Rose Prince, to whom devotion is expressed utilizing both adapted Catholic traditions and previously banned Indigenous rites, and Kateri Tekakwitha, who represents the strong bonds of spiritual ancestry: Canonico's great-great grandfather signed the first petition for her canonization, and Canonico's first cousin was the miracle case that finalized Rome's requirements. Canonico concluded that the spreading of devotion to these saints among diverse tribes and non-natives is a sign that Indigenous lives are truly "woven in the eschatological Body of Christ," sharing their spiritual ancestors with others and contributing their unique expression of the Catholic faith.

Doris Kieser from the University of Alberta then offered a response. Kieser, acknowledging herself as a non-native scholar, proposed sharing what she had learned after fifteen years of listening to Indigenous voices. The shame and confusion she experienced when recognizing the complicity of her ancestors and her Canadian church in Indigenous injury drew her attention to three ideas: identity and baptism, the connection of identity with land, and the need for truth in reconciliation.

The subsequent table conversations were given a pedagogical orientation in response to a generous grant the WCCT had received from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning. Participants were asked to share words that summarized their take-away from the panel: oft-repeated words included "ancestors, grief, listen, sorrow, heartbroken, hope." The tables then discussed how the panel would impact the content and form in which they approach their teaching, and a few tables shared their ideas with the group. A resolution was made to gather and share resources on Indigenous-inspired pedagogical methods, including dialogue, truth-telling, and historical retrieval.

After a short break, the session reconvened for the presentation of the Ann O'Hara Graff Award. This year's recipient was Christine Firer Hinze, professor of theology at Fordham University and a former president of the CTSA. Firer Hinze was recognized for her long-time mentorship of women in academia and for the current historical significance of her work in Catholic social ethics. Drs. Mari Rapela Heidt, Natalia Imperatori-Lee, and M. Shawn Copeland offered warm words of congratulations and gratitude to Firer Hinze in her capacity as a colleague, professor, advocate, and, most especially, a friend.

MELICIA ANTONIO
Anahuac University Mexico
Mexico City, Mexico

DISABILITY THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: The Present: How do we envision and measure progress?
 Conveners: Mary Jo Iozzio, Boston College
 Miguel J. Romero, St. Louis University
 Moderator: Susan McElcheran, St. Michael's College
 Presenters: Kevin Timpe, Calvin University
 Blake Hereth, Western Michigan University
 Ben Parks, Mercy College, Ohio

What comes next? Disability consciousness.

In the third and final year of the interest group we were engaged with thinking about what may follow from this deliberate focus on disability in Catholic practice and theology across the disciplines of anthropology, ethics, history, liturgical practice, and scripture. A significant body of literature on disability has been produced by colleagues across these disciplines although the subject remains largely peripheral to sustained theological reflection on efforts by our members to recognize who is missing and/or whose voices are silenced. The future of a specifically Catholic contribution to the field has yet to be envisioned by most. This final year of the interest group focused on the integration of disability in the theological work that members of the CTSA can engage to unpack the imperatives of faith seeking understanding inclusive of investigations of the multiple and diverse realities of life with disability. As the first two years introduced the concerns and contributions of Disability Theology to our academy, this final year looked to how the CTSA in particular may further the work begun of recognizing 1) the prevalence of disability in the human communion, 2) the global prevalence of discriminations against people with disabilities (PWD), and 3) the theological imperatives that call us to ever more mindful attention of the gift and the responsibility of theological reflection about what is good and right in matters concerning PWD.

The session began with a welcome of fifteen members, some new to the CTSA. Mary Jo Iozzio offered the background developments and previous foci of and hopes for the group's work. The session included three presentations and a lively discussion among those present. Regretfully, Rosemary Garland-Thomson, Emory University, and co-presenter Andrew Walker-Cornetta, Georgia State University, were unable to attend and to submit their paper, "Thinking with Catholic Theology, Imagining Disability," for another to deliver it.

In their presentation, "Catholic Faith and Intellectual Disability," Kevin Tempe and Blake Hereth offered challenges to the medical models of disability re: to intellectual and cognitive disability, with a focus on diversity within God's creation of human, non-human animal, and other "creature"-kind. Their presentation began with a challenge to the work of Stephen J. Gould, American paleontologist, evolutionary biologist, and historian of science. Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium demonstrates the dynamic changes on the planet from its fits and starts to the present. However, Gould was not impressed by the chance of disability and held that disability was a flaw (rather than another iteration of human and other creature-kind diversity). Alternately, Tempe and Hereth argued convincingly that normative-imposed

functioning is itself harmful to individuals by assuming the “worst” of the experience (and a “better to be dead” mentality). Presumed “broken,” persons with disability remain the *imago Dei* glory of God fully alive. Perhaps remarkably, people with disability are the vanguard of the future.

In “Martyrdom and Disability,” Ben Parks focused his presentation on a challenge to sacrifices attendant to martyrdom of persons with disability and/or their families and caregivers. Catholic piety has its place in this tradition, surely. However, piety is often misused and contrary to a personally willed sacrifice. Parks interrogated the assumed “martyrdom” of people with disability and/or their family and caregivers. The challenge for the non-disabled is to not assume and impose “piety” on persons with disability. Rather, Parks considered at the Massacre of the Innocents and Jesus’ crucifixion to argue that, in the deaths and in the hearts of loved ones, dignity remains intact. Martyrdom, Parks argued, is an offering, yes, but it is not necessarily pious or violent. The martyrdom Parks described is fully dignified. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Irish embraced an asceticism that grants the martyr her/his dignity in spite of cruelties to which she/he may be subject. Further, as there are many ways that persons can be martyred, Parks recounted the traditions of Ireland where martyrdom is creatively engaged as a cultural value. Here, colors are attached to the ‘kind’ of martyrdom a person willingly embraces: ‘green’ martyrs leave the comforts of home as hermits; ‘white’ martyrs dedicate their lives to God and service to others; blue martyrs dedicate themselves to fasting and other mortifications in penitential service. Passivity here is not limp, it is fully engaged with the present.

The goal of the interest group was to raise the profile of Disability Theology in a Catholic vein. The future is promising. Like other minoritized communities, a distinct theology has emerged from members of the CTSA, may the silence be broken and our voices celebrated.

MARY JO IOZZIO
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

MIGUEL ROMERO
St. Louis University
Saint Louis, Missouri

PUBLIC THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Voting
 Conveners: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
 David DeCosse, Santa Clara University
 Moderator: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
 Presenter: Nicholas Hayes-Mota, Santa Clara University
 Ramon Luzarraga, Saint Martin’s University
 Byron D. Wratee, Villanova University

This interest group facilitated a shared space for theologians to gather across diverse interdisciplinary fields and further develop the praxis of Catholic public theology in our time. To resonate thematically with this year’s convention and reflect theologically on the 2024 US presidential election and its multi-pronged threats to democracy, this year’s session addressed voting. Voting figures prominently in US Catholic public theology and political engagement. This session expanded on vibrant theological conversations sparked by recent US presidential elections and also aligned with the convention theme of baptism to focus on some salient theo-political intersections and implications about baptism, democracy, and voting, especially since 2025 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. This session considered public theologies of voting in light of widespread voter suppression/restriction, contemporary social movements to reclaim political participation and voting rights, and voting trends among prominent ethnoracial, gender, and religious groups in the US electorate. After introductions to this group, the conveners, and the panelists, each panelist presented and the nearly fifty attendees enjoyed small group discussion, followed by general questions and discussion.

In “Forming the People: Towards a Baptismal Theology of Citizenship,” Nicholas Hayes-Mota elaborated a baptism-based view of citizenship by critically and constructively analyzing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) document “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) practices of faith-based community organizing. Hayes-Mota observed an overly ecclesiocentric, intellectualistic, and reductionistic voting-centric approach in the USCCB’s document. By contrast, the IAF’s practices of deliberative discernment in community of common action for the common good is grounded in a theological exercise of baptism. In Hayes-Mota’s view, the IAF offers a more robust and expansive theological vision and practice that forms both people and the people, i.e., a collective vision of empowerment, solidarity, and the common good that significantly parallels a synodal approach in the contemporary church.

In “Why Roman Catholics Cannot Vote for a Dictator (Including Aspirational Ones), Ever,” Ramon Luzarraga traced relevant historical examples of Catholic teachings, theologians, and groups to meaningfully meet the current moment of rising global authoritarianism. Synthesizing wide-ranging resources from Henri de Lubac, Pope Pius XI, and Catholic Alliance with as well as resistance to dictators like Spain’s Francisco Franco, among others, Luzarraga insightfully showed how the church’s entanglement in authoritarian power politics violates catholicity (by delegitimizing or instrumentalizing church leaders for totalitarian ends) and threatens civil society (by

limiting human rights to association and to participation in the common good). Drawing on these in-depth examples, Luzarraga argued that global church governance, missions, and education reinforce catholicity, the common good of the human family, and a faith-based cosmopolitanism in religio-political ways that condemn and counteract any resurging idolatry of nationalism.

In “One Baptism, One Vote: Public Theology and the Call to Black Political Participation,” Byron D. Wratee extended a womanist theology of survival and a positive quality of life in the wilderness to call for religio-political and social change that dignifies Black people and communities, too long divested of rights, family, and heritage in US democracy. Lifting up Black men’s lived experiences of intersectional injustices under systemic racism and other ideological social structures and stigmas, Wratee articulated a baptismal theology of democratic political participation based on the hollers or laments of Black men about their ambivalence with American politics and public life. Heeding these cries for change embodied by Marvin Gaye’s “Inner City Blues” and by Black men’s pushback against political scapegoating for election results, Wratee constructed a theo-ethic of voting as a sacred and political birthright that reclaims both humanity and political belonging, grounded in God’s pathos with a suffering world.

After the presentations concluded, the moderator encouraged attendees to gather in small group discussion about three questions: 1) Based on your perspectives and experiences, how do you think the Catholic Church could better form its members as citizens? 2) How much of our nation’s bout with illiberalism and slide toward authoritarianism is a structural problem with our polity or a character issue with citizens and who we elect to public office? 3) How do these papers speak to our present politically-charged moment of US authoritarianism, characterized by highly-militarized state surveillance and violence of immigration raids, detention, and deportation; white supremacist and fundamentalist ideologies that fuel harmful national budget proposals; and the dismantling of democratic institutions and practices in US government and higher education? How do these papers speak truth to power and also a prophetic word of hope in our time of political, social, economic, and educational turmoil? Groups engaged these questions in diverse and lively ways, then reconvened for an open-ended enriching discussion about several topics, including intersectional analyses; prophetic possibilities for reimagining the nation-state; discerning the Spirit in challenging times; and, increasing US secularity. The session concluded with gratitude and with general agreement that Public Theology should continue beyond this short-term group.

ROSEMARY P. CARBINE
Whittier College
Whittier, California

THEOLOGIES OF PEACEBUILDING AND
NONVIOLENCE – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Theologies of peacebuilding and nonviolence
Convener: Eli McCarthy, Georgetown University
Moderator: Leo Guardado, Fordham University
Presenters: MaryKristel Nwuba, D.D.L., Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Love
Joshua Snyder, Boston College
Fidelis Olokunboro, Villanova University

Sr. MaryKristel Nwuba presented “A Comparative Analysis of Nonviolent Communication and Eco-Spirituality,” which explored the synergistic potential of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and eco-spirituality in fostering compassionate ministry for the twenty-first century. Facing environmental degradation, social unrest, and interpersonal conflicts, the need for innovative approaches to ministry is paramount. The presentation positioned NVC, developed by Marshall Rosenberg, as a crucial tool. NVC emphasizes empathy and compassionate dialogue through four components: observation, feelings, needs, and requests. A key element is distinguishing observations from evaluations to prevent conflict escalation; for example, replacing judgmental statements (“You’re always late!”) with objective observations (“I noticed you arrived fifteen minutes late three times this week). By identifying underlying needs and making clear requests, NVC facilitates collaborative problem-solving and mutually beneficial solutions. The presentation suggested that integrating NVC’s emphasis on empathetic communication with the ecological awareness of eco-spirituality can equip ministers to address the complex challenges of our time effectively, promoting healthier relationships and a more sustainable world. The integration of these two frameworks aims to create a more compassionate and effective ministry model.

Joshua Snyder presented a paper titled, “The Role of Nonviolent Education in Peacebuilding.” The presentation demonstrated how the principle of human dignity as well as insights from theologies of liberation ought to inform the formation of liberative curricula of nonviolence. Beginning with a brief consideration of the relationship between peacebuilding, nonviolence, and transitional justice, Snyder highlighted the importance of education for fostering peace. Over the past forty years, the United Nations affirmed the importance of peace education for transitional justice. This approach can be further complemented by a theological understanding of nonviolent peace education. Both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have gestured toward what a pedagogy for peacemakers entails.

Nonviolent peace education rooted in human dignity provides the knowledge and skills to address the causes of violence, challenges systems of oppression and injustice, and empowers individuals to become agents of positive change. Liberation theologies demonstrate the significance of praxis as a proper criterion for education. Praxis-education and education for nonviolent resistance involve learners in the concrete work of peacebuilding. Education is not neutral; it is either for subjugation or liberation. Critical pedagogy links the educational project to the community, questioning and

reflecting on social, cultural, and political events and taking a stand against acts of injustice, discrimination, and violence.

The presentation concluded by analyzing two attempts to develop nonviolent peace education initiatives within the post-conflict contexts of Guatemala and the former Yugoslavia. Snyder demonstrated how public education was weaponized during periods of violence as well as its transformative potential to foster reconciliation. While there was limited success in developing comprehensive nonviolent peace education in the public-school systems, Catholic schools wielded substantial influence in fostering peacebuilding initiatives and mitigating conflict. There was a discernible “Catholic school effect” attributable to the intentional focus on human dignity and praxis-based nonviolent education.

Fidelis A. Olokunboro presented “Unless a Grain of Wheat Falls and Dies: A Theo- Anthropological Approach to Peacebuilding,” which focused on René Girard’s mimetic theory as providing additional insights on the triggers of violence in Africa. Echoing Girard, he argued that someone wants something because the other wants it or has it. As such, humans become imitators of the desire of the other, leading to mimetic rivalry, conflict, and violence in a context of limited resources. Using this perspective, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) becomes a victim and a theater of violence because it possesses desired mineral resources, such as cobalt. DRC’s leaders, its neighboring African countries, and the West rival themselves to own it.

Jesus’ life, ministry, and death expose the lies that undergird mimetic desire, the victimhood of the scapegoat of that desire, and paradoxically, the necessity of the scapegoat to break the cycle of violence. In our contemporary context, Bishop Christophe Munzehirwa’s life and martyrdom were a mimesis of Christ’s example. He was a bishop of the Bukavu diocese amid the context of violence in DRC that typifies the country as a victim of mimetic desire. Like Christ, he submitted himself as a scapegoat. Their example shows that peacebuilding mechanisms demand a discoverer of the lies of violence and a scapegoat. This is a Christocentric and anthropological approach to peacebuilding. But some key questions remain: Must the sacrifice of the scapegoat, which is necessary to break the cycle of violence, be bloody? And if it must, should the victim be human?

After the three presentations, Eli McCarthy offered an overview of what has been accomplished over the past three years of this interest group, alluding to the various presenters and themes addressed, and possible ways of moving forward within CTSA. This included drawing on the value of a just peace moral framework for engaging conflict constructively, breaking cycles of violence, and building sustainable peace. This style of moral reasoning would better integrate peacebuilding and nonviolence. Another constructive move is to lean into a posture of accompaniment, a “walking with” that affirms those who resist injustice or violence, while focusing attention on the practices to break the cycles of violence. Accompaniment also avoids morally justifying violence in order to avoid exacerbating the violence and increasing the harm for all people involved. The primary reflection focused on the [question of active nonviolence and legitimate defense](#) as an area ripe for development. Pointing out Pope Francis’ trajectory to center nonviolence, to argue there is “no just war,” and to no longer even use such language—along with early comments from Pope Leo on

nonviolence—the analysis leaned into “how” one defends and “what” one is defending. The argument offered to better integrate peacebuilding and nonviolence entailed a shift in focus to defend “dignity,” and alter the style of defense we affirm and spotlight, i.e. unarmed civilian protection, strategic nonviolent resistance, and nonviolent civilian-based defense. Highlighting Myanmar Cardinal Bo’s letter to the synod in 2023, two recommendations for advancing the Catechism and Social Compendium were offered.

1) A robust section on Gospel nonviolence and just peace moral reasoning was proposed. This would include a clear call for the church to center/focus on nonviolence and just peace, a broad description of nonviolence, key nonviolent practices to scale-up (e.g., nonviolent communication, unarmed civilian protection, nonviolent strategic resistance, restorative justice), including the meaning, strategies, and impact of nonviolent defense, and the guiding norms of a just peace ethic.

2) Because we are each endowed with sacred, inviolable dignity, the church affirms both the right to life and the right to nonviolent resistance—or somewhat related to what Pope Francis refers to as *ius pacis*, i.e. the “right to settle all conflicts without violence,”¹ which implies our corresponding responsibility to be consistent with and illuminating human dignity. In turn, we need a consistent ethic of dignity. Governments have a responsibility to transform conflict in a sustainable way consistent with just peace and human dignity. As a church we will embody, invest, and advocate for creative, effective nonviolent forms of defense.

The session ended with a lively discussion of the presentations and points of clarification.

LEO GUARDADO
*Fordham University
Bronx, New York*

ELI MCCARTHY
*Georgetown University
Washington District of Columbia*

¹ Francis, Address: Prayer Meeting for Peace (Rome, October 25, 2022), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/october/documents/20221025-incontro-pace.html>.

THE ENDURING GIFT AND THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE
OF JOHANN BAPTIST METZ – INTEREST GROUP

- Topic: One World, One Hope: Living with Hope Today Out of a Dangerous Memory
- Convener: J. Matthew Ashley, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
- Moderator: Julia Prinz, VDMF, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
- Presenters: Janice Thompson, King's College
Daniel Castillo, Loyola University of Maryland

This was the second session in the interest group that explores the legacy and ongoing relevance of Johann Baptist Metz and his innovative “new political theology.” Janice Thompson spoke first, on “Living as a Community of Hope in a Hope-Destroying World: Johann Baptist Metz and the German Church after Auschwitz.” Her subject was the 1975 statement by the Joint Synod of the Dioceses in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany): *Unsere Hoffnung*. She commented both on the process that led to this synodal document and on its content, which was based on a draft prepared by Johann Baptist Metz. Regarding the process, Thompson noted that it had a number of features that we today associate with synodality. It was initiated in part because of concerns and interests of the laity in the West German church, and involved an extensive consultation of Catholics in Germany (some twenty-one million surveys were mailed out). Metz’s draft was accepted, with some minor revisions, by an overwhelming majority of the bishops (225 out of 267 voted to accept it). It began by asserting that the God in whom we believe is the God of “our hope,” and the “we” that hopes is the whole church, extending ecumenically beyond the Roman Catholic Church, and including those who have questions or objections about the church and/or have become marginal to it. The document evidenced a willingness to self-criticism. Because the God of “our hope” is a universal God of all the living and the dead, our hope must include all persons; this hope will not allow us to reconcile ourselves to suffering anywhere. The church failed in this regard when it came to the Jews who suffered and died during the Holocaust (or, to give it a specific geographical name that ties it to Germany: Auschwitz). Then followed the first official recognition of responsibility, and apology for the German church’s failures during the Holocaust. Finally, in a section that was particularly important for Metz, the document focused on the possibility of forgiveness of sin (both at the level of the individual and of the church), which requires that society and the church reject a tendency to defer guilt by minimizing it or blaming it on others.

Following this, Daniel Castillo spoke on “Renouncing the Glamour of Evil: Dangerous Memory in a Time of Politico–Ecological Emergency.” He started with the baptismal promise to reject the glamour of evil and refuse to be mastered by sin. He asked how it is that sin and evil can be experienced as alluring and glamorous, rather than horrific. Focusing specifically on political-ecological emergency, this question becomes that of how a colonial/neo-colonial “ordering” of our global house that maximizes extraction and aggrandizement of resources, doing incalculable damage, and then unequally distributes the precarities that come with this radical disruption/destabilization of our world, can be seen as glamorous. He outlines an

answer to this question based on Augustine's justifying of a localized evil by appeal to a broader, beautiful (and thus alluring) order and harmony. Thus, the "localized evils" (say, of deforestation or the murders of ecomartyrs such as Chico Mendes), are justified by an appeal to the allure of a global order being created by the growing reach of human science and the power of the neoliberal techno-economic regime. Metz's category of dangerous memory points to a way that this "enspelledness" of our minds and hearts by which we see what is horrific as alluring can be interrupted by remembering the suffering of those victimized by this "order and harmony." Castillo went on to argue that these memories are not enough to fully deglamorize evil, because even they can be denatured unless they are accompanied by and interwoven into a counter-narrative to the colonial metanarrative of progress through growing economic and technological power. Thus, he urged that greater attention be paid to Metz's category of dangerous narrative, moving beyond seeing it as simply a straightforward transcription of dangerous memory.

John Downey, who has written extensively on Metz and translated many of his works into English, then made a few remarks. He asserted that the best way to continue Metz's legacy is to develop his ideas further or better than he did. He suggested that four key themes in Metz's thought which can and should still be put in play are 1) his critique of cultural amnesia and the forgetfulness of suffering woven into our current political order, 2) the importance of questioning God, 3) the recognition that there is no suffering in the world that does not concern us, and 4) attention to suffering arises out of compassion and empowers efficacious solidarity with those who suffer.

J. MATTHEW ASHLEY
*Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University,
Berkeley, California*

GUN CULTURES AND GUN VIOLENCE – INTEREST GROUP

Conveners: SimonMary Asele Ahiokhai, University of Portland
 Michael R. Grigoni, Wake Forest University
 Moderator: Eli S. McCarthy, Georgetown University
 Presenters: Christina Astorga, University of Portland
 Ki Joo Choi, Princeton Theological Seminary
 David Turnbloom, University of Portland

The second session of the three-year Gun Cultures and Gun Violence Interest Group built upon last year's focus on the cultural conditions that sustain gun prevalence and gun violence in the United States, expanding on this theme while turning to the theological dimensions underlying these social realities. In doing so, this year's session pressed deeper into the central question of the interest group: how might we transform American gun cultures in light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the church's living tradition?

Christina Astorga's paper, "Reckoning with Religion and Gun Culture in Light of Christian Nationalism," explored how Christian nationalism fuels and legitimizes the place of guns in the United States. Astorga began by resourcing the sociological research of Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry, outlining how the Christian nationalist pursuit of political power seeks to realize a particular social order marked by hierarchy and exclusion along nativist, racist, sexist, and heteronormative lines. With respect to guns, Christian nationalism sanctions the use of force in its boundary-making efforts, generating "a culture of alienation, exclusion, and prejudice" premised on fear of "the other." She then drew from J. Kameron Carter to argue that whiteness constitutes the epicenter of Christian nationalism, enabling it to appear, for its adherents, as a "divinely ordained" political vision that simultaneously "promotes exclusionary, dehumanizing ideologies." In contrast to this ethos of fear and exclusion, Astorga concluded by invoking the Gospel's call to love and justice while asserting that moral theological treatment of guns in the United States must address the interlocking dimensions of politics, race, and religion that appear within this particular manifestation of religious nationalism.

In a paper titled "Asian Americans, Guns, and Belonging: A Case Study on Insecurity and its Root Cause(s)," Ki Joo Choi proposed that we view the United States' increasing dependence on guns and armed securitization as reflective of something more than class-based anxieties or insecurities. His argument critically engaged with how Asian Americans have embraced self-defensive gun ownership and advocated for expanded law enforcement and carceral solutions in response to COVID-era anti-Asian violence. Drawing from these examples, Choi argued that dependence on guns and armed securitization is driven primarily not by economic-based insecurity but something more fundamental—namely, by the role violence plays within constructions of American identity, particularly within the ideal of the "free and prosperous American." This is not to deny that economic distress shapes attitudes toward gun ownership and armed securitization—only that economic materialist accounts fail to recognize "that culture, and specifically *acculturation* into a political community *and* its assumed moral imaginary, matters just as much as economics."

Bringing this to light provides what Choi termed “an immigrant—and specifically Asian immigrant—contribution to the debate on guns,” showing that the desire to belong to a particular political community (“the nation,” or, in this case, the United States) can animate a turn to guns and law enforcement among immigrant communities that renders such uses of violence “seemingly normal or reasonable.” In this way, guns and armed securitization intensify challenges to “fraternal openness,” to draw from Pope Francis, exacerbating how “nonporous political or national identities can contribute to social division rather than solidarity.”

David Turnbloom’s paper, “Icons of Autonomy: Guns as Religious Symbols,” employed a liturgical theological framework to explore the symbolic role played by guns in American society. Drawing from recent sociological research by Paul Froese and Benjamin Dowd-Arrow, among others, he began by arguing that guns often function as sacred symbols for gun owners, satisfying needs that religious symbols have traditionally fulfilled. As such, guns function in ways that are more affective than rational for their owners, signifying agency and security in light of perceived emotional, existential, and social needs. He critiqued approaches to gun control that fail to reckon with this aspect of guns, asserting that a purely legislative approach to gun prevalence and gun violence will ultimately fall short. An alternative, more holistic approach is needed, one that is cognizant of the symbolic power of guns and committed to grappling with the cultural and spiritual dimensions of gun attachment. Such an approach would “offer an alternative symbolic world” that challenges the association of guns with feelings of safety, dignity, and empowerment. It would be context-specific, developed in response to the concerns of individuals and communities that use guns in light of available religious resources. Most fundamentally, it would recognize that the gun issue must be addressed at the affective and existential level—that appeals to statistics and argumentation, or dependence on legislative reform alone, are insufficient, as the role of guns in the United States is a profoundly liturgical one.

The papers generated a robust discussion that brought these many themes into dialogue with each other, building on our ongoing discussion of this pressing issue.

MICHAEL R. GRIGONI
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

SYNODALITY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Ecumenical Reflections on Synodality
 Convener: Martin Madar, Xavier University
 Moderator: Martin Madar, Xavier University
 Presenters: Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada (retired)
 Susan K. Wood, Regis College, University of Toronto
 Richard Lennan, Boston College

The Synod on Synodality concluded with its second general assembly in October 2024. Many have seen this Synod as a *kairos* in the life of the church and the most significant event in Catholicism since Vatican II (1962-1965). As with any event of such magnitude, what will be decisive is the implementation of the Synod's vision spelled out in its Final Document. It is worth noting that Pope Francis, who passed away in March 2025, decided not to write a post-synodal exhortation, but accepted the Synod's Final Document as part of his ordinary magisterium. Pope Leo XIV, who succeeded Francis, has so far indicated that he intends to continue in promoting synodality.

This session was the second round of a three-year interest group dedicated to synodality steered by Martin Madar, Jakob Rinderknecht, and Susan Reynolds. This year, the focus was on synodality from ecumenical perspectives, taking into consideration the Final Document of the Synod.

The panelists were invited based on their diverse experiences in ecumenical dialogues and their contribution to the theology of synodality. Archbishop Linda Nicholls is a retired primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. She is a member of the current Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission. Susan K. Wood serves on the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Dialogue and on the North American Roman Catholic–Orthodox Theological Consultation. In addition to serving on the Australian Anglican–Catholic Dialogue (2005-2007), Richard Lennan served as a theological advisor to the preparation of the *Light from the Southern Cross*, a 2019 document on reforming the governance of the Catholic Church in Australia, which was prepared using a synodal process.

The session started with each panelist giving short opening remarks. Archbishop Nicholls reflected on synodality in light of the recent experience of Canadian Anglicans with synods. She first explained how the synods function and how they are organized as physical gatherings of the elected or appointed clergy and laity. She cautioned against idealism regarding synods, making a point that synods rarely live up to the lofty theology of synodality. She stressed that many of the concerns of Catholics as they were expressed in various reports of the synodal process overlap with the concerns of Anglicans in Canada. She shared that one of the areas of the current discussion in the Anglican Church of Canada is the way in which a final discernment is reached. The key question is whether the votes of bishops should have more weight than the votes of the lower clergy and laity.

Susan Wood reflected on communal decision-making processes across ecumenical differences. After some preliminary comments regarding the practice of discernment,

the focus of her remarks was on how the synodal processes of the Society of Friends (Quakers) differ from those of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She argued that the former is closer to the spirit of the Synod on Synodality, while there are also lessons to be learned from the latter.

Richard Lennan reflected on the challenge of the Synod's Final Document to Catholic understandings and practices of ecumenism. He first identified some trends in Catholic responses to ecumenism in the second half of the twentieth century, honing in on how history has shaped Catholic perceptions of ecumenism, as well as the reality of a very mixed reception of ecumenical texts and initiatives. He then addressed how the Synod's document offers a new context and identified some differences between the Synod's approach and more familiar ecumenical emphases.

After these presentations, the session continued with a conversation among the panelists and concluded with an energetic discussion between members of the audience and the presenters. The questions dealing with the role of pastoral conversion and of formation in a truly synodal church received the most attention.

MARTIN MADAR
*Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio*

EMBODIMENT, TRAUMA, AND ILLNESS – INTEREST GROUP

- Topic: Embodiment, Trauma, and Illness
 Conveners: Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
 Elizabeth Antus, Georgetown University
 Moderator: Victoria Basug Slabinski, University of Virginia
 Presenter: Emma McDonald Kennedy, Villanova University
 Ashley Theuring, Xavier University
 Respondent: Flora x. Tang, University of Notre Dame

The papers featured in the inaugural session for the interest group utilized interview-based research methods to examine and theologize the communal and structural dimensions of trauma and suffering. Emma McDonald Kennedy's "Trauma and Reproductive Loss in Fertility Clinics Contexts: How Social Forces Frame Reproductive Futures" focused on Catholic women's decision-making about preimplantation genetic testing for aneuploidy (PGT-A). From Kennedy's interviews with women experiencing infertility, she learned how fertility clinics frequently framed PGT-A as a means of avoiding, first, the suffering and trauma that results from experiences of reproductive loss and, second, experiences of having a child with a disability. According to Kennedy, theological and ethical examinations of PGT-A should appreciate how the loss of a developing embryo or fetus can be a source of suffering, even trauma, that such technologies may help to mitigate while also interrogating how clinical narratives present PGT-A as a "solution" to the "problem" of giving birth to a disabled child. The latter assumption reflects structural and cultural biases against disabled embodiment and experience, such as the wrongful belief that disabilities, including conditions such as down syndrome, always occasion profound and unbearable suffering for children and parents. Kennedy proposed trauma-informed healthcare policies to better support people during long, often challenging, infertility journeys that frequently involve suffering and trauma. She also called for broader cultural and structural reforms that decouple disability from suffering and instead envision disabilities as expressions of the finitude and contingency that define all human life.

Ashley Theuring's "Clergy Sexual Abuse: Reimagining Forgiveness in a Compromised Church" drew from interviews with three demographics—survivors of clergy sexual abuse, diocesan employees, and Catholic university students—to illuminate the collective effects of clergy sexual abuse. Theuring's interviews revealed how the church's position as both an agent of harm and a source of salvation engendered "moral confusion" among the faithful, resulting in moral injury to survivors and other church members. Prevailing individualist conceptions of sin and forgiveness contributed to this moral injury, prompting reconsiderations of these theological categories. The moral injury incurred by church members challenges its prevailing focus on personal sin, which fails to address the social and systemic complexities of rape culture and the pervasiveness of sexual abuse. Likewise, individualistic approaches to forgiveness burden survivors with the expectation that they owe forgiveness to their abusers regardless of other factors such as transparency, confession, and accountability on the part of the wider community. In addition to

critiquing these notions of sin and forgiveness, Theuring followed trauma theorist Judith Herman in identifying collective practices of acknowledgment, apology, and accountability as avenues for reducing the trauma and moral injury experienced by the church community.

Flora x. Tang responded to these papers by posing questions to their respective arguments and by highlighting some of their overlapping themes, especially as they pertain to the interest group's focus on embodiment, trauma, and illness. Tang connected Pope Francis's critiques of techno-futurism in *Fratelli Tutti* and *Laudato Si'* to Kennedy's warnings against the false promise that PGT-A can eradicate reproductive suffering altogether. How do we appreciate the potential moral good of alleviating women's suffering through reproductive technologies while rejecting techno-futurism's denial of human finitude? And relatedly, how do we mitigate the suffering of infertility and reproductive loss while also developing a post-traumatic theology that attends to the unavoidable persistence of some forms of this suffering? Responding to Theuring, Tang suggested the concept of "hermeneutical injustice" as another apt label for the "moral confusion" that arose for interviewees when the evils of sexual abuse came into tension with inherited conceptions of salvation, sin, and forgiveness. In view of Theuring's focus on the communal dimensions of trauma, Tang invited her to respond to those who argue that discussions of a communally "traumatized church" elides how Christians are differently traumatized and may gloss over the moral failure of those church members who are apathetic toward clergy sexual abuse and/or lack empathy for survivors. Concluding with questions pertaining to both papers, Tang asked about how theologians should engage the language of "trauma" in view of concerns about overly broadened uses of this language in both the academy and popular culture. Noting how both papers link healing and justice, she also invited further clarification of the overlap and differentiation of these terms and processes. This response prompted replies from our presenters and initiated lively discussion among those present.

JESSICA COBLENTZ
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana

COMMITTEE FOR UNDERREPRESENTED ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS
(CUERG) DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR-LEADER AWARD

Chair: Leo Guardado, Fordham University
Committee
Members: Byron Wratee, Loyola University Baltimore
Andrew Massena, Loras College

During the 2025 CUERG Luncheon, the Committee for Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups presented the second annual CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award. This year's recipient was Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow. In presenting her the award, the following citation was read:

Siblings in Christ, let us bless the Lord God, the Source of all goodness, the Savior and Sustainer of all things, for guiding every event and inspiring the faithful to bless and praise all human works. Let us bless the Lord for the life, work, scholarship, mentorship, and witness of the recipient of the 2025 CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award: Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow.

Dr. Dorsey Bellow, a Baltimore native, grew up near the US's first Black Catholic parish, the oldest operating Black Catholic school, the first successful Black Catholic women's religious order, and the first and only religious order dedicated to the evangelization of African Americans. The historically Black Catholic parish of St. Cecilia served as her first ecclesial community, teaching her to center her life, ministry, and scholarship around the Black Catholic community.

Dr. Dorsey Bellow earned her first degrees in Spanish and business. As a member of the first class of women to complete a full four years at Baltimore's Loyola College, she was one of the first Black women to graduate from Loyola in 1975. In many respects, she was ideally positioned to break barriers, being the firstborn of Charles Dorsey, Jr., who desegregated Loyola in 1949 as its first full-time Black student. After graduating, she worked as a translator in the Social Security Administration's Division of International Operations and also taught at Holy Angels Catholic School in Chicago.

In 1977, she married Paul L. Bellow, a marine engineer, and moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where she earned her Master of Business Administration from McNeese State University in 1987. She then worked as a business counselor at the local Small Business Development Center, managed a consulting firm specializing in small business planning, and served as president of the Lake Charles North Redevelopment Authority Board. As an active member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Lake Charles, Louisiana, she has participated in parish, diocesan, regional, and national ministries. She is a former principal of Sacred Heart/Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. In addition to her roles in various ministries for the Diocese of Lafayette and the Diocese of Lake Charles, she also served as a team member of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Encouraged by her pastor, she started the master's degree program at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS), a school of theology that meets during the summer at Xavier University of Louisiana. Since the summer of 1989, she has rarely missed a session at the IBCS, which she lovingly calls her spiritual home. After earning her Master of Theology degree from the IBCS, she went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry

in Liturgical Studies at the Catholic Theological Union, a post-Vatican II seminary for twenty-one religious communities and lay students focused on intercultural and ecumenical partnerships. Her research focuses on how Vatican II's liturgical theology has been received and on the role of the laity's full, active participation in Black Catholic parishes.

"I never meant to be a professor," Dorsey Bellows once said. "Academia felt too stuffy—I've always been a grassroots, 'people-in-the-pew' kind of person." Yet love has a way of calling us where we least expect. Drawn by a deep devotion to the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, Dr. Dorsey Bellows remained rooted in the life of historically Black colleges and the Black Catholic theological tradition. Over the years, she served the IBCS in many roles—volunteer, staff assistant, and associate director. Then, in 2019, providence and irony met. Dr. Dorsey Bellow now holds the Drexel Society Endowed Professorship in Black Catholic Studies in Xavier's Theology Department and serves as the Director of the IBCS. In addition to her work at Xavier, Dr. Bellows has served as a past convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS), the nation's only theological society in the Black Catholic tradition.

Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellows is not only a guiding light within the IBCS and BCTS—she is also a vital presence in the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). One nominator for the CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award put it best: Dr. Bellows is widely known for her "long-time dedication to support and promote the theological endeavors of underrepresented and underrecognized scholars." The CTSA, they noted, has been deeply enriched by her commitment to Black Catholic Studies and her bridge-building across marginalized communities.

Together with her friend and colleague, Dr. C. Vanessa White, she has supported CUERG's work and has worked tirelessly to keep Black liberation and Black Catholic theology at the heart of CTSA discourse. In addition to convening the Black Catholic Theology Consultation, she has spearheaded an invited session and a three-year interest group focusing on the liberating theology of James Hal Cone. For the 2024 CTSA gathering in Baltimore, she convened a timely and powerful session titled "Baltimore and the Black Catholic Experience," spotlighting the struggles and hopes of Black Catholic parishes through the voices of lay catechists, organizers, and legal advocates.

Her influence extends beyond the CTSA's annual convention. Dr. Bellows has mentored almost every CTSA early career scholar and doctoral student—Catholic or Protestant—who researches Black Catholic experiences. She has created opportunities for them at the IBCS by offering adjunct teaching roles that help emerging scholars connect their theology to the lived faith of Black Catholic communities. As one recommender so rightly said, "As a theologian, Dr. Bellow is shaping the future of the guild, Catholic higher education, and the church."

Dear CUERG colleagues and friends, please join me in praising God for Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow and warmly welcoming her as she accepts the 2025 CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award.

LEO GUARDADO
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

TEXTUAL JOURNEYS: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY
 READING GROUP – PRE-CONVENTION MEETING

Topic: Text: *The Light of Truth (Satyārth Prakāś)* by Dayananda Saraswati
 Conveners: Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Seton Hall University
 Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
 Moderator: Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
 Presenters: Shinjae Lee, Boston College

The purpose of this meeting is to bring theologians together who wish to explore the practice of comparative theology through guided readings of texts from a non-Christian tradition. This meeting invites someone to select short texts from the other tradition and prepare some introductory commentary. The texts along with the commentary is circulated ahead of time. At the breakfast, following introductory explanations of key terms by the presenter, the group engages in an interreligious, close reading together as a community so that fresh theological insights may be encountered.

This year, Shinjae Lee, a Ph.D. student from Boston College, presented on portions of *The Light of Truth (Satyārth Prakāś)* by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824–1883). Dayananda was a Hindu reformer who, like those who founded the Brahmo and Prarthana Samājes, articulated an ethical monotheism in Western terms that could push back against challenges posed by Christian missionaries and colonial schools. Unlike others, though, he contended that Hindus should return to the classic Vedic texts and to the deepest elements of their tradition. In 1875, Dayananda gathered his supporters into the organization of the Ārya Samāj, whose charter verse, “*Kṛṇvanto viśvam āryam—Make the whole world noble*” (Ṛig Veda 9.63.5), situated their attempts at social change as a form of returning to and aligning with the cosmic truth-order, *ṛta*. Like other reformers, Dayananda proposed a set of cultural changes to Hindu life, such as renouncing caste privilege and promoting women’s education, but all from the perspective of championing the Vedas as the sole revelation. The Veda, he argued, precedes the division between the various Hindu spiritual lineages, and so it can generate a modern ethic that is freed both from oppressive ritualism and idol worship as well as from dependence on colonial ways of thinking. Dayananda was able to synthesize a conservative approach to textual traditions with a more egalitarian social reform which also manifested through concrete institutions, such as schools and vernacular journals, through which the movement took hold.

There were two primary selections from *The Light of Truth*, which showcased Dayananda’s textual arguments and his focus on Hindu reform. The first ten chapters of the book articulate positive doctrines concerning God, education, marriage, and cosmic cycles. The final four chapters are polemical and seek to dismantle what Dayananda labels anti-Vedic systems, from Paurāṇic Hinduism to Christianity and Islam.

In the first text selection, Dayananda focuses on truth (*satya*), cosmic order (*ṛta*), and moral righteousness (*dharma*), and because this is the core of the Vedas, anything contrary is *adharma*, against righteousness. For example, Dayananda argues that true sacrifice is not about fire-oblation but instead is about the ethical disciplines of study, charity, and self-governance. Thus, while he might agree with fellow Hindu critiques

of idol worship, the solution is not a rejection of Vedic culture (following European critics) but instead a Vedic renaissance that returns to the text and its alignment with cosmic order. In the second passage, Dayananda makes an epistemological argument about the sources of truth, linking the Veda to the observable order of nature, the testimony of respected sages, the statement of conscience, and the traditions of logical reasoning. Together, these two passages illustrate Dayananda's movement from the cosmic principle of reality to daily duties, and from scriptural revelation to social reform, offering us a clear example of *ṛta*-centered Hindu renewal.

The discussion covered a range of topics, including comparisons of Dayananda's focus on *ṛta* to Catholic natural law approaches that root cultural critiques and reforms in a form of return to eternal law. We also discussed the Indigenous resistance to colonialism, and how Hindu critiques of other religions might adopt some categories and terms from these non-Hindu traditions in order to reject other suppositions and positions. We also debated the possibility that one way of resisting an oppressive universalism is to fashion an alternative universalism. In addition, we examined the example of Dayananda and his contention that ethical renewal need not require abandoning ancient scripture; indeed, retrieval can be a critical, forward-looking act.

SHINJAE LEE
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

DANIEL P. SCHEID
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

FALL 2024 & SPRING 2025 VIRTUAL EVENTS – MID-YEAR GATHERINGS

Ad Hoc Board Committee on Virtual Events:

Mary Kate Holman, Eli McCarthy, SimonMary Asese Aihikhai

Fall Topic: Teaching Catholic Theology in the Present Political Moment
 Date: October 22, 2024
 Moderator: Mary Kate Holman, Fairfield University
 Presenters: Leocadie Lushombo, i.t., Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
 Mia E. Theocharis, University of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto
 Eric Martin, University of California, Los Angeles and Loyola Marymount University

Spring Topic: Sanctuary and Solidarity: Catholic Theology in the Face of Mass Deportation

Date: March 31, 2025
 Moderator: Eli McCarthy, Georgetown University
 Presenters: Leo Guardado, Fordham University
 Brett C. Hoover, Loyola Marymount University
 Tisha Rajendra, Loyola University Chicago

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Society continued the practice of holding two online gatherings. The sessions were organized by a committee composed of Mary Kate Holman (Fairfield University and Chair), Eli McCarthy (Georgetown University), and SimonMary Asese Aihikhai (University of Portland). Both meetings were well attended by members of the Society.

The theme of the first meeting was “Teaching Catholic Theology in the Present Political Moment.” It met on October 22, 2024. This conversation brought together three scholars with politically-engaged research and teaching experience to explore resources and strategies for engaging challenging political conversations in Catholic theology courses, particularly during the 2024 US presidential election cycle. The event featured Léocadie Lushombo, Eric Martin, and Mia Theocharis. Each speaker drew on their scholarship, teaching, and activism to suggest approaches for addressing in our classrooms anti-immigrant rhetoric, creeping fascism, and antisemitism, respectively.

The theme of the second meeting was “Sanctuary and Solidarity: Catholic Theology in the Face of Mass Deportation.” It met on March 31, 2025. The session took as a starting point Catholic Social Teaching’s strong defence of migration as a human right and the fact that this right is under acute and heightened threat in our present political context. The panelists, Leo Guardado, Brett Hoover, and Tisha Rajendra, addressed how Catholics can apply the principles of CST into actionable practice. There was a strong focus on how Catholic persons and institutions can shift from theoretical to practical sanctuary and solidarity. The conversation surfaced many

resources, which MaryJane Ponyik, CTSA Executive Director, compiled and made available on the CTSA Newsfeed for the membership and general public.

MARY KATE HOLMAN
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut

SECRETARY’S REPORT THE SEVENTY-NINTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

The Catholic Theological Society of America held its seventy-ninth Annual Convention from June 12 to June 15, 2025, at the Portland Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Portland, Oregon. The theme of the convention was “One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond.” Registration for the convention was conducted electronically in the months leading to the meeting. The Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology met on Thursday, June 12th from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., PDT. The 2025 Ann O’Hara Graff Award was presented to Dr. Christine Firer Hinze, Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Fordham University. At 7:00 pm, PDT, CTSA President Nancy Pineda-Madrid formally opened the convention, starting with a Land Acknowledgement Statement. Dr. Robert D. Kelly, President of University of Portland, led convention participants in prayer and offered welcoming words.

CTSA President Nancy Pineda-Madrid introduced the plenary speaker for the evening, Dr. Nicholas Denysenko from Valparaiso University. Dr. Steven Battin from the University of Notre Dame offered a response to the keynote plenary. The evening concluded with a reception. The CTSA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following institutions and individuals supporting this year’s convention: Herbert & Phyllis Anderson; Anonymous Donor via Fidelity Charitable Giving; The Callaghan-Pierog Family Foundation, Inc.; Rev. Edward Foley, O.F.M. Cap., Vice Postulator, Cause of Fr. Solanus, Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order; James L. Fredericks; Gonzaga University; Loyola Marymount University; University of Notre Dame, in Honor of Rev. Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P.; Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University; Saint Paul University; and Youngpa Kwon.

On Friday, June 13, the convention resumed with the second plenary session and a Memorial Service to remember and honor CTSA members who passed away during the previous year. The second plenary session was delivered by Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar of the Oregon Synod of the ELCA. Two Business Meetings held online preceded the convention. One of them dwasedicated to discern and welcome new Active and Associated members. Minutes from these meetings with supporting documents can be found after the convention program in this report. Toward the end of the day, Dr. Susan Abraham, CTSA President-Elect, and Dr. Catherine Clifford, CTSA Vice-President presided a community conversation followed by the CTSA President’s Reception for New/Newer Members.

After Morning Prayer on Saturday, June 14 Dr. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht from the University of the Incarnate Word led an interactive session on the topic “The Baptismal Call of the Theologian: A Synodal CTSA Conversation.” Convention participants proceeded to a full day of sessions and conversations. The CUERG Luncheon took place between 1:00 pm and 2:15 pm, PDT. During this luncheon, Dr. Kathleen Dorsey-

Bellow, Associate Professor in the Department of Theology at Xavier University of Louisiana and Director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, received the CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award.

At 5:00 pm, PDT convention participants gathered in the same hotel to celebrate the Eucharist. Rev. Richard Lennan presided the celebration and Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid offered the reflection. After the liturgy, all gathered at 6:15 pm, PDT for a reception, followed by the convention banquet at the Portland Marriott Waterfront Hotel. During the meal, Flora x. Tang received the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award. Subsequently, President Nancy Pineda-Madrid read the citation and presented the John Courtney Murray Award to Rev. Stephen Bevans, S.V.D. It was an opportunity to honor an early-career scholar and one whose work has enriched the life of the CTSA for several decades.

On Sunday, June 15, after morning prayer, Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid delivered her Presidential Address. After this, she formally concluded her term as CTSA President and introduced the new President, Dr. Susan Abraham.

Dr. Layla A. Karst from Loyola Marymount University served as the Liturgical Aide. During the convention several special receptions, breakfasts, sessions and other meetings took place. See the convention program below for more details.

CONVENTION PROGRAM

Concurrent Sessions At-A-Glance

I. Friday Morning

1. Asian Theology Consultation
2. Church / Ecumenism Topic Session
3. Karl Rahner Consultation
4. Liturgy & Sacraments Topic Session
5. Moral Theology I
6. Public Theology Interest Group
7. Christian theologians on Storied Lands
8. Disability Theology Interest Group
9. The Least of These Selected Session
10. Historical Theology Topic Session
11. Thomas Aquinas Consultation

II. Friday Afternoon

1. Christianity and Judaism Consultation
2. Embodiment, Trauma, and Illness Interest Group
3. Spirituality Topic Session
4. Black Catholic Theology Consultation
5. Moral Theology II Topic Session
6. Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church
7. Reconfigured Finitude and Christian Belonging in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque Selected Session
8. Deepening Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist Praxis for the Care of the Planet and People Invited Session
9. Latinx Theology Consultation
10. Hope, Health and the Nature of Healing Invited Session
11. Christ topic Session

III. Saturday Morning

1. Gun Cultures and Gun Violence Interest Group
2. Catholicity within the Constructs of Colonialism and Place Invited Session
3. Catholic Social Thought Topic Session
4. American Exceptionalism Selected Session
5. Fundamental Theology / Method Topic Session
6. Bioethics / Healthcare Topic Session
7. Theology and Science Topic Session
8. Lonergan Consultation
9. Hans Urs von Balthasar Consultation
10. Creation / Eschatology Topic Session
11. The Disruptive Agency of Baptism Selected Session

IV. Saturday Afternoon

1. Reimagining Ecclesial Unity Invited Session
2. Walking Together as a Synodal Church Selected Session
3. One Baptism - One Church? Selected Session
4. Catholicity and Mission Topic Session
5. Comparative Theology Topic Session
6. Practical Theology Topic Session
7. Theologies of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence Interest Group
8. Anthropology Topic Session
9. Johann Baptist Metz Interest Group
10. God / Trinity Topic Session
11. Ecumenical Reflections on the Synod on Synodality Interest Group

Pre-Convention Events, Thursday, June 12, 2025

CTSA Board Meeting	9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Medford
<i>Theological Studies</i> Board Meeting	1:00–5:00 p.m. Salem
Registration	1:00–4:30 p.m. and 6:00–7:00 p.m. Salon Foyer
Exhibits	1:00–7:00 p.m. Salon ABCD
Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology	3:00–5:30 p.m. Salon H-I

Administrative Team:

Cristina Lledo Gomez, Margaret Mary Moore, Stephanie Edwards,
Taylor Ott

Co-Conveners: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of
Theological Education

Margaret Mary Moore, Theology & Life Institute

Moderator: **Melicia Antonio**, Anahuac University

Presenter: **Zara Surratt**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Paper Title: “Ugly Baptisms and Child Welfare: Histories of Non-consensual
Baptisms at Indigenous Boarding Schools and the Catholics Who
Performed Them”

Presenter: **Julia Canonico**, University of Notre Dame

Paper Title: “Baptismal Identity and Indigenous Experience”

Respondent: **Doris Kieser**, University of Alberta

Ann O’Hara Graff Memorial Award

4:30–5:00 p.m.

The 2025 Ann O’Hara Graff Memorial Award will be awarded to

Christine Firer Hinze

Professor, Theological and Social Ethics

Fordham University

Business Meeting

5:15–5:30 p.m.

WCCT Steering Committee Members:

Conveners: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of
Theological Education

Margaret Mary Moore, Theology & Life Institute

Treasurer: **Stephanie Edwards**, Boston College

Secretary: **Vacant**

Award Convener: **Taylor Ott**, Leuven University

Members: **Annie Selak**, Georgetown University

Elissa Cutter, Georgian Court University

Melicia Antonio, Anahuac University

Thursday Evening, June 12, 2025**Opening and First Plenary Session**

7:00–9:00 p.m.

Salon E-F

Presiding: **Nancy Pineda-Madrid**, Loyola Marymount University
President, CTSA

Land Acknowledgement

We, the Catholic Theological Society of America, acknowledge and recognize that we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of many Indigenous nations in Portland, Oregon. In particular, we give thanks for the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon and reverentially recognize:

- **The Burns Paiute Tribe**, which is primarily comprised of the descendants of the Wadatika Band of Northern Paiutes;
- **The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians**, who trace their ancestry back to the aboriginal inhabitants of the South-Central coast of Oregon;
- **The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon**, that include over 30 Tribes and bands from Western Oregon, Northern California, and Southwest Washington;
- **The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians**, which include Clatsop, Chinook, Klickitat, Molala, Kalapuya, Tillamook, Alsea, Siuslaw/Lower Umpqua, Coos, Coquille, Upper Umpqua, Tututni (including all the lower Rogue River bands and those extending up the coast to Floras Creek and down to Whales Head), Chetco (including all of the villages from Whales Head to the Winchuck River), Tolowa, Takelma (including the Illinois Valley/midRogue River and Cow Creek peoples), Galice/Applegate and Shasta;
- **The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation**, which is a union of three Tribes: Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla;

- **The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs**, which includes the Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute Tribes;
- **The Cow Creek Tribe**, which has a rich history in southern Oregon that reflects hard work, perseverance and the desire to be self-reliant;
- **The Coquille Tribe**, which covers Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson and Lane counties; and
- **The Klamath Tribes**, which consist of the Klamath, Modoc and Yahooskin peoples.

Mindful of Pope Francis' repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery in March 2023, and in a spirit of repentance and reconciliation, we acknowledge complicity in historical and ongoing systems of oppression and resolve to work for healing and reparation in the face of the unjust experience of violence, enslavement, displacement, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples here in Portland, and in the many communities where we live and teach.

We hope against hope that this prayer and land acknowledgment inspires us to learn from the Indigenous stewardship of our environment and from their struggle for identity, freedom, and self-determination. Amen!

Welcome and Opening Prayer:

Robert D. Kelly
President, University of Portland

Address: **Nicholas Denysenko**, Valparaiso University

“Echoes of Nicaea: Ministry of the
Baptized in the Twenty-First Century”

Respondent: **Steven Battin**, University of Notre Dame

Opening Reception

9:00 p.m.

Mount St. Helen and Mount Hood

The CTSA is grateful for the support of the following Donors

Herbert & Phyllis Anderson

Anonymous Donor via Fidelity Charitable Giving

The Callaghan-Pierog Family Foundation, Inc.

Rev. Edward Foley, Vice Postulator, OFM CAP Province of St. Joseph of the
Capuchin Order Cause of Fr. Solanus

James L. Fredericks

Gonzaga University

Loyola Marymount University
 University of Notre Dame in Honor of Rev. Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP
 Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
 Saint Paul University
 Youngpa Kwon

Friday Morning, June 13, 2025

von Balthasar Society Breakfast	7:00–8:15 a.m. Willamette
Mentorship Breakfast: Transitioning into Careers in Theology <i>Prior registration required</i>	7:00–8:15 a.m. Mount Hood
Schillebeeckx Breakfast	7:00–8:15 a.m. Sunstone
Comparative Theology Reading Group Breakfast	7:00–8:15 a.m. Laurelhurst
Centering Prayer	8:00–8:20 a.m. Mount St. Helen
Exhibits	8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Salons ABCD
Registration	9:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. Salon Foyer
Second Plenary Session & Memorial Service	8:30–10:45 a.m. Salons E-F

Presiding
 Memorial Service: **Nancy Pineda-Madrid**, Loyola Marymount University
 President, CTSA

Presiding
 Second Plenary: **Christine Firer Hinze**, Fordham University
 Past President (2021-2022), CTSA

Address: **Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar**, Oregon Synod, ELCA

“That They May Be One: The Baptismal
 Call for Radical Transformation”

Respondent: **Ish Ruiz**, Pacific School of Religion

Coffee Break

10:45–11:15 a.m.
Salons ABCD

Concurrent Sessions – Friday Morning

11:15 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

1. Asian and Asian American Theology Consultation

Salon G

Administrative Team: Min-Ah Cho, Fiona Li, Cecilia Francisco Tan

- Convener: **Min-Ah Cho**, Georgetown University
 Moderator: **Fiona Li**, St. Mark's College at the University of British Columbia
 Presenter: **Linh Hoang, O.F.M.**, Siena College
 "Baptism in Asian Theology in Light of the Climate Crisis: Water Accessibility and Scarcity"
 Presenter: **Victoria Basug Slabinski**, University of Virginia
 "Re-Narrating 'One Baptism' towards the Healing of Colonial Wounds"
 Presenter: **Zachary R. Dehm**, Loyola University Maryland
 "'One Baptism' in the Vision of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences"

2. Church /Ecumenism Topic Session

Salmon

Administrative Team: Elyse Raby, Jaisy Joseph, Mary Kate Holman

- Convener: **Elyse Raby**, Santa Clara University
 Moderator: **Mary Kate Holman**, Fairfield University
 Presenter: **Amanda Osheim**, Loras College
 "Born into Vulnerability, Baptized into Kenosis: Towards Ecclesial Examinations of Conscience"
 Presenter: **Flora x. Tang**, University of Notre Dame
 "Baptism on the Potawatomi Trail of Death: An Ecclesiology of (Limited) Solidarity for a Decolonizing Church"
 Presenter: **Carol George**, KU Leuven
 "Unity in Diversity: Reciprocal Dynamism of Synodality and Receptive Ecumenism"

3. Karl Rahner Consultation

Eugene

Administrative Team: Brandon Peterson, Jakob Rinderknecht, Michael Rubbelke,
Grace Agolia, Mark Fischer

Convener: **Grace Agolia, Boston College**
Moderator: **Madeline Jarrett, Boston College**
Presenter: **Youngpa Kwon, Sogang Institute for Theology**
"Bridging Bei-sich-sein and Prehension:
Toward a Metaphysical Theology of Evolution"
Respondent: **Michael Rubbelke, St. John's University, Colledgeville**

4. Liturgy/Sacraments Topic Session

Belmont / Hawthorne

Administrative Team: Benjamin Durheim, LaRyssa Herrington, Megan Effron

Convener: **Benjamin Durheim, College of Saint Benedict / Saint John's University**
Moderator: **Kayla August, Boston College**
Presenter: **Anne McGowan, Catholic Theological Union**
"Baptized in One Church? Capacities and Challenges of Multi-Church Collaborative OCIA Processes"
Presenter: **Christopher O'Brien, Catholic University of America**
"Reintegrating Baptism and Eucharist: A Case for Communing Baptized Infants in Roman Catholicism"
Presenter: **Lauren Warner, Boston College**
"Harmonizing the Waters: Music as a Celebration of Baptism and Unity in Catholic Liturgy"

5. Moral Theology I Topic Session

Medford

Administrative Team: David Kwon, Marcus Mescher, Leocadie Lushombo

Convener: **David Kwon, Seattle University**
Moderator: **Megan McCabe, Gonzaga University**
Presenter: **Marc V. Rugani, Saint Anselm College**
"Capax Dei: Living Out Christian Hope Through Capabilities Expansion"
Presenter: **Federico Cinocca, Emmanuel College**
"Boundless Grace: Exploring Sacrament's Sucedanea from Baptism to Marriage for Same-Sex Couples"

6. Public Theology Interest Group

Salon H

Administrative Team: Rosemary P. Carbine, David DeCosse

Conveners: **Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College**
David DeCosse, Santa Clara University
Moderator: **Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College**

- Presenter: **Nicholas Hayes-Mota**, Santa Clara University
 “Forming the People: Towards a Baptismal Theology of Citizenship”
- Presenter: **Ramon Luzarraga**, St. Martin’s University
 “Why Roman Catholics Cannot Vote for a Dictator (Including Aspirational Ones), Ever.”
- Presenter: **Byron D. Wratee**, Loyola University Maryland
 “One Baptism, One Vote: Public Theology and the Call to Black Political Participation”

7. Christian Theologians on Storied Lands

Salem

A Dialogue on Portland with LaCugna Award Winner Invited Session

Administrative Team: Antonio Sison, Cristina Lledo Gomez, Kevin Considine

- Convener: **Reid B. Locklin**, St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto
 Moderator: **Megan Hopkins**, Boston College
 Panelists: **Craig A. Ford, Jr.**, Saint Norbert College
Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education
David Turnbloom, University of Portland

8. Disability Theology Interest Group

Medow Lark / Douglas Fir

Administrative Team: Mary Jo Iozzio, Miguel Romero

- Convener: **Mary Jo Iozzio**, Boston College
 Moderator: **Susan McElcheran**, St. Michael’s College
 Presenter: **Rosemary Garland-Thomson**, Emory University
 (Co-author Andrew Walker-Cornetta, Georgia State University)
 “Thinking with Catholic Theology, Imagining Disability”
- Presenter: **Kevin Timpe**, Calvin University
 (Co-author Blake Hereth, Western Michigan University)
 “Catholic Faith and Intellectual Disability:
 A Mere-Difference Response to Gould”
- Presenter: **Ben Parks**, Mercy College of Ohio
 “Martyrdom and Disability”

9. The Least of These: People Suffering from Mental Illness, Law Enforcement, and Innovative Responses Selected Session

Salon I

- Convener: **Cathleen Kaveny**, Boston College
 Moderator: **Shaun Slusarski**, Boston College

- Presenter: **Peter Fay**, Villanova University
"Catholic Social Teaching and the Mentally III"
- Presenter: **Tobias Winright**, St. Patrick's Pontifical University
"Just Policing and the Mentally III"
- Presenter: **Meg Kaveny**, Behavioral Response Team, Portland Police Bureau
"An Innovative Partnership: Social Workers and Police Officers"

10. Historical Theology Topic Session

Pearl

Administrative Team: Joshua Brown, Trent Pomplun, Grant Kaplan

- Convener: **Grant Kaplan**, St. Louis University
- Moderator: **Grant Kaplan**, St. Louis University
- Presenter: **Justin Coyle**, Mount Angel Seminary
"Eucharistic Debates at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy"
- Presenter: **Michael Petrin**, Mount Angel Seminary
"Grace, Imitation, and Transformation:
The Baptismal Theology of Gregory of Nyssa"
- Presenter: **Joseph Flipper**, University of Dayton
"Black Catholicity: Universalism and African American
Catholicism in the Mid-Twentieth Century"

11. Thomas Aquinas Consultation

Columbia

Administrative Team: Gregory LaNave, Andrew Hofer, John Meinert

- Convener: **Gregory LaNave**, Dominican House of Studies
- Moderator: **Dominic Langevin**, Dominican House of Studies
- Presenter: **Zane Chu**, Saint Mary's College of California
"Common Baptism, Common Doctor:
The Basis of the Order of Theology in Aquinas"
- Presenter: **Scott Roniger**, Loyola Marymount University
"The Soul of the State in Catholic Political Thought"

Friday Afternoon, June 13, 2025

Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology Luncheon

1:15–2:30 p.m.
Mount Hood

Concurrent Sessions – Friday Afternoon

2:45–4:30 p.m.

1. Christianity and Judaism Consultation**Salon G**

Administrative Team: Carol Ann Martinelli, Mia Theocharis, Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski

Convener: **Carol Ann Martinelli**, Independent Scholar
 Moderator: **Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski**, Boston College
 Presenter: **Matthew Tapie**, St. Leo University
 “Christology and the Mystery of Israel after *Nostra Aetate*”
 Respondent: **Mary Doak**, University of San Diego

2. Embodiment, Trauma, and Illness Interest Group**Salmon**

Administrative Team: Elizabeth Antus, Jessica Coblentz

Convener: **Elizabeth Antus**, Georgetown University
 Moderator: **Victoria Basug Slabinski**, University of Virginia
 Presenter: **Emma McDonald Kennedy**, Villanova University
 “Trauma and Reproductive Loss in Fertility Clinics Contexts:
 How Social Forces Frame Reproductive Futures”
 Presenter: **Ashley Theuring**, Xavier University
 “Baptism and Clergy Sexual Abuse:
 Reimagining Forgiveness in a Compromised Church”
 Respondent: **Flora x. Tang**, University of Notre Dame

3. Spirituality Topic Session**Eugene**

Administrative Team: Michael Rubbelke, Theodora van Gaal, C. Vanessa White

Convener: **C. Vanessa White**, Catholic Theological Union
 Moderator: **Michael Rubbelke**, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary (Minnesota)
 Presenter: **Simeiqi He**, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology
 “One Baptism, One Life, and One Love:
 Spiritual Convergence between the East and West”
 Presenter: **Emmanuel Osigwe**, Mount St. Mary's University
 “African Indigenous Initiation Rituals and the Sacrament of
 Baptism: Exploring Elements of Communion Toward an Effective
 Inculturation”
 Respondent: **Hansol Goo**, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary (Minnesota)

4. Black Catholic Theology Consultation

Belmont / Hawthorne

Administrative Team: Craig A. Ford, Jr., Chanelle Robinson, Nicole Symmonds

- Convener: **Nicole Symmonds**, Columbia Theological Seminary
Moderator: **John Barnes**, Fordham University
Presenter: **Jeannine Hill Fletcher**, Fordham University
"Enslaved and Enslaving Catholics in the Waters of Renewal"
Presenter: **Kayla August**, Boston College
"Give Me that Ole Time Religion: What the Slave Preacher
Teaches Us About Effective Lay Preaching Today"
Presenter: **Paulinus Odozor**, Notre Dame University
"Environmental Degradation in Africa:
Issues, Implications, and Solutions"

5. Moral Theology II Topic Session

Medford

Administrative Team: David Kwon, Marcus Mescher, Leocadie Lushombo

- Convener: **Leocadie Lushombo**, Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara
University
Moderator: **Barbara Anne Kozee**, Boston College
Presenter: **Hilary O. Nwainya**, Saint Thomas University
"Towards a National Ethos of Recognition:
Leveraging 'One Baptism' to Address Ethical and Social
Fragmentation in Nigeria"
Presenter: **Amanda Rachel Bolaños**, Duke Divinity School
"The Virtue of Solidarity:
A Baptismal Account of Reclaiming Charity"

6. Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church Consultation

Salon H

Administrative Team: Cristina Traina, Megan McCabeStan Ilo, Daniel Horan, Julia
Feder

- Convener: **Cristina Traina**, Fordham University
Moderator: **Megan McCabe**, Gonzaga University
Interactive Session

7. Reconfigured Finitude and Christian Belonging
In the Thought of Emmanuel Falque Selected Session

Salem

- Convener: **Anthony Godzieba**, Villanova University
Moderator: **Anthony Godzieba**, Villanova University

- Presenter: **Colby Dickinson**, Loyola University Chicago
 “Emmanuel Falque and the Psychology of Theology”
- Presenter: **Trevor B. Williams**, Villanova University
 “The Ruptured Alliance: Emmanuel Falque’s Interpretation of Pascal and Kierkegaard in La chair de Dieu (2023)”
- Presenter: **Rohan Abraham**, KU Leuven
 “Baptism, Incarnation and Metamorphosis: Emmanuel Falque’s Phenomenological Theology and its Significance for an Embodied Conception of Baptism”

8. Deepening Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist Praxis for the Care of the Planet and People Invited Session **Medow Lark / Douglas Fir**

- Conveners: **Rosemary P. Carbine**, Whittier College
Rosina H. Simon, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
- Moderator: **Sarah Robinson**, Dominican University of California
- Presenter: **Rosemary P. Carbine**, Whittier College
 “Sacramentality in Soil and Seeds: Catholic and Hindu Ecofeminist Imaginaries and Communities”
- Presenter: **Rosina H. Simon**, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
 “When Buddhist Mindfulness Meets Christian Watchfulness”
- Presenter: **Michelle Voss**, Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto
 “A Comparative, Trauma-Informed Soteriology for Interfaith Praxis”

9. Latinx Theology Consultation

Salon I

Administrative Team: Mauricio Najarro, Ish Ruiz, Natalia Imperatori-Lee

- Convener: **Mauricio Najarro**, UC Berkeley
- Moderator: **Ish Ruiz**, Pacific School of Religion
- Presenter: **Xavier Montecel**, St. Mary’s University
 “Not Being for Others: An Exploration of Sin and Baptism Latinamente”
- Presenter: **Benjamin Groth**, Tulane University
 “One Baptism, Many Races: How Baptism Created Race in the Americas”
- Respondent: **Natalia Imperatori-Lee**, Fordham University

10. Hope, Health, and the Nature of Healing
Insights from Disability and Trauma Theology Invited Session

Pearl

- Convener: **Megan Heeder**, University of Scranton
 Moderator: **Berit Guidotti**, Boston College
 Presenter: **Stephanie Edwards**, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium
 "Hope in the Darkness: Trauma Healing beyond the Colonial Curative Model"
 Presenter: **Miguel Romero**, St. Louis University
 "Aquinas on Disability, Original Sin and the Healing Ministry of Christ"
 Presenter: **Madeline Jarrett**, Boston College
 "Disabled Agency and the Contours of Healing"

11. Christ Topic Session

Columbia

Administrative Team: Eugene Schlesinger, Robert Lassalle-Klein, Ligita Ryliskyte

- Convener: **Eugene Schlesinger**, Santa Clara University
 Moderator: **Robert Lassalle-Klein**, Santa Clara University
 Presenter: **William Orbih**, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary
 "The Risen Christ is the Resisting Christ: From Nicaea to Postcolonial Africa"
 Presenter: **Brandon Peterson**, University of Utah
 "One Gospel, Many Nations: The Torah, The Covenant, and Christian Supersessionism"
 Presenter: **Michael Costas**, Boston College
 "Living Up to Our Baptism"

Friday Evening, June 13, 2025

CTSA Conversation

4:30–6:00 p.m.
Salon EF

Presiding: **Susan Abraham**, Pacific School of Religion
 President-Elect, CTSA

Catherine Clifford, Saint Paul University
 Vice President, CTSA

President's Reception for New/Newer Members

*Prior registration required/
 ticket provided in registration packet*

6:15–7:45 p.m.
Mount Hood

CTSA Vision Statement

The CTSA advances inclusive theological scholarship and reflection for an evolving Church, academy, and wider world.

Core Values of the CTSA:

Catholic ~ Scholarly ~ Inclusive ~ Global

Catholic. As a *Catholic* scholarly society in an evolving church, academy and world, we aspire to embrace Catholic traditions appreciatively, critically, and dialogically; engaging ecumenically, interreligiously, and with “the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted....” (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

Scholarly. As a *scholarly* society since founded in 1945, we are committed to carrying on living into our vital and distinctive mission: to support, in its many genres and contexts, theological scholarship at the highest levels, in service to church, academy, and society.

Inclusive. As an *inclusive* body, we aspire to ‘catholicity,’ by supporting scholars that draw on the wisdom of theological traditions in all institutional settings and practitioners in areas of applied theology; who address and respond to contemporary challenges in our field; and actively seeking out the riches that theological diversity in dialogue (intellectual, ecclesial, cultural, gender, racial-ethnic, geographical, religious) can yield.

Global. As a North American society, we cultivate *global* encounters and awareness through our membership, scholarship, and network affiliations.

This Vision Statement was collaboratively arrived at by the Centennial Committee after significant input from CTSA members. In the Centennial Committee’s and the CTSA Board of Directors’ judgment, this Vision Statement most effectively captures Society members’ and leadership’s animating vision for the CTSA at 100.

Saturday Morning, June 14, 2025

Benedictine Universities and Colleges Breakfast <i>Sponsored by Saint Anselm University</i>	7:15–8:45 a.m. Sunstone
Breakfast Meeting: Karl Rahner Society	7:15–8:45 a.m. Mount Hood
Centering Prayer	8:00–8:30 a.m. Mount St. Helan
Morning Prayer	8:30–8:45 a.m. Mount St. Helen

Exhibits 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Salons ABCD

Registration 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Ballroom Foyer

Third Plenary Session 9:00–10:30 a.m.
Salon E-F

Presiding: **Susan Abraham**, Pacific School of Religion
President-Elect, CTSA

Presenter: **Jakob Karl Rinderknecht**, University of the Incarnate Word
“The Baptismal Call of the Theologian:
A Synodal CTSA Conversation”

Interactive Session

Coffee Break 10:30–11:00 a.m.
Salons ABCD

Concurrent Sessions – Saturday Morning 11:00 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

1. Gun Cultures and Gun Violence Interest Group **Salon G**

Administrative Team: Michael Grigoni, SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai

Convener: **SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai**, University of Portland
Moderator: **Eli McCarthy**, Georgetown University
Presenter: **Christina Astorga**, University of Portland
“Reckoning with Religion and Gun Culture in Light of Christian
Nationalism”

Presenter: **Ki Joo Choi**, Princeton Theological Seminary
“Asian Americans, Guns, and Belonging:
A Case Study on Insecurity and its Root Cause(s)”

Presenter: **David Turnbloom**, University of Portland
“Icons of Autonomy: Guns as Religious Symbols”

2. Catholicity within the Constructs of Colonialism and Place:
Universality and Diversity in Negotiations of Religious-Cultural
Identity Across the Indian Sub-Continent Invited Session **Salmon**

Convener: **Deepan Rajaratnam**, Saint John's University (Minnesota)
Moderator: **William Orbih**, Saint John's University (Minnesota)

- Presenter: **Deepan Rajaratnam**, Saint John's University, Collegetown, MN
 “Grace in the Context of Colonialism:
 A Multi-Generational Account of Inculturating Tamil Catholicism”
- Presenter: **Akhil Thomas**, Harvard University
 “Poetics of Displacement: Jesuit Acculturation in Early Modern
 Malabar and its Afterlife in Contemporary Chicago”
- Respondent: **Rohan Abraham**, KU Leuven

3. Catholic Social Thought Topic Session

Eugene

Administrative Team: Kate Jackson-Meyer, Kevin Ahern, Carmen Nanko-Fernández

- Convener: **Peter Fay**, Villanova University
- Moderator: **Xavier Montecel**, St. Mary's University
- Presenter: **Jens Mueller**, Notre Dame of Maryland University
 “Laudato Si’ and Baptismal Renewal: Embracing Ecological
 Conversion for the Jubilee Year 2025”
- Presenter: **Shaun Slusarski**, Boston College
 “Pope Francis, Catholic Social Teaching, and Prison Reform”

4. American Exceptionalism: A Theological Evaluation of a Troublesome Notion Selected Session

Belmont / Hawthorne

- Convener: **Thomas Massaro, S.J.**, Fordham University
- Moderator: **Timothy Perron, S.J.**, Fordham University
- Presenter: **Thomas Massaro, S.J.**, Fordham University
 “American Exceptionalism: A Theological Evaluation of a
 Troublesome Notion”
- Respondent: **David DeCosse**, Santa Clara University
- Respondent: **SimonMary Ase Ahiokhai**, University of Portland

5. Fundamental Theology / Method Topic Session

Medford

Administrative Team: Nicholas Olkovich, T. Derrick Witherington, Sara Hulse Kirby

- Convener: **Nicholas Olkovich**, St. Mark's College
- Moderator: **Jonathan R. Heaps**, Seton Hall University
- Presenter: **Jack Nuelle**, Loyola University Chicago
 “One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins:
 Symbolic Efficacy, Encounter, and Structural Sin”
- Respondent: **Ryan G. Duns, S.J.**, Marquette University
- Respondent: **T. Derrick Witherington**, Loyola University Chicago

6. Bioethics / Healthcare Topic Session

Salon H

Administrative Team: Dan Daly, Kate Jackson-Meyer, Emma McDonald Kennedy

- Convener: **Dan Daly**, Boston College
Moderator: **Emma McDonald Kennedy**, Villanova University
Presenter: **Michael McCarthy**, Loyola University Chicago
"Bioethics and the Principle of Mercy:
Baptism and the Style of Jesus' Healing Ministry"
Presenter: **Leah Wakefield**, Marquette University
"Harm Reduction, Catholic Medical Ethics, and Catholic Social
Teaching"
Presenter: **Megan Heeder**, University of Scranton
"The Christian Baptismal Call: Shaping a Bioethical Response to
Poverty and Race's Role in Eating Disorders"

7. Theology and Science Topic Session

Salem

Administrative Team: Megan Ulishney, Benjamin Hohman, Robert Elliot

- Convener: **Megan Ulishney**, Boston College
Moderator: **Benjamin Hohman**, Salve Regina University
Presenter: **Taylor Nutter**, Mount St. Mary's University
"AI, Death-Time, and Baptismal Hope"
Presenter: **Monica Marcelli-Chu**, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara
University
"Grace-in-Flux and a Changeable Self:
Conceiving an Ecological Theology of Grace"
Presenter: **Alexander Klee**, Boston College
"Original Trauma: Epigenetics as a Solution
to the Issue of Evolution and Propagated Sin"

8. Lonergan Consultation

Medow Lark / Douglas Fir

Administrative Team: Jeremy Blackwood, Jennifer Sanders, Cecille Medina-
Maldonado

- Convener: **Jennifer Sanders**, Saint Louis University
Moderator: **Brian Himes**, Saint Louis University

- Presenter: **Joseph Mudd**, Gonzaga University
 “Transposing Sacramental Character: Metaphysics and Meaning in an Ecumenical Theology of Baptism”
- Presenter: **John Dadosky**, Regis-St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology
 “Ecclesia, Theology, and Canon Law: Reflections on a Post-Vatican II Integration”
- Presenter: **Patrick Nolin**, Regis-St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology
 “Transcendental Infrastructure in Creating Narratives of Hope”

9. Han Urs von Balthasar Consultation

Salon I

Administrative Team: Charles Gillespie, Anne Carpenter, Christopher M. Hadley, S.J., Kristen Drahos

- Convener: **Charles Gillespie**, Sacred Heart University
 Moderator: **Charles Gillespie**, Sacred Heart University
 An Experimental and Interactive Session

10. Creation / Eschatology Topic Session

Administrative Team: Daniel Scheid, Paul Schutz, Kathleen McNutt

- Convener: **Daniel Scheid**, Duquesne University
 Moderator: **Aristotle Papanikolaou**, Fordham University
 Presenter: **Jack Pappas**, Fordham University
 “‘In My End is My Beginning’: Creation and the Image of God in Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor”
- Presenter: **Anne Carpenter**, St. Louis University
 “‘*Creatio* is the Relation’: On the Strangeness of Thing Creation”
- Presenter: **Sarah Livick-Moses**, Gannon University
 “The Drama of Creation: Bulgakov, Balthasar, and the Promise of Ecumenical Ecotheology”

11. The Disruptive Agency of Baptism: Reclaiming the Christian Call to Conversion, Dialogue, and Co-Responsibility Selected Session

Columbia

- Convener: **Ryan McAleer**, KU Leuven
 Moderator: **Bradford Hinze**, Fordham University
 Presenter: **Ryan McAleer**, KU Leuven
 “Initiation into the Divine-Human Dialogue”

- Presenter: **Kim Mendoza**, KU Leuven
 “Co-Responsibility and Hierarchical Communion
 in Church Governance”
- Presenter: **Maria Cimperman, R.S.C.J.**, Catholic Theological Union
 “Baptism and the Call to Ongoing Conversion, with Implications
 for Communal Discernment and Healing”

Saturday Afternoon, June 14, 2025

Theological Studies Editorial Consultation Luncheon 12:50–2:15 p.m.
Sunstone

CUERG Luncheon 1:00–2:15 p.m.
Mount Hood

CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award

The award will be presented to

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, D.Min.

*Associate Professor, Department of Theology, Xavier University of Louisiana
 and Director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies*

Concurrent Sessions – Friday Afternoon 2:30–4:15 p.m.

1. Reimagining Ecclesial Unity Invited Session **Salon G**

- Convener: **SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai**, University of Portland
 Moderator: **SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai**, University of Portland
 Presenter: **Mary Follen**, Spirit of Grace Ecumenical Community, Beaverton,
 Oregon
 “Thirty-year Worship Journey and Struggle
 of an Ecumenical Community”
- Presenter: **Juan Carlos La Puente Tapia**, Spiritual and Theological Mutual
 Accompaniment International Network
 “Spiritual and Theological Mutual Accompaniment”
- Presenter: **Thomas Mason**, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish,
 Lake Oswego, Oregon
 “Emergent Reflection Regarding Understanding of Authority and
 Its Guiding Means for Walking Together”

2. Walking Together as a Synodal Church:
 Ministerial and Sacramental Prospects for Communion,
 Participation, and Mission Selected Session **Salmon**

- Convener: **Ty Monroe**, Assumption University
 Moderator: **Megan Effron**, Notre Dame
 Presenter: **Grace Agolia**, Boston College
 “Proclaiming ‘One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins’: The Future of Ministry in a Synodal Church”
- Presenter: **Deepan Rajaratnam**, St. John’s University (Minnesota)
 “Disciple by Baptism, Minister by Call: Reframing the Theologian’s Vocation in Light of Synodality, Locality and Catholicity”
- Presenter: **Ty Monroe**, Assumption University
 “Synodality, Sacraments, and the Church as the Prolongation of the Incarnation in History”

3. One Baptism – One Church? Baptism, Belonging and the Contemporary Ecumenical Movement Selected Session

Eugene

- Convener: **Kimberly Belcher**, University of Notre Dame
 Moderator: **Alexander Turpin**, Notre Dame Parish, Diocese of Rockville Centre
 Presenter: **Benjamin Durheim**, College of Saint Benedict / Saint John’s University
 “Actions Matter: On the Liturgical (Mis-)Recognition of a Common Baptism”
- Presenter: **Tom McLean**, KU Leuven
 “A Personal Matter: Autoethnographic Reflections on Crossing Denominational Lines”
- Presenter: **Theresa Rice**, University of Notre Dame
 “Dialoguing with the Past: Reflections on the Role of History in Ecumenism and the Reception of Baptized Christians”

4. Catholicity and Mission Topic Session

Belmont / Hawthorne

Administrative Team: Cristina Lledo Gomez, Kevin Considine, Flora x. Tang

- Convener: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
 Moderator: **Kevin Considine**, Catholic Theological Union
 Presenter: **Margaret Mary Moore**, Theology & Life Institute
 “De-coding the So-called Doctrine of Discovery”
- Presenter: **David de la Fuente**, Fordham University
 “Pentecostalizing Catholicity and Mission: Jennings and Yong on the ‘Baptism of the Multitude’”
- Presenter: **Ramon Luzarraga**, St. Martin’s University
 “The Box Score of Baptism:”

US Catholic Missionary Christianity in the Caribbean"

5. Comparative Theology Topic Session**Medford**

Administrative Team: Julius-Kei Kato, Laurel Potter, Domenik Ackermann

Convener: **Julius-Kei Kato**, King's University College-Western UniversitModerator: **Laurel Potter**, University of St. ThomasPresenter: **Axel Oaks Takacs**, Seton Hall University

"Tradition and Propriety of Rituals in the (Omnipresent) Face of God: Ordinary (Supernatural) and Extraordinary (Natural) Means of Experiencing the Divine Presence"

Presenter: **Joyce Konigsburg**, DePaul University

"One Baptism: From Unity in Diversity to Diversity in Unity"

Presenter: **Shinjae Lee**, Boston College

"Reimagining Spiritual Equality:

A Comparative Analysis of Dayananda Sarasvati's Vedic Reform and the Concept of One Baptism in Dalit Theology"

6. Practical Theology Topic Session**Salon H**

Administrative Team: Cynthia Cameron, Jennifer Owens-Jofre, Ish Ruiz

Convener: **Cynthia Cameron**, University of St. Michael's College, University of TorontoModerator: **Jennifer Owens-Jofre**, Loyola Marymount UniversityPresenter: **Marc Del Monico**, St. Luke Institute

"Baptismal Ministries': A Synodal Embrace of Lay Ministry ... or is it?: Synod 'Vocabulary' and the Relationship between Baptism, Lay Ministry, and Co-Responsibility"

Presenter: **Tiffany Hunsinger**, University of Dayton

"Catholicism and Indigenous Hawaiian Spirituality: Navigating a Legacy of Forced Conversion"

7. Theologies of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence Interest Group**Salem**

Administrative Team: Eli McCarthy, Leo Guardado

Convener: **Eli McCarthy**, Georgetown UniversityModerator: **Leo Guardado**, Fordham UniversityPresenter: **Sr. MaryKristel Nwuba, D.D.L.**, Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Love

"A Comparative Analysis of Nonviolent Communication"

and Eco-Spirituality”

- Presenter: **Joshua Snyder**, Boston College
 “The Role of Nonviolent Education in Peacebuilding”
- Presenter: **Fidelis Olokunboro**, Villanova University
 “Unless a Grain of Wheat Falls and Dies:
 A Theo-Anthropological Approach to Peacebuilding”

8. Anthropology Topic Session

Medow Lark / Douglas Fir

Administrative Team: Tiffany Hartnell-Howden, Adam Beyt, Timothy Perron

- Convener: **Tiffany Hartnell-Howden**, Boston College
- Moderator: **Adam Beyt**, Loyola University-Chicago
- Presenter: **Brianne Jacobs**, Emmanuel College
 “Infinite Generation: Relationships and Baptism in the AI Age”
- Presenter: **Arun Joseph Chakkalakkal**, KU-Leuven
 “Relationality and Anthropology:
 Weaving Towards a Participatory Relational Ontology”
- Presenter: **Bede Ukwuije, C.S.Sp.**, Duquesne University
 “Memoria Christi in the Amistad Story:
 Transforming the Memory of Race through the Memory of Grace”

9. The Enduring Gift and Theological Challenge of Johann Baptist Metz

Salon I

Administrative Team: Matthew Ashley, Kevin Burke, S.J., Julia Prinz, V.D.M.F.

- Convener: **Matthew Ashley**, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara
 University
- Moderator: **Julia Prinz, V.D.M.F.**, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara
 University
- Presenter: **Janice Thompson**, King’s College
 “Living as a Community of Hope in a Hope-Destroying World:
 Johann Baptist Metz and the German Church after Auschwitz”
- Presenter: **Daniel Castillo**, Loyola University of Maryland
 “Renouncing the Glamour of Evil: Dangerous Memory in a Time
 of Politico–Ecological Emergency”

10. God / Trinity Topic Session

Administrative Team: Nancy Dallavalle, Darren Dias

- Convener: **Nancy Dallavalle**, Fairfield University

Moderator: **Robin Landrith**, Loyola University Maryland
 Presenter: **Paul DeHart**, Vanderbilt University
 "The Economic Trinity and the Nicene Faith
 —Learning from Schleiermacher"
 Respondent: **Elizabeth Groppe**, University of Dayton
 Respondent: **Darren Dias**, University of Toronto

11. Synodality Interest Group

Columbia

Ecumenical Reflections on Synodality

Administrative Team: Martin Madar, Jakob Rinderknecht, Susan Reynolds

Convener: **Martin Madar**, Xavier University
 Moderator: **Martin Madar**, Xavier University
 Panelists: **Archbishop Linda Nicholls**, Primate of the Anglican Church of
 Canada (retired)
Susan K. Wood, S.C.L., Regis College, University of Toronto
Richard Lennan, Boston College

Saturday Evening, June 14, 2025

Eucharist	5:00 p.m. Salon E
John Courtney Murray Award Reception	6:15 p.m. Mount Hood & Mount St. Helen
John Courtney Murray Award Banquet	7:00 p.m. Salon F-I

Sunday Morning, June 15, 2025

Conveners' Breakfast	7:15–8:45 a.m. Salon I
-----------------------------	----------------------------------

New conveners (or their delegates) of Topic Sessions, Interest Groups, and Consultations will meet Susan Abraham, CTSA President-Elect, Catherine Clifford, CTSA Vice President, and Kevin Brown, Editor of Proceedings, for evaluation and preliminary planning for the 2065 convention.

Centering Prayer	8:00–8:30 a.m. Mount St. Helen
Morning Prayer	8:30–8:50 a.m.

Exhibits	Mount St. Helen 8:30–11:00 a.m. Salons ABCD
Fourth Plenary Session: Presidential Address	9:00–10:00 a.m. Salon E
Presiding: Catherine Clifford , Saint Paul University Vice President, CTSA	
Address: Nancy Pineda-Madrid , Loyola Marymount University President, CTSA	
“Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Eruption of Evil, and Reckoning for Theology”	
Appointment of the New President	10:00 a.m. Salon E
Coffee and Pastries	10:15 a.m. Salons ABCD
Meeting and Luncheon: CTSA Board of Directors	11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Willamette

Thank you to Our 2025 Institutional Donors!

The Callaghan-Pierog Family Foundation, Inc.

Gonzaga University

Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

Loyola Marymount University

University of Notre Dame in Honor of Rev. Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P.

Saint Paul University

**Catholic Theological Society of America
80th Annual Convention**

“Theology in a Synodal Church”

June 11–14, 2026

**Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch
Saint Louis, Missouri**

The CTSA would like to thank the following members for their service and assistance with the annual convention:

Local Arrangements Committee

Ma Christina Astorga, University of Portland (Chair)
David Turnbloom, University of Portland

Liturgical Aide

Layla A. Karst, Loyola Marymount University

Parliamentarian

Mary Doak, Loyola Marymount University

Photographer

Paul J. Schutz, Santa Clara University
Melicia Antonio, Anahuac University

Program Organization Assistant

Akhil Thomas, Harvard University

Registration Team

Christine Mellick, University of Dayton
Caleb Mundle, Saint Louis University
Joseph Rosales, Harvard Divinity School
Akhil Thomas, Harvard University

Catholic Theological Society of America
Board of Directors 20254-2025

President	Nancy Pineda-Madrid Loyola Marymount University
President-Elect	Susan Abraham Pacific School of Religion
Vice President	Catherine Clifford Saint Paul University
Past President	Kristine E. Heyer Boston College
Secretary	Hosffman Ospino Boston College, School of Theology & Ministry
Treasurer	Patrick Flanagan, C.M. St. John's University (New York)
Board Members	SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai (2023-2025) University of Portland
	Elsie Miranda (2023-2025) The Association of Theological Schools
	Daniel P. Horan (2024-2026) Saint Mary's College
	Laurie Johnston (2024-2026) Emmanuel College
Executive Director	Mary Jane Ponyik John Carroll University
Proceedings Editor	B. Kevin Brown Gonzaga University

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AWARD 2025

Citation from Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid, CTSA President:

The John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement

¡Les deseo a cada uno de ustedes lo mejor esta noche! I wish each of you the best this evening! My great joy tonight is to recognize the colleague whom CTSA honors this year with the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Achievement in Theology.

Our honoree was born in Baltimore on July 14, 1944, of Welsh and Irish ancestry. From County Clare, Ireland, his mother's forebearers immigrated to the United States in the 1820s. His father's Welsh forebearers immigrated here in the seventeenth century, some four centuries ago and settled in Maryland. As a child he grew up in Baltimore and Washington, DC. However, when he was thirteen, his family moved to Riverside, California where he attended high school at Divine Word Seminary. He holds a B.A. in English Literature from Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa; an S.T.B. and an S.T.L. from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and a Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Notre Dame, where he studied with Thomas O'Meara, O.P.

During the time of his studies in Rome, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Prior to beginning his Ph.D. program at the University of Notre Dame, our honoree spent eight years teaching undergraduate and graduate courses at the Immaculate Conception Major Seminary in the Philippines. Throughout his life, his teaching and many publications have transformed how missiology, contextual theology, and a global perspective are understood. He has taught at institutions around the globe; directed or served on many dissertation committees; served as editor for a number of prestigious journals; and served on several international commissions. In 1986, he began his long and celebrated work as an assistant professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where, in 1998, he was appointed the Louis J. Lusbetak, S.V.D. Professor of Mission and Culture, a position he held until 2015 when he retired and became professor emeritus. Over the course of his illustrious career, he has remained a dedicated member of the CTSA, delivering a plenary address at the 2001 convention, and serving as a board member from 2007 to 2009.

Missiology has been the bedrock of our honoree's work since he was in his twenties and began his life-long commitment to the Society for the Divine Word, the world's largest Roman Catholic order with a focus on missionary work. In 1972, three days after he arrived in the Philippines to begin teaching, a colleague and another S.V.D. professor, Leonardo Mercado, mentioned that he was in the middle of writing his dissertation on Filipino philosophy. Mercado then asked a most consequential question: "Do you plan to teach *theology* to the Filipino students, or, do you plan to teach *Filipino* theology?" "Theology" implying Roman theology or "Filipino theology."¹ For this newcomer to the Philippines, this question was deeply agitational.

¹ Stephen B. Bevans, "Becoming a Global Theologian: A Personal Journey," in *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue: Essays in Honor of Stephen B. Bevans, SVD*, ed. Dale T. Irvin and Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 249.

In the following months, our honoree's reaction was to learn the local dialect, and to read "a good bit" of Philippine history and literature as well as the Filipino theology that was available in the 1970s. He then offered a course in Filipino theology to ten interested students. By necessity, they—professor and students alike—read and searched together. Many years later, in the acknowledgments of his 2009 book, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, our honoree wrote,

I need to acknowledge the patience, the wisdom, the enthusiasm, and even the misgivings and disagreements with my students throughout the last thirty-five years. When the legendary Casey Stengel of the New York Yankees was congratulated for winning yet another World Series in the 1950s he is said to have remarked: "I couldn't have done it without the players." I have similar sentiments in regard to my students, and this is why this book is dedicated to them.²

Overtime the original question took root, and so began a lifetime quest to more deeply understand **contextual theology**. Left behind was the default of taking an assumed acontextual Catholic theology and merely imparting it to those situated in a different context. Rather, he came to a more reflective understanding of what *catholicity* means in our tradition, a recognition that God's grace and the movement of the Holy Spirit are present within contexts other than our own. In the early 1970s, this was still a radical idea.

This award's namesake, John Courtney Murray, S.J., in his own time, was deeply concerned with the United States' drift away from its religious roots, away from the more spiritual underpinnings of this democratic republic and, consequently, the nation's movement toward a vacuous materialism. Murray believed this trajectory was not only inconsistent with the Roman Catholic tradition but also, over time, would deeply undermine the nation's democratic institutions. He drove the development of a public theology directed at reforming American society.

Our honoree's legacy resonates with Murray's instincts by encouraging attention to the contextuality of *all* theological discourse. Yet, our honoree goes further by encouraging the expansion of theology's horizons to include the diverse populations of the globe. The result being a reforming dynamic in the way we do theology by embracing a **global perspective**. In his words, he invites theologians to know

their own context, but also to try to expand that context and avoid the blinders that their context provides by "listening to all the voices" themselves. In this way they will be introduced to doing a truly *catholic* theology in quite another sense. ... They will learn how to be faithful to their own particular culture, gender, generation, national identity while at the same time expanding their understanding beyond their own particularity to embrace, learn from, and even challenge other ways of thinking and expression. ... Theology today, I firmly believe, must be done in this global

² Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), xv.

perspective. It *must* be contextual; but it must also be in dialogue, open to the other, ready to change, ready to challenge, ready to enrich and be enriched.³

For well over three decades, the Catholic Press Association has repeatedly awarded his publications. And, as they are released, his many books have been consistently recognized by the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* as among their “best books on mission.” Dale T. Irvin and Peter C. Phan coedited a festschrift in his honor titled, *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue* (2018).

In 2021, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Missiology. And very recently, the Association of Catholic Publishers awarded his newest book, *Community of Missionary Disciples: The Continuing Creation of the Church*, first prize in the category of best books in theology in 2024.

With great joy and deep gratitude for the rich legacy bestowed to us, here tonight, in the Pacific Northwest city of Portland, the Catholic Theological Society of America confers the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Achievement in Theology on Stephen B. Bevans, of the Society of the Divine Word.

³ Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 5, italics in the original.

CUERG DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR-LEADER AWARD 2025

The 2025 CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award was announced during the CUERG Luncheon during the CTSA annual meeting on Saturday, June 14, 2024 in Portland, Oregon. The award was presented with the following citation:

Siblings in Christ, let us bless the Lord God, the Source of all goodness, the Savior and Sustainer of all things, for guiding every event and inspiring the faithful to bless and praise all human works. Let us bless the Lord for the life, work, scholarship, mentorship, and witness of the recipient of the 2025 CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award: Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow.

Dr. Dorsey Bellow, a Baltimore native, grew up near the US's first Black Catholic parish, the oldest operating Black Catholic school, the first successful Black Catholic women's religious order, and the first and only religious order dedicated to the evangelization of African Americans. The historically Black Catholic parish of St. Cecilia served as her first ecclesial community, teaching her to center her life, ministry, and scholarship around the Black Catholic community.

Dr. Dorsey Bellow earned her first degrees in Spanish and business. As a member of the first class of women to complete a full four years at Baltimore's Loyola College, she was one of the first Black women to graduate from Loyola in 1975. In many respects, she was ideally positioned to break barriers, being the firstborn of Charles Dorsey, Jr., who desegregated Loyola in 1949 as its first full-time Black student. After graduating, she worked as a translator in the Social Security Administration's Division of International Operations and also taught at Holy Angels Catholic School in Chicago.

In 1977, she married Paul L. Bellow, a marine engineer, and moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where she earned her Master of Business Administration from McNeese State University in 1987. She then worked as a business counselor at the local Small Business Development Center, managed a consulting firm specializing in small business planning, and served as president of the Lake Charles North Redevelopment Authority Board. As an active member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Lake Charles, Louisiana, she has participated in parish, diocesan, regional, and national ministries. She is a former principal of Sacred Heart/Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. In addition to her roles in various ministries for the Diocese of Lafayette and the Diocese of Lake Charles, she also served as a team member of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Encouraged by her pastor, she started the master's degree program at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS), a school of theology that meets during the summer at Xavier University of Louisiana. Since the summer of 1989, she has rarely missed a session at the IBCS, which she lovingly calls her spiritual home. After earning her Master of Theology degree from the IBCS, she went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry in Liturgical Studies at the Catholic Theological Union, a post-Vatican II seminary for twenty-one religious communities and lay students focused on intercultural and ecumenical partnerships. Her research focuses on how Vatican II's liturgical theology has been received and on the role of the laity's full, active participation in Black Catholic parishes.

"I never meant to be a professor," Dorsey Bellows once said. "Academia felt too stuffy—I've always been a grassroots, 'people-in-the-pew' kind of person." Yet love has a way of calling us where we least expect. Drawn by a deep devotion to the Institute

for Black Catholic Studies, Dr. Dorsey Bellows remained rooted in the life of historically Black colleges and the Black Catholic theological tradition. Over the years, she served the IBCS in many roles—volunteer, staff assistant, and associate director. Then, in 2019, providence and irony met. Dr. Dorsey Bellow now holds the Drexel Society Endowed Professorship in Black Catholic Studies in Xavier’s Theology Department and serves as the Director of the IBCS. In addition to her work at Xavier, Dr. Bellows has served as a past convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS), the nation’s only theological society in the Black Catholic tradition.

Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellows is not only a guiding light within the IBCS and BCTS—she is also a vital presence in the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). One nominator for the CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award put it best: Dr. Bellows is widely known for her “long-time dedication to support and promote the theological endeavors of underrepresented and underrecognized scholars.” The CTSA, they noted, has been deeply enriched by her commitment to Black Catholic Studies and her bridge-building across marginalized communities.

Together with her friend and colleague, Dr. C. Vanessa White, she has supported CUERG’s work and has worked tirelessly to keep Black liberation and Black Catholic theology at the heart of CTSA discourse. In addition to convening the Black Catholic Theology Consultation, she has spearheaded an invited session and a three-year interest group focusing on the liberating theology of James Hal Cone. For the 2024 CTSA gathering in Baltimore, she convened a timely and powerful session titled “Baltimore and the Black Catholic Experience,” spotlighting the struggles and hopes of Black Catholic parishes through the voices of lay catechists, organizers, and legal advocates.

Her influence extends beyond the CTSA’s annual convention. Dr. Bellows has mentored almost every CTSA early career scholar and doctoral student—Catholic or Protestant—who researches Black Catholic experiences. She has created opportunities for them at the IBCS by offering adjunct teaching roles that help emerging scholars connect their theology to the lived faith of Black Catholic communities. As one recommender so rightly said, “As a theologian, Dr. Bellow is shaping the future of the guild, Catholic higher education, and the church.”

Dear CUERG colleagues and friends, please join me in praising God for Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow and warmly welcoming her as she accepts the 2025 CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award.

CATHERINE MOWRY LACUGNA AWARD 2025

The members of the LaCugna Award Committee for 2024-2025 were Dr. Reid Locklin (Chair), Dr. Christopher Steck, S.J., and Dr. Rhodora Beaton. The award was announced during the CTSA annual banquet on Saturday, June 14, 2024 in Portland, Oregon.

This year, the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award Committee received twenty-three excellent essay submissions. Each member reviewed all of the essays independently and then met to share our evaluations and come to a final decision. It was not an easy choice, as several of the submitted essays were truly outstanding, challenging committee members' assumptions and deepening our understanding of several difficult issues. In the end, we agreed unanimously to recognize Flora x. Tang with the LaCugna Award for her article, "From Ecclesial Sin to Ecclesial Han: Ecclesiology Beyond 'A Church of Sinners and Saints.'"

Every now and then, one encounters a scholarly argument that not only engages a particular question convincingly but also profoundly transforms the question itself. In the committee's judgment, Tang's essay does just this on the tangled, contested issue of ecclesial sin. Taking her start from Pope Francis's historic 2022 apology for Catholic participation in the Indian Residential School System, Tang draws attention to the various ways that debates about ecclesial culpability and ecclesial repentance function to render those who are the victims of sin invisible and without agency.

To address this lacuna, she offers, first, a nuanced reading of the theological conversation emerging from Vatican II on ecclesial sin. Among other things, this treatment brings out the strongly gendered character of the debate, exemplified not only by well-traveled metaphors of bride and mother but also by Karl Rahner's metaphor of the Church as a "chaste whore." Tang does not refute such gendered constructions; instead, she leans into them through an insightful, creative application of the Korean theological concept of han, as interpreted by Andrew Sung Park and embodied especially in the lived experiences of suffering women. Rather than a duality of sinner and saint, a robust theology of han encourages us to reflect on the mutual relations of sinners and sinned-against, in an ongoing work of reconciliation and pastoral care.

"A recognition of ecclesial han," Tang concludes, "enables ecclesial conversations to center the healing of and justice for victim-survivors, thus preventing these conversations from devolving into self-centered defenses of the church's reputation of holiness despite scandal and sin. The heart of the church, under this light, does not need to be safeguarded from the impacts of human sin, for it is already wounded by sin as its most vulnerable members have been."

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

In 2025, the CTSA membership had two business meetings online. On June 14, 2024, during our 2024 Annual Business Meeting the CTSA membership voted in favor of holding the 2025 Annual Business Meeting online. This is a three-year (2025, 2026, and 2027) experiment aiming at engaging members who cannot attend the convention and maximizing the use of time during the in-person meeting. At the end of the third year, the Board of Directors will review the practice and engage the membership to determine whether online is the best way to proceed henceforward.

CTSA SPECIAL ACTIVE MEMBERS' MEETING TO VOTE ON NEW CTSA MEMBERS MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025 7:00 P.M. TO 8:30 P.M., EDT

Only CTSA active members attended this meeting online via Zoom. Article III.3.a of the CTSA Constitution reads: "Active members alone shall be eligible to vote and to hold office. Election to office shall be by a simple majority vote of those present at the annual business meeting." Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid, CTSA President, called the meeting to order on May 12, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. EDT. Dr. Mary Doak from the University of San Diego served as parliamentarian.

Dr. Anna B. Moreland, Chair of the Admissions Committee, presented the report on behalf of the committee. Members of the Admissions Committee for 2024-2025 were Dr. Anna B. Moreland, *chair*; Dr. Nicole Reibe, Dr. Andrew Massena, Dr. Ted Ulrich, and Dr. Hosffman Ospino, Secretary, *ex officio*. The Committee completed its work during May 2025.

Between May 2, 2024, and May 1, 2025, the CTSA received a total of seventy-nine applications. Three did not meet the conditions to move forward. One was discussed by the active membership and did not move forward. In total, seventy-five applications were viable and eventually approved. Of these, there were seven special cases appropriately documented and moved forward. New active membership applicants: forty-three. Of these, ten corresponded to associate members applying to active membership. New associate membership applicants: forty-two. The Admissions Committee recommended that all seventy-five applications be considered for approval.

The CTSA active members present at the meeting approved the committee's recommendation expressing their unanimous approval. President Nancy Pineda-Madrid encouraged the new members to become actively involved in the life of the Society. The names and affiliations of new members are found in the addenda to the CTSA Directory contained in the appendices of this volume of the *Proceedings*.

President Nancy Pineda-Madrid thanked those attending this special business meeting and reminded all that the formal business meeting will be on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. EDT online.

**CTSA BUSINESS MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2025
7:00 P.M. TO 9:30 P.M., EDT**

President Nancy Pineda-Madrid presided the meeting. Dr. Mary Doak from the University of San Diego served as parliamentarian. Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid, CTSA President, called the meeting to order on May 27, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. EDT. Dr. Mary Doak from the University of San Diego served as parliamentarian.

Report of the Nominations Committee

After a process of receiving, vetting, and discerning nominations from the general membership, the members of the Nominations Committee, Dr. Bede Bidlack, *chair*, Dr. Colleen Carpenter, and Dr. Bryan Massingale submitted the names of candidates recommended to stand for election to serve on the Board. Dr. Bede Bidlack read the names proposed by the committee:

The slate of nominees proposed by the committee follow:

For Vice-President: Dr. Kevin Burke, S.J.
 Dr. Elena Procario-Foley

For board members: Dr. Ramon Luzarraga
 Dr. Kathleen McManus, O.P.
 Dr. Dan Scheid
 Dr. C. Vanessa White

There were no nominations from the floor. President Nancy Pineda-Madrid thanked all CTSA members standing for election.

Mrs. Mary Jane Ponyik explained the process to vote electronically during the online meeting. Officers were voted one at a time and the results of each voting round was announced immediately.

Dr. Kevin Burke S.J. was elected as Vice-President. Dr. Dan Scheid and Dr. C. Vanessa White were elected as Board Members. Dr. Hosffman Ospino (Secretary) and Rev. Patrick Flanagan, C.M. (Treasurer) were reelected by acclamation for another one-year term.

After the 2025 Convention, Dr. Susan Abraham assumes the Presidency for the year 2025-2026. Dr. Catherine Clifford becomes President-Elect. The other members of the Board of Directors for the upcoming year are Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid (Past President), Dr. Daniel P. Horan (Board Member) and Dr. Laurie Johnston (Board Member).

President Pineda-Madrid thanked Dr. Elena Procario-Foley, Dr. Ramon Luzarraga, and Dr. Kathleen McManus, O.P., for their willingness to stand for election.

Reports from Officers and Committee Chairs

CTSA officers and committee chairs developed written reports and sent them to membership in advance in preparation for the business meeting. At the Business Meeting they synthesized and summarized their presentations.

Report of the President

The report of the president is supported by the reports of the Centennial Committee, the LaCugna Award Committee, the Committee on Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups, and the INSeCT representative, each of which is found below. It is also supported by reports from

- The Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Planning, Development & Infrastructure 2024 – 2026,
- The Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Planning, Development, and Infrastructure,
- The Value of Theology in University Education Study Group,
- The Virtual Events Committee,
- The Coordinator of Relationships with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and
- The Coordinator of Relations with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops,

as well as CTSA President’s January 2025 letter to the membership. The following is the text of the report submitted by Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid:

It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as CTSA president over the course of this year. I thank CTSA members for entrusting me with this sacred work. This past year has been one filled with many consequential matters leading many of us to feel that the ground beneath our feet is shifting dramatically, impacting the landscape of our work in theology. Yet, even amidst the sorrow of Pope Francis’ passing there is hope and excitement with the election of Pope Leo.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the Presidential Line, Executive Director, Board Officers, and Board Members for their ongoing support, dedicated work, and insightful wisdom on behalf of the Society over the course of this year. The chairs and members of CTSA’s standing and *ad hoc* committees did a great deal to respond to the concerns of our Society’s members, to think seriously about and plan for the current and emerging needs of the Society, and to deliberate about how CTSA might best position itself during the changing climate of the church, the academy, and society. For all of these contributions, I am most grateful.

On behalf of the entire Society, I offer deep thanks to President-Elect Susan Abraham for conceiving and planning the **CTSA Seventy-Ninth Annual Convention** which addresses the timely and insightful theme of ***One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond***. This convention’s program is indeed wide-ranging and will stretch our theological imaginations. I am grateful to Executive Director Mary Jane Ponyik, Program Assistant Akhil Thomas, the Local Arrangements Committee (Christina “Tina” Astorga, Chair, and David Turnbloom), and the Registration Team for the many, many ways your efforts, energy, and dedication have brought this convention to fruition. Thank you to all the conveners,

presenters, and prayer/meditation leaders for enriching our time together. I appreciate the work and leadership of Liturgical Liaison Layla Karst, Photographers Paul Schutz and Melicia Antonio, and Parliamentarian Mary Doak. Thank you to Kevin Brown for his contribution as editor of our *Proceedings*. A special word of thanks to Christine Firer Hinze and Kristin Heyer for their continuing work this year bringing the CTSA's Strategic Plan into final form. I am also grateful to the individuals and institutions whose donations support our convention and our wider work:

- Herbert & Phyllis Anderson
- Anonymous Donor via Fidelity Charitable Giving
- The Callaghan-Pierog Family Foundation, Inc.
- Rev. Edward Foley, Vice Postulator, OFM CAP Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order Cause of Fr. Solanus
- James L. Fredericks
- Gonzaga University
- Loyola Marymount University
- University of Notre Dame in Honor of Rev. Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP
- Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
- Saint Paul University
- Youngpa Kwon

I am deeply grateful that each Board Member has made a financial contribution to the Society this year and deeply grateful that a total of fifty members of the Society have made a financial contribution. Thank you.

General Updates on Work of the Society This Year:

I am deeply grateful to all members listed below who have done so much to serve the Society this year.

1. Once again, the **Nominations Committee**, chaired by Bede Bidlack,⁴ has given us a fine slate for our election. A huge thank you to all members who have agreed to run.
2. The Board voted to receive the **Centennial Committee's** draft of the **Strategic Plan** in June 2024, then the Board edited the Strategic Plan by, among other things, including several action steps in response to the goals and strategic initiatives named in the plan. Additionally, in October 2024, the Board voted to receive the Centennial Committee work on the **Vision Statement**, completing the work of the Strategic Plan's *first goal*. On March 7, 2025, the Board voted to promulgate the Strategic Plan, 2025-2030 (#3b). The Board and the Centennial Committee hosted two listening sessions (April 22, 2025 and May 7, 2025, #3c) with the goals of (1) giving CTSA members a chance to learn more about the Strategic Plan and Vision Statement and (2) allowing CTSA members to listen to one another's reactions to the Strategic Plan and Vision Statement thereby deepening our common commitment to this future.

⁴ Nominations Committee, 2024-2025: Bede Bidlack (Chair); Bryan Massingale; Colleen Carpenter.

3. This work is significant in that it marks the first time in CTSA's history that the Society has a *comprehensive* strategic plan that identifies *Society-wide* goals and *integrates* the various initiatives of the Society. In their reports for this meeting and the June Board meeting, I asked all standing and *ad hoc* committee chairs to reflect on connections between the work of their committee and the goals and initiatives of the Strategic Plan. The Centennial Committee, led this year by Kristin Heyer and Christine Firer Hinze,⁵ has played the central role in bringing this work to fruition as their report makes clear (#3a).

To realize the *fifth and final goal* of the Strategic Plan, I launched an **Ad hoc Committee on Financial Planning, Development, and Infrastructure**, chaired by Dan Rober,⁶ which began its work in December 2024 as is clarified in their report (#2c). In broad terms, this committee is charged with helping CTSA to do a comprehensive reset of its finances by planning for CTSA current and future financial needs, by creating a development plan which may lead to the creation of a CTSA endowment, and by making suggestions regarding the financial infrastructure needs of the CTSA (#2b). The vision and work of this committee build on the work of the last several CTSA presidents who have done studies identifying this need and suggesting possible future initiatives.

Beginning this year, the **CTSA's Treasurer**, Patrick Flanagan, C.M.,⁷ has submitted, along with the financial documents he has always submitted for the annual business meeting (#9a), a narrative overview of the state of CTSA finances to assist members in understanding our financial situation (#9b). In addition, he is working to clarify the financial resources available for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. His work is integral to the *fifth goal* of the Strategic Plan.

4. To realize in part the *second goal* of the Strategic Plan, at the June 2025 Board Meeting, the Board will be continuing its deliberations on whether to expand the responsibilities of the current **Admissions Committee**, chaired by Anna Bonta Moreland.⁸ An expansion would be done to respond to the membership strategies and tasks listed as part of this goal. Alternatively, the Board might

⁵ Centennial Committee Members, 2024-2025: Kristin Heyer and Christine Firer Hinze (Chairs); Antonio E. Alonso; David Cloutier; Craig A. Ford, Jr.; Jaisy Joseph; Cristina Lledo Gomez; Daniel Rober; Michele Saracino; Nancy Dallavalle (Recording Secretary); Nancy Pineda-Madrid (CTSA President & *ex officio*); Patrick Flanagan, C.M. (CTSA Treasurer & *ex officio*); Mary Jane Ponyik (Executive Director & *consultant*)

⁶ Committee on Financial Planning, et al., 2024-2025: Daniel Rober (Chair); Elizabeth "Liz" O'Donnell Gandolfo; Linh Hoang, OFM; Daniel Horan; Brian Linnane SJ; Mick McCarthy SJ; Susan Ross; Nancy Pineda-Madrid (CTSA President & *ex officio*); Patrick Flanagan, C.M. (CTSA Treasurer & *ex officio*); Mary Jane Ponyik (Executive Director & *consultant*).

⁷ Board Finance Committee, 2024-2025: Patrick Flanagan, C.M. (Chair); Elsie Miranda; Dan Horan.

⁸ Admissions Committee, 2024-2025: Anna Bonta Moreland (Chair); Ted Ulrich; Andrew Massena; Nicole Reibe; Hosffman Ospino, *ex officio*.

- decide to create a new committee charged with these membership responsibilities.
5. During this past year Executive Director Mary Jane Ponyik announced that the 2026 convention would be the last one she would coordinate in person and that she will retire at the end of October 2026. Obviously, it is hard to overstate the significance of this coming transition. She will be greatly missed. This year the **Ad hoc Committee on the Executive Director Transition**, chaired by Paul Lakeland,⁹ has done substantial work to prepare CTSA for this transition, which is described in their report (#4). The work of this committee addresses, in part, some of the strategies of the *third goal* of the Strategic Plan.
 6. In response to the evaluations of last year's convention, this year's **Ad hoc Committee on Convention Accessibility and Inclusion**, chaired by Mary Jo Iozzio,¹⁰ did an extensive review of the operational practices of CTSA's annual convention and submitted a report making several suggestions regarding the convention's accessibility and inclusion. This year, President-Elect Susan Abraham and Executive Director Mary Jane Ponyik have taken steps to change some of CTSA's practices for our upcoming convention, improving its accessibility. Again, this work addresses, in part, the *third goal* of the Strategic Plan.
 7. During the convention last year and over the course of this year, CTSA leadership has had to address disruptive behavior during our gatherings. As a result, the Board decided that we needed a revised **Professional Standards and Code of Conduct** policy, an initiative being led by Elsie Miranda¹¹ (#5). The draft here is still a "work in progress" and it will be further discussed at the Board's June 12 meeting. This too addresses, in part, the *third goal* of the Strategic Plan.
 8. During the 2023-2024 year, then-President Kristin Heyer, launched a **Study Group on the Value of Theology in University Education**, chaired by Elisabeth Kincaid.¹² This group just recently completed their work and submitted a report on their findings and thinking (#2d). This report makes a number of suggestions for CTSA to consider. The Board has not yet had a chance to discuss this report and to engage the Society in a conversation. This report contains novel and important ideas for CTSA to consider moving

⁹ Committee on Executive Director Transition, 2024-2025: Paul Lakeland (Chair); Susan Abraham; Christine Firer-Hinze; Edward Hahnenberg; Katharine Ward.

¹⁰ Committee on Accessibility and Inclusion, 2024-2025: Mary Jo Iozzio (Chair); Anne Masters; David Kwon

¹¹ Board Professional Standards and Code of Conduct, 2024-2025: Elsie Miranda (Chair); Daniel Horan; Kristin Heyer; Mary Jane Ponyik, Executive Director & *consultant*.

¹² Study Group on the Value of Theology in University Education, 2024-2025: Elisabeth Kincaid (Chair); Susan Bigelow Reynolds; Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado; Edward Hahnenberg; Linh Hoang, O.F.M.; Natalia Imperatori-Lee; Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos; Daniel Rober; Christopher Vogt; Mark Yenson.

forward. This too addresses, in part, elements of the *third and fourth goals* of the Strategic Plan.

9. This year the **Virtual Events Committee**, chaired by Mary Kate Holman,¹³ organized two outstanding events: (1) an October 22, 2024, event, titled “Teaching Catholic Theology in the Present Political Moment,” that featured Léocadie Lushombo, Eric Martin, and Mia Theocharis; and, (2) a March 31, 2025, event, titled “Sanctuary and Solidarity: Catholic Theology in the Face of Mass Deportation,” that featured Leo Guardado, Brett Hoover, and Tisha Rajendra. Their report has further details (#2e). This year the Board voted to make this committee a standing committee. This committee’s work addresses, in part, the *third and fourth goals* of the Strategic Plan.
10. This year our **Coordinators for Relations with the U.S. Bishops** (Leo Lefebure) and **for Relations with the Canadian Bishops** (Mark Yenson) have continued their vital work in service of the Society. An account of their work can be found in their reports (#2f and #2g). This work addresses, in part, the *fourth goal* of our Strategic Plan.
11. Each year the **LaCugna Award Committee**, chaired this year by Reid Locklin,¹⁴ does significant work in selecting an awardee which their report illustrates (#2h). Normally, this award is announced during CTSA’s Annual Business Meeting. However, because this year our meeting is on Zoom, this year’s LaCugna Awardee will be announced during our Saturday evening John Courtney Murray Banquet. This committee’s work addresses, in part, the Society’s new Vision Statement, the *first goal* of the Strategic Plan.
12. Obviously, this year our **Annual Business Meeting and Voting is online**. This move online is the result of a vote taken by the membership during our last annual business meeting in June 2024. The **Ad Hoc Committee on Moving the Business Meeting and Voting Online**, chaired by Stephen Okey,¹⁵ provided the Board with excellent advice on how to make this move thoughtfully. Being online is a pilot project. The Board recognizes that voting online can be done more efficiently, but this year because we are following our current bylaws, it may feel a bit clunky to the membership. In the coming year, the Board may choose to improve this process which will necessitate a change to our bylaws. This move to online meetings addresses, in part, the *third goal* of the Strategic Plan.
13. The work of **Committee on Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups (CUERG)**, chaired by Leo Guardado,¹⁶ has been notable again this year as you will see in their report (#11). Of particular note, is CUERG’s Annual

¹³ Virtual Events Committee, 2024-2025: Mary Kate Holman (Chair); SimonMary Ahiokhai; Eli McCarthy

¹⁴ LaCugna Award Committee, 2024-2025: Reid Locklin (Chair); Christopher Steck, S.J.; Rhodora Beaton

¹⁵ Committee on Moving the Business Meeting and Voting Online, 2024-2025: Stephen Okey (Chair); Adam Beyt; Taylor Ott; Cynthia Cameron

¹⁶ CUERG, 2024-2025: Leo Guardado (Chair); Byron Wratee; Andrew Massena.

Distinguished Scholar Leader Award which was instituted last year. CUERG's work addresses, in part, the *second and third goals* of the Strategic Plan.

14. CTSA has had an ongoing commitment to collaborate with other Catholic theology guilds in the United States and internationally. Often **INSeCT** and the **WFTL** are at the forefront of the international collaborations as is evident in INSeCT's report this year (#12a & #12b). Indeed, CTSA's representative to INSeCT, Linh Hoang, O.F.M., was elected President of INSeCT in December of 2024. CTSA's representative to the WFTL is Cecilia Titizano. During CTSA's Board Meeting on June 12, 2025, we will be developing a process for evaluating CTSA's ongoing relationship with INSeCT and the WFTL. This relationship will be evaluated in October 2025. This work addresses, in part, the *fourth goal* of our Strategic Plan.

In addition, CTSA had a strong presence at the December 9-10, 2024, Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education's International Congress titled, *The Future of Theology: Legacy and Envisioning* held in Rome. Twenty CTSA members participated and were among the 450 theologian participants from around the world. A much more detailed description of this event is found in my January 31, 2025, letter to the Society. Four CTSA members gave public presentations at this event, including myself. This too addresses the *fourth goal* of our Strategic Plan.

15. This year I have been aware of the solemnity of serving as CTSA president during a time when it feels as if the ground is moving beneath our feet. Increasingly I ask myself if our generation of theologians is already knee deep in a "Barmen Declaration" moment. Our time has been marked by many challenges not least of which is the ongoing attacks on academic freedom on university and college campuses across the country in addition to the attacks on immigrants, on the poor, on LGBTQ+ persons, on people of color, and on women, among others. Some members have asked me to encourage the Board to issue a statement of protest in the face of these attacks. At this writing, the Board does not have a sufficient consensus on this matter. In addition, some of our international members are either boycotting the CTSA as a protest or have been advised by their universities not to attend any academic gathering held in the US. Of course, this pushes the CTSA to consider what does it mean to be "of America"? This is a question many members have asked for some time now. No doubt, we theologians will be measured by how we respond to this fraught moment. I am grateful to President-Elect Susan Abraham and Vice President Catherine Clifford who have organized a Friday afternoon conversation during the convention when we will be able to listen to one another and to have a frank conversation about where we are today.

In closing, it has been a great honor to serve as President of the CTSA this past year. Thank you.

Report of the President-Elect

The following is the text of the report submitted by Dr. Susan Abraham:

As is customary, the President-Elect's Board report for the Business meeting anticipates the June Convention and provides a glimpse of the coming presidential year priorities. Before turning to those, I would like to thank several colleagues and friends who have provided generous and substantial help and support and contributed in various ways in planning and organizing this year's convention. First, I deeply thank Executive Director Mary Jane Ponyik for much advice and encouragement over the course of this year. The convention could also not have arrived at its current shape without the significant help of Akhil Thomas who served as program assistant and as a sounding-board for me. I also thank the Presidential Line—Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Catherine Clifford and Kristin Heyer—and Board Members for much help, advice and encouragement to bring the program together. Thank you to Ma Christina Astorga for coordinating the LAC (Local Arrangements Committee); to Layla Karst for coordinating liturgy; liturgical music coordinator Chris D'Silva; photographer Paul Schutz; and the registration team under the able leadership of Mary Jane Ponyik. I am also grateful to the leadership of CUERG (Committee for Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups), especially Leo Guardado, Byron Wratee and Andrew Massena for help with the Land Acknowledgement. I am particularly grateful to the Invited Sessions conveners and participants, many of whom were dealing with unprecedented delays and other roadblocks to create a unique program as we gather in Portland. To all, and to all who will gather, thank you.

Seventy-Ninth Annual Convention of the CTSA, "One Baptism: Evolving Visions of Catholicity from Nicaea to Vatican II and Beyond," Portland, Oregon

This year's convention is suitably focused on a necessary call to unity in the context of partisan politics, entrenched polarization and the steady loss of academic and intellectual freedoms in the United States. As "pilgrims of hope," the members of the Society who will gather in Portland, Oregon will "build bridges with dialogue and encounter so we can all be one people always in peace" as Pope Leo XIV exhorted us in his first papal address.¹⁷ Registration for the convention is at 300 participants (generally West Coast conventions garner about 325-340 attendees) in comparison to 386 attendees who came to Baltimore and 359 to Milwaukee. We are also seeing lower numbers of international scholars, some of whose institutions have actively discouraged them from travel to the United States. Of the participants attending, there are a total of 128 presenters, of which thirty self-identify as a member of an underrepresented and minority group, and twenty-five as female. Thank you so very much for the wonderfully creative and inspiring proposals we received to create a truly hope-filled convention, fit for the times we live in.

This year, our welcome to Portland and our opening prayer will be offered by Dr. Robert D. Kelly, President of University of Portland. As is CTSA's custom, I extended invitations to Archbishop Alexander Sample and members of the archbishop's team. None were available. We are, however, thrilled to have Dr. Kelly greet us on Thursday evening.

¹⁷ Leo XIV, "First Apostolic Blessing *Urbi et Orbi*" (May 8, 2025), <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/urbi/documents/20250508-prima-benedizi-one-urbietorbi.html>.

For the annual "Share the Wisdom" initiative, five newer members have signed up. Thank you to the seasoned members who are generously giving of their time and energy to mentor our newer colleagues in the ways of our Society.

I have also sent invitations to the *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR), Catholic News Service, *Commonweal, America*, the local newspaper and the local diocesan newspaper, welcoming them to the convention. Since we are a month away, I do not have any responses yet and will send them another invitation in a few weeks.

CTSA session conveners have been requested to submit their presenters' papers and other materials to Dropbox to facilitate access for those who need it. Plenary speakers and their respondents will do the same.

On Friday, June 13, Vice President Catherine Clifford and I will lead a conversation on the theme of "Catholic theology in Higher Education and Public Life in 2025" given the many ways academic freedom and the work of Catholic theologians are steadily being eroded. This is an open mic conversation, where we practice the sense of "home" that Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe speaks about:

We need to renew the Church as our common home if we are to speak to a world that is suffering from a crisis of homelessness. We are consuming our planetary home. There are more than 350 million migrants on the move, fleeing war and violence. Thousands die crossing seas to find a home... Everywhere there is a terrible spiritual homelessness. Acute individualism, the breakdown of the family, ever deeper inequalities, mean that we are afflicted with a tsunami of loneliness. Suicides are rising because without a home, physical and spiritual, one cannot live. To love is to come home to someone.¹⁸

We belong together, joined by our common Baptismal calling to be Church together. In uncertain and difficult times, a commitment to be home for and with each other is no small act of courage.

To continue and deepen the call to create home, we have reimagined the third plenary on Saturday. After some guiding remarks, Saturday morning's plenary convener, Dr. Jakob Rinderknecht, will encourage conversation at individual tables on a series of pertinent questions on the theme of "The Baptismal Call of the Theologian: A Synodal CTSA convention." This will be followed by a panel discussion. I am grateful to Jakob for partnering with me in re-envisioning this plenary. We hope for wide participation of all present at this plenary.

Looking Ahead to 2025-2026

There is more that we can do to deepen belonging and a sense of home with each other at CTSA. In the years I have served on the Board of CTSA, and now in my role as "president-elect," I have experienced the Board and the Executive Director practice such collegial and steward leadership. It simply remains for CTSA's language and grammar to catch up to our practice. Hence, a theme I will be exploring this year will be how we can reframe inherited languages of leadership that may cloud an understanding of One Baptism. Our language of the leadership structures at CTSA

¹⁸ Timothy Radcliffe, *Listening Together: Meditations on Synodality* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2024), 18.

(President, President-Elect, etc.) reflects the inherited habits of clericalism that have been internalized by laity and clergy, which Pope Francis condemned as a “scourge and a form of worldliness that enslaves.”¹⁹ What “spirituality of communal discernment”²⁰ can lead to such a revisioning of our titles for steward leaders, without the toxic labels of rigid hierarchies? Hence, might we simply imagine a conciliar model of steward leaders, united in and through the One Baptism, but with different charisms and gifts, creating a welcoming home for all?

A year is not enough of course, nonetheless, I do want to collaborate with each member of the Society to raise a vision of a prophetic synodal church that takes seriously the accountability and co-responsibility of being a member of a community of equals in its language, word, and deeds. Here, truth and love together will guide our way. A catholic, scholarly, inclusive and global society²¹ like CTSA can indeed speak in a different voice to challenge the bellows of tyrants in the world by drawing deeply from our wells, the same wells that yield the living water of our One Baptism.

Report of the Vice-President

The following is the text of the report submitted by Dr. Catherine Clifford.

Planning for the Eightieth Convention of the CTSA, 11-14 June 2026, St Louis, Missouri

In mid-April the theme of the Eightieth Convention of the CTSA, “Theology in a Synodal Church,” was announced. It invites the membership of the CTSA to engage with the calls emerging from the Final Document of the 2021-2024 XVI Ordinary General Synod, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” “to do theology in a synodal way,” and “to continue research aimed at clarifying and deepening the meaning of synodality and accompanying formation in the local churches.”²²

The Eightieth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America will meet from 11- 14 June 2026 at the Hyatt Regency at the St. Louis Arch, in St Louis, Missouri, to explore the theme “Theology in a Synodal Church.” Confirmed speakers include Bishop Daniel Flores (Brownsville, TX, Council of the Synod), Maria Cimperman, R.S.C.J., Kristin M. Colberg, Agbonkhiamenge E. Orobator, S.J., Edward P. Hahnenberg, and Amanda C. Osheim.

New Members Mentorship Breakfast

I look forward to welcoming some of the sixty-eight new members to the mentoring breakfast at this year’s convention. The theme of this year’s breakfast

¹⁹ Radcliffe, *Listening Together*, 129.

²⁰ See “Toward Centennial Year 2045,” CTSA’s Strategic Plan, Phase I document, 10: This review should include attention to ways the Society could fruitfully/appropriately incorporate forms of “synodal” decision-making structures and practices, including exploring ways of promoting a spirituality of communal discernment in our ways of proceeding.

²¹ “Toward Centennial Year 2045,” 3-4.

²² Francis and XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission – Final Document” (October 26, 2024), §67, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Document-o-finale.pdf.

meeting will be “Transitioning to Careers in Theology”—a subject that is perhaps more fraught in the present context of transitions in academic and ecclesial institutions, and where more of our graduates will be obliged to consider non-academic career paths.

Memorial Service and Morning Prayer Services

We are well advanced in the planning of the memorial liturgy service for Friday morning prayer during the convention. This year we will remember 13 past and present members who have contributed in various ways to the life of the Society and to the academy. They include Anne Clifford, C.S.J.; Gregory Hillis; Eileen Burke-Sullivan; M. Kathleen Flanagan, S.C.; Agnes Cunningham, S.S.C.M.; Kieth J. Egan; James A. Coriden; Lawrence Cunningham; Nathan Chase; Ladislav Örsy, S.J.; Mary Gerhart; David W. Tracy; and Wendy Wright. I am grateful to all of those who have accepted to prepare an appropriate tribute to each of our deceased colleagues. As well, I wish to express my gratitude to Layla A. Karst, of Loyola Marymount University, for her leadership of our common prayer during the convention, and to Chris de Silva, also of Loyola Marymount, who has graciously accepted to take on the role of liturgical liaison in the coming year.

Resolutions Committee

To date, no proposed resolutions have been submitted, and the Resolutions Committee has not convened.

Report of the Secretary

CTSA Secretary, Dr. Hosffman Ospino, renewed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Society in this capacity during the past year. He thanked CTSA Executive Director, Mary Jane Ponyik, for her assistance with technical and organizational matters that make the life of the CTSA run effectively. He also thanked this year's members of the Admissions Committee: Dr. Anna Bonta, chair; Dr. Nicole Reibe, Dr. Andrew Massena, and Dr. Ted Ulrich. Dr. Ospino serves *ex-officio* on this committee.

He is glad to see renewed interest in the life of the CTSA among new members as well as much energy among those in the early stages of their careers to contribute to the Convention. It is good to observe that many of our new members bring strong interdisciplinary perspectives and commitments, which will enrich our interactions as a learned society. He looks forward to another year of service supporting the work of the Society and all its members.

Report of the Treasurer and Finance Committee Presentation

The Treasurer, Dr. Patrick Flanagan, C.M. submitted and reviewed provided a brief overview of the financial statements corresponding to this year's report. The report narrative and financial statements are available as part of the *Proceedings*.

Report of the Centennial Committee

The following is the report submitted by Dr. Kristin E. Heyer, CTSA Past President and Christine Firer Hinze, former CTSA President, who served as Chairs of the Centennial Committee during 2023-2024:

Background

The Centennial Committee (CC) was established in 2022 to help the Board and members of the Society consider, in an ongoing way, two fundamental questions: “Who do we want to be at 100?” and “What do we need to do to get there?” Chaired by Kristin Heyer, CTSA Past President, and serving in an advisory role to the Board, the CC consists of nine appointed colleagues representing the diversity of our membership who serve staggered, three-year terms, plus the current CTSA President and CTSA Treasurer. In addition, the Executive Director serves as a consultant to the committee.

The CC’s broad charge is to help the Society’s leadership and members attend to North American Catholic theology’s evolving contours and national and international contexts, challenges, and opportunities; to **help our membership articulate and operationalize a guiding vision for the CTSA at 100**; and, to that end, to develop, recommend, and assist the Board in carrying out a process of **comprehensive strategic planning for advancing CTSA’s mission and shared vision for the Society’s next quarter century**.

The CC is responsible for drafting **a series of vision- and mission-driven, 5-year strategic plans for the CTSA from 2025 to 2045**. The Centennial Committee is also responsible for helping to **monitor and evaluate CTSA’s progress toward realizing the goals of each iterative strategic plan**. The establishment and work of this committee mark the first time the CTSA has developed a comprehensive strategic plan inclusive of all its endeavors and initiatives in light of our evolving contexts and, significantly, with an intentional focus on financial sustainability.

2024-2025 Report

In 2024-2025, the CC built on its work in [2023-2024](#) to bring to completion two major tasks:

1. First, helping to create, following extensive member, Board, and committee consultation, a **vision statement** that captures the Society’s core values and guiding vision for the next quarter century.

After soliciting member input on proposed vision statements at the June 2024 Baltimore convention, in July, the committee circulated to the Society membership the three proposed vision statements to invite further input. In late August, all received member input was collated and disseminated. Following thoughtful discussion at its September meeting, the committee crafted a new version of the vision statement to capture better the committee’s conversations as well as concerns raised last year on the committee, member input in June and July on initial sample statements, and in the Friday night convention-wide session in June 2023 (Milwaukee). The resulting vision statement (along with the two most upvoted sample statements) was submitted for the Board’s consideration at its October 2024

meeting, where a final version was approved by the Board and incorporated into the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan:

Vision Statement: The CTSA advances inclusive theological scholarship and reflection for an evolving Church, academy, and wider world.

Core Values of the CTSA:

Catholic. As a Catholic scholarly society in an evolving church, academy and world, we aspire to embrace Catholic traditions appreciatively, critically, and dialogically; engaging ecumenically, interreligiously, and with “the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

Scholarly. As a scholarly society since founded in 1945, we are committed to carrying on living into our vital and distinctive mission: to support, in its many genres and contexts, theological scholarship at the highest levels, in service to church, academy, and society.

Inclusive. As an inclusive body, we aspire to ‘catholicity,’ by supporting scholars that draw on the wisdom of theological traditions in all institutional settings and practitioners in areas of applied theology; who address and respond to contemporary challenges in our field; and actively seeking out the riches that theological diversity in dialogue (intellectual, ecclesial, cultural, gender, racial-ethnic, geographical, religious) can yield.

Global. As a North American society, we cultivate global encounters and awareness through our membership, scholarship, and network affiliations.

2. Second, collaborating with the Presidential Line and Board as it finalized and approved **the CTSA’s Strategic Plan**, “Toward Centennial Year 2045: CTSA Strategic Plan Phase I, 2025-2030,” for which the CC had developed the draft in 2023-24.

In addition, the following tasks and initiatives were undertaken in accordance with the CC’s charge and designated responsibilities:

1. Mindful of its charge to serve as a site for more sustained reflection on issues facing the organization and its membership, in September, the committee brainstormed and reached consensus on priority issues deserving further reflection during the upcoming year. Based on topics most frequently surfaced, two subcommittees were formed that reported at the CC’s November meeting: one on “ensuring hospitality across vocational, generational, ideological, racial/ethnic divides,” and another on “promoting the vibrancy of the guild and deep listening amid headwinds.” In light of ensuing discussions, a list of recommendations for Board consideration was compiled, refined, and presented to the Board by CC Chair Kristin Heyer in December.
2. In the spring, 2025, heightened concerns about general and specific threats to the health of theological higher education also drew the CC’s reflection.
3. At the request of the Board, the CC also studied members’ wide-ranging feedback concerning recommended improvements or alterations to the

convention structure. CC Chair Past President Kristin Heyer²³ composed a report to the Board on considerations for revising the convention structure in light of input received last year not yet captured in the first increment of changes voted on in June 2024.

4. Under CC responsibilities delineated in the Strategic Plan promulgated in March 2025, the committee's later-spring work focused on developing a process whereby progress on the goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan can be fruitfully and collaboratively monitored. Two drafts have been discussed, with an updated draft focused on a timeline and initial way of proceeding for 2025-2026, only to be refined and discussed by email following the committee's final meeting in May.

Conclusion

Abundant thanks are due to the leadership and members of this important committee, particularly for the patient and collaborative work the CC has done to get underway, get its footing, and to do the heavy lifting of researching, developing, gaining member input on, and delivering for Board deliberation and approval what are now our Vision Statement and Phase I Strategic Plan. What the CC has accomplished to date augurs well for the committee's potential to effectively serve both the Board and wider membership to advance both the reflection and action needed to address the challenges and opportunities the Society will encounter over the next two decades, moving toward our centennial year and beyond.

Report of CUERG

The following is the report submitted by the CUERG leadership (2024-2025), Dr. Leo Guardado, Dr. Byron Wratee, and Dr. Andrew Massena:

2024 CUERG Luncheon

The 2024 luncheon was a celebration marking the inaugural CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award recognizing Dr. C. Vanessa White for her decades of work with underrepresented groups in the academy and her involvement in establishing CUERG at CTSA. The luncheon drew a large and enthusiastic crowd, creating a vibrant celebratory atmosphere.

Dr. White's remarks at the luncheon were a historical narrative of the struggles and aspirations that led to CUERG's founding. These remarks have been transcribed and are being uploaded to the CUERG website.

CUERG Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award

The recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award is Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow. Dr. Bellow will be honored at the 2025 luncheon. The text of the citation for Dr. Dorsey Bellow is found above, within this Secretary's Report, and in CUERG submission in this volume *Proceedings*.

Nominations for the Distinguished Scholar-Leader Award are due by December 15 of every year.

²³ Due to health reasons, Christine Firer Hinze chaired the committee in Kristin Heyer's stead from January to May 2025.

CUERG Bibliographies

CUERG leadership has decided to standardize the format for the bibliographies of all three underrepresented communities and implement an online system for keeping them updated. To accomplish this goal, the following tasks will be carried out starting this summer:

1. After the CTSA annual convention, CUERG members will receive a google form that will ask for basic contact information and for their respective affiliated community. In the form members will be able to paste from their CV the publications they want included in the respective CUERG/CTSA bibliography.
2. Bibliographies of all three underrepresented communities will appear on the website in portable document format (PDF).
3. The committee will update the bibliographies annually.
4. The annual deadline for submitting updates will be December 15.

CUERG & the CTSA Strategic Plan

The strategic plan seeks CUERG's advice to "review and monitor how hospitable CTSA is toward historically marginalized groups." This task will be a priority for the fall 2025 CUERG agenda, which will require feedback, perhaps anonymous, from CUERG constituents. CUERG is committed to working toward the creation of a CTSA community where underrepresented racial and ethnic communities can contribute their knowledge and wisdom and where it can be received.

CUERG Pioneers

As the Catholic Theological Society of America approaches its centennial, CUERG aims to contribute to the ongoing reflections on its history and future by gathering the insights of those who have shaped its commitment to racial and ethnic inclusivity. We have begun a process of identifying the CUERG pioneers whose theological expertise and lived experiences are vital for capturing the memories and momentum of underrepresented racial and ethnic communities within CTSA. We are inviting pioneers to offer a written reflection that speaks to the two dimensions of memories and momentum of CUERG. Drawing from their personal recollections, we ask: How did CUERG come into being? What were the key moments, challenges, or breakthroughs that shaped its mission? Looking ahead, what challenges remain for CUERG and CTSA for including underrepresented racial and ethnic groups? What momentum is needed to ensure that the work of CUERG continues to shape the CTSA's future? We envision these reflections as contributions to the broader centennial conversations already taking place at CTSA. These reflections will be edited, compiled, and disseminated through digital and written form.

Report of the INSeCT Delegate

The following is the report submitted by Dr. Linh Hoang, O.F.M., CTSA representative to INSeCT.

The International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT) was founded on August 4, 1996 to advance Catholic theology in the world by promoting collaboration between regional theological societies. There are currently twenty-three

member societies and twelve affiliated groups included in the network membership. The goal of INSeCT is to foster academic theology and theological research in various continents through communication among the member societies, particularly concerning information about projects and works in progress, results of academic research, and theological congresses, conventions, and meetings; encouragement of research within the theological disciplines and stimulation of interdisciplinary work in the interest of academic theology; an ecumenical orientation and dialogue with other religions and worldviews. The network is eager to meet its mission by supporting and responding to the needs of each society through improved communication between member societies.

Since the last report to the CTSA membership in June 2024, there has been many changes at INSeCT. The network held its General Assembly in Rome to coincide with the Holy See's Dicastery for Culture and Education conference on the future of theology in December 8-13, 2024. The Dicastery conference was the first two days of the general assembly that included an audience with the late Pope Francis who welcomed and encouraged the work of Catholic theology by academics, scholars and anyone who values the importance of theology in the world. Many INSeCT members were included in the conference as speakers, facilitators and reporters. It was a time to bring awareness to INSeCT as well as the deep contributions of theologians to the church and the larger society. From this conference, the network has created a better relationship with the Holy See and will continue to cultivate this solid relationship in the future.

After the conference, member societies met at the Australian Catholic College in the Trastevere area of Rome for their assembly. The General Assembly gathered twenty-five representatives from the five regions of the world (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America and South America). The board and past-president engaged the members in a discussion of the statutes and bylaws of INSeCT. The members deliberated on proposed amendments to the statutes and voted on implementing them. There was an in-depth discussion about the network stimulated by the discussion on statutes, bylaws, and implementations.

Following the deliberation on the statutes, the assembly held elections for a new executive committee. The process involved members of the five regions meeting separately to choose a regional representative. After the five regions elected their representative, the newly elected representatives formed the new executive committee. The new executive committee among themselves elected board officers.

After the regional elections and committee selection, a new board of INSeCT was formed: President **Linh Hoang O.F.M.**, Siena College (CTSA, North America); Vice-President **Gusztav Kovacs**, Episcopal Theological College of Pecs, Hungary (European Society for Catholic Theology); Treasurer **Stephanie Ann Y. Puen**, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines (Asia-Pacific); **Jean Bonzo Kouassi** (Cellule de reflexion et de propositions des theologiens Ivoiriens, CREPTI, Africa), **Isabel Corpas de Posada** (Asociacion Colombiana de Teologas, ACT, South America) and Past-President **Ruben (Sonny) Mendoza**, Ateneo de Manila University (Asia-Pacific). They will serve in this capacity for the next three years.

The board accepted their responsibilities and endorsed keeping the current executive secretary Marnie D. Racaza from the Ateneo University in the Philippines.

Marnie is a doctoral student. She was hired in early 2024 and immediately established connection with the board and the wider network. She was instrumental before, during and after the General Assembly. Marnie took notes at each of the meetings which eventually contributed to the final report of the General Assembly of INSeCT. This is available on the INSeCT website and included in the report to the CTSA.

After the election, the network heard reports from member societies on their finding from the global research project of 2021-2024: "A People of All Nations: Decolonizing Theologies–Decolonizing the World." There was an open meeting that included invited guests to hear presentations by members on their research projects. A summary from these reports is included in the final report of the general assembly.

The new executive board initiated a discussion about the next global research project. There was not ample time left during the General Assembly to engage thoroughly in a new research project. The board decided to table the discussion and move the discussion online to give the membership time to weigh in on the initial discussion about a research project.

After several months of email exchanges and online conversation, the committee decided on a new research project theme: "The Future of Theology: Disrupting the Past and Generating a New Vision." This theme was inspired by the late Pope Francis and the Vatican's Dicastery on Culture and Education conference emphasis on the future of theology. The subtitle was part of the informative and lively discussion of the network on disruption and new possibilities. The coupling of both the pope and the network provide support to the network membership on the importance of working together so shape the future of theology. The network now invites and encourages all theologians in their respective societies to participate in this new research project and to advance the work of Catholic theology in their local community, the church and the wider world. The mission of INSeCT thrives because the membership continues to work and to support one another to engage in Catholic theology and to share it with all people. The network anticipates working with all member societies, invite new members, and to engage with the newly elected Pope Leo XIV, especially as much energy is being given to the Catholic faith.

Action to Receive the Reports

A motion was put forward to receive all reports. All reports were received by acclamation.

New Business

No new business was introduced.

Adjournment

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m., EDT.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

HOSFFEMAN OSPINO
CTSA Secretary
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

TREASURER'S REPORT

Dr. Daniel Horan, Dr. Elsie Miranda, and I, as members of CTSA's Finance Committee, have been steadfast in our commitment to the society's financial health. We met regularly throughout the past fiscal year to review and strategize, and we are pleased to report an overall positive financial status. We sincerely thank Mrs. MaryJane Ponyik, our learned society's executive director, and Rev. Dan Daly, S.J., who generously volunteers his time as CTSA's accountant.

In 2024, dues revenue increased 34 percent (\$22,598.03), with 890 members paying their dues by October 2024 (\$88,510) compared to 834 in October 2023 (\$65,911.97). On our rolls, we have 1159 members. The CTSA reported a surplus annual income of \$152,095.43, representing a 148% increase over the \$61,243.61 surplus in 2023. While these numbers are positive, there continues to be cause for concern. Historically, CTSA's revenue from dues was intended to cover administrative costs. In 2024, administrative costs rose \$2040.51 or 1.7% to \$120,770.88. Dues cover only 73.3% of administration costs. This is cause for concern given that while we just happily welcomed 43 members and 32 associate members, they will not replenish our membership rolls, which are annually depleted due to retirements, deaths, and financial constraints. The CTSA Board of Directors is committed to examining ways to reduce administrative overhead and securing more funding sources.

Concerning our annual meeting, Mary Jane Ponyik works deliberately to ensure our convention succeeds. Her work is multi-faceted, often involving multiple conversations with hospitality representatives, seeking to ensure quality service and products at just rates. Despite her strident efforts, our convention costs in 2024, \$141,031.55 outweighed the rates we charged CTSA members by \$6,654.67 or 4.7%. The Board of Directors is intent on keeping these costs down, given the economic challenges many of us face in the academy and our home nations. The Board of Directors will continue to work strategically to provide a quality gathering at a reasonable price.

At our 2022 CTSA meeting, we voted to move our monies to Aperio, a financial company committed to more opportunities to further our commitment to Catholic values, particularly those associated with environmental sustainability, all in accord with the USCCB's Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines. This transition gave us a fresh start and offered the CTSA different investment opportunities. In 2024, our investment portfolio enjoyed a 20.9% return of \$152,108.24. I am pleased to report that we continue to meet our benchmarks in our first five-plus months with Aperio. As of May 13, 2025, our investments are \$909,190.96, up 3.6% from the end-of-year total of \$877,273.24 reported on our balance sheet.

We are very grateful for the generous contributions in 2024 totaling \$33,610, a 135% increase from the \$14,320 given in 2023. \$6,190 came from institutional support,

a 44.6% decrease from 2023, totaling \$11,175. \$4,455.34 came directly from members, a 114.6% increase from 2023, totaling \$2,075. A new income stream in this area was \$550.66 donated directly to support the Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology (WCCT). \$22,415 was earmarked for scholarships coming primarily from The Callaghan-Pierog Foundation, with whom CTSA enjoys an ongoing relationship remarkable after being introduced by Dr. Linh Hoang, O.F.M. These monies allow CTSA to assist colleagues who apply for the Dolores L. Christie Scholarship, as twenty did in 2024 and received \$1250 each to support their registration, airfare, hotel, and any other related expenses. Eight of our CTSA member colleagues were awarded monies from our Tutti Fund. This covers recipients' registration and John Courtney Murray banquet ticket costs, whether they are presenting at a convention. CTSA is grateful to Board of Directors members Dr. SimonMary Asele Ahiokhai and Dr. Laurie Johnston for their work on the Scholarship & Subsidy Subcommittee of the Board. Thank you again to all CTSA's benefactors, and I encourage all of us to contribute, whether large or small. It will impact our colleagues' lives in ways unimaginable. Notably, the Board of Directors achieved a 100% giving rate this past year. We invite you to join us.

As we look at the coming year, the Finance Committee, together with the Board of Directors, the Centennial Committee, and the Finance and Long-Term Planning Committee has established some goals related to treasury matters:

1. Identify and strategize how to achieve an ideal endowment. For example, suppose CTSA's goal was 2 million dollars. In that case, this threshold will enable CTSA to take its annual 5% drawdown, amounting to \$100,000, and increase the subsidization of conference costs, support more members' needs, and consider new initiatives for the future, especially those that emerged from the Centennial Committee's report.
2. Identify personal and corporate annual fundraising goals and strategize how to achieve other revenue streams, including grants, matching gifts, and planned giving.
3. Strategize ideal investment funds with Aperio, paying close attention to the costs associated with our portfolio and benchmarking goals.
4. Identify ideal primary sites for future annual meetings. The CTSA has already scheduled its annual meetings for 2026 in St. Louis, 2027 in Louisville, and 2028 as a Virtual Event.
5. Strategize how to network with other learned academic societies to learn more about how might we continue to strategize to build membership in our learned guilds.

Ultimately, our goal is to implement a comprehensive plan that ensures long-term fiscal stability, considering the challenges facing the Academy and the broader higher education sector.

PATRICK FLANAGAN, C.M.
Saint John's University
Jamaica, New York
CTSA Treasurer

**Catholic Theological Society of America
COMPARATIVE FINANCIAL REPORT
Fiscal Years Ending December 31, 2023/2024**

PATRICK FLANAGAN, C.M.
*Saint John's University
Jamaica, New York
CTSA Treasurer*

COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET

Assets as of December 31, 2024/2023

Category	2024	2023
Cash in Checking	\$ 11,616.90	\$ 13,068.56
Cash in CTSA savings	5,844.18	10,000.06
Cash in WCCT savings	949.88	1,511.31
Investment	877,273.24	725,165.00
University Agency Account (Deficit)	(1,345.26)	(7,501.42)
Total Assets	\$ 894,338.94	\$ 742,243.51

Liabilities and Fund Balances

Category	2024	2023
CTSA Fund Balance – Beginning of Year	\$ 742,243.51	\$ 681,000.22
Net Surplus (Deficit)	152,095.43	61,243.29
Total Liabilities & Fund Balances	\$ 894,338.94	\$ 742,243.51

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

Revenue

Category	2024	2023
Dues	\$ 88,510.00	\$ 65,911.97
Proceedings	-	90.00
Convention*	134,376.88	127,946.35
Sales of Labels & Misc.	200.00	600.00
Contributions*	33,610.00	14,320.00
Draw on Investments	35,000.00	-
Other	120.00	1,511.26
Gross Operating Revenues	\$ 291,816.88	\$ 210,379.58

Expenses

Category	2024	2023
Convention*	\$ 141,031.55	\$ 100,900.93
<i>Proceedings</i> Expenses	5,000.00	5,110.09
Administration*	120,770.88	118,730.37
Fall Board Meeting*	-	712.42
Grant: Theological Initiative with Bishops	28.20	-
Grant: INSECT	-	500.00
Gross Operating Expenses	\$ 266,830.63	\$ 225,953.81

Analysis

Category	2024	2023
Net Operating Revenue (Deficit)	\$ 24,986.25	\$ (15,574.23)
Investment Income Net of Draw	127,109.18	76,817.52
Net Revenue (loss)	\$ 152,095.43	\$ 61,243.29

* See additional information on following pages

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Convention Revenues

Category	2024	2023
Registration	\$ 101,000.00	\$ 81,329.58
Withdrawal from Portfolio for scholarships	-	14,528.30
Institutional Donations	17,250.00	16,500.00
Exhibitor Income	3,600.00	2,950.00
Program Ads	2,650.00	2,450.00
Carbon Footprint Assessment	-	972.00
Third Party Sponsored Events	4,053.49	9,216.47
Other	5,823.89	-
Total Convention Revenues	\$ 134,376.88	\$ 127,946.35

Contributions

Category	2024	2023
Members	\$ 4,454.34	\$ 2,075.00
Institutional	6,190.00	11,175.00
Donations for Scholarships	22,415.00	1,070.00
WCCT Donations	550.66	-
Total Contributions	\$ 33,610.00	\$ 14,320.00

Convention Expenses

Category	2024	2023
Travel	\$ 2,238.52	\$ 2,814.37
Hotel	103,899.93	71,638.14
Awards	2,284.21	4,009.00
Liturgy	5,997.41	2,275.71
Printing	2,028.28	1,452.54
Supplies	637.61	696.70
Postage	386.44	-
Software Subscriptions	139.99	199.19
Insurance	1,372.74	1,248.98
Carbon Footprint Donation	791.52	972.00
LaCunga	750.00	750.00
Scholarship Awards	15,194.57	11,823.57
President's Discretionary Expenses	2,500.00	2,500.00
Refunds	2,690.00	-
Miscellaneous	120.00	520.73
Total Convention Expenses	\$ 141,031.55	\$ 100,900.93

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**Administration Expenses**

Category	2024	2023
Salaries and Stipends	\$ 105,412.15	\$ 106,123.93
Professional Services	-	2,786.82
Telecommunications	312.78	335.48
Postage	50.63	293.68
Service Contracts	3,410.26	598.23
Duplicating	1.00	1.50
Supplies	48.36	111.62
Insurance	1,215.00	615.00
Printing	-	25.34
Bank Fees	6,962.70	4,838.77
Rent	3,348.00	3,000.00
Capital Equipment	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-
Total Administration Expenses	\$ 118,730.37	\$ 118,730.37

Fall Board Meeting Expenses

Category	2024	2023
Meeting	\$ -	\$ 712.42
Institutional	-	-
Total Fall Board Meeting Expenses	\$ -	\$ 712.42

**DONOR AND BOARD RESTRICTED FUNDS
CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE**

Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2024

Category	Tutti Fund	Christie Fund
Balance as of 12/31/23	\$ 3,000.02	\$ 7,000.04
Interest	0.38	0.44
Donations – Restricted by Donor	1,415.00	1,000.00
Donations – Designated by Board	10,000.00	10,000.00
Scholarships	(1,700.00)	(3,871.70)
Convention Luncheon Subsidy	-	-
Convention Expenses	-	-
Total Fall Board Meeting Expenses	\$ 12,715.40	\$ 14,128.78

Category	WCCT	Other
Balance as of 12/31/23	\$ 1,511.31	\$ 9,528.30
Interest	0.12	-
Donations – Restricted by Donor	550.66	-
Donations – Designated by Board	-	-
Scholarships	-	(9,528.30)
Convention Luncheon Subsidy	(750.00)	-
Convention Expenses	(362.21)	-
Total Fall Board Meeting Expenses	\$ 949.88	\$ -

Category	Total
Balance as of 12/31/23	\$ 21,039.67
Interest	0.94
Donations – Restricted by Donor	2,965.66
Donations – Designated by Board	20,000.00
Scholarships	(15,100.00)
Convention Luncheon Subsidy	(750.00)
Convention Expenses	(362.21)
Total Fall Board Meeting Expenses	\$ 27,794.06

**APPENDIX I:
PRESIDENT’S LETTER ON THE PASSING
OF POPE FRANCIS**

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID
CTSA President
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

April 24, 2025

Dear CTSA Colleagues and All Who Mourn the Passing of Pope Francis:

CTSA grieves the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis and expresses gratitude for his leadership marked always by dialogue, inclusivity, catholicity, a global vision, synodality, and the enduring communal search for truth. He encouraged a theology of encounter that fosters greater intimacy with the people, taking account of their joys and sorrows. Notably, he invited our particular interest in the condition of people who live amidst the peripheries of our world. Both his annual recent visit to prisoners on Holy Thursday, and his July 2013 trip responding to the cry of refugees in Lampedusa, bookended his ceaseless grace-filled vision, personal character, and spiritual depth. He encouraged theologians to be shepherds who take on the smell of the sheep, and to recognize the need today to envision the church as a “field hospital,” a place of healing for all who are wounded in body, soul, heart, and mind. Indeed, Francis often spoke of the Eucharist as not a prize for the perfect, but, as food and nourishment for those who need it. He envisioned the sacrament of reconciliation as an experience not of desolation but of consolation.

As a leader of theologians, Francis’ 2023 apostolic letter, *Ad Theologiam Promovendam* (“On Promoting Theology”) urged, “To promote theology in the future, we cannot limit ourselves to abstractly re-proposing formulas and schemes from the past. Called to prophetically interpret the present and to see new itineraries for the future, in the light of Revelation, theology will have to deal with profound cultural transformations, aware that: ‘what we are experiencing is not simply an era of change, but a change of era’” (§1). And he further taught us, “A synodal, missionary, and “outgoing” Church can only correspond to an “outgoing” theology” (§3). In more recent remarks addressing theologians, and also signaling his theme for our current 2025 jubilee year, he preached that theology is a “significant and necessary ecclesial ministry...because it is part of our Catholic faith to explain the reason for our hope to all those who ask (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). And we know that hope is not an emotion or a feeling,

but the very person of Jesus, who is himself “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).” (Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT), Friday, 10 May 2024)

His deep understanding of the ministry of theology again showed a freshness in another recent set of remarks addressing theologians from around the globe. Francis shared “This is a journey you are called to undertake together, theologians of both sexes. Here I think of an episode in the Second Book of Kings. During the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem, a text came to light; perhaps it was the first edition of Deuteronomy, which had been lost. A priest and several scholars read it, as did the king. They sense its importance but did not understand it. So the king decided to give it to a woman, Huldah, who immediately understood its meaning and helped the group of scholars – all men – to grasp it (Cf. 2 Kings 22:14-20). There are things that only women understand, and theology needs their contribution. An all-male theology is an incomplete theology. We still have a long way to go in this direction.” (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Congress on the Future of Theology, 9 December 2024)

Francis once remarked that when he thinks about theology, he thinks about light, about light that illuminates faces, people, the color of our world, so that the light of Christ and his Gospel may shine ever more brightly. May his memory continue to light the way.

Rest in peace, Francis.

Y por favor, ruega por nosotros,
Nancy Pineda-Madrid
CTSA President

**APPENDIX II:
PRESIDENT’S STATEMENT ON THE
ELECTION OF POPE LEO XIV**

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID
CTSA President
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

On May 8, 2025, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A., 69, was chosen as the 267th pope. He chose the name Leo, making him Pope Leo XIV.

Pope Leo XIV was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois to parents of French, Italian, and Louisiana Creole (African, French, Haitian, and Spanish) descent. He holds a Doctorate and a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum (Rome); a Master of Divinity from Catholic Theological Union (Chicago); and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Villanova University (close to Philadelphia). He speaks Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, and English. He also reads Latin and German. He was ordained a priest in 1982 at the age of twenty-seven in the Order of Saint Augustine, a religious order with a charism of contemplative prayer, a practical love for all others especially the poor, and an ardent pursuit of truth. In 1985, at the age of thirty, as an Augustinian missionary, he was sent to Peru where he has lived for much of his adult life, serving there early on as a pastor, and as a seminary teacher in Trujillo in the northwestern part of Peru. From 1998 to 2001, he returned to Chicago, serving as Prior Provincial of his religious order. Then, in 2001, he was elected Prior General of the Augustinians and lived in Rome until 2013. Pope Francis named him Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru in 2014 where he served until 2023, the year he became a Cardinal. In 2023 he moved back to Rome when Pope Francis named him President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, and Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, a position which oversees the selection of new bishops worldwide.

Pope Leo is an American in the most expansive sense; he is a citizen of Peru as well as of the United States. His significant Latin American background represents a continuity with Pope Francis, an Argentinian. Pope Leo is known as a bridge-builder, as a good listener, as a pastor first, and, as such, he is perceived to be a pope who will likely favor continuity with the reforms initiated by Pope Francis. He is said to share Pope Francis’ views on migrants, the poor, and the environment as well as his commitment to synodality, a promising means for addressing divisions in the US Catholic Church.

Pope Leo's choice of the name "Leo" is telling, signaling his commitment to social justice. The previous Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) is often recognized as the father of Catholic social justice, largely owing to his groundbreaking 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical, and others that followed, transformed Catholic teaching by launching what is now known as Catholic Social Teaching. *Rerum Novarum* focused on issues of social inequality and social justice, claiming that workers have rights as well as obligations. It was critical of both capitalism and communism.

In addition, the choice of "Leo" may also signal a connection to the first Pope Leo, Leo the Great (440-461), whose theological work on the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ helped the church deepen its understanding of the Incarnation, laying the groundwork for the Council of Chalcedon. In addition, this Pope Leo was known as a Western leader and peacemaker, convincing Atila the Hun, who had been plundering northern Italy, not to attack Rome in 452.

By taking the name "Leo," perhaps our new pope is locating himself within the tradition of these predecessors.

Long live Pope Leo XIV!

**APPENDIX III:
HOMILY FOR THE CONVENTION EUCHARIST**

~

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

First Reading: Proverbs 8:22-31

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 8

Second Reading: Romans 5:15

Gospel Reading: John 16:12-15

~

HUMANITY’S DANCE WITH THE HOLY TRINITY

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID

CTSA President

Loyola Marymount University

Los Angeles, California

Happy Father’s Day to all fathers present.

Speaking of fathers, let’s get personal. As many of you know I am Mexican-American, and like many Mexican-American families, my whole family loves to dance. Even to this day, my mother, at ninety-one years of age, regularly asks my brother to take her dancing. When I was about eleven my father tried to teach me how to dance with him. In the beginning he would get irritated with me because I kept stepping on his feet. In time, I learned how to quiet my mind and begin to read the physical signals he was giving me—the tug of an arm for instance, or the turn of his torso—enabling me to learn how to move **with** him and not contrary to him. In time, I no longer stepped on his feet, at least, not literally.

Our ability to detect the movements of the Spirit in our lives is somewhat similar. We need to quiet ourselves if we hope to detect the Spirit’s movement within us and around us. Often this means being more deeply grounded in our bodies, getting out of our heads.

Last week we celebrated the birthday of the church, Pentecost. So, how appropriate it is that today, the Feast of the Holy Trinity, coincides with the renewal of the sacred work of the Catholic Theological Society of America—*our* work.

Indeed, our readings today suggest that the Holy Trinity has everything to do with how we human beings relate to God. We need to recognize the dynamism of this relation—“**God works *with* us. God works *in* us. God works *through* us,**” as Dianne

Bergant reminds.¹ *With...In...and Through* resonates with perichoresis, the dynamic of three in one, the reciprocal presence, or indwelling, of each of the divine persons.

At the same time, I am also mindful this evening of an invitation extended years ago by the Jesuit theologian, Walter Burghardt, to take “a long loving look at the real.”²

The *real* of our time. Today, the world is on edge, distraught, unsteady, anxious. This country, which was not long ago perceived to be a beacon of hope, now prompts aversion. Daily, even hourly, we experience an onslaught of terrifying news—just today the politically motivated killing of Minnesota State Rep. Melissa Hortman (D) and her husband, Mark, and further, an attempt on the lives of Minnesota State Sen. John Hoffman (D) and his wife, Yvette. Both were shot but are still alive. All four shot by a gunman who posed as a policeman. We live in a time marked by the sharp escalation of social trauma, brought on by these attacks—and by attacks on migrants, on black and brown bodies, on the white poor (we do not talk enough about the white poor), on our common home the earth, on LGBTQ+ folks, on women, **even attacks on the very nature of the beautiful, the good, and the true.** We may feel overwhelmed, at times paralyzed, by the sheer volume of what we are experiencing. Increasingly, **chaos** appears to reign.

As members of the CTSA we find ourselves on ground that is less firm than it was five years ago—more of us have found our universities less able or willing to support our scholarly work, our departments shrinking in size or even closing. Some universities are asking us to be more cautious in the positions we advance in our lectures and publications. Academic freedom is under attack, some of our books are being banned: talk to our former president, Bryan Massingale, about one of his books being banned. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are values some of our universities want to pull back from given the threat they feel. Initiatives advancing the cause of freedom and justice are being viewed with a suspicion that was not present even six months ago. Some of our international members—who contribute so much to who we are—no longer feel able to attend our convention. Without their voices among us, we are *seriously* impoverished.

And yet, today is **Holy Trinity Sunday.**

Even in the midst of social trauma and chaos, we are reminded today that, in Proverbs, the Wisdom of God entices us with the **beauty** of creation (symphony of the earth, depths, springs of water, fountains, fields, skies, seas—it expresses a majestic sense) and there is beauty of the Spirit movement, incessantly poured forth, brought forth. The movement itself is for the purpose of drawing us in. Sometimes when I hear the wonderful beat of a piece of music, I just want to move, to be one with the music. To join the dance. The Holy Spirit claims to be God’s delight “day by day,” **playing** on the surface of the earth, finding **delight** in the human race. It may feel jarring to think of **dancing**, playing, taking delight in, while we find ourselves in the midst of **chaos**—when our lives are marked by angst and terror. And yet, the Spirit invites a pause, a pause for our health and well-being. The Spirit nudges us, inviting us to join

¹ Diane Bergant, “A Reflection for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year C,” *America Magazine*, June 9, 2025, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2025/06/09/dianne-bergant-preach-podcast-250882>.

² Walter J. Burghardt, “Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real,” in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George W. Traub (Chicago: Loyola Press), 89-98.

the Trinitarian dance, to drink in the beauty that is here. We need **time** for the beauty of creation in our lives. **Indeed, God works *with us***. Even as we stumble, we are called to join the Trinitarian dance, to feel God's presence.

Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* that by virtue of our baptism we are missionary disciples, we are invited to **move** through the world proclaiming God's **goodness**, a proclamation that materializes when we care for our sisters and brothers, especially the vulnerable and suffering. **God works *in us***. Saint Paul's letter to the Romans teaches us that our baptism makes of us a new creation, that "we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Even in our afflictions, our ongoing trials, our perseverance, God's grace **reshapes** us. The gift of God's grace incessantly encourages within each of us an ongoing process of **conversion**. An ongoing invitation to continue **dancing** with the Holy Trinity. Even with the chaos surrounding us, we are assured, not of a surface calm, but of a grounding deep peace that comes from knowing, feeling, sensing that **God works *in us***. Even as the world appears to be crumbling around us, **God works *in us***. Even though the world appears to be crumbling around us, as Romans reminds us, "**Hope** does not disappoint."

In the Gospel today, Jesus urges his disciples to pray ardently for the coming of the Spirit, the Spirit of **truth**. When we pray, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, is this not a recognition that **God works *through us***? Our "yes" to the Spirit's continuous invitation that we join the dance, cultivates within us an instinct for sensing and feeling God's movement. **God works *through us***. Over time, our instinct builds and deepens, leading us closer to **all truth**, to the fullness of **truth**.

On this Sunday, as we celebrate the **Holy Trinity**, may we come to know ever more deeply in every fiber of our being that **God works *with us***. **God works *in us***. **God works *through us***. May we know peace with God, and may we keep dancing. **Amen!**

**APPENDIX IV:
JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AWARD CITATION**

for
STEPHEN B. BEVANS, S.V.D.
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois

¡Les deseo a cada uno de ustedes lo mejor esta noche! I wish each of you the best this evening! My great joy tonight is to recognize the colleague whom CTSA honors this year with the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Achievement in Theology.

Our honoree was born in Baltimore on July 14, 1944, of Welsh and Irish ancestry. From County Clare, Ireland, his mother's forebearers immigrated to the United States in the 1820s. His father's Welsh forebearers immigrated here in the seventeenth century, some four centuries ago and settled in Maryland. As a child he grew up in Baltimore and Washington, DC. However, when he was thirteen, his family moved to Riverside, California where he attended high school at Divine Word Seminary. He holds a B.A. in English Literature from Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa; an S.T.B. and an S.T.L. from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and a Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Notre Dame, where he studied with Thomas O'Meara, O.P.

During the time of his studies in Rome, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Prior to beginning his Ph.D. program at the University of Notre Dame, our honoree spent eight years teaching undergraduate and graduate courses at the Immaculate Conception Major Seminary in the Philippines. Throughout his life, his teaching and many publications have transformed how missiology, contextual theology, and a global perspective are understood. He has taught at institutions around the globe; directed or served on many dissertation committees; served as editor for a number of prestigious journals; and served on several international commissions. In 1986, he began his long and celebrated work as an assistant professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where, in 1998, he was appointed the Louis J. Lusbetak, S.V.D. Professor of Mission and Culture, a position he held until 2015 when he retired and became professor emeritus. Over the course of his illustrious career, he has remained a dedicated member of the CTSA, delivering a plenary address at the 2001 convention, and serving as a board member from 2007 to 2009.

Missiology has been the bedrock of our honoree's work since he was in his twenties and began his life-long commitment to the Society for the Divine Word, the world's largest Roman Catholic order with a focus on missionary work. In 1972, three days after he arrived in the Philippines to begin teaching, a colleague and another

S.V.D. professor, Leonardo Mercado, mentioned that he was in the middle of writing his dissertation on Filipino philosophy. Mercado then asked a most consequential question: “Do you plan to teach *theology* to the Filipino students, or, do you plan to teach *Filipino* theology?” “Theology” implying Roman theology or “Filipino theology.”¹ For this newcomer to the Philippines, this question was deeply agitational.

In the following months, our honoree’s reaction was to learn the local dialect, and to read “a good bit” of Philippine history and literature as well as the Filipino theology that was available in the 1970s. He then offered a course in Filipino theology to ten interested students. By necessity, they—professor and students alike—read and searched together. Many years later, in the acknowledgments of his 2009 book, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, our honoree wrote,

I need to acknowledge the patience, the wisdom, the enthusiasm, and even the misgivings and disagreements with my students throughout the last thirty-five years. When the legendary Casey Stengel of the New York Yankees was congratulated for winning yet another World Series in the 1950s he is said to have remarked: “I couldn’t have done it without the players.” I have similar sentiments in regard to my students, and this is why this book is dedicated to them.²

Overtime the original question took root, and so began a lifetime quest to more deeply understand **contextual theology**. Left behind was the default of taking an assumed acontextual Catholic theology and merely imparting it to those situated in a different context. Rather, he came to a more reflective understanding of what *catholicity* means in our tradition, a recognition that God’s grace and the movement of the Holy Spirit are present within contexts other than our own. In the early 1970s, this was still a radical idea.

This award’s namesake, John Courtney Murray, S.J., in his own time, was deeply concerned with the United States’ drift away from its religious roots, away from the more spiritual underpinnings of this democratic republic and, consequently, the nation’s movement toward a vacuous materialism. Murray believed this trajectory was not only inconsistent with the Roman Catholic tradition but also, over time, would deeply undermine the nation’s democratic institutions. He drove the development of a public theology directed at reforming American society.

Our honoree’s legacy resonates with Murray’s instincts by encouraging attention to the contextuality of *all* theological discourse. Yet, our honoree goes further by encouraging the expansion of theology’s horizons to include the diverse populations of the globe. The result being a reforming dynamic in the way we do theology by embracing a **global perspective**. In his words, he invites theologians to know

¹ Stephen B. Bevans, “Becoming a Global Theologian: A Personal Journey,” in *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue: Essays in Honor of Stephen B. Bevans, SVD*, ed. Dale T. Irvin and Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 249.

² Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), xv.

their own context, but also to try to expand that context and avoid the blinders that their context provides by “listening to all the voices” themselves. In this way they will be introduced to doing a truly *catholic* theology in quite another sense. . . . They will learn how to be faithful to their own particular culture, gender, generation, national identity while at the same time expanding their understanding beyond their own particularity to embrace, learn from, and even challenge other ways of thinking and expression. . . . Theology today, I firmly believe, must be done in this global perspective. It *must* be contextual; but it must also be in dialogue, open to the other, ready to change, ready to challenge, ready to enrich and be enriched.³

For well over three decades, the Catholic Press Association has repeatedly awarded his publications. And, as they are released, his many books have been consistently recognized by the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* as among their “best books on mission.” Dale T. Irvin and Peter C. Phan coedited a festschrift in his honor titled, *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue* (2018).

In 2021, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Missiology. And very recently, the Association of Catholic Publishers awarded his newest book, *Community of Missionary Disciples: The Continuing Creation of the Church*, first prize in the category of best books in theology in 2024.

With great joy and deep gratitude for the rich legacy bestowed to us, here tonight, in the Pacific Northwest city of Portland, the Catholic Theological Society of America confers the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Achievement in Theology on Stephen B. Bevans, of the Society of the Divine Word.

Presented by the President of the Catholic Theological Society of America
NANCY PINEDA-MADRID
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California
June 14, 2025

³ Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 5, italics in the original.

**APPENDIX V:
TRIBUTES AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE
FOR RECENTLY DECEASED CTSA MEMBERS**

Anne Clifford, C.S.J. (d. October 2, 2024)

Tribute written and read by Mary Doak

It is an honor to provide this (all too short) tribute for Anne M. Clifford, CSJ. Anne was fully committed to our task of “faith seeking understanding,” and was a beloved friend and mentor to many of us in the academy.

A Sister of St. Joseph, Anne earned her Ph.D. in theology at The Catholic University of America. Her passionate commitment to teaching took her from parochial schools to higher education: Anne spent many years as a professor at Duquesne University before holding the Supple Chair in Catholic Studies at Iowa State University. A significant scholar in feminist theology, theology of creation, and in religion and science, Anne’s important book, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, is a classic text widely used in teaching and scholarship. Anne was a tireless advocate, a committed teacher, an encouraging mentor, a supportive colleague, a warm friend, and a loving and faithful member of her religious congregation.

Gregory K. Hillis (d. October 8, 2024)

Tribute written and read by Joseph Flipper

Gregory Hillis was my longtime colleague at Bellarmine University in Louisville. He was a Canadian by birth, a patristics scholar by training, and a follower of Thomas Merton. Louisville placed him in proximity to Merton’s monastery, the Abbey of Gethsemane. In 2021 he published *Man of Dialogue: Thomas Merton’s Catholic Vision*. The title, in my mind, captures who Greg was.

He was introverted, yet he could share his soul. He maintained extensive and lasting friendships with people across religious and ideological divides. He was a contemplative, but he lived that out while seeking justice. He had a vision for what Catholic faith should be, and he lived it. He had a large social media following but, remarkably, he was known for humility and gentleness. People were attracted to him, not because he had a giant personality, but because something about him was inviting. He died young. But his life was full.

Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan (d. November 30, 2024)

Tribute written and read by Kevin Burke, S.J.

Dr. Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan, S.T.D., seventy-five, of Omaha, Nebraska, died on November 30, 2024. Professor emerita and former vice president of university mission and ministry at Creighton University, Eileen was a gifted theologian, liturgist, teacher, writer, spiritual director, pastoral minister, and musician.

An expert in Ignatian spirituality and in directing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Eileen completed a doctorate in ecclesiology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology with a dissertation on Yves Congar. She authored and edited numerous works, including *The Ignatian Tradition* and *The Church in the Modern World* and, at the time of her death, she had just completed her work as general editor of *The Jesuit Spirituality Reader*. We in the CTSA miss her as a colleague and friend. My siblings and I miss her as a beloved sister.

M. Kathleen Flanagan, S.C. (d. January 6, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Paul Lakeland

Kathleen Flanagan, S.C., was a gifted teacher of theology, Church history and spirituality at Saint Elizabeth's University, New Jersey, where she taught for thirty years, and in Florida at Barry University and St. Vincent de Paul Seminary. Her passion for theology kindled a similar fire in generations of students, lay ministers, seminarians and permanent deacon candidates.

Kathy was a sought-after presenter on the life and spirituality of Saint Elizabeth Seton, and more recently, on Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich—like Kathy, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. To the group of scholars who transcribed, annotated and published four volumes of Saint Elizabeth Seton's writings, she contributed wisdom and wit. Her commitment to justice and interfaith relations lives on at The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education, founded by Kathy and a colleague at Saint Elizabeth's.

Agnes Cunningham, S.S.C.M. (d. January 22, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Mary Catherine Hilkert, O.P.

Sister Agnes Cunningham was born in Yorkshire, England in 1923 and migrated with her family to the United States before she was three years old. At age seventeen, she entered the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary. After studies in music and English literature, she became the first woman to receive a doctorate in sacred theology from the University of Lyons and later pursued post-doctoral studies on patristics with Johannes Quaesten. Agnes published widely on spirituality and the early church and taught early church history for many years at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and Mundelein Seminary.

A true pioneer in our Society, Agnes was the first woman to serve on a CTSA committee, to be elected to the board of directors, to serve as secretary, and to be elected as vice-president and president (1977-78). In 2001, she was awarded the John Courtney Murray Award for her distinguished life of service and achievement.

Keith J. Egan (d. January 29, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Daniel P. Horan

Keith J. Egan was born in Pittsburgh in 1930. At the age of fourteen he entered the Carmelite minor seminary. He earned a master's degree in medieval studies from The Catholic University of America and a doctorate at the University of Cambridge in 1965. He joined the faculty at Marquette University, where he taught historical theology until 1983. At that time, he moved to Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, where he served as department chair and founded the Center for the Study of Spirituality in

1984. His vision led to the establishment of the renowned annual Madeleva Lecture and the summer Carmelite Forum.

While Keith is best known internationally for his scholarly work on the Carmelite tradition, especially the spiritual writings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, he is also remembered as a gifted teacher, dedicated mentor, beloved spouse and father, and tireless advocate for women in theology and the church.

James A. Coriden (d. February 7, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Susan K. Wood, S.C.L.

James A. Coridan was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Gary, Indiana, in 1957. After receiving an S.T.L. (1958) and the J.C.D. (1961) from the Gregorian University, he served his diocese from 1961-1968. He obtained a J.D. degree from The Catholic University of America in 1972. Academic dean and professor of canon law at the Washington Theological Union from 1975-1995, he continued teaching there until it closed in 2013. He received the “Role of Law Award” in 1987 from the Canon Law Society of America and the John Courtney Murray Award from the CTSA in 2011. He authored three books and was co-editor of the *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (1995-2000).

He saw his role as a canonist to be two-fold: to listen carefully to the pastoral needs of the people and to try to interpret Canon Law as a viable response to those needs. Known for his gentle and self-effacing sense of humor, he was the model of kindness to everyone he met.

Lawrence Cunningham (d. February 20, 2025)

Tribute written and read by J. Matthew Ashley

“Non coereri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est.” “To suffer no restriction from anything however great, and yet to be contained in the tiniest of things, that is divine.” I can feel Larry, an expert in Christian spirituality, frowning at me. He would remind me that he was never a Jesuit. I use this motto anyway, because it is so apt.

He took on great tasks—department chair of a faculty of 50+, authoring sweeping introductions to the study of religion, or Catholicism—but also “the tiniest of things”—helping a junior faculty turn his University of Chicago dissertation into a book that someone might like to read, writing a lovely book on the chapels of Notre Dame. He did it all with grace, generosity and wry humor.

Someone who visited him near the end of his life reported that Larry ended one visit joking, “Dying is boring!” Dear Larry. I’m sure you’re not bored now. Thank you.

Nathan Chase (d. March 1, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Kimberley Belcher

Nathan Chase will be remembered professionally for his methodological innovations, integrating textual, material, and ritual approaches to liturgical history. The purpose of his historical work was always twofold: on the one hand, he sought a deeper understanding of the nature of the universal church of Christ, which is united in the spirit of love by means of its diverse and culturally embedded modes of prayer. On the other, he sought to improve the contemporary worship and practice of that church,

especially within the Roman Catholic communion he entered at age 21. He authored and edited eight books and published over twenty-seven journal articles.

Those of us who knew him will also remember his extraordinary personal generosity, which was honed to Christic self-offering by his seventeen-month paschal encounter with leukemia. On March 1, 2025, at age thirty-four, “having loved his own in the world, he loved them to the end.”

Ladislav Örsy, S.J. (d. April 3, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Catherine E. Clifford

Ladislav Örsy’s participation in this society signified his appreciation for the dependence of canon law upon good theology. He died this year at the age of 103, after a long and distinguished career. ‘Les’ entered the Society of Jesus in Hungary in 1943, studying philosophy and theology at Leuven, civil law at Oxford University, and canon law at the Gregorian in Rome. Missioned to the United States in 1966, he taught at Fordham, Catholic University of America, and finally at the Georgetown School of Law, where he conducted graduate seminars into his nineties.

Having consulted on the elaboration of the 1983 Revised Code of Canon Law, he felt passionately that church structures and practice must embody the fundamental orientations of the Second Vatican Council. He established the Peter and Paul Research Seminar where canonists and theologians continue to explore this concern. Good law, he once said, creates a space for the Spirit.

Mary Gerhart (d. April 22, 2025)

Tribute written and read by William George

Some years ago, Mary Gerhart, born in Stacyville, Iowa in 1935, and a onetime Trinitarian nun, was scheduled to speak at Dominican University. When at the last minute she could not come, I was given her notes for the talk and asked to stand in for her. Listening to tributes delivered at her funeral, a week before that of her dear friend David Tracy, and in the same church, was like receiving more notes, this time from those who knew how deeply Mary cared for others—family, friends, students at Hobart and William and Smith colleges, guests, strangers—just as she cared for her garden and for theology.

A year later, Mary *did* come to Dominican and spoke about the Law of the Cross, which is all about a love that animates communities of charity and grace—communities such as the CTSA, but for her now, also the communion of saints.

David W. Tracy (d. April 29, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Susan A. Ross

David W. Tracy, who died this spring at the age of eighty-six, was a monumental figure in Catholic theology, one of the most dominant theologians of the last fifty years, committed to conversations across almost every academic and artistic field. He was interested in *everything* and could shed new light on topics from Thomas Aquinas to the role of sacramentality in the catalog for the Met Gala.

For those like myself who knew David as a teacher and mentor, what will remain in our memories were his intellectual generosity, as he would preface his comments on Plato, Dante, or Derrida by saying, “as we all know;” his whimsical sense of humor; his love for all things New York (although he once described Chicago as “just like New

York, except without Manhattan”); and his profound capacity for friendship which extended to his nieces, nephews, colleagues, students, and caretakers. He now converses with the angels and saints.

Wendy Wright (d. May 19, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Rhodora Beaton

Dr. Wendy Mae Wright was born on March 5, 1947, in Burbank, California. After some years performing as an actress and singer, she moved to Santa Barbara to attend the Religious Studies program at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She obtained her Ph.D. from UC Santa Barbara in 1983, beginning a notable career as a professor and writer of Christian spirituality.

The author of seventeen books and over sixty academic articles, she served for almost thirty years as professor of theology at Creighton University. In 2006, she facilitated a collaboration with the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas which led to the development of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Spirituality in which she taught for many years. She will be remembered for her passion for spirituality and her profound closeness to and love of God, especially as lived out in her teaching.

Daniel Maguire (d. May 21, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Ryan G. Duns, S.J.

Dan Maguire, a distinguished Catholic theologian and ethicist, passed away leaving behind a legacy of faith, scholarship, and moral courage. As a longtime professor at Marquette University, Dan dedicated his career to advancing moral theology and engaging deeply with issues of social justice, medical ethics, and ecological responsibility. His work was marked by a compassionate heart and an incorrigible willingness to challenge and expand the boundaries of the Catholic theological tradition.

A prolific scholar, Dan authored numerous books and over 200 articles, striving always to bring Catholic thought into dialogue with pressing moral issues. He served as president of both the Society of Christian Ethics and the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health, and Ethics—roles that underscored his commitment to justice, human dignity, and global well-being.

We give thanks for Dan’s life, for his fearless intellect, and for the inspiration he offered to so many. May his legacy continue to illuminate the path of faith and ethical reflection. May he rest now in the peace of Christ.

Jill Raitt (d. May 27, 2025)

Tribute written and read by Laurie Johnston

Let us remember Jill Raitt, who died last month at ninety-four. A scholar of the Middle Ages and Reformation with a love for Eucharistic theology, she helped shape the Lutheran–Catholic dialogue that produced the joint declaration on justification. Among the first Roman Catholics to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago Divinity School, she then was the first woman on the faculty of Duke Divinity School. She gave up her own office space there to serve as the Women’s Center. Later, she

founded the Department of Religion at the University of Missouri and taught there for more than twenty years.

In her plenary address to our society in 2003, Dr. Raitt said that she was once “a pagan cowgirl...[who] is now a Roman Catholic academic,” and wished she could deliver that address from the saddle of a horse. Her many grateful students and colleagues are blessed to have been along for the ride.

Gary Riebe-Estrella, S.V.D. (d. June 2, 2025)

Tribute written and read by C. Vanessa White, O.F.S.

“He was a great leader and scholar whose pastoral work was the foundation for his writings.” These words from one of his colleagues speaks eloquently of the contributions of Latino theological educator, theologian, professor, and mentor, Gary Riebe-Estrella, who died on June 2.

Twice past-president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States, he was a member of the Divine Word Missionaries, and one of the first graduates from the Catholic Theological Union. After receiving his S.T.D. in *teologia practica* from Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca in 1992, he returned to his *alma mater* in Chicago, assuming teaching and administrative roles. In 1996, he accepted the role of vice president and academic dean at CTU as its first Latin@ dean and the first in the nation, where he served for thirteen years. He was instrumental in creating a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse faculty. Rest in peace and power, Gary.

LAYLA A. KARST

*Convention Liturgical Aide
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California*

CATHERINE E. CLIFFORD

*CTSA Vice President
Saint Paul University
Ottawa, Ontario*

APPENDIX VI: ADDENDUM TO THE CTSA REGISTRY

NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS

Ackermann, Domenik. Ph.D. in Comparative Theology, 2024, Boston College.
Dissertation Title: Prayer and Memory: What Christian Theology can Learn from Jewish Practice.

Barrette, Andrew. Ph.D. in Philosophy, 2018, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Dissertation Title: The Origin of the Question: The Structure and Emergence of Questioning in Edmund Husserl's Work.

Brun, Rudolf B. Ph.D. in Biology, 1969, University of Basel (Switzerland).
Dissertation Title: Ontogenese-und Evolutionsprobleme bei der Musterbildung des Argusfasans (*Argusianus argus*).

Chong, S.J., Vicente. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2017, Heythrop College, University of London. Dissertation Title: A Theological Aesthetics of Liberation: God, Art, and the Social Outcasts.

Daniels, Brandy. Ph.D. in Christian Theology, 2017, Vanderbilt University.
Dissertation Title: Who is the "We" Futurity and the Formation of Spiritual and Sexuality Subjectivities.

De la Fuente, David. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2024, Fordham University.
Dissertation Title: A Catholic Reception of Azusa Street's Pentecostal Fire.

De Silva, Chris. D.Min. (Leadership / Community Witness), 2022, Emory University.
Doctor of Ministry Final Project: Between Sword and Surrender: Finding New Narratives for Christian Belonging.

DeLong-Bas, Natana. Ph.D. in History (Middle East), 2002, Georgetown University.
Dissertation Title: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: An Intellectual Biography.

Dinnella-Borrego, Luis-Alejandro. D.Min (Pastoral Theology), 2025, The Catholic University of America. Doctor of Ministry Final Project: That They May Have Life: Existential Catholicism and Adult Faith Formation.

Epsen, Edward. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2017, Durham University.
Dissertation Title: From Laws to Liturgy: An Idealist Interpretation of the Christian Doctrine of Creation.

Goo, Hansol. Ph.D. In Liturgical Studies / Sacramental Theology, 2022, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: Migrant God: Anamnesis and Migrant Sacramentality for Korean American Catholics.

Gumness, O.Carm., Matthew J. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2024, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: The Science of the Cross: Towards a Cross-Disciplinary Theology of Desire.

Heeder, Megan. Ph.D. in Religious Studies, 2024, Marquette University. Dissertation Title: The Beauty of a Good Appetite in a Social Media Age.

Himes, Brian. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2022, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Max Scheler on Love and Human Dignity: The Wertkern [Core of Value] as Resolving the Aporia of Dialogical and Metaphysical Personalism on the Knowledge of Persons.

Hrabovecky, Pavol. S.T.D. (Sacred Theology), 2014, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome). Dissertation Title: The Role of Reason in Defending Faith: A Comparison of John Milbank and Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

Kieser, Doris. Ph.D. in Secondary Education, 2008, University of Alberta. Dissertation Title: Bodies of Evidence: Toward a Sexual Theology Accounting for Adolescent Females.

Kumar Hrudayaraj, S.J., Bala Kiran. Ph.D. in Social Ethics, 2024, Innsbruck University. Dissertation Title: Social Justice as Participation: The Resonance between Amartya Sen's Theoretical Framework and Catholic Social Tradition.

Landrith, Robin. Ph.D. in Historical Theology, 2024, Boston College. Dissertation Title: The Debt of Love in the Theology of Richard of St. Victor.

Livick-Moses, Sarah. PhD in Systematic Theology, 2024, Boston College. Dissertation Title: The Icon of Divinity: Sophia, Trinity, and Creation in Sergii Bulgakov.

Matson, Br. Christian. Ph.D. in Divinity, 2016, University of St. Andrews (Scotland). Dissertation Title: Towards a Eucharistic Theatre: The Theatrical Theologies of the Reduta, the Rhapsodic Theatre, and Grotowski's Lab.

Maxey, Amy. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2021, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: Erotic Entanglements with the Christian Mystical Tradition: The Feminist Theologies of Sarah Coakley and Catherine Keller.

McCullough, James Joseph. Ph.D. in Theological Aesthetics, 2013, University of St. Andrews (Scotland). Dissertation Title: Aesthesis and Ascesis: On the Relationship Between the Arts and Spiritual Formation.

Medina-Maldonado, Cecille. Ph.D. in Ethics, 2025, Marquette University.
Dissertation Title: Towards Relationship: A Trinitarian Model in Defense of Human Embryo Adoption.

Moons, Jozef. Ph.D. in Ecclesiology, 2018, Tilburg University (Netherlands).
Dissertation Title: The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Pneumatological Renewal: *Mystici Corporis, Lumen Gentium* and Beyond.

Myrose, Jamie. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2025, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Everything is Friendship: Towards a More Relational Theological Anthropology.

Nutter, Taylor. Ph.D. in Systematics, 2021, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: The Self Forgetful of Itself: Augustine and the Modern Oblivion of the Erotic Mind.

O'Neill, S.J., Brett. Ph.D. in Theology (Immigration Ethics), 2025, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Migration Governance for the Global Common Good: Immigration Regulation in Catholic Social Teaching.

Orbih, William. Ph.D. in Theology, 2024, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: Resistance in African Literature: Towards a Decolonial Theology of Hope.

Parks, Benjamin. Ph.D. in Theology and Health Care Ethics, 2020, St. Louis University. Dissertation Title: Techno-Wizards and Despairing Dragons: On Magic, Chaos, and Acedia in Modern Medical Technology.

Petrin, Anna. Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies, 2018, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation Title: The Egyptian Connection: Egyptian Elements in the Liturgy of Jerusalem.

Petro, Susannah. Ph.D. in Theology & Education, 2023, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Bearing One Another's Burdens: Synodal Trauma-Aware Relational Pastoral Caregiving Ministry for Families in the Local Church.

Piolata Thomas, Ph.D. in Theology, 2024, Durham University. Dissertation Title: Ratio Finiendi: The Finality of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of St. Bonaventure.

Rajaratnam, Deepan. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2025, Saint Louis University. Dissertation Title: Re-imagining the Sense of the Faithful: A New Paradigm for a Synodal Church in Light of Culture, Place, and Periphery.

Robinson, Chanelle. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2024, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Poetic Incarnations: Developing a Womanist Theological Anthropology in Canada by Exploring Diasporic Poetry.

Roniger, Scott. Ph.D. in Philosophy, 2017, The Catholic University of America. Dissertation Title: How Is Natural Law Promulgated? A Phenomenological Approach to Thomas Aquinas's Natural Law Theory.

Samalot-Rivera, OP, Yamil. Ph.D. in Luso-Brazilian Studies (Brazilian Church History and Ecclesiology), 2008, Brown University. Dissertation Title: A carnavalização da fé: O novo romance histórico de revisitação colonial e a releitura das raízes católicas do Brasil.

Simon Rosina, Hajati. Ph.D. in Spirituality / Practical Theology, 2024, Regis St. Michael at University of Toronto. Dissertation Title: A Comparative Study of the Jesus Prayer of Hesychasm and Samatha-Vipassanā Meditation: Juxtaposing Christian “Watchfulness” with Buddhist “Mindfulness” in Healing.

Tagliapietra, Claudio. S.T.D. (Dogmatic Theology), 2021, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome). Dissertation Title: Cognitio Dei Experimentalis. La Dimensione Teologale Dell'esperienza Religiosa in Romano Guardini e Bernard Lonergan [Experimental Knowledge of God: The Theological Dimension of Religious Experience in Romano Guardini and Bernard Lonergan].

Theuring, Ashley. Ph.D. in Practical Theology, 2018, Boston University. Dissertation Title: Toward a Catholic Feminist Practical Theology of Hope after Domestic Violence.

Timpe, Kevin. Ph.D. in Philosophy, 2004, St. Louis University. Dissertation Title: Event Individuation and its Implications for the Principle of Alternative Possibilities.

Udoekpo, Michael. S.T.D. (Biblical Theology), 2010, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome). Dissertation Title: Re-thinking the Day of YHWH and Restoration of Fortunes in the Prophet Zephaniah: An Exegetical and Theological Study of 1:14-18; 3:14-20.

Voss, Michelle. Ph.D. in Comparative Theology, 2006, Emory University. Dissertation Title: Dualities: A Theology of Difference.

Wratee, Byron. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2024, Boston College. Dissertation Title: Howard Thurman's Theological Anthropology: A Mystical-Political Response to Anti-Black Violence.

HOSFFMAN OSPINO
CTSA Secretary
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

APPENDIX VII: ADDENDUM TO THE CTSA REGISTRY

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Abraham, Rohan. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, KU Leuven. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): *Transforming Crossroads or Obfuscating Pathways: A Hermeneutical-Theological Exploration of Ontotheology and Alterity in Emmanuel Falque's Thought*.

Adrien, Karla. Program: Ph.D. in Missiology, St. Thomas University. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): *Sedintas: An Indepth Analysis of Lay Missionary Apostolate Within the Context of Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

Bolanos, Amanda Rachel. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, Duke Divinity School. Exp March 2025. Dissertation (working title): *Reclaiming Charity: Virtue Theory and Latinx Liberation Theology*.

Canonico, Julia. Program: Ph.D. in Liturgy, University of Notre Dame. Exp. June 2025. Dissertation (working title): *Beholding and Becoming: A Renewed Theology of Eucharistic Adoration*.

Cecilio, Joanna. Program: Ph.D. in Practical Theology, Palm Beach Atlantic University. Exp. 2028. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Chakkalakkal, Arun Joseph. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, KU Leuven. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): *Sacramentality of Human Relations: A Critical Inquiry into the Theologies of Hans Boersma and John Behr*.

Conlin, Patrick. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Marquette University. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): *Suryoye: A Crucified People*.

Costas, Michael. Program: Ph.D. in Christian Spirituality, Boston College. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): *The Contemplative Habitus of the Heart*.

Cuff, Matthew. Program: Ph.D. in Liberation Theology, Boston College. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Ferguson, Hannah. Program: Ph.D. in Identity and Belonging, Regis College, University of Toronto. Exp. Nov. 2025. Dissertation (working title): *Broadening Belonging: Christian Discipleship in the Wake of Normativity's Crisis*.

George, Carol. Program: Ph.D. in Ecclesiology, KU Leuven. Exp. June 2027. Dissertation (working title): Listening to the *Sensus Fidelium* in a Synodal Church: A Contextual and Critical Study of the Attention to Synodality in the Indian Church Today.

George, Jerit. Program: Ph.D. in Spiritual Theology, Teresianum (Rome). Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): Kenosis in the Life and Writings of Therese of Lisieux.

Hunsinger, Tiffany. Program: Ph.D. in Historical Theology, University of Dayton. Exp. May 2025. Dissertation (working title): The American Catholic Icon from England: The Reception of G.K. Chesterton in the United States.

Klee, Alexander. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Anthropology. Boston College. Exp. 2028. Dissertation (working title): Salvific Tears: Affectivity in the Life of Christ.

Kozee, Barbara Anne. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, Boston College. Exp. October 2025. Dissertation (working title): On Social Trust and Political and Ecclesial Polarization.

Lee, Shinjae. Program: Ph.D. in Comparative Theology, Boston College. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Lugonja, John Bosco. Program: Ph.D. in Ethics, Boston College. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): Theological Perspective on Labor Externalization: Confronting the Challenges Faced by Ugandan Migrant Workers.

McElcheran, Susan. Program: Ph.D. in Disability Theology, Regis St. Michael's Faculty of Theology. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): An Affective Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in The Cloud of Unknowing from a Mimetic and Disability Perspective.

Mendoza, Kim S. Program: Ph.D. in Ecclesiology, KU Leuven. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): Enhancing the Participation of All Actors in Teaching and Governance: Towards a Polyhedric Catholic Church.

Misey, Monica. Program: D.Min. (Leadership), University of St. Mary of the Lake. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): Leadership Rooted in Love: A Dehonian Approach to Today's Leadership Challenges.

Molony, Scott. Program: Ph.D. in Moral Theology, Boston College. Exp. May 2027. Dissertation (working title): Not by Code Alone: Forming the Moral Imagination of AI Engineers.

Nguyen, Ngoc. Program: Ph.D. in Christian Ethics, Marquette University. Exp. May 2026. Dissertation (working title): Influence of Confucianism on Vietnamese Catholic Women: How the Church Can Promote Women's Empowerment in a Patriarchal Context.

Nuelle, Jack. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic. Loyola University Chicago. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): Whiteness and Experiencing the Body of God.

O'Brien, Chris. Program: Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies, The Catholic University of America. Exp. May 2024. Dissertation (working title): Children and the Eucharist in the Roman Rite: History, Theology, and Ritual.

Ojeifo, Emmanuel. Program: Ph.D. in Eco-political Theology, University of Notre Dame. Exp. March 2026. Dissertation (working title): Who Owns the Land? The Theology, Politics, and Ethics of Land in Africa.

Poggi, Alfredo Ignacio. Program: Ph.D. in Theology, Universidad Católica de Córdoba (Argentina). Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Rice, Theresa. Program: Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies, University of Notre Dame. Exp. May 2027. Dissertation (working title): A Theology of Relics: Piety and Practice in Early Medieval Gaul.

Sandschafer, Cody J. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Marquette University. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): Memoria: The Conscious Site of God's Self-Communication.

Surratt, Zara. Program: Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Indigenous Religion in the Americas), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Exp. May 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Those Who Wear Black Dresses": Immigration and Assimilation at St. Francis Indian School.

Thunig, Theresa Maria. Program: Ph.D. in Dogmatic Theology, University of Bochum (Germany). Exp. March 2027. Dissertation (working title): Crisis, Identity, Church: The Church and Christian Self-Understanding in Light of a History of Abuse.

Wakefield, Leah. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, Marquette University. Exp. 2027. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Way Skinner, Christine Marie. Program: Ph.D. in Ecclesiology, Regis St. Michael's. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): The Promise and Perils of Synodality for the Conversion of Clericalist Culture.

HOSFFMAN OSPINO
CTSA Secretary
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

