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# PERSPECTIVAS

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS

FALL 2006

The 2006 HTI Summer Workshop Lecture: *Immigration: Facts, Theology and Ministry*

To Welcome the Stranger: The Myths and Realities of Illegal Immigration

*Patricia Fernández-Kelly*

Immigration and the Bible: Comments by a Diasporic Theologian

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Immigration and Theology: Reflections by an Implicated Theologian

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We Are Not Your Diversity, We Are the Church! Ecclesiological Reflections from the Marginalized Many

*Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández*



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# ***P E R S P E C T I V A S***

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**Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, editor**

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PERSPECTIVAS: OCCASIONAL PAPERS

EDITOR

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The Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) began the publication of *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* in 1998 to highlight the scholarship of Latina/o scholars in theology and religion, and feature the contributions of Latinas/os as an important and critical means to stimulate further dialogue and research in theological education.

Our past and present issues feature the work of HTI mentors, fellows, and HTI Summer Workshop Lecture and HTI Regional Conference speakers. The present publication is the tenth in the series.

*Perspectivas* is sent to seminaries and to religion and theology departments at universities and other institutions throughout the United States, and Puerto Rico. The issues are free and we are happy to accommodate requests from faculty and/or students for additional copies and/or copies of back issues when available. Please e-mail us at [hti@ptsem.edu](mailto:hti@ptsem.edu) for these requests.

We trust you will find *Perspectivas* engaging and insightful, and we invite you to share comments and responses to any of the articles.

Joanne Rodríguez  
*Director, HTI*

## FROM THE EDITOR

U.S. Latina/o theology, in spite of its marginalized social location, continues to make positive contributions to public discourse in the United States, optimistic that its distinct vision can contribute to God's plans for greater human liberation. This refreshing optimism challenges perspectives like that of Samuel Huntington, who identifies Mexican immigration and what he terms "Hispanization"<sup>1</sup> as the greatest threat to American national identity and national security in post-9/11 United States. This issue of *Perspectivas* brings together the interdisciplinary conversation that took place at the 2006 Hispanic Theological Initiative Summer Workshop around the theme, "Immigration: Facts, Theology and Ministry," with two articles exploring many of the same themes—immigration, *mestizaje*, inclusion, and diversity—as an alternative to Huntington's version of the "American dream," which can be charitably characterized as assimilation into the Anglo mainstream, and less charitably as xenophobic intolerance.

The eschatological dimension of Christian thought (its "already-not yet" aspect) reminds the church that while it is renewed in the Spirit and called by God to live in inclusive community, where there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27-28), our present reality is tainted by sin, and relationships of domination persist. Consequently, our distinct contribution to the rich tapestry of North American Christianity is summed up by the phrase *teología de conjunto*, in which we intentionally nurture mutually enriching conversation across boundaries of belief, culture, gender, and ethnicity in order to embody the Gospel's inclusive vision (what Alejandro García-Rivera has called the community of the beautiful). Latina/o theology's contributions to the broad-

er Christian tradition sometimes challenge and unsettle the theological and ecclesial mainstream, not from some desire to erase or replace the dominant theological traditions, but in recognition that our historically marginalized perspective enriches the Christian tradition by highlighting long-neglected, important *and* integral liberative themes that have always been part of the biblical and doctrinal heritage of Christianity through the ages.

The challenge contained herein is a call for the Christian church to embrace its identity as a pilgrim community, as sojourners in a foreign land, in obedience to God's command to protect the stranger among us, the naked and hungry, and those in prison, who embody Christ for the church today (Mat. 25:31-46).

Rubén Rosario Rodríguez  
*Editor*

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<sup>1</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004). Huntington defines "Hispanization" as the drive toward a distinct Latino/Hispanic culture within the United States resulting in a "culturally bifurcated Anglo-Hispanic society with two national languages" (221).

## TO WELCOME THE STRANGER: THE MYTHS AND REALITIES OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Patricia Fernández-Kelly

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*Then the King will say to those on his right,  
'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.*  
—Matthew 25: 34-35

### Introduction

For most of the last century, the study of immigration to the United States has been an auspicious endeavor filled with surprises and inspirational lessons. Immigration comprises the saga of humble workers who arrive in this land searching for

opportunity, laboring without respite on behalf of children, eager to fulfill dreams of prosperity and freedom denied in their own countries. Almost always, foreigners arrive hoping that, through sacrifice, they will ennoble their progeny and make real the vision of America, a country strengthened by the blood and sweat of immigrants.

Until recently, the story of immigration has been simple in its design and ponderous in its effects. Workers, whether having entered the U.S. legally or not, perform menial tasks, earn low wages, try to overcome linguistic barriers, and confront prejudice from the descendants of earlier, more established immigrants. Eventually, this Cinderella tale of hardship, faith, and endurance blossoms into something larger—the strangers become citizens, their offspring barely distinguishable from other Americans. The secret behind that transition has been to counterbalance the harsh realities of capitalist exploitation and market competition with an abundance of opportunity and a measure of tolerance. Two factors have overwhelmingly contributed to the advancement of working-class and immigrant populations: incentives to education and property rights (Koontz 2000). Over time, and not without pain, a combination of private demand for cheap labor and forward-looking government policies created a sturdy safety net. Through the accumulation of human and material capital, outsiders gained admission into the larger society; they prospered and developed a stake in the maintenance of laws and regulations. The German anarchists that bloodied the streets of Chicago in the late nineteenth century lived on to see their children become voters and homeowners.

But there is another, less sanguine story related to immigration. When America has failed to provide material and educational incentives to recent arrivals, instead meeting their desire with hostility and their ambition with a lack of sympathy, she has seen

their children grow up to become permanent strangers, resentful, skeptical, and rebellious. The descendants of slaves who flowed from the rural south into Midwestern and Northeastern cities led by hopes of inclusion only to see those dreams dashed by bigotry and discrimination saw many of their children and grandchildren drop out of schools, join gangs and give up on mainstream values (Gans 1996; Massey and Denton 1998). The counterpoint between the fate of African-Americans and that of immigrants lies at the core of America's failures and successes. Until recently, the story of immigration has been infused with optimism; that of suppressed racial minorities with despair. As the new century advances, however, those two stories begin to converge. Below, I sketch the elements of that momentous shift.

### **Immigration in the Age of Globalization**

Throughout the twentieth century, immigrants in the U.S.—many without proper documentation—were tolerated in obeisance to the demands of powerful economic interests, especially in agricultural production. Mexicans constituted the bulk of arrivals concentrating in the American Southwest to harvest the crops that filled domestic and international markets (Gamio 1971). Until the 1960s, most immigrants from Mexico were men with low levels of education who came from small rural villages in the home country. Between 1942 and 1965 many of those workers entered the U.S. as part of what has become known as the Bracero Program, a bilateral agreement that enabled agricultural workers from Mexico to enter the U.S. legally on a temporary basis. In 1965, under the Kennedy administration, that program was terminated in response to persistent complaints over the abuses and misuses of Mexican labor.

In 1965 as well, the Family Reunification Act opened new channels for immigrants already established in the U.S. to sponsor the

legal entry of relatives, especially wives and children. The same piece of legislation expanded immigration quotas for immigrants from Asia. As a result, the late twentieth century witnessed the growth of migration from Mexico, Guatemala, China, Viet Nam, and other countries in the two continents.

Between 1965 and 1986, the complementarity of American demand for cheap labor and a growing supply of Mexican workers created a well-oiled machine that benefited employers as well as immigrants (Alba and Nee 2005; Massey 2003). A measure of toleration for illegal entries led to an abundance of foreign-born recruits employed in services and agriculture. Many Mexicans—especially those without proper documentation—resorted to circular migration spending working periods in the U.S. and returning periodically to their home towns to mind small businesses or build homes. Remittances became the equivalent of a grassroots foreign-aid program, enabling many communities in Mexico to thrive despite prevailing scarcity and ineffective government practices. The needs of American employers were met even as Mexican workers obtained benefits. The cost of this symbiotic relationship was moderate—a bending of the rules governing formal immigration policy.

Then, after the passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, more punitive and exclusionary measures began to be implemented. Immigration in general and illegal immigration in particular, gained attention as a problem in search of a solution. New arrivals, mostly from Mexico and Central America, were blamed for poverty increases in receiving areas. Media outlets portrayed newcomers as parasites taxing the welfare system, bearing children without restraint, crowding schools and packing the emergency rooms of local hospitals. The budget allocated to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service grew exponentially as did its personnel (Massey 2003). By the 1990s, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service had become the second

largest military force in the nation trailing only after the U.S. armed forces.

Such policies had as a goal to curtail the uninterrupted flow of illegal migrants. Under Operation Gatekeeper and other similar endeavors, refined surveillance technology was deployed and a fence several miles long was built along the Tijuana-San Diego border to stop unauthorized entries. Although hailed as a success by its designers, that campaign's major effect was to push potential immigrants to other more dangerous points of entry, including the Arizona desert. Before 1990, the number of deaths of individuals attempting to cross into the United States was negligible. Since that date approximately 300 people have died on the average every year trying to make their way into the United States (Marosi 2005).

The incongruities surrounding illegal immigration are multiple and best illustrated by the process that led to the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993. That voluminous piece of legislation had as an objective to remove as many barriers as possible for the free movement of capital across international borders. One way to conceptualize NAFTA is as the logical culmination of economic currents that began three decades earlier. Starting in the late 1960s, an increasing number of manufacturing operations were relocated from advanced industrial nations, including the U.S., to less developed countries where wages were but a fraction of those paid to workers in rich nations (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Shaiken 1989). Neo-liberal economic policies and a consensus built around the virtues of the free market eventually gave way to the North American Free Trade Agreement whose purpose was to facilitate competition and economic integration on a continental scale (Duina 2006).

Similar in purpose to NAFTA was the creation of the European Union. In that case, however, planners gave concerted attention to



the effects of economic integration on labor flows. As a result, European nations supported investments in Portugal, a poor country and the weakest link in the European chain. The goal was to arrest an exodus of labor once the European Union had been formed. By contrast, the architects of NAFTA refused at every step of the way to consider labor in the arrangements that would lead to growing economic interdependence throughout the American hemisphere. Avid to find ways to demolish every obstruction for investments across international lines, they nonetheless expected workers to stay put (Duina 2006). Ironically, those most vocal about the virtues of free markets now call for government intervention to prevent workers from crossing borders in search of the very same opportunities that have been created by neo-liberal policies.

That egregious breach of logic has had its costs. As the treatment of unauthorized immigrants became harsher, more of those already in this country settled down, returning less frequently to their hometowns for fear that attempted reentry into the U.S. would be blocked (Massey 2003). Over a short period of time what had been a circular migration gave way to a permanent population of illegal immigrants now reaching an estimated 12 million. The demand for immigrant labor continued unabated but the number of legal entries allotted to Mexicans remained unrealistically small—so small, in fact, and in such discrepancy with the realities of labor supply and demand as to ensure that many immigrants would have to enter the country illegally. As of July 2005, the annual number of family visas allowed under the U.S. visa preference system was 226,000 and the number of employment visas was 140,000 (Hernández 2006). No country is permitted to use more than 7 percent of those visas. By comparison, an estimated 150,000 persons arrive in the U.S. without documents every year. Increased discrimination and deaths of people trying to cross the border have not lessened migration—they have only

resulted in wasted resources and steep suffering among vulnerable workers eager to find their way into America.

Conditions have grown even worse in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. Over the last five years immigration has emerged as a new fulcrum galvanizing public concerns over national security. A decade and a half of escalating hostility against Mexican arrivals, especially those without proper documentation, exploded into new forms of repression starting in 2003 when the Immigration and Naturalization Service was dismembered and folded into the recently established Office of Homeland Security. That dependency was created with one goal in mind: to protect Americans from the threats of terrorism. By moving immigration services into Homeland Security immigrants were de facto redefined as security risks and potential terrorists. Of little significance in this madding process were the facts—it did not matter that those responsible for the 9/11 attack had entered the U.S. legally or that most illegal aliens seldom violate the laws of the land, or that not a single terrorist has ever entered the U.S. via its southern border. In the face of all evidence, the drumbeat of unreason prevailed leading politicians to advocate extreme measures, including the building of an electrified 2000-mile fence between Mexico and the United States, the imposition of severe penalties on employers who hire unauthorized immigrants, and the denial of citizenship to the children of illegal aliens. So far, none of those measures has been implemented but the growing hostility they foster augurs badly for immigrants and their children who now face growing discrimination and rancor. For the first time in recent history, Mexicans and Central Americans face a fate similar to that which stifled the capacity of African Americans to gain full membership in American Society.

Perhaps the most lamentable aspect in this situation is its superfluity. Immigration, whether legal or illegal, has never constituted a major problem in the United States. Latin Americans liv-

ing in this country hardly present a security threat. When given an opportunity they have assimilated like the members of other groups. Only ignorance and fear in tandem with political opportunism can explain the present state of things. In the next section I give attention to ten points concerning the reality of immigration to the U.S.

### **Immigrants: Assets or Burdens?**

The best way to understand immigration—both legal and illegal—is by enumerating the facts that surround it.

- **Fact One:** Most immigrants to the United States come from a single country—Mexico. More than half of all legal entries to this country are Mexicans and more than half of illegal aliens come from Mexico with smaller but fast rising groups originating in Central America. About a third of all immigrants since 1965 are Asians (Portes 2006). For the most part, first-generation Asians and Mexicans do not become involved in criminal activities or terrorist acts.
- **Fact Two:** Unemployment among first-generation immigrants is virtually nonexistent; most immigrants arrive in this country eager to work and easily find jobs. Although the overall effect of immigration on the U.S. economy is small, immigrant workers are vital to the stability and growth of sectors such as agriculture, the hospitality industry, construction, and other like services (Alba and Nee 2005). Working-class immigrants tend to take jobs that are unlikely to be filled by native-born residents. There is some debate about the effect of immigrant workers on the urban poor. Nevertheless, most studies conclude that such an effect, when present, is minuscule. Moreover, to base concerns over immigration on its impact on racial minorities is disingenuous—the members of long established U.S. populations would not be competing for entry

level jobs if adequate channels for their economic mobility were in place.

- **Fact Three:** Most illegal immigrants pay taxes (Massey 2003). Even when using counterfeit documentation, illegal immigrants make contributions to the nation's coffers. In addition, their illegal status makes it difficult for many of them to obtain pensions and other benefits reserved to citizens. Their contributions represent a net gain for the nation. Immigrants also represent a burgeoning market and, when presented with the opportunity, they tend to participate constructively in political processes.
- **Fact Four:** Most illegal immigrants do not use services or depend on public assistance for fear of deportation. It is true that in some localities immigrants crowd schools and emergency rooms. That problem would be largely resolved if immigrants were legalized. Citizens and permanent residents are less likely to cluster in low-income neighborhoods with over-taxed resources.
- **Fact Five:** Whether legal or illegal, most immigrants in the U.S. endorse the norms and culture of the United States. Some authors, like Samuel Huntington (2005), argue that cultural differences among Hispanics threaten prevailing American values. That argument flies in the face of reality. Mexicans, for example, have a long tradition of European and American acculturation; they espouse Christian values and are conversant with mores and aspirations familiar in this country (Portes 2006). It is, in fact, their devotion to family and work—two central tenets of American culture—that first propels them in their journey to the U.S. The complaints regularly aired through talk show radio and, most notoriously, through TV series like "Broken Borders," the unhappy creation of journalist Lou Dobbs, eerily echo the chauvinistic rantings against

Irish, Polish, Jewish and Italian immigrants heard more than a hundred years ago, at the turn of the twentieth century.

- **Fact Six:** It is not true that immigrants from Latin America refuse to speak English or maintain a separatist attitude. English is far from being a beleaguered language in need of defense. More than 90 percent of immigrants in the U.S. speak English, at least to some extent. Almost universally, they try to speak the dominant tongue to better communicate with employers and service providers. English as a Second Language courses are oversubscribed throughout the nation. It is unreasonable to think that people who first came to this country in search of opportunity would spurn a major skill necessary for their own economic and social advancement. Most second-generation immigrants speak only English (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In fact, where immigrants are concerned, the problem is not that they refuse to learn English, but that they lose the language of their ancestors so quickly.
- **Fact Seven:** All attempts at curtailing illegal immigration to the U.S. have failed largely because the availability of legal resident visas is in great disparity with both employer demand and labor supply. Under present regulations, Mexico—a neighboring country with a population of 107 million people and a long trajectory of economic interdependence with the U.S.—is entitled to the same number of legal entries as tiny countries in Africa and Oceania (Massey 2003). The waiting period to gain legal admission to this country ranges between ten and twenty years. Less costly and wasteful than current proposals for the construction of fences and the expansion of vigilante squads along the U.S.-Mexico border would be to close the quota disparity in ways that reflect true market conditions.
- **Fact Eight:** Reputable studies show that, on the average, first-

generation immigrants exhibit better health indicators than the U.S. public at large (Rumbaut 1996; 1999). That is partly because limited resources prevent them from partaking of the dangerous distractions that so often doom more established populations. Child mortality and morbidity rates are low among first-generation Mexicans as is the consumption of controlled substances. The evidence does not support the claim that illegal immigrants are carriers of disease.

- **Fact Nine:** At least a third of illegal immigrants in the United States are youngsters who first entered the United States with their parents. Those children did not make an independent decision to cross borders illegally. They have grown up in this country, speak only English, and many have no memory of their ancestral nation. Yet, given their irregular status, those children face limited opportunities in education and employment. Their fate should be a central concern among policy makers.
- **Fact Ten:** Mounting evidence, the result of painstaking research, clearly shows that, in the age of globalization and with growing points of contact between Mexico and the U.S., illegal immigration will continue unabated. The question is not whether people will keep flowing to points of opportunity but whether more will have to die or sink to the bottom of the social ladder in the process.

### **Conclusion: On Whose Side is God?**

To reconcile American values and history with present attitudes towards immigration boggles the mind. A country known for its reliance on democratic ideals, market forces, and cultural tolerance is presently engaged in a denial of its own tradition. The America that overcame Nazism and Communism now sees a few

million modest workers eager to find a second chance within its borders as enemies. The nation that emerged victorious from the Second World War to spread the advantages and disadvantages of market capitalism throughout the world now wishes to see immigrants, the very embodiment of individualism and self-reliance, crushed and ousted. Those contradictions would be risible were they not tragic. To espouse exclusion over inclusion is as immoral as it is self-defeating. The assault against illegal immigrants is not only an attack against persons and families but also an affront to knowledge.

It has become fashionable to argue that Americans are not plagued by a spirit of xenophobia; that they are not against immigration but only against those who break the law; that all they seek is to protect national sovereignty. Outsiders, so the argument goes, should wait for their turn to enter the U.S. in an orderly fashion and in accordance with established procedures. To do otherwise is to make a selfish choice in detriment of those who play by the rules. That kind of reasoning assumes that all people face the same options. Yet the workers who cross borders without papers are making the only reasonable choice available to them: to survive and endure despite the barriers created by outdated and ineffective laws. By accident of birth their alternatives are limited.

It is part of our Judeo-Christian tradition to recognize one fundamental truth—that the law cannot be above justice. America has always derived strength from those with the courage and imagination to change or defy bad legislation in the interest of fair play. From the pilgrim settlers who yearned for religious freedom to those who made possible the American Civil Rights Movement, little social progress has been made in this country without breaking injurious rules. Those who sanctimoniously advocate respect for the law might have, in a different era, supported segregationist norms even as Harriet Tubman worked in the shadows to free slaves along the Underground Railroad.

Can God be on the side of those who uphold the law at the expense of humanity? No, is the resounding answer heard throughout the Old and New Testaments—God is always on the side of the suffering. Thus, the study of immigration presents more than an opportunity to fulfill academic objectives; it is also a platform to achieve what sociologist Marvin Bressler (1964) calls encoded decency. A systematic investigation of the facts surrounding immigration can lead to better understanding but also to the establishment of more sensible and humane approaches than those currently in existence.

Finally, a few more words are necessary about the unintended consequences of misguided immigration policies. Those laws are certain not to curtail the flow of people seeking alternatives in the U.S. but they may achieve a different and unexpected outcome—the creation of a hostile climate in which the children of once hopeful immigrants will scoff at the purported merits of democracy, opportunity, and fair treatment. Whether legal or not, immigrants are here to stay. The only doubt is whether they will end up as citizens, or whether they will enlarge the looming and desperate American underclass.

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## IMMIGRATION AND THE BIBLE: COMMENTS BY A DIASPORIC THEOLOGIAN

Luis R. Rivera Rodríguez

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Dr. Rivera serves as Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for the Study of Latino/a Theology and Ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. He is a native of Puerto Rico, where he taught for nine years at the Evangelical Seminary prior to joining McCormick's faculty in 1995. His most recent research and teaching focuses on the theological, ethical and hermeneutical challenges posed by the experiences of global migrations and the formation of diaspora communities and Christian immigrant congregations amidst multicultural societies in a globalized world. He is coeditor of *Diccionario de Intérpretes de la Fe* (also in Portuguese and English).

My commentaries about the Bible and immigration are very limited and focused on the Old Testament. I am not a biblical scholar but a theologian who always seeks to be informed by biblical studies. Therefore, this presentation constitutes more of a theological reading of some biblical texts than a scholarly exposition of them.

I share this reflection as one who considers himself a first generation migrant, even though as a Puerto Rican my legal status is not one of an immigrant. I construct my biography and identity as a transnational diasporan, that is, one who has come from another country, conditioned by colonial relationships with Spain

and the United States, and who has resettled in the United States while keeping real and imaginary relationships and connections to the place of origin.

I approach this topic with a commitment to defend the aspirations and rights of immigrant workers, refugees and asylees. Their decision and experience to migrate are part of the strategies of survival and development that individuals and families try in response to national and international contexts of economic, political and social instability, dependency, and integration that characterizes the capitalist world economy today. I also locate myself within the public sectors and political opinion in this country that favor an open, though regulated, immigration policy and seek a diverse and just society in which unity and diversity are defined interculturally.

I will present and expand three theses on the topic of the Bible and immigration.

### FIRST THESIS

*References related to human (and divine) migrations constitute an important motif in Christian Scriptures. The experience and consciousness of migration have shaped profoundly the content of the Old and New Testament.*

The experiences of being an internal migrant, an immigrant, a refugee, an exilee, a pilgrim, a resident alien, a conqueror, a colonizer, and a person in diaspora are represented and reflected upon religiously and politically in many texts in both Testaments. The Old Testament presents, historically and imaginatively, different passages related to migrations: narratives and stories of national formation; mobility of families because of war and environmental factors; imperial invasions and exiles; national restorations; diaspora communities; the conquest of other people; the social control of minority groups; and the destruction of Israel as a state. The

New Testament also represents, historically and imaginatively, experiences of internal migration, emigration and immigration that early Christian leaders, groups and congregations experienced.

In the Old Testament, in particular, there are texts in which the people of Israel, their ancestors and descendants, are represented as migrant people who experience voluntary or forced migrations in the midst of imperial/colonial dynamics (Pentateuch; exilic Prophets; Lamentations; Psalm 137). Stories of voluntary exodus and forced exiles present people and families experiencing uprootedness and displacement from homelands, as well as relocation and short or long-term settlements in foreign lands. Many of these stories illustrate the main factors contributing to the migration of people: economic and political interventions of imperial countries; regional warfare and local conflicts; political and religious persecution; wars; economic crisis; environmental disasters (droughts, floods, famine, and plagues); family reunion; and even religious motivations like revelations and pilgrimages.

There are other stories in which Israel and her representatives are found already in foreign lands as minority groups. They are represented experiencing different social conditions in relation to majority groups in the receiving country (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome). Israel and Israelites are pictured as oppressed minorities settled in one place (Exodus; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Esther; Lamentations); or as wandering and welcomed sojourners in a region or as resident aliens at peace or in conflict with local groups (Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph); or as members of foreign elites serving in the court of gentile kings (Nehemiah; Esther; Daniel). Many of these stories illustrate the troubles, plights, and hardships of immigrant and minority groups in foreign lands. They also speak about the strategies of survival, negotiation and resistance that foreign and minority groups develop in response to the political practices of majority groups and the hierarchical struc-

tures of power (class, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, language, etc.) in receiving countries.

Several of the biblical traditions allow us to have a sense of the debates and tensions among different sectors in the exilic and diaspora communities. There are writings that give voice to the despair and desolation of exilic people (Lamentations; Psalm 137), and other voices that attempt to console and give hope (Second Isaiah). There are voices that call for separation and segregation in the foreign land (Daniel 1-6), and others that seem to suggest some form of accommodation in the imperial situation (Esther; Nehemiah). There are voices that picture in negative terms the encounter with the gentile/foreigner (Joshua; Deuteronomy; Nehemiah) and other voices that offer a more positive profile of those multicultural experiences (Jonah; Esther; Ruth).

Apart from stories of exit and entry in a foreign land, we find stories and prophetic traditions that call the exilic Israel to hope and prepare for a new exodus or return migration to the native land (Second Isaiah; Jeremiah). Some of the stories narrate the home return and the work of conquering and reconstruction by returning Israelites, including their conflicts with indigenous groups or co-ethnics that never left the land in exile (Ezra; Nehemiah).

Still other biblical passages present Israel as a host country or becoming a majority group (laws toward foreigners in Deuteronomy; Joshua). These passages give us pictures of conquered and displaced foreign people who have turned foreigners in their own land given Israel's conquest; internal migrants who have become resident aliens and minorities in the midst of Israel; returning Israelites from exile; and pilgrims from the diaspora visiting the land. Prophets and legislators sometimes encouraged the domination, social control and aggression against these minorities, and at other times, they bring words of judgment against Israel's

oppressive practices against their foreign or native minorities.

In all of these stories that show Israel and Israelites as foreigners or in contact with foreigners as minority or majority groups, we find different ways of constructing the image of the other. Gentile strangers can take one of three forms for Israel.<sup>1</sup> Strangers can be enemies of God and Israel; a threat to Israel's political and spiritual survival, and well-being (Joshua; Ezra; Nehemiah; Lamentations). Sometimes, gentiles and foreigners can turn into admirers of Israel and fearers of God who turn into friends and allies of Israel (Jonah; Daniel 1-6; Esther). At other times, there are ideal pictures of foreigners becoming acceptable resident aliens, or members of Israel as proselytes (Ruth), or members of the assembly (Isaiah 56:6-7; Zechariah 2:10-11; Isaiah 19:24-25), or part of the human diaspora that will come to Jerusalem to honor God and the city (pilgrimage of foreigners to Jerusalem in Isaiah 2:56-66).

In summary, the motif of migration and the relationships between indigenous and foreign groups, and majority and minority groups in host lands, are part of the social and theological scenarios through which biblical texts convey their messages. For this reason, the Bible "speaks" to Christians concerned with migration issues or who engage in migratory and hosting practices.

## SECOND THESIS

*Among the biblical legal traditions that deal with immigrants, the Deuteronomist tradition, which speaks of the resident alien (ger), constitutes a potential though limited and ambiguous resource for formulating pastoral agendas and theologies that support the struggle for justice of immigrants in our days.*

The resident alien or *ger* in these legal documents refers to a foreigner who is settled in Israelite territory, has a minority status, is expected to conform to the internal regulations of an Israelite community, does not have kinship ties, is most likely landless, and

lacks basic resources and full benefits in the host community. Therefore, they experience economic poverty, social vulnerability, political marginalization, religious subordination, and cultural distance or non-assimilation.<sup>2</sup>

Legal traditions in the book of Deuteronomy recognize resident aliens as part of the larger community as one of the vulnerable groups in society, and expect them to conform to Israelite social and cultural rules:

But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work- you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you (Deut. 5:14).

Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths... you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people- men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns, so that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law... (Deut. 31:10, 12).

There are laws that call for social solidarity and promote moral responsibility to provide for the material needs of resident aliens. (Deut. 14:22-29; 16:9-12, 13-15; 24:17-18, 19-22; and 26:12-15):

Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your town; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake (Deut. 14:28-29).

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this (Deut. 24:19-22).

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, then you shall say before the Lord your God: "I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows, in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me..." (Deut.26:12-13).

These legal traditions also promote a moral consciousness and a public practice that secure some minimal standard for the well being and some minimal rights to resident aliens:<sup>3</sup>

I charge your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien" (Deut. 1:16).

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them



their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt (Deut. 24:14-15).

You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this (Deut. 24:17-18).

There are at least four incentives given to follow these policies in relation to the resident aliens: a) first, the love and concern of God for the resident alien; b) second, the empathy and solidarity that former slaves and aliens should have; c) the potential blessing for obeying God's law; and finally, d) the avoidance of divine curse:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deut. 10:17-20).

"Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (Deut. 27:19).

Some aspects of the Deuteronomy's theological worldview can be resources for a theological reflection on the dignity and rights of immigrants. For example, God is concerned with the material well-being and physical survival of vulnerable groups, including resident aliens. God commands fair treatment and justice in legal

and labor matters for them. God loves the strangers and demands from Israel a similar attitude and commitment to them. Israel, as host society and majority group, is called to integrate, respect and engage in practices that guarantee minimal rights and the life of vulnerable resident aliens. Israel is expected to exercise an ethics of solidarity and care for their subordinate and vulnerable groups.

But these concerns for resident aliens do not mean that all foreigners and resident aliens are perceived and treated like equals in status, privileges, rights, and responsibilities. Some foreigners are off limits but some resident aliens are selectively recognized and respected:

No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord... You shall never promote their welfare or their prosperity as long as you live (Deut. 23:2, 6).

You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien (ger) residing in their land. The children of the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:7, 8).

The justice and care that these laws talk about do not envision a project of equality and inclusiveness in economic, social, political and religious terms. These laws imply the acceptance of the subordinate and vulnerable status and some of them work with a negative stereotype of these foreigner groups:

You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the aliens residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God (Deut. 14: 21).

You shall not charge interest on loans to another Israelite... On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest...(Deut. 23:19, 20).

But if you will not obey the Lord your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees... then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you... Aliens residing among you shall ascend above you higher and higher, while you shall descend lower and lower. They shall lend to you but you shall not lend to them; they shall be the head and you shall be the tail (Deut. 28:15, 43-44).

In attempting to retrieve critically these biblical materials, we need to recognize the ambiguities that we recognize in the texts in light of our contemporary values and expectations for social justice. The welfare system advanced in these texts implies the acceptance of resident aliens in their status as minority, subordinate and vulnerable groups within the social hierarchies in the Israelite society. The God of the Deuteronomist is also a god who promotes the conquering of territories, the destitutions of indigent populations, the genocide of native peoples, the discrimination of foreigners, and allows the subordinate and dependent status of resident aliens.

### THIRD THESIS

*When critically studied, Scriptures provide religious and ethical insights to inform and support a theological and pastoral agenda that supports the struggles and aspirations for justice and human rights of immigrant workers around the world and in the U.S.A. The critical interpretation of these biblical traditions for us today requires the elaboration of some hermeneutical principles.*

1. Our reading strategies of biblical texts that represent dynamics

of migration require that we explore them with attention to our best understanding of the complex economic, socio-political and cultural factors and situations that precipitate and sustain migration flows and networks, among others: a) systems of sending and receiving societies, b) imperial and colonial dynamics, c) the emergence of immigrant communities, d) the development of multicultural societies, e) relations between and among majority and minority groups, f) the dynamics and politics of national and diasporic groups, g) the variety of nationalist, diasporic and cosmopolitan agendas with different ethnocentric and ethnorelativist ideologies, h) the practice of racialization and racism, i) the practices and ideologies of social hierarchies (class, gender, ethnic, racial, generational, etc.) that affect citizens and denizens, j) the emergence of reform and social movements in multicultural situations, k) the dynamics and changes in migrant religious communities.

2. The interpretation of biblical texts that refer to dynamics of migration requires that we become aware of their religious, sociological and political functions. These texts may: a) give religious, moral and political meaning to historical events; b) provide religious, moral and political sanctions to social practices and institutions; c) establish or legitimize social and power relationships in and between majority and minority groups; d) construct group or national identities in encounters with foreigners in asymmetrical power relationships; e) develop religious and political agendas or projects; f) engage in ideological critique of other religious-political interpretations and projects inside and outside Israel.
3. The retrieval of biblical texts to reflect and respond theologically, ethically and pastorally to the challenges of migration processes today requires the practice of a political hermeneutics. We need to recognize, first, the differences and commonalities of our historical contexts of migration; second, the

possibilities, limits, and ambiguities of these traditions as resources; third, how our interpretations of these texts are shaped by our social locations, ideological commitments, strategic agendas, reading strategies, and religious and ethical options.

4. Finally, we need to become aware of the contemporary experiences and sources that provide us with visions, values, and options to interpret and deal with migration issues, for example, the UN Convention on Protection on Rights of Migrant Workers.<sup>4</sup> Let me illustrate and finish with this last point.

We can say with the Deuteronomist: “You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice.” But with the Convention, we can specify: migrant workers and members of their families shall have the right to liberty and security of person; shall be free to leave any State; shall have the right at any time to enter and remain in their State of origin; shall not be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; shall not be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home, correspondence or other communications, or to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation; shall not be subject to measures of collective expulsion; shall have the right to life; shall be respected for their cultural identity; shall have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose their place of residence.

We can join the Deuteronomists in demanding: “Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien.” The Convention allows us to claim that migrant workers and members of their families shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; shall have the right to freedom of expression; shall have the right to have recourse to the protection and assistance of the consular or diplomatic authorities of their state of ori-

gin; shall be entitled to effective protection by the State against violence, physical injury, threats and intimidation whether by public officials or by private individuals, groups or institutions; when arrested, shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of their detention and order their release if the detention is not lawful; when deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person and for their cultural identity; shall have the right to equality with nationals of the State concerned before the courts and tribunals.

We can insist with the Deuteronomists: “You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns.” With the Convention, we add: migrant workers and members of their families shall enjoy treatment not less favourable than that which applies to nationals of the State of employment in respect of remuneration and other conditions of work; shall not be arbitrarily deprived of property, whether owned individually or in association with others; shall not be held in slavery or servitude; shall have the right to take part in meeting and activities of trade unions; shall have the right to receive any medical care that is urgently required for the preservation of their life or the avoidance of irreparable harm to their health on the basis of equality of treatment with nationals of the State concerned; upon the termination of their stay in the state of employment, shall have the right to transfer their earnings and savings, and their personal effects and belongings.

There are words and wisdom in the book of Deuteronomy that allow us to say and live boldly something that our faith requires but no UN Convention will say: “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” and “cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology" in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Edited by Mark G. Brett (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996): 117-142.
- <sup>2</sup> Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice made Legal. Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002): 45-48. José E. Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel. The (ger) in the Old Testament* (BZAW 283; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999). Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah. History and Motif in Biblical Narrative*, (JSOTSup, 231: Sheffield: JOST Press, 1997), chapter 2. C. von Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (JSOTSup, 107: Sheffield: JOST Press, 1991). Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social and Religious Institutions*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961). Frank A. Spina, "Israelites as gerim, 'Sojourners,' in Social and Historical Context," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983). Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde im Antiken Juda* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). Epsztein, Leon, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986).
- <sup>3</sup> This writer follows those interpreters that see in the Deuteronomist's legal instructions an attempt to promote a commitment to some forms of justice and welfare for vulnerable sectors in Israelite society. See, F.C. Frensham, "Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21 (April 1962): 129-139. H. Eberhard von Waldow, "Social Responsibility and Social Structure in Early Israel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970):182-204. P.C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1976): 233-234, 244-247, 310-324. Leon Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1986). A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991): 245-246; 259-261; 326-327. Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996): 8-30. For a challenge to this line of interpretation see, Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice made Legal. Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> The following quotations on the rights of migrant workers are taken from "The International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families" of the United Nations. ([http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/m\\_mwctoc.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/m_mwctoc.htm))

## IMMIGRATION AND THEOLOGY: REFLECTIONS BY AN IMPLICATED THEOLOGIAN

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Anyone who has read the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures knows that theological reflection on immigration is as old as the Bible, and older. However, the present context and reasons for immigration are not what they were in the biblical or ecclesial past, and so with biblical and ecclesial insights we must also take into consideration the new issues and realities that our forebears did not and could not have considered.

As all of you know, I am Roman Catholic. Consequently, I will be speaking from within my theological tradition, although I suspect that most of what I will suggest here will be acceptable in other Christian theological traditions. I have been a U.S. citizen for most of my life, but I came to the U.S. as a young immigrant—and so, I am personally implicated in my own reflections.

As we must all expect, given the necessary brevity of my remarks today, much that would need to be said and reflected on the topics of my presentation cannot be included or referred to here. I suspect that what I will present to you, however, will be enough to lead us to a lively discussion at the end, and hopefully motivate some of us to do further theological research.<sup>1</sup>

Why should American theologians reflect on immigration as it occurs today? There are a number of very important reasons. Let me just mention two that are important to me. **FIRST.** From the reality of my own church: Nearly half of all Catholics in the United States are Latinas/os.<sup>2</sup> Although the majority of Latina/o Catholics are *not* immigrants, millions of us are immigrants or the children of immigrants; and add to these numbers the millions of Filipino, Vietnamese, African, Canadian and European Catholic immigrants. How can we honestly and ethically engage in *American Catholic ministry* or *American Catholic theology* and disregard the most traumatic experience in the life of millions of members of the *American Catholic Church*? And I know that, perhaps without *yet* confronting the same dramatic demographic impact, other American denominations have begun to react to the growing immigrant presence in their midst. Just one example I know well: the Episcopal Church USA in 1990 counted Latinas/os 2% of their national membership, but in just ten years (2000) that proportion had risen to 12% Latinas/os—most of them immigrants.<sup>3</sup>

**SECOND.** Christian theological tradition has often spoken of the whole Christian Church as a “pilgrim people,” a people on the move.<sup>4</sup> These images are not just poetic phrases. They indicate a reality that lies at the very foundations of Christianity, they remind us of some practical consequences of Jesus’ preaching on the Reign of God, they point to Christianity’s approach to and understanding of reality, and to its experience of the trinitarian God (more specifically its pneumatology). Or put differently, it is

impossible to be a Christian and be “stuck” in the past... or in the present. Christianity journeys forward, toward a still unknown future, and is a living witness to the precarious and always penultimate quality of all human societies, of all human explanations, and of all human expectations. Indeed, it is part of the genius of Christianity to value what is truly human while at the same time critiquing its claims to finality. Only God is final and absolute, and nothing else (and this includes all of our churches) can make such claims. This double genius of the Christian Church has managed to push Christianity always forward in spite of its own follies and sins, without losing its foundational roots. The image of a “pilgrim people,” therefore, is not just a poetic phrase but touches the very core (the very “dogmatic” core) of who we are as a Christian people.

Now, can we be on a “pilgrimage” without ever “moving”? Can a people “move” into the future without somehow becoming “immigrants” into that very future? Can we do theology or ministry without somehow reflecting on the meaning of “migrating” (even if only from the known to the unknown)? Can we be Christians without *ourselves* becoming “immigrants” into the future of humankind? Can we speak seriously and responsibly about the future fulfillment of the Reign of God without realizing that it requires *our* “migrating” into the future, and thus our becoming “immigrants” in and to the Reign? No one can hope to participate in the Reign of God without first admitting that she/he is an “immigrant” in that Reign—and again, these are not poetic phrases or homiletic recourses but explicitly dogmatic statements (in the theological sense of “dogmatic”).

Theological reflection on immigration is not just for those who are immigrants or the children of immigrants. It is not just for those who are pastorally engaged with immigrants and their families. It is (and must be) part and parcel of what Christian theologians and ministers do. Indeed, if these theologians and ministers

are American, a further reason is the very definition of “American-ness”—could we understand ourselves as a nation without incorporating into that understanding the categories of “pilgrimage,” “future,” and “immigration”?

Immigration today is not simply a repetition of immigration in the past. The contexts and reasons for contemporary immigration are not just the same as those of the 19th century, for example. In order for me to explain what I mean, and in order to have some ground on which to build a theological reflection, let me first (and very briefly) discuss what I understand by “globalization” and some of its consequences. I will then share with you some theological reflections, mostly posed as ongoing questions, on immigration and on its importance for Christian theology. The present-day reflection on immigration has been mostly left to politicians, social scientists, ethicists and pastoral agents—and there are plenty of reasons for this; but systematic theologians have to face the issues sooner or later. As a systematician, I want to suggest a few thoughts on the matter.

Theology is not a monologue. From the very beginning of our discipline, theologians have assumed as necessary their dialogue with other “sciences,” and indeed with human experience as the latter is understood and explained by the social and human sciences. That is why philosophy has always been so important for theology, and why increasingly today the social sciences are welcome and important dialogue partners for theologians. I mention this because I will need to refer very briefly here to the economy and to human culture, before addressing the specifically theological issues.

### **I. Globalization and some of its consequences**

By “globalization” is meant the theoretical paradigm that attempts to describe humanity’s current stage, with special

emphasis on the development of worldwide capitalism as the new cultural context.<sup>5</sup> There is no commonly agreed definition of “globalization,” but most scholars agree that globalization at least refers to “the increasingly interconnected character of the political, economic, and social life of the peoples on this planet.” More concretely, globalization is the extension of the effects of modernity to the entire world, accompanied by the compression of time and space brought about by communication technologies.<sup>6</sup>

In the process of the “de-territorialization” of capital, not only economic strategies and institutions become globalized: ideas, thought processes, and socio-cultural patterns of behavior are also globalized and “de-territorialized.” Breaking cultural, social, political, and ideological barriers (which had been built over the centuries), the mass media and other means of massive and instant communication have shaped (and continue to shape) a truly global mass culture. A whole universe of symbols and signs is now broadcast and distributed globally by the modern means of communications, thereby defining anew the manner in which millions of persons throughout the world think, feel, desire, imagine, believe and act. Signs and symbols are increasingly disconnected from historical, religious, ethnic, national or linguistic particularities, becoming “de-territorialized” and “global.”

There is little doubt that globalization has appropriated those elements of modernity and post-modernity that serve its “de-territorializing,” global project, although globalization should not be confused with the historical stages usually referred to as “modernity” and “post-modernity.” Thus, for example, globalization emphasizes the very “post-modern” attitude that relativizes all claims to truth or to universal validity in order to bring down the cultural, political or religious barriers that may stand in the way of the methods and activities of the transnational corporations. But at the same time, globalization emphasizes the very “modern”

and universalizing scientific and technological claims made by Western societies, since the 18th century, in their quest to control knowledge and the creation of knowledge in the world—thereby denying scientific and technological legitimacy or equality to any scientific or technological alternative from outside the Western world.

The evident success of the transnational, globalization model in *some* corners of the world, however, has made the rest of the world (i.e., the vast majority of humans, which are deemed to be “not successful” by the standards of globalization) to also wish for the success they see elsewhere for themselves.

It would be utterly naive to think that the “de-territorialization” of the economy, of cultural imagination, and even of human identities, somehow follows or obeys the dynamics of equality or democracy. In fact, globalization seems to imply and assume the construction of new hierarchies of power, of new power structures across the world. What globalization brings is a new, asymmetric distribution of privileges and exclusions, of possibilities and of hopelessness, of freedoms and slaveries. During the last three millennia, asymmetric power relations in the world were organized so that the rich needed the poor (whether it was for the rich to “save their souls” through works of charity on behalf of the poor, or to exploit the poor through labor in order to further increase the rich’s wealth). Now, in these globalized times, the poor seem to be no longer necessary. Wealth and capital increase without the work of the poor (among other reasons because the labor force needed in the globalized economy is a trained labor force which, almost by definition, prevents the participation of the poor). Globalization is a new way of producing wealth, but it is also (and concomitantly) a new way of producing poverty.

Let me argue that while the “physicality” of territory has been important to humans, its importance has not been mainly due to

the “physicality” of the land, but, rather, its importance resided mostly in a people’s ability to sustain their lives and their identity as a people “there.” Put differently, “territory” is the condition that sustained human life and helped identify a people as such in a given “place,” while on the other hand, globalization is intimately connected with “de-territorialization.” In other words, globalization causes and is caused (among other reasons) by the possibility of *not needing* a “place” which would identify and sustain a people as “this” people.

Identity and sustenance, in the new economy, come from the possibilities opened by being members of the so-called “global village.” Identity and sustenance, thus conceived, dramatically alter (and clearly subvert) what has been traditionally understood by “identity” and “sustenance” and, consequently, also impact such categories as “loyalty,” “honor,” “citizenship,” “nationality,” and “immigration.” The very notion of “immigration,” after all, assumes a set of cultural and political definitions (such as “border”) that, thanks to the globalized economy, are gradually losing their hold on human experience.

Boundaries between states become increasingly insignificant in the flow of information and capital. The movement of peoples, especially rural peoples in search of the benefits of globalization, makes the meaning of “home” as an ancestral place less significant. If boundaries have played an important role in identity by helping us define who we are by who we are not, they are now so crisscrossed by globalization processes that they seem to have lost their identity-conferring power.

I find it highly ironic that oftentimes the same individuals and groups who enthusiastically and uncritically endorse the economic and cultural conditions which foster globalization, probably because they are benefiting from them, are often the same individuals and groups who then wish to hold back the consequences

of the transformation of the traditional cultural definitions and political structures which globalization is quickly dismantling. In other words, it is impossible to support an unbridled global market economy (or the conditions for and benefits thereof) without compromising family and communal values, beliefs and expectations, and without actively promoting the migration of millions.

Given what I have been saying on globalization and “de-territorialization,” immigration cannot be simply or naively viewed today as the movement of individuals who individually decided to move from one geographic location to another, even when crossing national boundaries. Globalization inevitably forces millions to migrate, and is the cause of most present-day immigration.

The global economy is a reality. The global labor market is a reality. The global distribution of symbolic and material products is a reality. Global mass culture is an increasing reality. The power of nations is no longer what it used to be prior to the emergence of the transnational corporations and, as a consequence, identity and sustenance are no longer necessarily tied to a geographic location for millions of people.

People migrate because they need to find employment in order to feed their families, educate their children, and be able to afford healthcare—these are human, moral rights, and Christian ethics has consistently affirmed this. Consequently, we may ask, do people have the moral right to migrate across borders when their very existence and livelihood is at risk? Can national laws ultimately prevent immigration when pervasive globalization, supported by the very governments and power groups that want to stop the migratory flow, is forcing millions of humans to migrate in order to simply live?

The growing reality of exchange and engagement through immigration (of building and rebuilding, and of defining and

redefining the human community), as well as the “pilgrim” foundations of Christianity, make me wonder if we are not also urgently in need of a new ecclesiology that, while also reflecting on the usual topics of any substantive ecclesiology, would take seriously the experience of doctrinal issues raised by immigration, viewing the entire ecclesiological construct from the perspective of immigration.

## II. Theological Reflections

While we consider that new ecclesiology, I will recommend here a few questions to guide and foster the reflection, as well as a renewed understanding of “catholicity.” FIRST, “catholicity.” Ever since the councils of Christian antiquity, Christian doctrine has consistently taught that the Church must recognize itself as both “catholic” and “one.” There is no choice possible between these two “marks” of the Church—catholicity and unity are non-negotiable and equally necessary. History reminds us, however, that there is no easy way of fostering both catholicity and unity.

“Catholicity” (meaning “universality”) is not a question of geography. In other words, the catholicity of the Church does not depend on the latter’s presence in every corner of the planet. If this were so, how could we claim that early Christianity was indeed “catholic”? Catholicity is a quality of the Church—a quality that describes a constitutive and indispensable dimension of the Church’s mission and foundational grace. Catholicity has to do with universality as quality, as attitude, as vocation. The Church is “catholic” because its doors are open to every human being, and to every human group, without distinction and without barriers. The Church is “catholic” because it refuses to assume that one human culture is superior to others, or that one human culture or nation is “better suited” as witness and bearer of the Christian gospel, or that one theology is the standard for all oth-



ers. Indeed, it is part of the very definition of catholicity that national, cultural, racial, political, gender, economic and theological barriers and imperial/colonizing attitudes must come down as a direct consequence of God’s revelation in Christ.

Catholicity does not stamp out diversity. On the contrary, it assumes the legitimacy of diversity. Universality does not necessitate uniformity—but it does require the end of prejudice and of all claims of superiority over others. In some ways, it is possible to argue that catholicity offers the Church the ground on which to understand and engage contemporary globalization while at the same time allowing the Church to prophetically critique globalization’s inhuman consequences. Where globalization attempts to erase diversity, catholicity can strongly support diversity. Where globalization would implement unfair power and class relations, catholicity can demand equality and respect for the rights of all humans. Indeed, the Church’s catholicity can play this prophetic role precisely because the Church too is a global community, whose identity does not depend on nationalities, territories, racial categories, or borders that serve as barriers.

It is indeed part of the genius of Christianity to engage and dialogue with every culture, every race, every people, and every idea. The Church will not necessarily come to agree with all, but agreement or disagreement cannot occur without prior discernment, and discernment cannot happen without prior knowledge. Knowledge, in turn, cannot come about without serious engagement and exchange. The catholicity of the Church can and does transcend and critique the barriers established by human societies throughout the centuries precisely because it assumes and engages human diversity.

Welcoming the stranger (the “immigrant,” we could say today) is the most often repeated commandment in the Hebrew Scriptures, with the exception of the imperative to worship only

the one God. And the love of neighbor (especially of the more vulnerable neighbor) is doubtlessly the New Testament’s constant demand. Further, the best Christian social ethics has consistently defended not only the human rights of immigrants but also their right to migrate across borders in order to find security and livelihood. Whatever the cause of immigration today, there can be no doubt as to where the Church must stand when it comes to defending the immigrant.

In mainstream Christian teaching, immigrants are *not* and *cannot* be considered “aliens” or “foreigners” among Christians. Immigrants, on the contrary, are always valued as “neighbors,” and we all know the New Testament’s repeated and emphatic command to love our neighbor—regardless of the neighbor’s virtues or lack thereof. From the apostolic Church through the great bishops of Christian antiquity to our own generation, we find a constant, broad and powerful stream of voices insisting that the neighbor in need must be loved and protected—and treated as equal. The moral demands on Christians seem clear. The doctrinal explanation and grounding of these moral demands are solid. The particularities of each situation will dictate *how* immigrants’ rights will be defended and protected—but there is no question on *whether* they should be defended and protected.

AND LAST: Questions to guide and promote a new ecclesiological construct. Beyond my remarks on the necessary Christian attitude toward immigrants, and arguably *much more important in the long run*, are the following theological, dogmatic questions that might appropriately ground and guide the construction of a theology of immigration within a fundamental ecclesiology:

1. Given the global economy and the “de-territorialization” it has brought about, could we argue that immigration is *the* indispensable “sacrament” of the Church’s catholicity today? Can we have catholicity today without immigration?

2. Can we be “catholic” without recognizing in ourselves and in our immigrant neighbors the “pilgrim” condition so emphatically taught by the Scriptures and required of all who hope to participate in the Reign of God—thereby making immigration the contemporary definition of “pilgrim Church”—with all that the latter implies (or should imply) in ecclesiology?
3. Can we discover in the immigrant (and in the experience of immigration) the very dimension of catholicity that defines Christianity, thereby making the fair treatment of the immigrant, and our understanding of the experience of immigration, necessary to Christianity (not just pastorally but dogmatically)?

Immigration is not going to stop—and given contemporary globalization, it cannot stop. And yet a thorough, systematic theological reflection on immigration is still in the future. Theologians have been dealing with immigration from the perspective of ethics (social or personal), but the questions posed to dogmatic or systematic theologians by globalization, “de-territorialization” and immigration have frequently gone unheard and consequently unanswered.

I cannot and do not pretend to have done here more than a quick “scratch of the surface.” In fact, I know that I have done nothing but suggest that immigration, and its contemporary global context, merit careful study on the part of theologians—not just as an ethical or pastoral issue, but as a profoundly dogmatic one. And I hope to have adequately made the point.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The present text is identical to that of the paper I presented at the HTI’s 2006 Summer Workshop in Princeton. I have intentionally kept the tone of the oral presentation and limited the endnotes to those the reader might want to consult in order to continue her/his reflection and further reading. The sources mentioned in the endnotes include ample bibliographies on all topics raised in the present text.

- <sup>2</sup> All statistics on Latinas/os in society and church are from the document “The Latino/a Face of the American Church,” by the staff of the Center for the Study of Latino/a Catholicism (University of San Diego). This document gathered a number of statistical studies, done by others independently of the Center, and collated their results into a coherent, single narrative. The document was published internally by the Center in 2003, and for use by the Center’s staff.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. my keynote address to the annual (2003) convention of the Episcopal diocese of San Diego. The text was published in the diocesan newspaper (*Church Times*).
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. O. Espín, “Migration and Human Condition: Theological Considerations on Religious Identities and Unexpected Inter-Religious Dialogue.” In: R. Fornet-Betancourt, ed. *Migration und Interkulturalität: Theologische und Philosophische Herausforderungen* (Aachen, Germany: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz, 2004), 177-188. And idem, “Immigration, Territory, and Globalization: Theological Reflections.” In: *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*, 7:3 (2000), 46-59. These two articles include bibliographies on many of the issues raised here and elsewhere in the present paper.
- <sup>5</sup> This definition of globalization (with greater problematization thereof) I owe to Robert Schreier. He presented it in a paper at an annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and then elaborated it further in his book *The New Catholicity*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- <sup>6</sup> For further developments of some key ideas briefly presented in this section on globalization and its consequences, and for ample bibliographical references, cf. O. Espín, “Immigration, Territory, and Globalization: Theological Reflections,” cit.; and idem, “Toward the Construction of an Intercultural Theology of Tradition.” In: *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*, 9:3 (2002), 22-59.

## Beyond Hospitality: Implications of Im/migration for Teología y Pastoral de Conjunto

Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández

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I am at the stage in my life where most of us would crave stability, however I find myself as part of the global phenomenon of “people on the move.” I am from the Bronx, I live in Washington, I work in Chicago, and in the “off-season” I teach across the U.S. for a couple of weeks here and there to supplement my income. As a professor in a Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry I am a gray-collar<sup>1</sup> theological migrant worker. If you ask me where home is I will tell you New York, though I have not lived there in decades—but that’s where my family lives. In the past two years, the words of bi-national, bilingual poet Francisco Alarcón have taken on a special and quite literal significance for me: “mis raíces las cargo siempre conmigo enrolladas

me sirven de almohada (I carry my roots with me all the time rolled up I use them as my pillow.).”<sup>2</sup>

I concur with Fernando Segovia’s honesty about the situatedness of our theologies, reflected in his admission that “[a]t a fundamental level I have used my life story as a foundation for my work.”<sup>3</sup> My migratory experiences are not accompanied by the concomitant dangers and injustices lived by refugees and those among us who lack the proper documents. This is thanks to decisions made by grandparents on both sides of my family who made their journeys to insure their children would be born and/or raised in the United States. But my family story is not all that different from so many in this latest wave of migrations to North America. My Slavic father’s oldest brother came as a toddler and earned his citizenship by serving in the U.S. Army and surviving World War II. My uncle’s experience is not unlike a number of the 30,000 plus foreign nationals in the U.S. military today with dreams of becoming citizens through their service. My mother’s parents detoured through Cuba from Spain, victims of revised U.S. immigration policies. They married and conceived their firstborn in Cuba, and, like so many today, their migration to the U.S. bears unexplained contradictions in documentation. But from their journeys my inheritance includes a fondness for plátanos (sweet fried plantains), an inexplicable level of comfort in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the word guagua<sup>4</sup> and the responsibility to wear a white shirt as a sign of solidarity and as a reminder to a commitment that transcends generations.<sup>5</sup> Migrations are not objects of disengaged study, they are sources of theological reflection that emerge from mi vida cotidiana (my daily living). And as a Hispanic theologian, rooted in an appreciation of teología y pastoral de conjunto, I see no demarcation amongst theological disciplines that sets pastoral theology and practical concerns as separate and secondary fields of study in the church and the academy.

One of the advantages of doing theology latinamente<sup>6</sup> is that our recognition of lo cotidiano (the daily) as locus theologicus allows us to accept the reality that all theology is local.<sup>7</sup> Therefore to reflect on migration abstractly, removed from the context of real people and communities in complex situations, is counterintuitive and unproductive. Our local theologies arise from our communities of accountability, and we need to remember that in the context of migration to, from and through the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Canada our communities and churches comprise migrants and their families, border patrol agents and federal judges, politicians and policy-makers of all stripes, the conflicted and the xenophobic, the fearful and the threatened, minutemen and activists, companions and those struggling to live as good neighbors. With this complexity of our communities in mind, I would like to focus on four challenges for theological reflection and praxis latinamente; first, retrieving the lost memories of las luchas (the struggles) from past migrations; second, cultivating dynamic solidarity across difference; third, changing the language and rhetoric that surrounds im/migration; fourth, avoiding the temptation to spiritualize border-crossings.

### Retrieving Our Stories

Author Alfredo Véa, in his novel *The Silver Cloud Café*, poignantly dedicated to migrants, challenges the cultural amnesia that plagues the United States:

You must seek out remembrance, for ours is a land of amnesiacs who pretend that there is no past; that America is a multi-cultural land when, in truth, it is an anticultural place that has ever been blessed with persistent and enduring cultures that have survived never-ending efforts to drag them out of sight; push them out of mind; to imprison them in the past.<sup>8</sup>

Later in the book he goes on to unmask the price paid for such forgetfulness, “Americans run away from their old names, their old dialects, from extended families, from relationships. They run from languages, from people of color. The aggression of racism and the hatred against the bakla are more ways of running.”<sup>9</sup>

All theology is local! “This is America. When Ordering, Speak English,” proclaims the laminated sign in South Philly’s Geno’s Steaks, proudly placed by the owner, Joey Vento, grandson of Italian immigrants.<sup>10</sup> Vento’s conviction grounded in a flawed understanding of his own country’s immigration policies prior to 1921, is not the exception in our churches and communities. Reflected in the sentiment is the sad reality that our ecclesial institutions may well have contributed over the years to an assimilation and white-washing of countless migrants to the point where the sacrifices and struggles of emigrating ancestors have been sanitized, romanticized and idealized. This leaves the descendants without the context necessary to be in solidarity with or even tolerate the presence of those who come seeking the very same things that their elders sought. As theologians, ministers, and members of communities of faith, how do we heal cultural amnesia? How do we provide the tools, resources, space and support necessary for our communities to begin the risky prospect of retrieving their own, our own, stories?

### **Dragging the Middle to the Edge**

All theology is local! At the end of June 2006 in the Catholic diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma, a pastoral visit by Bishop Edward Slattery uncovered “a sense of disruption,” articulated by a number of the founding English-speaking members of a parish upset with the proactive outreach initiated by a relatively new pastor.<sup>11</sup> The bishop himself also came under fire for celebrating confirmation predominantly in Spanish. As the meeting became more

heated, Slattery was shocked to hear a parishioner declare “Yes, and I’ll drive a bus,” in response to whether or not all those without acceptable documentation should be deported. “You have something to learn here,” the bishop replied, “and it’s the Gospel.”<sup>12</sup>

Beneath the layers of fear was not only ignorance about the Church’s social justice teachings but an experience of displacement on the part of some in the Anglophone community. The disconnect between the church’s teachings and the lived experience of this particular community is mirrored across the Catholic continuum in North America. The inability of ecclesial leadership to communicate this profound tradition of social justice in a concrete manner that makes sense to the grassroots remains an obstacle to the task of justice. For over a century, the Catholic Church has developed and continues to proclaim a dynamic tradition grounded in a respect for the fundamental dignity of all human beings, insured by defense of basic human rights, including the right to migrate. Yet this tradition sadly remains unknown or ancillary to the majority of the faithful. This ignorance leads to the conclusion expressed by a frustrated parishioner to Bishop Slattery, “The Catholic church should have a plan.”<sup>13</sup>

For our churches to have any impact beyond the immediate signs of our *tiempos mixtos*,<sup>14</sup> we must move and sometimes drag the center to the edge and the edge to the heart of the center.<sup>15</sup> Yet, lest we forget, the middle that requires some dragging also includes *nuestra comunidad latina* (our Latina/o community). The reality of our community’s growing affluence, influence and value as a market audience is a source of pride and tension. *La lucha* (the struggle), for increasing numbers of our people (ourselves included considering the privileged position of scholars), entails aspiration to and maintenance of a comfortable material existence. However, the focus of Hispanic ministry in many of our churches attends necessarily to the needs of the least of our

hermanas y hermanos (sisters and brothers). This is not always well-received. The proceedings of a national symposium of Catholic Hispanic ministries reports,

This focus has led, at times, to tensions between new immigrants and U.S.-born Hispanics. The recent influx of new immigrants from Mexico and Central America into areas traditionally populated by Puerto Ricans, Cubans, or Mexican Americans is presenting new challenges to Hispanic ministry in dioceses throughout the country. Adding to this complexity are other ethnic groups with comparatively small migrations, such as Latinos of African descent who have long suffered racial prejudice, as well as indigenous peoples from rural regions of Mexico and other countries who may possess a low level of Spanish literacy.<sup>16</sup>

Those of us who have struggled to arrive in the middle can also be threatened, and solidarity can be an impediment to our social mobility. However there are signs of hope. A recent survey by the Center for the Study of Latino Religion shows that “74 percent of Latinos want their churches or religious organizations to aid undocumented immigrants even when providing such help is illegal...”<sup>17</sup>

### Changing the Rhetoric

There is a disturbing trend in immigration rhetoric, as exemplified by news commentator Lou Dobbs, to refer to those who migrate in dehumanizing terms. No matter one’s position on immigration reform, there is a need to examine critically the public language used to refer to people on the move, especially with respect to those of us who settle in communities and nations without the necessary documentation. The ongoing public rants that play on the fears and insecurities of citizens unjustly categorize

im/migrants at best as burdens on society and at worst as potential terrorists. Labeling human beings as illegals and/or aliens desensitizes individuals and communities to our shared humanity that is grounded in our being created in the divine image. Humans are not illegal, actions are; and migration is a human right with responsibilities not a criminal act. Furthermore the association of those of us who are migrants and immigrants as disease-bearers, especially in this age terrified of pandemics, harkens back to Nazi rhetoric about Jews and others deemed detrimental to the state, and recalls images of braceros in a cloud of DDT being fumigated prior to entering the United States to work.<sup>18</sup> The cost of collective dehumanization has been paid many times over in human suffering and the stains remain on the churches, communities and nations who remained passive in the presence of injustice.

But language can create distance even when used by those with the best of intentions. There is a need for us as theologians, ministers, educators and scholars to examine critically our own use of language in our scholarship, teaching, preaching and ecclesial statements. For example, there is a tendency to use the third person when referring people on the move. We are church and they are the stranger, we make an option for them!

This carelessness with language is also evident in ecclesial documents that reflect on diversity. Too often diversity is synonymous with difference and difference means the immigrant, the minority or the under-represented plurality. Diversity is a condition—of our humanity, our globe, our nations, our churches. It is not a characteristic of some who are in our midst; it is who we all are. The words of Chicano author Luis Alberto Urrea express this far more poetically. He writes in his book *Nobody’s Son*: “My life isn’t so different from yours. My life is utterly alien compared to yours. You and I have nothing to say to each other. You and I share the same story. I am the Other. I am you.”<sup>19</sup>

### Spiritualizing Our Discomfort

There is a temptation for some of us involved in ministry and theology to spiritualize that which makes us profoundly uncomfortable. While certainly the quest for freedom of religious expression has prompted movement across the centuries, more often than not migration is motivated by the need to eat, to feed one's family, to survive conscription and violence, to perhaps secure a future that might not be possible at home. There are those who migrate out of adventure or occupation, but for many, movement also implies loss; there are physical, psychological, economic, relational and social implications. To impose spiritual interpretations on *las vidas cotidianas* of those who comprise our communities of accountability is exploitative, manipulative and to a degree voyeuristic. To romanticize migration and canonize those among us who migrate is to dehumanize and disregard the particularity of each life.

Naïve interpretations of border-crossings as passion/resurrection experiences downplay the ongoing uncertainty and risk of life in the "promised land." All theology is local, but as the divisive legislation in Hazelton, Pennsylvania gains national momentum, we are reminded of how easy it is for the promise to dissolve. Neighbors turn in neighbors, families are separated even in detention, and job security takes on new meaning as raids threaten the daily rhythm of work. These are concrete human lives, not object lessons to deepen our faith or opportunities to exercise the corporal acts of mercy.

Exaggerated spiritualization conceals the more complex role religion certainly has to play. Sociologist Manuel Vásquez observes:

Religion helps immigrants imagine their homelands in diaspora and inscribe their memories and worldviews into the physical landscape and built environment. In

addition, religion regenerates and re-centers selves challenged by the migration process, producing new habituses, introducing new forms of collective and individual identity, and new understandings of citizenship, loyalty and community. Although these processes are 'imagined,' they are not inconsequential; they have tangible effects on space, time, and the body.<sup>20</sup>

As proposed legislation, policies and practices aimed at migrating peoples across Canada, the United States and Mexico become increasingly harsh and family unfriendly the prophetic role of our churches as sanctuary and advocate will be tested. There may indeed come the moment parallel to that experienced by our ecumenical *hermanos y hermanas* in Puerto Rico over Vieques. Rev. Heriberto Martínez, then Secretary General of the Council of Churches of Puerto Rico framed the prophetic challenge:

In addition to individual spiritual issues, the church had to denounce sin and announce hope. Vieques shook us from a colonial mentality which kept the religious domain apart from the social. It made us realize that we can't just say the Our Father, while remaining silent in the face of injustice. When the highest leaders of the churches decided to take part in civil disobedience, the church had to confront its role in society.<sup>21</sup>

In his Ash Wednesday sermon on March 1, 2006, Cardinal Roger Mahoney of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles called for civil disobedience on the part of the church's ministers, should HR 4437 become law. This controversial stance urging defiance if confronted with injustice was not new. Catholics would do well to remember that the Diocese of Caguas, Puerto Rico with the leadership of their bishop Alvarado Corrada del Río, "established a peace camp in February 2001, trained people to do civil disobedi-

ence, and produced user-friendly resources to help members understand the Vieques issue.”<sup>22</sup> Among the ecumenical community of 180 people arrested on May 4, 2000 for civil disobedience were Bishop Corrada del Río, whose diocese of Caguas includes Vieques, “34 nuns, 18 priests, 7 seminarians, and many deacons and lay people.”<sup>23</sup>

The contemporary contexts of im/migration challenge us as Latina/o scholars, ministers and theologians to comprehend teología y pastoral de conjunto as a prophetic invitation to retrieve lost memories; to cultivate solidarity; to humanize our discourse; and to respect the integrity of immigrants’ own stories. Hospitality is not enough! Even the posture of hospitality contains a hidden power differential revealed in the sentiment of a parishioner from that Tulsa Oklahoma parish: “the English-speaking parishioners have tried to be welcoming to the Hispanics. But many feel the newcomers have not reciprocated and that the Anglos’ contributions are not valued.”<sup>24</sup> The power resides on the side of the one who has the ability to choose to welcome or to turn away. The problem with hospitality as the predominant paradigm is that current usage of the language of stranger fails to appreciate that the stranger is not only the newcomer to the land, but also the inhabitant encountered by the sojourner.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I use the term gray-collar to refer to those among us in professions like teaching who augment salaries during semester breaks sometimes with labor traditionally understood as blue-collar.
- <sup>2</sup> Francisco Alarcón, “Roots/Raíces,” in *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera* (San Francisco, CA: Children’s Book Press, 1997, Bilingual edition, 2005), 5.
- <sup>3</sup> Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 155.
- <sup>4</sup> A colloquial term for “bus” used in parts of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

- <sup>5</sup> In the Spring 2006 rallies in support of the rights of immigrants in the U.S., the white shirt became the visible sign of solidarity especially for Latinos/as. White shirts are typically associated with workers in service industries and agriculture, areas of labor with a high presence of immigrants and Latinos/as. At the June 2006 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), white shirts were worn symbolically by those members of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) who also belonged to the CTSA in order to raise awareness and in efforts to have a resolution supporting just immigration reform put on the agenda and passed. The effort was successful and had been precipitated by a statement on immigration passed earlier in the week by ACHTUS at its annual colloquium, see <http://www.achtus.org/ImmigrationReform.html>. For the CTSA resolution see [http://www.jcu.edu/ctsa/convention\\_2006.html#immigration](http://www.jcu.edu/ctsa/convention_2006.html#immigration).
- <sup>6</sup> Many Latina/o theologians claim to do their theologies de conjunto or en conjunto. Therefore to do theology latinamente, as Orlando Espín observes, refers to a manner of doing theology jointly whereby “the ‘product’ ultimately belongs to the community...and must also spring from and reflect the reality and faith of the people among whom the theologians live and work.” See Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz, eds., *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations In Catholic Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 1-3, 262-263.
- <sup>7</sup> Jean-Pierre Ruiz develops well this concept of theology as local in the context of im/migration in “Taking the Local: Toward a Contemporary Theology of Migration,” in *From Strangers to Neighbors: Reflections on the Pastoral Theology of Human Migration* (New York: St. John’s University Vincentian Center for Church and Society, 2004), 2-18.
- <sup>8</sup> Alfredo Vea, Jr., *The Silver Cloud Cafe* (New York: Penguin Plume, 1997), 125.
- <sup>9</sup> Alfredo Vea, Jr., 198.
- <sup>10</sup> Gaiutra Bahadur, “The Immigration Debate | Then Vs. Now: An Old Struggle To Adapt To a New Country’s Ways,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 30, 2006). <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/14697552.htm>
- <sup>11</sup> Marilyn Duck, “Bishop Meets With Parishioners Angry Over Perceived Slight.” <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/update/nt072606.htm>. Thanks To Jean-Pierre Ruiz for calling my attention to this article.
- <sup>12</sup> Duck, “Bishop Meets With Parishioners Angry Over Perceived Slight.”
- <sup>13</sup> Duck, “Bishop Meets With Parishioners Angry Over Perceived Slight.”
- <sup>14</sup> I borrow this expression from Jean-Pierre Ruiz, see “Taking the Local: Toward a Contemporary Theology of Migration.”
- <sup>15</sup> I borrow this expression and image from Donald Pelotte, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, who said the following, “Not only must your ministries take you to the edge, but you must simultaneously teach the center of society and move the center—sometimes drag the center unwillingly—to the margins where the poor and powerless can be found.” See Bishop Donald Pelotte,



"Six Challenges for Justice Ministries," *Origins* 21:10 (August 1, 1991), #4, 158.

<sup>16</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), "Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry," (2002), #73.  
<http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.shtml>

<sup>17</sup> Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, "Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings," Center for the Study of Latino Religion (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Institute for Latino Studies, January 2003), 17.  
<http://www.nd.edu/~cslr/research/pubs/HispChurchesEnglishWEB.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> For a photographic image of braceros being sprayed with DDT prior to being allowed entrance into the U.S. to work in agriculture see National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, "Opportunity or Exploitation: The Bracero Program," in *America on the Move* online exhibition, [http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/themes/story\\_51\\_5.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/themes/story_51_5.html).

<sup>19</sup> Luis Alberto Urrea, *Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 58.

<sup>20</sup> Manuel A. Vásquez, "Historicizing and Materializing the Study of Religion: The Contribution of Migration Studies," in Karen I. Leonard, Alex Stepick, Manuel A. Vásquez, and Jennifer Holdaway, eds. *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2005), 238.

<sup>21</sup> Fellowship of Reconciliation, Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean, "The Churches and the Struggle for Peace in Vieques," *Puerto Rico Update*, Spring 2004.  
<http://www.forusa.org/programs/puertorico/pr-update-0504-1.html>

<sup>22</sup> "The Churches and the Struggle for Peace in Vieques."

<sup>23</sup> "The Churches and the Struggle for Peace in Vieques."

<sup>24</sup> Duck, "Bishop Meets With Parishioners Angry Over Perceived Slight."

## The *imago Dei* as Embodied in *Nepantla*, a Latino Perspective

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Dr. Alanís joined the faculty of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) at its extension program, the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS) in Austin, Texas in 2000. He is the Associate Professor of Theology, Culture and Ethics and serves as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. He is a native of south Texas whose grandparents and father were Mexican immigrants that emigrated to the U.S. during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920. His doctoral dissertation focused on the *imago Dei* construct as a venue for an ethical response to the plight of undocumented immigrants in the U.S., a subject he has written on extensively.

A little self-disclosure is in order here. I would like to create a geographical image in your mind so as to give you a reference point for this topic on the *imago Dei* and how this life-embodiment and life-affirming doctrine of the church might help us to value and affirm the human dignity of the most marginalized among us, and specifically the Hispanic and Latin American immigrants of our communities.<sup>1</sup> I have a particular interest in this topic as a focus of ministry as I am the son of immigrant parents and grandparents who left Mexico for south Texas during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920. My family settled in what is now referred to as the Río Grande Valley of south Texas

and specifically in the small town of San Juan that is located about 20 miles from the U.S. Mexican border. As the son of immigrants I inherited the oral history of my family and the experience of social, economic, political, and cultural displacement that now, almost one-hundred years later, continues to resonate with the experience of the newly arrived immigrants and the many folks who have lived in the borderlands since before the Alamo became the subject of film and fable.

This geographical location of the Spanish borderlands can be described by the *Náhuatl* word “nepantla,” an indigenous term meaning “the place in the middle.” It refers to that physical and psychical space where one experiences displacement as a way of being. In this middle zone one no longer belongs to one nation or another but somehow one belongs to both, while being claimed by neither. In this place of ambiguity, one experiences all kinds of disorientation. In this place one often becomes a non-person and a member of an invisible community that shares the experience of dislocation, cultural rejection and economic exploitation. Such is the condition of many of our neighbors in the Southwest, especially among the immigrants who come here seeking jobs and a better way of life. The idea that “they do not belong here” or that “they need to go back to where they came from” or in the alternative “to be sent back” is a primary subject of public discourse and public policy in Texas and throughout the nation, as witnessed recently by Samuel Huntington. I believe that the church is called to offer an alternative and critical commentary from a different paradigm.

Allow me to describe a scenario that I experienced this past summer as I was driving from San Juan in the Rio Grande Valley to Austin where I teach at the Lutheran Seminary of the Southwest and at the Episcopal Seminary in the Southwest. Not long after stopping at the border check point which is located approximately 90 miles from the U.S.-Mexican border, I saw three Mexican

men walking by the side of the road under the hot sun and in the middle of nowhere, as it were, in the midst of the wild brush country of south Texas. They were carrying the familiar plastic gallon milk containers that I assume contained water to drink. This is a common practice among undocumented immigrants who cross the border to go north looking for jobs. Since I was traveling at a high rate of speed, not an uncommon experience in those long stretches of the Texas brush country, I was unable to stop in time to offer them a ride. So I decided to go to the next turn-around that was not too far off and headed back to try to find them. I wanted to offer them a ride to San Antonio or to Austin. Since I could not find them I turned around again, but much to my frustration I was unable to locate them, leading me to conjecture three possibilities that may have occurred. The men either walked into the brush to continue their trek north, or someone else may have offered them a ride or, more than likely, they were picked up by the border patrol that often patrols those roads looking for the undocumented. The reason I suspect that these men were undocumented immigrants is because unlike U.S. citizens who hitch rides by a physical indication of their intent, these men did not. In fact, they were walking straight ahead without bothering to look back at passing motorists. This lack of intent to hitch a ride was a sure clue that they were not ordinary U.S. citizens.

In those long stretches of Texas brush country between the Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio, a distance of some 400 miles, it is not uncommon for border patrol vehicles to stop and park in hidden nooks along the road waiting for unsuspecting immigrants in order to deport them to Mexico. It is not uncommon along this stretch of borderland to see many border patrol vehicles transporting the undocumented who are in the back seat of the border patrol van sitting behind a grated screen, an image that is so familiar along this route that one hardly notices anymore unless prompted to do so. This image forms a part of the natural land-

scape of the Southwest. These men and women are the nameless non-persons who form the invisible community that supports and maintains the economic infrastructure of the American Southwest and beyond.

On another occasion our Seminary Program took a group of students to the border for a cultural *encuentro* or encounter with the people along both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. On our return to San Antonio and Austin and not far from the border cities of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras, we noticed a helicopter not far from the road and close to the land creating a whirlwind of dust in the desert landscape. In our naiveté we initially thought it must be some wealthy rancher herding cattle out of the desert brush. However, we thought it odd that a helicopter should be used for this purpose until we noticed the distinctive symbol of the border patrol. It dawned upon us that those flying the helicopter were not herding cattle out of the brush, but undocumented immigrants that were using this desolate place as their point of entry into Texas. They were being herded, corralled, and lassoed, as it were, by high-tech means. These undocumented immigrants, unable to earn a living in their native country, had become human targets for the U.S. deportation machine. We faculty and students returned to Austin that day with this graphic image firmly embedded on our minds. It would serve as a basis for our continuing conversation on what it means to be in ministry in the context of the Southwest.

Since we believe and teach that place is context for theological education and formation, allow me to locate our seminaries within the context of Austin, Texas. The Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest and the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest are located in a highly attractive and expensive part of the city just north of the University of Texas campus and very near the capitol. In fact, we can see the capitol dome through the windows of the

chapel. Like many other cities throughout the Southwest, Austin is divided both racially and economically, by an interstate highway. Historical records indicate that this demarcation was intentional and aimed at separating the downtown business and government district from the lower income and less developed Hispanic and African-American communities in East Austin.

I often take my students to the East side of Interstate 35 to have lunch at my favorite Mexican restaurant. I take them to the East side because I want them to see a part of the city that otherwise would remain unfamiliar to them. I also do this because I want them to meet the hard-working people who serve us meals, the waitresses and the cooks who speak to us in limited English but who will gladly converse with us in Spanish. They talk to us about their struggles in their native land and all they endured and suffered to get to this country. They tell us about *la lucha*, as *Mujerista* theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz calls it, the struggle of life on the margins of our communities. I tell my students that many of these folks are undocumented, but find here in East Austin a place where they can work and earn a living, which they do by serving us.

Out of curiosity I once asked the waitress who serves me on a regular basis where she came from. She told me Veracruz, México on the gulf coast. I asked her if she had crossed the border in Brownsville, Texas, or some other border town. She smiled and looked away as she told me in Spanish, "*por allí*," "thereabouts." I took that to mean that she crossed the border with the assistance of a *coyote*, a paid smuggler who helped her to cross the Rio Grande River or perhaps she swam across the river on her own. This is not an uncommon occurrence in the Texas borderlands. In fact, crossing the river under the cover of darkness was the way my father and his parents and extended family crossed the Rio Grande River in 1918 when they fled the Mexican Revolution. Like this waitress who serves me lunch each week in East Austin,

there are many others who serve us not only in the many fine restaurants and hotels of cities like San Antonio and Austin but throughout the country. This past summer while visiting Manhattan, I met two similar waiters who shared their story with me while serving me at upscale restaurants in Central Park.

In order to begin to answer the question of how the church embodies the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in the Southwest, I felt it necessary to give you this panoramic view of an immigrant reality that we as a theological community and church find difficult to dismiss and that we attempt to address in the preparation and formation of our clergy. We encourage our students to read the city as a text for theological study and critical reflection. We accompany them to develop critical thinking skills to help them ask the difficult doctrinal questions that arise from living in our particular context, e.g.:

- What does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God in the context of the Southwest where immigrants and many native folk are often not seen at all, even as they construct our roads, build our homes, serve us in restaurants, and live close enough to be our neighbors?
- What does it mean to be a seminary in mission in this context so that all people regardless of ethnic heritage, immigrant status, or native language are valued and esteemed as children of God?
- What does it mean for the church to embody a doctrine that affirms the life-creating and life-affirming nature of the Creator who from the very genesis of the creation narrative calls it “very good” (Genesis 1:31)?

These and other questions naturally arise from reading the biblical text of the *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26) within our context of mission and ministry.

### Perspectives on the Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*

Allow me to offer some potential insights to these questions that might shed light on how the church might respond to the invisible community and to those folks who are seeking answers to these and other questions. There have been many and diverse interpretations of the *imago Dei* throughout history, but most scholars today generally agree that the *imago Dei* refers to the profound value and sanctity of human life as well as the potential for relationship with the Creator. Claus Westermann indicates that to be created *in the image and likeness of God* does not mean a particular human quality (such as *reason* which was especially exalted during the Enlightenment). Rather, it concerns the purpose of relationship and responsibility for the creation. He observes that the Creator creates a being analogous to the Creator, to whom the Creator can speak, and who will listen and speak to the Creator. This purpose “remains true despite all human differences; every person is created in the image of God.”<sup>2</sup> Further, humanity is given a special task and is gifted with human dignity, a value of high esteem and respect that is intrinsic to human being. This value was of particular interest for the early church.

For Philip Hefner, the human being is created in the image of God as a *created co-creator* with a high destiny. This destiny is essential to the world if the human is to bear the mark of the Creator. For Hefner, the ability to make self-aware, self-critical decisions, to act on those decisions, as well as to take responsibility for them are characteristics that comprise the image of God in humanity. This includes the freedom to conceive of actions and to carry them out, a freedom that is grounded and finds meaning in a relationship with God. The ability to reflect on this freedom and actions is what allows the human agent as a *created co-creator* to be responsible for the creation and to discover one’s likeness to God and one’s origin and destiny in God.<sup>3</sup>

The early church tradition affirmed that the human being was created in the image and likeness of God and construed the *imago Dei* symbol as an inclusive concept that affirmed the human worth, dignity and nobility of all persons and of the marginalized in particular. Elaine Pagels observes that this interpretation of the doctrine was “good news” for the conquered and enslaved people of the Roman Empire. All the marginalized—women, children, slaves, and foreigners—were esteemed as members of the human family. They were valued as part of the good creation of God.<sup>4</sup> Members of the diverse Hispanic and Latina/o theological community recover this perspective of the church in their quest to affirm their own unique creation in the image and likeness of God. These voices offer critical insight and nuances of the image of God that reveal that the concept is not static or confined to the historical formulations of their traditions but is fluid as a live organism and symbol that seeks to express itself in new, creative, inclusive, and life-affirming ways.

Brazilian theologian Vitor Westhelle offers a perspective from the social context of the poor and powerless of Latin America that finds resonance within the context of the Southwest. Westhelle interprets the *imago Dei* as a praxis of love, which was the work of the Christ and his disciples. He maintains that the poor and the powerless of history cannot affirm their creation (of themselves or of the world around them) when they are searching for food in city dumps. This is a reality that our students at the Lutheran and Episcopal seminaries witnessed this year when we visited the city dump of Matamoros, Mexico on the border with Brownsville, Texas during our January cultural immersion experience. Westhelle reminds us of the reality of our neighbors in the two-thirds world and observes that to be created in the image of God is to participate in affirming the dignity of those who do not have a vital space to exist. For Westhelle, this justice praxis component of the *imago Dei* reflects the nature and imperative of God.<sup>5</sup>

Hispanic and Latina/o theologians and ethicists articulate the significance of the high destiny and task of the human agent who is *imago Dei* from within the experience of the community. Cuban immigrant and *Mujerista* theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz has identified this special task of the human agent as the historical project of the *kin-dom* of God in which the Latina/o community participates as historical subjects through the gift and responsibility of moral agency that is exercised in the struggle for justice. She notes that we are all *kin* to each other when we struggle for a more just and equitable community. To struggle for justice is to be *imago Dei*. She notes that one cannot call oneself a Christian and not struggle for justice, as justice is an inherent principle of the *kin-dom* of God. One participates in the *kin-dom* of God not as an isolated individual, a concept that is contrary to Hispanic and indigenous self-understanding, but as highly valued members of a community that share a common life in solidarity with others who struggle against systemic oppression and for the common good of the community. Isasi-Díaz speaks for many who continue to come to this country because of geo-political and global economic systems. She joins the cause of those who struggle daily not only to survive economically, but for a more just social order. She and others from within her tradition understand that many who appear to be invisible are not in fact nameless but have a name, a family, a faith life, and a place of origin that is dear to their hearts.<sup>6</sup>

This is a sentiment shared by Virgilio Elizondo, founder of the Mexican-American Cultural Center of San Antonio. He writes about his experience growing up in this city as a Mexican-American and being the subject of ridicule and of racial stereotypes because his culture and Spanish language were not valued. He has written extensively on the experience of the native Mexican-American population and the many Latino immigrants who visit his church, San Fernando Cathedral, where they find a

welcoming place. It is so welcoming that Rabbi Samuel Stahl of this city has called this historic church “the cathedral of the people.” I encourage you to visit this church that is located in the heart of this city. In his latest book, *A God of Incredible Surprises*, Elizondo writes that, “with each newborn child, the image and likeness of God are once again made visible. Or as our ancient Mesoamerican ancestors would say: Creation is once again renewed.”<sup>7</sup> Further, in the man Jesus the truth of God regarding the human is revealed. In Jesus, the *mestizo* or mix-blood peasant of Galilee, God became the nothing of the world, so that the nothing and everyone else may know that no one, no one human being, is inferior to others. This, Elizondo observes, is indeed “good news” for everyone, but especially for the “born-nothings” of this world. Because every human being is created to the image of God, to disregard anyone, to despise anyone, and even more to exploit, enslave, and rob the weak and the poor are offenses against the Creator for everyone is created with equal dignity, value, and beauty.<sup>8</sup>

Ethicist Ismael García, a Puerto Rican of the diaspora, offers yet another perspective of the *imago Dei*. Ismael teaches at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary not too far from our campus. He identifies the special task given the human at creation as the creative agency of the human being who is the image of God as a creative agent. This agency empowers the Hispanic community to pursue the vision or historical project of creating a more inclusive and compassionate community. Human dignity and responsibility are exemplified in the ethics of care of the community. For García, dignity or *dignidad* is a gift in the act of creation. It is relational in character and irrevocable.<sup>9</sup> It can be trampled upon, but no one can take it away.<sup>10</sup> Historian Justo González shares a similar view when he observes that creation in the image and likeness of God means the exercise of the creative power and love of God after whom we have been created. As love, the nature of God is

being-for-others. To be fully human is thus to be for others in a praxis of love and care.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the *imago Dei* is the language component that characterizes its essence for it is through language that one participates with the divine in co-creating and naming the world and God. In addition to acts of justice and ethical care and concern for others, to be *imago Dei* gives us the ability to know and to speak to God as *Diosito/Daddy*, the caring and endearing God who knows us intimately and cares for us. This is particularly significant for the immigrant and native Spanish-speaking and bi-lingual communities that now constitute a majority population in many of our cities such as San Antonio. As Westermann indicates, “implicit in being created in the image of God is the capacity for language.” The history of a people emerges from a common language that expresses the community’s self-understanding and concept of God.

Westermann’s observations resonate with the Hispanic perspective on the *imago Dei* for several reasons. First, language or the ability to speak and name the world is derivative of the *imago Dei* as a gift of God.<sup>12</sup> The language of the family of origin is a gift of a historical and theological world-view.<sup>13</sup> The gift of language also confers an identity that is nurtured and affirmed through the culture and history of the family and the community. It allows the beneficiaries of the gift to name the world and thereby to co-create with the Creator and Donor of the gift. It is through the capacity and gift of language implicit in the *imago Dei* and made explicit in our language of concern and care that the community is empowered to be co-creators with God as historical subjects and as agents of love and justice. It is through the language of the people that the ethics of care is embodied. Language as a form of communication allows one to connect with the other who may be a displaced immigrant. Language also allows the community to worship God in the language of the heart. For the Hispanic com-

munity the Spanish language is the language of prayer and of communion with God. Through the Spanish language we know God and hear God in the still small voice and in the *coritos*, the little chorus songs that are popular in our worship.<sup>14</sup> To ignore this gift or to attempt to eradicate it in the interests of national cohesion or church unity segregates and devalues native peoples.

Secondly, language represents history. The gift of language allows the connection to the past. It gives the Hispanic immigrant community its sense of history and specificity within a culture that is not their own. It nurtures the cultural memory of faith and reminds the community that it has a place of belonging in the heart of God. It also provides the connection to the larger Hispanic community throughout the United States so that a sense of solidarity and community arises wherever the Spanish language is spoken. It helps to end the isolation that many immigrants feel when they enter this country and do not speak the English language. It reminds them that they have a common history and familiar roots. It confers *dignidad* or dignity. Ismael García makes this point when he writes that the Spanish language for the Hispanic/Latino community is more than a tool of communication. *It is central to our identity.* Furthermore, he observes that “to let it go for the sake of social acceptance and advancement, which are quite uncertain, is to contribute to the process of self-annihilation and of diminishing of our dignity.”<sup>15</sup> To deny it is to violate the *imago Dei*.

These theologians remind us that the Hispanic community views itself as a people graced and empowered by a *dignidad* that is a gift of God and affirmed in a communal construct of the *imago Dei*. This symbol is about *familia* (family), which is a fluid and expansive concept for the Hispanic community. *Familia* includes more than blood relatives but the wider family of God that commune together around a common table as God has cared for us in and through the life and praxis of Jesus of Nazareth. *Familia*

includes the displaced persons of the community who worship with us in the familiar language of the heart. This language expresses the dialectic of the human and divine encounter in a relationship of care that crosses *fronteras* or boundaries such as the U.S. - Mexican border.

In San Antonio and throughout Texas, the distinct language of the people is a *mestizo* dialect known as “Tex-Mex,” a form of “Spanglish” that is typical of *nepantla*, that hybrid and liminal place where many diverse cultures meet to form a new culture and a new creation. In this city, this encounter of diversity is celebrated annually as *Fiesta*, a weeklong celebration that occurs every spring and that Virgilio Elizondo has described as a sign of the eschatological hope of the community.<sup>16</sup> During this week folks of many and diverse backgrounds gather as one big *familia* to celebrate the victory of life over death, and to affirm the present hope for a better future when all cultures and peoples will be a part of the Great Eschatological *Fiesta*.<sup>17</sup> In a similar manner, when Hispanic folks hear their own native language and dialects spoken in our churches and seminaries, as we do in the streets of San Antonio and Austin, and hear our God-talk in the special *coritos*, prayers and confessions of the church, as we do at our seminaries, then the church will indeed be a sign of that welcoming place where difference and diversity are valued and where identity is affirmed and celebrated as embodied *imago Dei*.

### Putting Flesh on the *imago Dei*

To answer the questions raised by this doctrine in our context of ministry the *imago Dei* must be en fleshed; that is, embodied in a way that does not do violence to any culture or tradition, but that affirms all cultures and traditions. Language is key here. To embody in the Spanish language means to *encarnar*, literally, to put on flesh. Our own scriptural tradition sheds light on this notion of embodiment. John 1:14 reminds us that “...the Word

became flesh, and dwelt among us, ..." This, I believe, is the apostle's way of saying that the Christ of faith put on particularity. The Word or *Logos* put on social location, specifically marginality, as a Galilean Jew. As the son of peasants, Jesus of Nazareth experienced the plight of immigrants who flee their countries of origin to escape all kinds of persecution. To put flesh on the *imago Dei* in our context is to see God *encarnado*, made flesh, in Jesus the homeless Jew and in those who come to us in like manner. Our context beckons us to examine His life from the perspective of the *fronteras*, the margins and middle zone where He lived and ministered. Immigrants and native folks in our context relate well to this image of God as Jesus the immigrant and homeless Jew because their experience is so similar.

Jesus was also born in *Nepantla*, a middle zone where cultures and peoples met and intermingled. He probably spoke a form of *mestizo* Greek and Aramaic similar to our own hybrid language of the borderlands. For Lutherans, whose confessional mantra is *sola gracia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*, the confession of John serves not only to highlight a Christocentric statement of faith, but also a cultural embodiment of divinity made flesh in the person of Jesus the Galilean *mestizo*. For Hispanic Lutherans in particular, one cannot avoid dismissing the nature of the Word made flesh in a *mestizo* and homeless Jew whose life mirrors their own in so many ways. In *Nepantla*, the Word puts on flesh in the lives and experience of the immigrants and native peoples who have lived on the margins of the *frontera*, the borderlands of the United States and Mexico.

To put flesh on the image of God that is the church in *Nepantla*, allow me to indicate some signifiers that I observed in the praxis of my own ministry while serving a parish in this city several years ago. In this borderland region where we find ourselves, the Church embodies the *imago Dei* in acts of service to the stranger, in hospitality that welcomes all people to our sacred spaces, and in acts of justice for the poor and the voiceless. While serving as a

pastor of a predominantly Anglo community, I took part in forming the South Side San Antonio Alliance, an organization of area churches that sought to serve the neighbor in visible and tangible ways. Churches of various traditions and confessions acted together to serve our community in such ministries as meals on wheels, youth advocacy and gang prevention, as well as advocacy for the undocumented and those without a voice. We took steps to make our worship culturally relevant and to incorporate the language of the people of our community in small but significant ways. We made hospitality a primary focus of our self-understanding as a church in mission.

We also took part in the annual Thanksgiving Day service and meal for the community that the Jiménez Family of San Antonio holds annually for anyone and everyone who may be homeless or without family during the holidays. Along with many volunteers we served hundreds of meals to the homeless and the undocumented, the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten. Everyone was served. No one was asked for documents. In this *fiesta*, citizenship status or the green card was irrelevant and of no consequence. This was table fellowship at its best and a sign of the kin-dom of God among us. It crossed denominational and cultural differences, ethnicities, social classes, political affiliations, and language barriers. This was a *fiesta* of the citizenship of the kin-dom of God where borders and barriers do not exclude anyone and where everyone is invited to the *fiesta*.

In Austin, one clearly sees the *imago Dei* embodied in acts of service and hospitality, such as at St. John/San Juan Lutheran Church, where both Anglo and Hispanic laity serve by offering their gifts of worship and leadership. Central Americans who fled the war in El Salvador years ago find in this predominantly Anglo community a place of cultural affirmation and a safe place of belonging. Their unique gifts and leadership are valued and recognized as gifts of service in the kin-dom of God. Our seminary



students also offer their gifts of service and talents at Iglesia Episopocal San Francisco de Asís in South Austin, and at Casa Marianela in East Austin, a community house for the undocumented. In these and many other ways the church embodies the image of God as a sign of hope and care in the community.

At ETSS and LSPS we live out our call to common mission in ways that embody a spirit of cooperation. We have worked together for 28 years in an attempt to make theological education contextually relevant and challenging. We have done this by actively listening to the other, at times offering suggestions and correctives and at times receiving them. Most recently we have made concerted efforts to reflect a strong sense of contextual relevance in our curriculum. With the assistance of a grant, ETSS invited Latina and Latino faculty from other seminaries to partner with the faculty in a project of curriculum review so as to ensure that the voices of the Hispanic community were reflected in each discipline. At LSPS, our faculty composition reflects this commitment. Many of our students, especially those from under-represented communities, have appreciated the intentional effort of the seminaries to allow their distinct voices and experience to be heard and celebrated. Together we have celebrated these voices in liturgy as well as in theological reflection, praxis, and proclamation. Though at times not without struggle, the experience as a whole has proved to be rewarding, transforming and enriching. We have enriched each other as we have learned to celebrate our own unique gifts and traditions with a strong sense of respect for the goodness of the other who is in the image and likeness of God.

### The *imago Dei* as Embodied *Esperanza*/Hope

To conclude, the questions that the symbol of the image Dei raises for us in the context of theological education in the Southwest leave us with both a challenge and a hope for a more

dignified present and future for all people. We are invited to see and hear our invisible neighbors as the other for whom Christ lived and died and rose so that in serving them in acts of justice we, as a seminary community and as a church, might embody the image of God in the world. We are challenged to enter into relationships of care and concern for the other such as those modeled for us in the life and praxis of Jesus the mestizo Jew of Nepantla so that those who are on the margins of our communities might have a hope for a more dignified and abundant life and ministry. We ourselves are challenged to go to the *fronteras*, where Jesus told his disciples that they would find Him, and there to enter into and experience the ambiguity of life lived in the middle zones. We are challenged to see the other, to really see and hear and serve the immigrant and native other who is our neighbor so that the invisible ones who have been created in the image and likeness of God might be made visible and together, as *familia en Cristo*, we might celebrate the embodied hope/*esperanza* that is our promise in community.

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The term Latin American refers to the many immigrants from throughout the hemisphere who are now our neighbors. Members of my parish from Central America prefer to use their national identity as their primary descriptor rather than to adopt the U.S. term "Hispanic" that lumps all Spanish-speaking groups into one category.
- <sup>2</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 10-11.
- <sup>3</sup> Philip Hefner, "Fourth Locus, The Creation," *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1. ed. Carl Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 325-7.
- <sup>4</sup> Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, first ed. (New York: Random House, 1989), 56-57, 100-101.
- <sup>5</sup> Vitor Westhelle, "Creation Motifs in the Search for a Vital Space: A Latin American Perspective," *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 128-40.

- <sup>6</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha, In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For an excellent study of the spiritual lives of an immigrant community, see Daniel G. Groody, *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> Virgilio Elizondo, *A God of Incredible Surprises: Jesus of Galilee* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 42.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>9</sup> Ismael García, *Dignidad: Ethics Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon 1997), 130-31.
- <sup>10</sup> Ismael García, "Ismael García: Speaking of Dignity." *Insights: The Faculty Journal of Austin Seminary* 114, no. 1 (1998): 19-23.
- <sup>11</sup> Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 131-8.
- <sup>12</sup> Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 11.
- <sup>13</sup> See González, *Mañana*, 75-87.
- <sup>14</sup> See Edwin Aponte, "Coritos as Active Symbols in Latino Protestant Popular Religion." *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 2, no. 4 (1995): 57-66.
- <sup>15</sup> García, *Dignidad*, 102-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988), 48-50.
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example, "Credo," Hispanic Creed, by Justo L. González, in *Mil Voces para Celebrar: Himnario Metodista*, (Abingdon, 1996), 70.

## We Are Not Your Diversity, We Are the Church! Ecclesiological Reflections from the Marginalized Many<sup>1</sup>

Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández

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"A lone sheep cries out:  
*There are more of us than them!*  
The flock keeps grazing."<sup>2</sup>

— Martín Espada

**A**s a U.S. Hispanic Catholic theologian, I take comfort and find challenge in a description by Luis Rivera-Pagán, of that proto-Latino theologian Bartolomé de las Casas: "His was the bitter honor of having many public noisy detractors and many secret silent admirers, ever since that day...in which he had the enigmatic intuition of being called to a prophetic vocation."<sup>3</sup> I keep these words in mind as this article raises questions that need to be raised by theologians emerging from la comunidad latina<sup>4</sup> in the U.S. Catholic Church, a community that can now best be described as a marginalized plurality. I resonate with Espada's prophetic sheep calling the flock not only to "do the math," but also to explore the ethical implications of this realidad nueva.<sup>5</sup>

"Doing the math" involves consideration of the statistics that provide insight into the Latina/o presence in the U.S. Catholic

Church and the pastoral responses of the institutional leadership to this growing community. Attention to the context of this realidad nueva also entails examination of the pastoral responses of the church in terms of the understanding of diversity that implicitly guides decisions impacting ministry with la comunidad latina. Theological reflection on diversity is necessary. Three loci, namely difference, commonality, and hybridity, emerge as distinct sources for such reflection.

### Contextual Horizons

Orlando Espín reminds us that any theology of grace is dependent on the daily lived experience of the theologian and his/her local community,<sup>6</sup> in other words, our first ethical responsibility is to acknowledge and recognize that each of our vidas cotidianas impact and influence our individual methodologies, foundations and starting points for reflection. “[L]o cotidiano makes social location explicit for it is the context of the person in relation to physical space, ethnic space, social space.”<sup>7</sup> Theologies that emerge from U.S. Latina/o perspectives bear an integrity marked by an openness to admit that our perspectives are situated and engaged, in other words to do theology latinamente is to engage de conjunto.<sup>8</sup>

Disembodied theologies result when we neglect to take into account the social contexts and lived experiences that shape our theological lenses, as well as those of our colleagues and predecessors in the academy and in the church, and the communities to whom we are accountable. To take this impact seriously does not mean we make our stories normative, but it does challenge temptations to universalize particular theologians or schools of thought as though they somehow transcend particularity. In many ways all theologies are contextual and to a degree autobiographical. Miguel Díaz reflects this in how he frames his conversation with

Karl Rahner, appropriately titled: *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives*. Díaz notes:

[M]y aim is to pave the way into an *analogical appreciation* of these two distinct but interrelated Catholic theological anthropologies, and their respective contexts. Whenever appropriate as a result of the ensuing conversation, challenge and critique will be carried out from the contextual horizon of each conversational partner. In so doing, we hope to avoid falling into the error of what Raúl Fornet-Betancourt ...has characterized as turning a specific categorical world into the center and horizon by which other worlds are accepted and understood.”<sup>9</sup>

What are the contextual horizons out of which U.S. Hispanic Catholic theologians reflect and write? The numbers indicate that the varied communities of people counted and included under the politically and socially charged umbrella terms of Hispanic and/or Latina/o constitute the fastest growing minority in the United States and the largest community in the U.S. Catholic Church. According to the figures quoted and used by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, approximately 39%, or 25 million of the nation’s 67.3 million U.S. Catholics are Hispanic.<sup>10</sup> Nationally, as well as in the Catholic church, the Latina/o population is characterized by its relative youth, with Hispanics comprising 41% of all Catholics under age 30, and 44% of children under 10.

While 71% of U.S. Catholic population growth since 1960 is attributable to la comunidad latina,<sup>12</sup> the number of Catholic Hispanic theologians has not proportionately kept pace with this reality and the face of ecclesial leadership fails to reflect what is not only the future of the church, but the present as well. Currently less than 10% of the nation’s bishops are Latinos; thus

there is a ratio of one bishop to every 231,000 Catholics in the United States but only one Hispanic bishop to every one million Latino/a Catholics in the country.<sup>13</sup> To date there has not been a U.S. Hispanic cardinal. Less than 7% of the nation's ordained clergy is Hispanic,<sup>14</sup> and "[w]hites still account for nearly two thirds of priesthood candidates enrolled in theologates. One in six (15 percent) is Hispanic/Latino."<sup>15</sup>

At the grassroots level, limited financial resources and lower levels of educational attainment affect the number of Latino/a laity involved in ecclesial ministries that do not require ordination. For example, Latinos/as comprise approximately 12% of participants in lay ecclesial ministry programs nationwide; in comparison "[n]early eight in ten participants... are white.... Hispanics/Latinos are much less likely to be enrolled in degree programs in lay ecclesial ministry formation and whites are much more likely to be enrolled in degree programs. Hispanics/Latinos are 6 percent of students enrolled in degree programs and 10 percent of students enrolled in certificate programs."<sup>16</sup> It is also telling that Latinos/as are "more likely to be providing their ministry as unpaid volunteers (25 percent compared to 12 percent)."<sup>17</sup>

The obvious implications of under-representation in all forms of ecclesial leadership is that more often than not Latino/a programs, parishes, and offices on the local and diocesan levels are managed by non-Hispanics; and the presence of Latinos/as in leadership, outside of the sphere of Hispanic ministries, is minimal. The correlation between under-representation and educational attainment cannot be under-estimated. The U.S. Bishops themselves admit that "[t]he limitation of resources dedicated to the education of Latinos has a direct impact on the number of Hispanics who have the necessary credentials to hold leadership-level positions."<sup>18</sup>

Not only are Latinos/as under-educated for ministerial leader-

ship, but even fewer are involved in the education and formation of the church's ministers. According to the data collected by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) from its member institutions, the presence of Latinos/as as students and faculty in theological education hovers around 3%. Latinos/as remain the most under-represented community in the academy especially in light of the size and exponential growth of the Hispanic population in general.<sup>19</sup> The most recent degree completion numbers for doctoral level programs at ATS schools are not encouraging: six men and three women earned the PhD/ThD and twenty men and two women the Doctor of Ministry degree.<sup>20</sup> Considering these numbers do not differentiate denominationally, the future for Catholics is particularly bleak. This minimal presence is reflected in a breakdown of the doctoral scholarship recipients of the Hispanic Theological Initiative from 1997-2005. Statistics indicate that 62% percent of the eighty-two awardees were Protestant and 38% were Catholic, a group that "does not mirror the religious orientation of Latinos in the general population."<sup>21</sup>

The human resource problem is coupled with a lack of material resources. Numbers alone do not necessarily translate into influence or access to those with decision-making or decision-breaking power. The Hispanic population in the church may have grown exponentially, but low representation in ministerial leadership, a paucity of presence in the education and formation of scholars and ministers, and recent pastoral developments cause skepticism about the institutional church's commitment to ministry with la comunidad latina. For example, the closures and/or mergers of parishes and schools across the nation have hit African Americans and Latinos/as particularly hard. Cardinal Francis George, commenting on school closings that would disproportionately impact poor and working class neighborhoods in his archdiocese of Chicago, noted "[w]hile the commitment remains strong, the resources remain limited."<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Archdiocese of Washington the Hispanic population has quadrupled over the past twenty-five years so that Latinos/as now constitute at least 40% of the Catholic community. In response, a pastoral plan several years in the making was released in June 2006. Entitled *Diverse in Culture, United in Faith*, the goals of the five year plan are to be funded out of the archdiocesan capital campaign, so that implementation will require no “shifting of priorities and resources at the expense of other ministries.”<sup>23</sup>

Clearly this remains to be seen, but as demonstrated with the situation in Chicago, there remains a disconnect between commitment to la comunidad latina and the recognition that this entails a serious allocation and reprioritization of both human and material resources. If not, Hispanic Catholics risk rapidly becoming a marginalized majority in our own church. It is worth heeding the experience of a parish lay leader: “I am discouraged by the fact that we, Hispanics, don’t count here in this parish. We come to mass in great numbers and our Masses are really filled with the spirit. But all the power is in the hands of a small group of (non-Hispanic) old-timers who contribute a lot of money to the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

### Dealing with Diversity: Homogenizing Difference

This sense of disempowerment is not only a local experience but it is communicated in an understanding of diversity that implicitly guides the direction of Hispanic ministry decisions by the ecclesial leadership. Two national examples from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Encuentro 2000* and the current proposal for the creation of a Committee on Culturally Diverse Communities, illustrate the marginalization that results for the U.S. church’s largest population when ecclesial leaders interpret diversity as difference that must be controlled.

In 1997 the U.S. bishops accepted the recommendation of their

Hispanic Affairs Committee to “convoke a national gathering in the Jubilee Year 2000 to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the Church in the United States.”<sup>25</sup> In the words of Bishop Gerald R. Barnes, then Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs, the premise of this fourth Encuentro was that the past three Encuentros had “given them [Hispanics] an opportunity to pray and share and listen to and with one another. As we begin the Third Millennium of Christianity, Hispanic Catholics in the United States want to gather once again with all their brothers and sisters in the Church to celebrate the cultural richness of the Catholic faith and to plan for new ways of evangelizing.”<sup>26</sup> Portrayed by the Bishops’ Conference as “a response to the challenges of serving culturally diverse communities, and especially the Hispanic community,”<sup>27</sup> this national intercultural event was convened in July 2000 in Los Angeles, California. The Committee on Hispanic Affairs and Hispanic Catholics served as the hosts and lead agents of “Encuentro 2000: Many Faces in God’s House,”

...[which] marked the first time that the Church in the United States gathered to recognize, affirm, and celebrate the cultural and racial diversity of its members. With the participation of more than five thousand leaders representing the many faces of the Church... Encuentro 2000 inspired and challenged Catholics in the United States to embrace a Catholic vision for the third millennium in which all are welcomed to the Father’s table.<sup>28</sup>

This event was not without controversy. There had been a degree of ownership by Hispanic Catholics of the Encuentro name and process that was nurtured over three national meetings from 1972-1985. Encuentro was a way of meeting, developed with Catholic Latinos/as, that promoted agency, favored consultation and served as a means to involve the grassroots in the ecclesial

decisions that impacted la comunidad. While the initial idea of a more inclusive Encuentro recognizing the plurality of cultures in the U.S. Church was said to have come from the Hispanic Affairs Committee there was a sense, on the part of some, that the name, process and players had been co-opted. The positive spin on Encuentro 2000 was that it reflected the hospitality of the new majority in recognizing “the many faces in God’s house.” The reality was that this invitation had come from the bishops of the United States and the faces of those with the power to extend the invitation did not and do not reflect this new majority.

The conspiracy-minded could certainly wonder how and why a process developed with Latinos/as struggling for their due attention in the church was transformed into a poly-cultural invitation to all. Why was such an invitation unfathomable when other ethnic groups constituted the dominant population? Why now was it so important to provide “an opportunity for the Church in the United States to gather, to engage in profound conversations about life and faith, to worship together, to learn from each other, to forgive one another and be reconciled, to acknowledge our unique histories, and to discover ways in which we, as Catholic communities, can be one Church yet come from diverse cultures and ethnicities.”<sup>29</sup> Why did the Encuentro, a gathering and process for empowering a particular disenfranchised community, suddenly have its focus change to “hospitality and strengthening the unity of the Church in a cultural context.”<sup>30</sup> What had changed? The demographics!

The operational understanding of diversity and the resulting marginalization is also evident in the current proposal to restructure the national conference. At their June 2006 meeting, the U.S. bishops entertained a proposed restructuring plan that would consolidate and/or eliminate a number of their standing committees. Among the potential victims of this plan is the Hispanic Affairs Committee. The office that supports this committee

remains significantly understaffed in proportion to the Latino/a presence in the church and under the new configuration Hispanic Affairs would be subsumed under a multicultural umbrella:

A Committee on Culturally Diverse Communities would replace current standing committees on African-American Catholics and Hispanic affairs and the ad hoc committee dealing with Native American Catholics. That committee would also be responsible for Catholics of Asian and Pacific Island descent, for which there is no current committee. It would have responsibility over the pastoral care of migrants, refugees and people on the move, which is currently under the aegis of the migration committee.<sup>31</sup>

While details of the restructuring will not be voted on until November 2006, concerns were raised that creating a “Diverse Culture Committee that would include all ethnic and racial groups would perhaps diminish the need to focus even more on pastoral outreach to the Hispanic Community, which is such a large and growing community.”<sup>32</sup> This was not new. In 2001 a group of regional and national leaders in Hispanic ministry, convened by the Hispanic Affairs Committee of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, identified a set of challenges impacting the ongoing development of ministry with la comunidad latina. They expressed reservations about “multicultural” models that would consolidate minorities under one umbrella thus diluting the particular identities and visions of the absorbed ethnic ministries. Articulated were concerns about a reduction of resources, limited access to the bishop, exclusion of the Hispanic ministry staff from pertinent decision-making processes and the overall effect on the Church’s ministries and mission.<sup>33</sup> The response of the bishops, seemingly ambivalent, in hindsight appears to have presaged the restructuring proposal: “We bishops are mindful of the cultural

diversity of the Church and of the need for effective ministry models. However, the size and long-standing presence of the Hispanic population call for an assertive response by the Church to the challenge of ministering among Hispanic Catholics.”<sup>34</sup>

Both Encuentro 2000 and the proposed restructuring plan are indicative of the bishops’ understanding of diversity. These two examples reflect an implicit attitude whereby difference is problematized, though euphemistically referenced as challenge. Diversity is not conceived of as a shared human and ecclesial condition; rather it is a means of referring to the ever-increasing presence of so-called minorities and immigrant populations. Diversity is in contrast to an unspoken normative understanding of the U.S. church, characterized as Anglophone and assimilated immigrant. The differences of generations of immigrants, primarily from across Europe, and the pastoral challenges that accompanied their linguistic, cultural, economic, racial and ethnic particularities are homogenized and romanticized at best, forgotten at worst. “English only” was used against Slavic peoples; “Whites only” discriminated against countless Mediterranean peoples; “Irish need not apply” restricted access to economic and social mobility. These communities too are the diversity of the church yet they are absent from the proposed “Diverse Culture Committee.” The African American, Hispanic and Native American communities predate the majority of the European presence in the United States, these communities are not the “new” face of the church, yet somehow they qualify for the “Diverse Culture Committee.” La comunidad latina is the largest presence in the church, should it not be the norm and all others fall under the purview of the umbrella group? In light of the Hispanic plurality, should not the descendants of earlier waves of immigration—English, Irish, Italian Polish, and German—now be considered the diversity?

Both Encuentro 2000 and the proposed Diverse Culture

Committee expose the operative paradigm: diversity is synonymous with difference and needs to be controlled. Difference suggests under-representation in leadership, vulnerability, need—especially with regard to social services, dislocation, and a degree of powerlessness, usually imposed from without though not recognized as such. The pastoral responses that accommodate this understanding of diversity amount to token gestures. To borrow the words of Justo González, the church,

can set up an office for ‘ethnic minority issues’; it can develop a ‘national plan for Hispanic ministry’ and then keep it marginal to the rest of the church; it can ‘elevate’ a few token minorities to positions of bureaucratic responsibility....the church can find a dozen ways to tell ethnic minorities as well as other marginalized people that they are welcome in the church, but that their presence is a problem.<sup>35</sup>

As theologians, what are the questions that we need to entertain in light of this nueva realidad? The overwhelming and growing presence of Latinos/as in the U.S. Catholic Church and the pastoral responses of current ecclesial leadership invite us as Hispanic theologians to explore diversity *latinamente*. Diversity discourse is not neutral and its presuppositions have practical implications and pastoral consequences. The church’s shifting contextual horizon, challenges paradigms that confuse universality with a powerful normative particularity. Theological reflection needs first to examine three loci which serve as sources for contemporary conversation and scholarship on diversity: difference, commonality, hybridity.

### **Diversity through the Lens of Difference**

Difference as a starting point for theological reflection on identity and diversity has both advantages and limitations. The cele-

bration of difference and a valuing of particularity is not a matter of political correctness or simply “identity politics.” Rather it is a way of responding to centuries of equating alterity as inferiority, a means of addressing systemic injustices and unequal access by promoting identity-based agency. Focusing on difference provides space for personal and collective identities to emerge and assume a visible public presence in una tierra that prizes assimilation. From *e pluribus unum* to the Body of Christ, accommodating difference within community remains a concern in the construction of identity.

A focus on difference is not without limitations. Particularity, even that, which resides on the margins, can be tempted to centrism, so much so that there is a failure to recognize points of intersection or to acknowledge the possibilities for common ground inherent in our human condition of multiple-belonging. Attention to relationality, for example, illuminates the reality that a number of the famous firsts and contributions we recognize during Hispanic Heritage Month in September/October also grace our celebrations of African American Heritage Month in February: Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, self described “Afroborinqueño,” curator of the largest collection of African and African American cultural materials in the world; Eugene Marino, first African American Catholic Archbishop in the U.S., son of a Puerto Rican father; Martín de Porres, first Black saint of the Americas; bomba and mambo, and the New York Cubans of baseball’s professional Negro Leagues—all represent a small part of intertwined inheritances that are sometimes missed in exclusive constructions of difference.

Some Hispanic theologians have reflected on difference as locus theologicus and recognized its limitations, including the danger of reifying the very stereotypes we sought to counter. María Pilar Aquino reminds us,

that any theological discourse that takes seriously into account the plural fabric of reality and of knowledge must deal also with the asymmetric character of social power relations at all levels. Theological discourse must critically confront the ethnocentric tendencies of all cultures, including its own, as well as avoid romanticizing its notions of family, community and people.<sup>36</sup>

Difference alone, whether experienced as Fernando Segovia’s being from two places but with no place to stand,<sup>37</sup> or as subsumed under umbrella terms like Latino/a or Hispanic, inadequately describes the experiences of communities and individuals whose diversity defies description. In his book from *Bomba to Hip Hop: Puerto Rican Culture & Latino Identity*, Juan Flores cautions that “generic, unqualified usage” of these terms can at times be employed to

mislead the public into thinking that all members and constituents of the composite are in basically the same position in society and all are progressing toward acceptance and self-advancement from the same starting line, and at the same pace....Thus what presents itself as a category of inclusion and compatibility functions as a tool of exclusion and internal ‘othering’.<sup>38</sup>

Difference discourse further leads to exclusion when one considers that the postmodern absolutization of particularity and otherness still leaves the rules for engagement, the invitation to greater conversation and the framework for dialog in the hands of those who are considered dominant (but not necessarily constituting a majority). These perspectives of dominance tend to see only the particularity of others, and not their own. By refusing to own their *own* difference they confuse their particularity with universality.



So when the so-called dominant permit the exotic, different, ethnic, alternate perspectives into the conversation, Roberto Goizueta observes we still remain, “‘true to the experience’ of only those who share the particular perspective or social location.”<sup>39</sup> Dismissed as “particular and other,”<sup>40</sup> and therefore deemed meaningful primarily to our own particular constituencies, alternate perspectives never necessarily need impact the greater conversations or be relevant to the experiences of more dominant, or assumed normative perspectives. Ada María Isasi-Díaz points out, if and when such exchanges occur, they resemble “one-way traveling” instead of genuine border crossing because those who are marginalized are “not allowed to bring into the dominant construction of the world elements from our own culture. It is also a one-way traveling because the few people of the dominant group who travel to our world insist on changing it by acting in [our worlds] ... the way they act in theirs.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Diversity through the Lens of Commonality**

Theologian James Nickoloff, addressing diversity from the perspective of gays and lesbians, seeks to “assert sameness from the side of, and on behalf of, those whom church and society scorn.”<sup>42</sup> His appropriation of sameness as entry into identity/diversity discourse is not naïve but in some ways it is a liberating act of resistance: “Along with other oppressed people, we have discovered that nothing causes greater offense than to tell those who despise us that in fact they and we are essentially the same.”<sup>43</sup> Nickoloff posits “fundamental similitude” as a starting point for understanding diversity as “differentiated oneness” because he is concerned that “beginning with alterity or hybridity often means staying with alterity or hybridity, that is, keeping oneself at arm’s length from the other.”<sup>44</sup> This critique is valid as difference and hybridity approaches risk ghettoizing their own constituencies and prevent solidarity across self-imposed barrios. In the long

term, permanent classes of other and or conditions of otherness prevent appreciation of a common creation in the image and likeness of the divine; a recognition of a common humanity that commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 12:31); a radical concept when one considers that this challenges us to recognize ourselves even in our enemies.

While I concur with Nickoloff’s suggestion to proclaim “homo-truth,” in reality our humanity is reducible to a limited set of least common denominators. All humans have our origins outside of ourselves. All humans are embodied and our multiple-belongingness is also embodied. All humans die. And, for some faith traditions, all humans are created in the divine image.

My lack of confidence in sameness as a starting point is rooted in concern for the slippery slope from common to normative. Too often the common and the normative are confused as interchangeable. Who determines what is common and what are the implications of assumptions of commonality?

I am reminded of an e-mail I received from a deaf Korean seminarian I had supported through his Master of Divinity thesis process.<sup>45</sup> Min Seo Park’s hope for me was that I could be deaf. This was not an infliction of a burden, but a sincere desire for me to be normative. Though we could communicate effectively in Sign Language, parsing the nuances of theology, and while I was certainly in solidarity with Min Seo’s ministry and the deaf community, I do not know what it is to be deaf or to experience deaf culture as an insider. This particular source of our commonality did not exist, though solidarity across our differences was present.

Too often there is a temptation, with the best of intentions, to move from solidarity with another to a misguided assumption of commonality such that agency is usurped. In other words, my good intentions and our shared humanity cause me to believe that I can represent you and in turn speak for you and in your place.

This form of what I would call homo-proxy<sup>46</sup> is destructive, resulting in a denial of agency for those who are being represented, reinforcing their under-representation. I intentionally coin the term homo-proxy here to refer to representation based on an assumption of sameness. The challenge is whether it is possible to exercise a posture of ortho-proxy, in other words to rightly represent another. As Latino/a theologians, our claims for engagement with our grassroots communities *de conjunto*, place this concern close to the center of our commitments. For Latinos/as loss of agency is not an alien experience, as others, from mostly dominant, non-Hispanic, communities decide to interpret, represent, or introduce us and our works, ideas, and customs to the greater community. Access means agency, solidarity should not imply a loss of agency. The process of accompaniment employs a metaphor of “walking with” another, not stealing their shoes.

Nickoloff rightly points to the power differentials present in declaring sameness; sameness in the hands of the powerful can become co-optation, and not a source of liberation. Unfortunately the move from common to normative is also concealed in the assimilation discourse of scholars such as Samuel Huntington. I am skeptical of propositions with the potential to ignore, obfuscate, and minimize the contextuality of our individual and communal lives ultimately leading to a blurring of identities that those of us in marginalized communities have struggled to articulate and get taken seriously, in the academy, church and society. Roberto Goizueta communicates well this frustration:

At the very historical juncture when Latinos and Latinas are asserting our historical subjectivity and the value of our own experience as *locus theologicus*, we are now advised that the historical subject does not exist and that value is an arbitrary, artificial construct. At the very historical juncture when we are articulat-

ing and developing a theological language that will allow us to enter into ‘rational discourse’ with the church and academy, we are advised that reason does not exist, only intuition, ambiguity, and irrationality.<sup>48</sup>

The context for the construction and reconstruction of identity by Latinos/as has changed dramatically in the past thirty years. Statistics indicate the time has come to redefine our understandings of ourselves as *comunidad*. One in seven persons in the U.S. is Hispanic. Immigration and higher birth rates have made Latinos/as the largest racial/ethnic minority community in the United States. And it is estimated that in the next few decades, Hispanics will constitute a quarter of the U.S. population. Since Latinos/as are already the largest population in the U.S. Catholic Church it would not be in our best interests to pursue commonality at the very time that the particularity of our Hispanic difference might well be the norm, especially when current constructions of common lack any hint of *sabor latino*. How does a once minority community avoid becoming a marginalized majority in its own church, or eventually in its own nation? In a twist on assimilation, these demographic shifts may suggest what Ed Morales calls the “contradiction of miscegenation as a potential solution” in other words that North America is beginning “its long-overdue process of assimilation into the greater American hemisphere.”<sup>48</sup>

Nickoloff’s invitation to consider what makes us common is necessary when one takes into account the damage that has been done when communities and nations isolate differences. The genocides of the twentieth century should temper any naïve appropriation of identity politics. However I have difficulty reconciling Nickoloff’s admirably nuanced handling of commonality in service to liberation with, for example, Samuel Huntington’s frightening assimilation rhetoric. The common in the hands of

Huntington, is a desperate attempt to protect what is currently dominant before the difference becomes the dominant. For Huntington the demographics are a source of fear. He clearly establishes the criteria of U.S. commonality and for belonging, sadly the same criteria employed to whitewash countless generations of immigrants whose rich diversity is reduced in the U.S. to festivals and food, fiestas y comidas. In the words of Huntington, "There is no Americano dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English."<sup>49</sup>

### Diversity through the Lens of Hybridity

For a number of Latino/a theologians, reflection on hybridity is a familiar and preferred entry point into identity/diversity discourse. Typically expressed in the language of *mestizaje*, and *mestizaje/mulatez*, these reflections attempt to deal with interculturality and the embodied-ness of our hybridity. As Aquino suggests "Precisely because *mestizaje* has been portrayed by dominant cultures as carrying a social value only worthy of exclusion, a *mestizo/a* theology will highlight the vital syntheses which 'new peoples' have interculturally created in order to explain their own vision and their own identities."<sup>50</sup> Aquino goes on to caution that a biological condition does not necessarily presume the development of intercultural consciousness.

Probably the most prominent and enduring metaphor in Hispanic theological discourse on diversity, *mestizaje* and the resulting new creation adds another dimension to constructions of race and culture. Some theologians like Ada María Isasi-Díaz see the appropriation of *mestizaje/mulatez* positively, using it as locus theologicus for *mujerista* theology "precisely because it identifies our culture," and therefore "critiques the dominant cul-

ture against which we have to struggle to survive."<sup>51</sup>

While *mestizaje* and *mulatez* have opened us to take seriously the construction of race, these categories are inadequate in dealing with issues of globalization, pluralism, sexuality and interreligious dialogue, to name but a few. Some, including Jean-Pierre Ruiz, have addressed the limitations and sinful heritage of *mestizaje* and *mulatez*. These critiques indicate that we cannot afford to forget, ignore or conveniently and uncritically rehabilitate *mestizaje* and *mulatez*.<sup>51</sup> This is particularly challenging for U.S. Hispanic theologians, these categories have constituted our theologizing for so long and with the recognition of our theologies, they even have cross-over appeal.<sup>53</sup>

In our dependence on *mestizaje*, we have too narrowly constructed hybridity discourse. While I remain conflicted over the ongoing value of using *mestizaje/mulatez*, I do appreciate the possibilities it has opened for dialog. One of the challenges for Latino/a theologians is to seek out other expressions, and constructions that also explore the complexities of hybrid identities.

For example, shifting the focus to linguistic diversity in the U.S. *comunidad latina* opens possibilities for deeper reflection on Spanglish as a locus theologicus. In the words of Ed Morales, our "Spanglish future" is "updated versions of liberation theology grafted onto post-Marxist prison gangs, like the Latin Kings, who hold meetings that are like a cross between a Catholic mass, a twelve-step meeting, and a slam poetry reading."<sup>54</sup> He continues, "To be Spanglish is to live in multisubjectivity; that is, in a space where race is indeterminate, and where class is slipperier than ever."<sup>55</sup> Theological reflection on language as an aspect of our hybridity allows for a long overdue conversation with popular culture as well as offers another perspective for unpacking the multiple dimensions of our intraconnectedness.<sup>56</sup>

### **Multiple-belonging: Diversity in the Divine Image**

Exploring identity in terms of an expanded understanding of hybridity as multiple-belonging, recognizes that human diversity is experienced as a belonging that is necessarily located, situated, embodied, engendered and lived—culturally, linguistically, socially, economically, politically, racially, religiously, sexually, spiritually. This hybridity is grounded in a shared humanity and derived from creation in the divine image that imparts a foundational commonality that must dictate the minimum level of expectation in our ethical behavior towards each other on the micro and macro levels.

Our embodied particularity is experienced as multiple-belonging through a variety of biological, geographical and relational factors. What we seek is not sameness but points of intersection that allow us to engage. According to Hawaiian author Darrell Lum, the impulse to establish relationality in his context is critical to understanding local culture that is also poly-cultural. For example, in Hawaii, a typical conversation-starter is the question, asked in Hawaiian Creole English (pidgin) “What school you went?” This question has “its root in the native Hawaiian way of identifying oneself by geography and genealogy.”<sup>57</sup> Lum continues, “rather than being a question that divides us, [it] is fundamentally an effort to discover how we are connected.”<sup>58</sup> We do not need to become each other in order to be companions or even kin; respect for diversity entails a search for intersections and connections. As such, this Hawaiian local ritual “is expressly a way for two people to begin discovering their relationships with each other, however distant, in order to talk stories that sprout on common ground. It is a way to begin weaving their histories together—and this defines friendship, or an aspect of it, local style.”<sup>59</sup> This way of engaging across contexts by privileging the local in a poly-cultural environment, offers fruitful possibilities for further conversation with U.S. Hispanic theologians and our privileging

of *lo cotidiano*, the daily, and our understanding of relationships through *compadrazgo*.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, a critical appropriation of multiple belonging requires attention be paid to the experience of multiple not-fitting in. Whether by choice or accident, as the result of other’s cruelties or own stances, this is also a reality that inclusion rhetoric glosses over. Explorations of our hybridity and multiple-belonging must also include a sustained conversation regarding multiple-not-fitting-in. In other words who gets left out in our constructions of identity and community? Who resides on our margins when we omit the stories of our intersections? Who is ostracized on the basis of arbitrary criteria determining the norm? Who is privileged and who is excluded when a particular norm is assumed as common? Who is silenced? Who loses agency? Who are the gatekeepers controlling access?

As theologians arising from the heart of a people who constitute the plurality of the U.S. Catholic Church and the largest minority population in the United States, we need to understand ourselves in a new way—as a majority. Theologizing from this perspective of majority, our past and contemporary experiences of marginalization have sensitized us to the dangers of privileging certain particularities and of inflating their significance with universal import. *La comunidad latina* is not the church’s diversity; we are the church! Our contextual horizons charge us as theologians to question and critique current operative paradigms of diversity that fail to recognize it as constitutive of our human, national and ecclesial conditions. Our contextual horizons invite us as theologians to pursue new directions for further exploration of diversity as these have ethical, practical and pastoral implications.

Creation in the divine image may actually say more about the richness of God’s diversity than our own humanity. In the words of Fray Juan de Torquemada<sup>61</sup> this diversity as reflected in the

“marvelous variety of colors” was the intentional creation of God:

There is no other reason for this [variation] than God’s wish to display his marvels through the variety of colors. Like the colors of the flowers in a field, he wished for them to preserve that given to them by nature. In this way, just as God is praised in the many shades of flowers, so too is the Almighty blessed and praised in the different and varied colors of [hu]mankind. It is through his artifices and paintings that he chose to show the boundlessness of his wisdom.<sup>62</sup>

Torquemada’s theological reflection comprehends diversity as an expression of divine intention, not an accident, a problem or even a challenge. Retrieving this insight from the depth and breadth of our Hispanic theological heritage provides direction for the development of new paradigms that address the nueva realidad that is our U.S. Catholic Church. Human creation in the divine image is creation in the divine diversity. Reflected in our embodied, engendered and located differences are the splendor, the complexity and the very mystery of God.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This article developed from two different papers delivered at the 2003 and 2005 annual meetings of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). See Gary Riebe-Estrella, Hispanic/Latino/a Theology, “The Vocation of the Latino/a Theologian: Speaking for Whom? Speaking to Whom?” *Proceedings of the Fifty-eighth Annual Convention*, The Catholic Theological Society of America, Volume 58 (2003), 147-148; Gary Riebe-Estrella, Latino/a Theology, *Proceedings of the Sixtieth Annual Convention*, The Catholic Theological Society of America, Volume 60 (2005), 142-143.
- <sup>2</sup> Martín Espada, “Sheep Haiku,” in *Alabanza: New and Selected Poems 1982-2002* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 210.
- <sup>3</sup> Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, “A Prophetic Challenge to the Church: The Last Word of Bartolomé de las Casas.” Inaugural lecture as Henry Winters Luce Professor in Ecumenics and Mission, delivered on April 9, 2003, at Princeton Theological Seminary. [http://www.lascasas.org/Rivera\\_Pagan.htm](http://www.lascasas.org/Rivera_Pagan.htm)

- <sup>4</sup> Unless they appear as such in a cited quotation, words and expressions in Spanish are not italicized. This reflects the dynamic interaction between Spanish and English in the daily lived experience of U.S. Latinos/as. The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino/a” are used interchangeably, and the grammatically gendered endings (Latinos/as) are employed so as not to suggest false correspondences between grammatical and natural gender.
- <sup>5</sup> I use the term *realidad nueva* not to imply that the Hispanic/Latino/a presence in the United States and in the Catholic church is a recent one. Rather the expression underscores a reality that “despite their [Latinos/as] long-standing, constitutive role in North American history, sheer demographic growth and diversification point to a markedly new structural positioning and cultural dynamic for Latinos in the second half of the twentieth century” and into the twenty-first. See Juan Flores, “The Latino Imaginary: Dimensions of Community and Identity,” in *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad*, Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, eds. (Hanover, NJ: Dartmouth College, University Press of New England, 1997), 190.
- <sup>6</sup> Orlando Espín, “An Exploration into a Theology of Grace and Sin,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, eds. Orlando Espín and Miguel Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 126.
- <sup>7</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 71.
- <sup>8</sup> Many Latino/a theologians claim to do their theologies *de conjunto* or *en conjunto*. Therefore to do theology *latinamente*, as Orlando Espín observes, refers to a manner of doing theology jointly whereby “the ‘product’ ultimately belongs to the community...and must also spring from and reflect the reality and faith of the people among whom the theologians live and work.” See Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz, eds., *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations In Catholic Systematic Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 1-3, 262-263.
- <sup>9</sup> Miguel Díaz, *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 115.
- <sup>10</sup> Department of Communications, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), “Catholic Information Project: The Catholic Church in America—Meeting Real Needs in Your Neighborhood.” (May 2005), 4. <http://www.usccb.org/comm/2005CIPFinal.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> USCCB, “Catholic Information Project,” 4.
- <sup>12</sup> USCCB, “Catholic Information Project,” 5.
- <sup>13</sup> Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), “Hispanic Ministry at a Glance.” <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/demo.shtml#1>
- <sup>14</sup> According to the USCCB, “2,900 of the nation’s 44,212 priests are Hispanic.” See <http://www.usccb.org/comm/cip.shtml#toc3>

- <sup>15</sup> Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D., "Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollments: Statistical Overview for 2005–2006," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University, Washington, DC (April 2006), 11. <http://cara.georgetown.edu/Overview0506.pdf>
- <sup>16</sup> Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D., "Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollments: Statistical Overview for 2005–2006," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 30.
- <sup>17</sup> Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier, "Summary of 'Latino/A Catholic Leaders In The United States,'" in *Strengthening Hispanic Ministry Across Denominations: A Call To Action*, Edwin I. Hernández, Milagros Peña, Rev. Kenneth Davis, CSC, and Elizabeth Station, eds., Pulpit and Pew Research Reports (Durham, N.C.: Duke Divinity School, 2005), 19. <http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu/latinoministry.html>
- <sup>18</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry," Appendix, #75. <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.shtml>
- <sup>19</sup> Association of Theological Schools, "Diversity in Theological Education," Folio, see Racial/Ethnic Enrollment by Decade, 1969 – 1999," and "Full-Time Racial/Ethnic Faculty in ATS Member Schools 1980, 1991, 2001." <http://www.ats.edu/resources/foliocol.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> Association of Theological Schools, 2005-2006 Annual Data Tables, see "Table 2.18 Head Count Completions Degree Program, Race or Ethnic Group, and Gender All Member Schools." <http://www.ats.edu/resources/FactBook/2006/2005-06%20Annual%20Data%20Tables.pdf>
- <sup>21</sup> Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, Edwin Hernández, Milagros Peña, Juan Carlos González, Kate Dillon Hogan, Elizabeth Station, "An Evaluation: Perspectives on the Hispanic Theological Initiative," *Perspectivas/Occasional Papers* (Fall 2005), 65.
- <sup>22</sup> Manya A. Brachear and Margaret Ramírez, "Catholic School Closings: Latino, Black Parishes Hit Hardest by Decision," *Chicago Tribune* (February 25, 2005). <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi0502250210feb25,1,3629470.story?coll=chi-news-hed&ctrack=1&cset=true> (originally). Now available on <https://mail.prairienet.org/pipermail/lpcc-listserv/2005-September/000335.html>
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Szczepanowski, "Archdiocese Issues Hispanic Pastoral Plan, 'Diverse in Culture, United in Faith,'" *Catholic Standard* (June 8, 2006). <http://cathstan.org/news/06-08-06/3.shtml>
- <sup>24</sup> Rev. Dr. Raúl Gómez and Dr. Manuel Vásquez, Hispanic Ministry Study. <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/studygomez.shtml>
- <sup>25</sup> Hispanic Affairs Committee, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Encuentro 2000." <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentro.shtml>
- <sup>26</sup> "Encuentro 2000." <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentro.shtml>
- <sup>27</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry," # 8. <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.shtml>
- <sup>28</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro and Mission," # 8.

- <sup>29</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro 2000."
- <sup>30</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro and Mission," footnote #2.
- <sup>31</sup> "U.S. Bishops' Proposed Reorg Plan Drastically Reduces Committees," *Catholic News Service* (6/1/2006). [http://www.catholic.org/national/national\\_story.php?id=20047](http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=20047)
- <sup>32</sup> Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas, "Monday Memo," (Vol. 4, No. 12, June 19, 2006). <http://www.diocetucson.org/june06memo.html#anchor061906>
- <sup>33</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro and Mission," Appendix, #69.
- <sup>34</sup> USCCB, "Encuentro and Mission," #69.
- <sup>35</sup> Justo L. González, "Reading from My Bicultural Place: Acts 6:1-7," in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 146.
- <sup>36</sup> María Pilar Aquino, "Theological Method in U.S. Latino /a Theology," in *From the Heart of Our People*, Orlando O. Espín and Miguel Díaz, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 36.
- <sup>37</sup> Fernando Segovia, "Two Places and No Place on Which to Stand: Mixture and Otherness in Hispanic American Theology," in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, Arturo J. Bañuelas, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 35.
- <sup>38</sup> Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip Hop: Puerto Rican Culture & Latino Identity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 8.
- <sup>39</sup> Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 163.
- <sup>40</sup> Goizueta, 163.
- <sup>41</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "A New Meztizaje/Mulatez: Reconceptualizing Difference," in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, eds. Eleazar Fernández and Fernando Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 210.
- <sup>42</sup> James Nickoloff, "The Word Entombed," 8. Unpublished paper presented in the Latino/a Theology group at the Sixtieth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America. See Gary Riebe-Estrella, *Latino/a Theology, Proceedings of the Sixtieth Annual Convention*, The Catholic Theological Society of America, Volume 60 (2005), 142-143.
- <sup>43</sup> Nickoloff, 5.
- <sup>44</sup> Nickoloff, 9.
- <sup>45</sup> Min Seo Park was ordained to the (transitional) diaconate in July 2006 in the Archdiocese of Seoul, South Korea.
- <sup>46</sup> I use the terms homo-proxy and ortho-proxy to describe situations that involve representation of individuals or communities by another.
- <sup>47</sup> Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 147-148.

- <sup>48</sup> Ed Morales, *Living in Spanglish: The Search for Latino Identity in America* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002), 29.
- <sup>49</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2004), 45.
- <sup>50</sup> María Pilar Aquino, "Theological Method in U.S. Latino /a Theology," in *From the Heart of Our People*, Orlando O. Espín and Miguel Díaz, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 37.
- <sup>51</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "A New Mestizaje/Mulatez: Reconceptualizing Difference," in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, Eleazar Fernández and Fernando Segovia, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 219.
- <sup>52</sup> Jean-Pierre Ruiz, unpublished paper presented in the Hispanic/Latino/a Theology group of the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, 2003. See Gary Riebe-Estrella, Hispanic/Latino/a Theology, "The Vocation of the Latino/a Theologian: Speaking for Whom? Speaking to Whom?" *Proceedings of the Fifty-eighth Annual Convention*, The Catholic Theological Society of America, Volume 58 (2003) 147-148; and "Dealing with Difference: Religion and the Politics of Racial and Ethnic Identity," unpublished paper presented at the annual colloquium of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) June 2005. See also Andrew Irvine, "Mestizaje and the Problem of Authority," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8:1 (August 2000), 5-37.
- <sup>53</sup> See for example Jacques Audinet, *The Human Face of Globalization: From Multicultural to Mestizaje*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); and "The Language of Mestizaje in a Renewed Rhetoric of Black Theology," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7:2 (November 1999), 32-42.
- <sup>54</sup> Ed Morales, *Living in Spanglish*, 29.
- <sup>55</sup> Ed Morales, 31.
- <sup>56</sup> See Carmen Nanko-Fernández, "Language, Community and Identity." In *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies*, Edwin Aponte and Miguel de la Torre, eds. Chalice Press, 2006, 265-275; and "Traditioning latinamente: A Theological Reflection on la lengua cotidiana," [http://prev.ctu.purplemonkey.net/export/sites/ctu/Learn\\_at\\_CTU/Lectures\\_and\\_Conferences/Nanko\\_Traditioning.pdf](http://prev.ctu.purplemonkey.net/export/sites/ctu/Learn_at_CTU/Lectures_and_Conferences/Nanko_Traditioning.pdf)
- <sup>57</sup> Darrell H.Y. Lum, "Local Genealogy: What School You Went?" in *Growing Up Local: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose from Hawai'i*, eds. Eric Chock, James R. Harstad, Darrell H.Y. Lum, and Bill Teter (Honolulu, HI: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1998), 11.
- <sup>58</sup> Darrell H.Y. Lum, 12.
- <sup>59</sup> Stephen H. Sumida, *And the View from the Shore* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1991) xvii. Cited in Darrell H.Y. Lum, 11.

- <sup>60</sup> Compadrazgo/comadrazgo refers to the lifelong network of relationships that are established between godparents and godchildren and between the parents and the godparents. The connection carries responsibilities of support, sometimes including financial, that extends to religious and secular occasions and events.
- <sup>61</sup> (1562-1624) chronicler of the Franciscan Order in Mexico.
- <sup>62</sup> Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana*, book 13, chapter 13, 567-8. Cited in Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2004, 47. Torquemada, grappling with the question of complexion variations of humankind was not satisfied with the theories of his day. I thank Jean-Pierre Ruiz for calling this reference to my attention.

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