

MISSIOLOGY AND MISSION THEOLOGY

- Topic: Resurrection of the Body in a Global Church:
 Images from Africa and Latin America
- Conveners: Stephen Bevans, Catholic Theological Union
 Colleen Mary Mallon, St. John's University, New York
- Moderator: Colleen Mary Mallon, St. John's University, New York
- Presenters: Margaret R. Pheil, University of Notre Dame
 Robert Lassalle-Klein, Holy Names University

This session of the Missiology and Mission Theology program group engaged the convention theme, Resurrection of the Body, by considering the mission of the church as embodied in the "crucified peoples" of Africa and Latin America. Robert Lassalle-Klein presented the paper, "Sign of the Resurrection for a Crucified People: Archbishop Oscar Romero" and Margaret Pheil presented the paper, "Touching the Wounds of the Resurrected Body: Notes from Latin America and Africa on the Dynamics of White Privilege."

Lassalle-Klein invited session attendees to reflect on how a theology of "the signs of the times" might shed new light on the life, death, and resurrection of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Specifically, Lassalle-Klein posited that the Salvadoran church's theologizing of Oscar Romero limns a particular agenda for reading the signs of the times, a way of reading and reflecting that is distinctive from more recent theologies of culture. Observing that a theology of sign is not synonymous with a theology of culture, the Latin American theological agenda reminds us that there are other signs besides culture. Thus, a fundamental theology of the signs of the times, situated from within the socio-historical reality of the Latin American church, starts with Vatican II and Medellin and finds particular, concrete expression in the ecclesial writings of Archbishop Romero. According to Ignacio Ellacuria, Romero's theology of revelation can be distinguished from, but never detached from a theology of the signs of the present time. In this light, what can be said about the sign that is the life, death, and resurrection of Oscar Romero? Jon Sobrino, building on the theology of sign of Ignacio Ellacuria maintains that a particular kind of faith transformed Romero into a living sign of the reign of God. Romero encountered in the crucified peoples of El Salvador the living presence of Christ and this event of "theosis" revealed to the archbishop the meaning of being an apostle, a prophet and a martyr. Acknowledging that the sign of the crucified people is no ordinary sign, Lassalle-Klein urged the reverent construction of a semiotics adequate to the task of reading such transformative signs.

In the second presentation, Margaret Pheil explored the threat that institutionalized racism (specifically white privilege) poses to the mission of the church today. Borrowing from both scripture and recent pontifical commission documents, Pheil suggested that, like Thomas in John 20, the church is called to touch the wounds caused by white privilege. Moreover, Pheil expressed the need for the church to enter fully into the so-wounded Body of Christ in order to authentically realize its

evangelizing mission of healing and reconciliation. The pervasive “blinking” of white privilege, (i.e., the sociocultural embedding of “whiteness” as normative), reflects an “ocular epistemology” that socially constructs the racial superiority of “whiteness.” Drawing from a variety of sources, (M. Shawn Copeland, Las Casas, Gustavo Gutierrez, Lamin Sanneh, Teresa Okure, Clarence Rivers, Peruvian Truth Commission Report), Pheil draws forth and exposes the complicit links between colonialism, Christianity and the race-based social violence that continues to wound the Body of Christ today. What epistemology will allow the church to address the reality of institutionalized racism? Returning to the pericope of Thomas in John 20, Pheil suggests an epistemology of mission that is incarnational, pneumatological, and holistic. *Incarnational knowing*: by touching and entering the wounded Body of Christ, believers encounter Christ inviting them to a faith beyond the limits of seeing. *Pneumatological knowing*: the wounds of white privilege in the church and the world requires nothing less than the Spirit of Jesus guiding the church to recognize and confront those blank, interrupted spaces where the structures of sin continue to harm the Body of Christ. *Holistic knowing*: a way of integral knowing that perceives the depth of relatedness that grounds all reality. To know holistically, is to know that my humanity is at risk in the fate of all others denied their humanity.

The session concluded after an engaging discussion among the twenty-five session attendees.

COLLEEN MARY MALLON

St. John's University

Jamaica, New York