

HISPANIC LATIN@ THEOLOGY

Topic:	Alimento para la lucha: Retrieving a Prophetic Voice from Latina América
Convener & Moderator:	Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, Catholic Theological Union
Presenter:	Neomi DeAnda, Loyola University, Chicago
Respondent:	Pam Kirk Rappaport, St. John's University, New York

Leaders of religious orders of men and women throughout church history have used the image of breast milk, often as a means to establish their particular leadership via relational claims to be both mother and father to the members of their respective communities (see for example, Gilberto Cavazos-González, *Greater Than a Mother's Love: Kinship in the Spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi*, Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2010). In her paper entitled "Transgendered Images of Breast Milk: Recovering the Voice of María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio," Neomi DeAnda retrieves the specific contribution of a Dominican Nun from México (1695-1756). Her development of this image set against the backdrop of Latin American and Iberian Catholicism expands the canon of creative and prophetic perspectives emerging from Latina América and specifically from the locus of religious convent women. DeAnda situates María Anna's reflections in a long tradition of theological attention to lactation. She traces the image as developed by medieval theologians such as Bernard of Clairvaux yet cautions against decontextualizing these representations lest they result in an essentializing of gender by contemporary readers.

DeAnda observes that María Anna's focus remains solely on the image in terms of Mary, with clear implications for ecclesiology, soteriology, and a theology of creation. From DeAnda's read of María Anna's spiritual/doctrinal treatise, *Marabillas del Divino Amor, Selladas con el sello de la Verdad*, "The privileges brought by Mary through her breast milk to all of humanity directly impact humanity's salvation. Mary's role is therefore a gift to humanity, part of the mind of the godhead from the beginning, engrossed in creation and central in salvation history."

These intonations are found in María Anna's own words:

How much more do we owe blessed Mary for this nourishment that ministered to Jesus Christ, our health and life? We owe her the example she left of her life, doctrines, miracles and the institution of the sacraments. We owe her because her son satisfied his Father for our debts and sins and giving him life, most blessed Mary conserved it with her sweet milk! We owe her for having a teacher, redeemer, savior....All of these we owe to the milk which created and sustained him (*Marabillas del Divino Amor*, Mexico: La Imprenta de la Bibliotheca Mexicana, 1758, 6).

Pamela Kirk Rappaport, renowned for her scholarship on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, complimented the groundbreaking work of DeAnda's retrieval of this overlooked mystic. She noted that there is no modern critical edition of Sor María

Anna's tome and appreciated DeAnda analysis of these texts in their eighteenth-century format as well as her efforts to situate her theologically.

Kirk Rappaport pointed to several intersections and trajectories that emerge from this encounter as well as potential contributions to historical, feminist, and theological studies. She identified intersections with Sor María Anna's connection of Mary's "bounteous love, in the image of her breast milk with God's bounty at creation" and the Spanish nun María of Agreda's *Mystical City of God* as well as with Sor Juana's *Devotional Exercises for the Feast of the Incarnation*. These texts place Mary at the beginning of creation in the mind of God. She alluded to possible implications of this retrieval for a more intentional theology of the body.

The rich conversation that followed the presentation and the response involved both speakers as well as those in attendance at the session. A number of promising directions arose within this context including but not limited to speculation about the relationship between bishops and educated religious convent women in terms of their possible role and influence as theologians in las Américas.

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