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Predicando: a Hispanic/Latino Contextual Theology of Liturgical Preaching from the Social Location of the Faith Community of St. Dominic Catholic Church in Miami, Florida

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PREDICANDO: A HISPANIC/LATINO CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF LITURGICAL PREACHING FROM THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF ST. DOMINIC CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

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who are in deed the Body of Christ.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-project maps out a practical theology of liturgical preaching from the experience of St. Dominic Church in Miami, Florida. The method of theological reflection that is operative in this thesis project is one of praxis-theory praxis. It is a practical theology that is grounded in a communal and grass-roots methodology that has been operative in U.S. Hispanic ministry for the last forty years. After a comprehensive ministerial, demographic and socio-political analysis of the parish community, the thesis-project explores preaching as the meeting point of faith and culture. Subsequently, the thesis-project places this concept of preaching as inculturation in dialogue with a theology of preaching that is rooted in the belief that human experience is a locus of God's self-revelation. Thus, attentiveness to culture is crucial in homiletic preparation not only for the purpose of effective communication, but also because it is text for liturgical preaching along with Sacred Scripture and the liturgical rite. The thesis-project concludes with the presentation of a method in preaching that mirrors the communal and grass-roots methodology embraced by the thesis-project itself. The outcome is a theology of preaching that sees the homily as the proclamation of the story of salvation that must include the soteriological narrative revealed in the life experience of the community of faith.

INTRODUCTION

"Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel."
--St. Paul

For St. Paul, as for the other mothers and fathers of the faith, the preaching ministry was the indispensable proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. From the very beginning of the Church, preachers have sought, and continue to seek, the most effective ways to exercise this fundamental ministry. It is in continuity of the quest to effectively preach the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ that is the impetus for this thesis-project.

This thesis will map out a practical theology of preaching from the unique and particular experience of the community of St. Dominic Church where I have been Pastor for the last 10 years. The theological method embraced by this project is a grassroots and communal based practical theology methodology that is the backbone of Hispanic pastoral planning and ministerial praxis. In the first chapter I will explain this methodology at depth. For now, it will suffice to say that it is a four stage hermeneutic circle: *ver* (see), *juzgar* (judge), *actuar* (act), and *evaluar* (evaluate).

The circle begins with a communal process of attentiveness to human experience as observable in the concreteness of the ministerial setting (*ver* stage). The issues, concerns, and questions that arise out of this stage become the framework for the critical and interdisciplinary analysis performed in the second stop in the circle (*juzgar* stage). The fruit that is harvested in the theological investigation in the *juzgar* stage leads to a revision of the ministerial praxis from which the process sprung (*actuar* stage). Finally,

an assessment of the revised praxis is performed (*evaluar* stage) and its results kick-starts the process anew.

Methodologically, this practical theology is necessarily biased and subjective. It is biased by the hermeneutics of the theologian and the experience of the community that is the social location of the theology. To say that this theology is admittedly subjective and biased should not be interpreted to mean that it either lacks objectivity or is outside the tradition of faith that frames the narrative of the Church. The difference between this theology and "objective" theology produced by many members of the theological community is that, in practical theology, the biases that are formulated in the thick description process become the hermeneutics that steer the theological method.

The theology developed in this thesis project is biased by the experience of the Latino community of faith at St. Dominic Church in Miami. The biases that arise out of the analysis of this particular community will be delineated in the first chapter. What will not be explicitly addressed in the first chapter are three of my own personal biases which are foundational and implicitly operative in this work: my own experience of diaspora, my identity as a Dominican friar, and my commitment to the Latino church in the United States.

I begin with my own experience of diaspora. I was born in Havana, Cuba to a very large family. I was brought home from the hospital to live in my paternal grandparent's house. There lived my mother and father, my grandparents, and two aunts. My maternal grandparents lived in the house next door. Four uncles lived within a three block radius with my aunts and cousins. This was just the immediate family. To this group must be added a much larger number who were members of the clan that made up

the extended family. From birth, I was gifted with a great sense of home and of belonging. Nine years later I was on a plane on my way to the United States with my mother, stepfather, and my two younger brothers. When the plane landed I was homeless. I no longer had a place to belong.

In an attempt to fit in and to find a home, I learned the language of my new country and tried with all my might to fit in and to feel at home. Experience taught me quickly that no matter how well I spoke the language and assimilated into the culture of North America, I would always be other, a foreigner in exile. Fifteen years after my arrival in the United States, I went to Cuba to visit my family, to go home, to return to what I thought was the one place where I truly belonged. What I found was a family I didn't know, a house that wasn't home, and the realization that I was a foreigner in the land that gave me birth.

Such is the experience of diaspora: a radical sense of otherness, of being a stranger and a foreigner in the place where one is born and in the place where one now lives.[1] It wasn't until I discovered my faith, my vocation, and my religious community that I found the place I now call home: the Church, as I experience it in the particularity of my membership in the Dominican Order.

It was grace, mediated through the Hispanic diaspora community in Atlanta, Georgia, that led me to the discovery of my faith, vocation, and the Dominican Order. With great patience and generosity, my Latino brothers and sisters in Atlanta helped me begin *un caminar de fe* (a pilgrimage of faith) in the conviction of God's infinite goodness and love. *En el caminar*, they taught me that "*el pan que se comparte sabe*

[1] Fernando Segovia, "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement," Segovia, Fernando and Tollbert, Mary Ann, eds. *Reading From This Place* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 57-73.

mejor"[2] and thus challenged me to *compartir el pan* through the preaching of God's word. With their assistance and encouragement I commenced a ministry of lay preaching that ultimately led me to discover the Order of Friars Preachers who, since the Middle Ages and in fidelity to Domingo de Guzman's vision, has been preaching the Good News of the Gospel.

This theology is also biased in favor of a Dominican spirituality that sees preaching as the fruit of the dialogue between faith and experience. Like the Cuban and American cultures, the Dominican Order is also a community of culture that informs my self-identity. The axis of this community of faith and culture is the following of Jesus Christ in the richness of an eight hundred year old tradition. From our founding, the Dominican Order has maintained a passion for the theological endeavor. This pillar of our tradition is in a dialectical relationship with our fraternal and sororial common life, our commitment to contemplation, and our zeal for the preaching of the Gospel.

Since 1985, I have been a preacher in the Hispanic community and a student of theology. In Columbia, South Carolina I preached at the only Hispanic community in the city and studied at the Lutheran Seminary. In northern California, I preached in several communities around the Bay area and studied at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. In Miami I preached as an Associate Pastor and then as Pastor at St. Dominic Parish and have studied at the Southeast Pastoral Institute and at Barry University. In essence my life as a Dominican has been marked by the dialectical relationship between praxis and theory, between ministry and theology, between

[2] Shared bread tastes better. This is a line from the hymn "*Cantandote Con Alegria*" by Cuban-American liturgical composer Roger Hernandez.

preaching and contemplation. This dialogue between praxis and theory is the methodological cornerstone of this thesis-project.

Another bias that defines this work is my love of and commitment to the Hispanic/Latino community. Thus, my motivation for working on this thesis project is found in my love for the Dominican Order, my passion for its mission, and my commitment to serve the Hispanic community in the United States. In my experience of ministry in the Latino community, I have found that the preaching heard from the Church's pulpits too often fails to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom clearly and unambiguously and in a way that the message of salvation can be heard, understood, and responded to in faith and conversion. Much too often the preaching offered to Latinos fails to recognize the abounding grace that is present in our community and the gracious God that is ever present in the midst of human experience.

After ministering for over two decades in this graced community, I am convinced that the Latino Church deserves clear and unambiguous preaching that recognizes and points to the presence of God in their own experience because to fail to do so not only makes preaching irrelevant, but also, and most importantly, betrays the gift of the resurrection and denies the presence of Holy Spirit in the life of Church community.

Many of my brother and sister preachers in the Latino community are anxious for training that will help them better serve their communities. Today, given that the majority of Catholics in the United States are Latinos there is an urgent need to train preachers to preach to Hispanics from their own cultural context and faith experience. It is my hope that the work presented here will be of service to them and to the Latino community in the United States.

CHAPTER ONE

An Analysis of the Reality of St. Dominic Catholic Church in Miami, Florida

Practical Theology in a Latino Key

The historical roots of the method in ministry embraced by the Hispanic/Latino community can be traced to the first office for Hispanic ministry in the United States which was established in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas by Archbishop Robert Lucey in 1945. This office begins to give voice to a people who had been systematically silenced and ignored. Slowly, the voices of Latinos were heard in greater numbers throughout the nation. As a result, an office of Hispanic ministry at the national level was established in 1968 at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference (NCCB/USCC) in Washington, D.C. Pablo Sedillo Jr. was the office's first director.[3]

Four years later, the *Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral* (First National Encounter of Hispanic Pastoral Ministry) was held with the participation of one Hispanic Bishop and 250 delegates. From its emergent stages, the primary preoccupations of the *Encuentro* processes and of the methodology of Hispanic pastoral planning was that the ministry respond directly to the concrete reality of Latinos and that the participation of *la base* (the grassroots) in the pastoral planning process be a priority. In 1976, in

[3] Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, *Proceeding of the II Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral*, (Washington, D.C.: USCCB), 64.

preparation for the Philadelphia National Eucharistic Congress, a concerted effort was made to assure that the point of departure of the pastoral planning process was the concrete experience of Hispanics. As a result, more than 4000 Latinos were consulted at the level of *la base.*[4]

The next year, in preparation for the *Segundo Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral* more than 100,000 people participated at the level of *la base.* The voices of "a silent people began to speak with a sense of responsibility, history and sound Gospel values."[5] In the process of listening to the voices of the silenced, a method of practical theology, grounded in experience and framed by a commitment to the building up of the community and the participation of *la base*, was born.[6]

The methodology of practical theology that the Hispanic/Latino community was developing in the 1970's was greatly influenced by budding ecclesial and theological movements in our countries of origin. The church in Latin America experienced extraordinary change in the immediate aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. This period coincided with the Cold War and the expansion of Marxist-Leninist thought in Latin America which presented an articulate challenge to ecclesial status quo.

Up to that point in history, the church in Latin America had been wedded to the *criollo* class.[7] The theology and pastoral praxis of the church had been geared to this elite bourgeoisie class while the overwhelming majority of church's membership lived in dire

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 66.

[6] Jorge Presmanes, *Preaching as Inculturation*, (MA Thesis, Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology and the Graduate Theological Union, 1990), 38-41.

[7] *Criollo* is a term to describe the descendants of Europeans born in the Americas. *Criollos* form the powerful and elite social class. Though it is the social class that is responsible for the independence movements in America, they have traditionally been Eurocentric in their philosophy and world-view. They have also been habitually closed to the indigenous and popular culture that surrounded them.

poverty. The apparent "preferential option for the powerful" fueled the Marxist critique that the church was the right hand of the dominant class by offering the masses a religious opiate that perpetuated their oppression. In response to the Marxist critique and under the leadership of priests and religious who were convinced that the historical praxis of the church in Latin America was an aberration of the Gospel, movements of liberation, *concientización,* and *capacitación* in the church of Latin America were born.[8]

These grassroots movements called for a strategic realignment of priorities in the life and mission of the church in Latin America. The voices of those who had traditionally been silenced were finally heard by the hierarchy at the meeting of the Latin American Conference of Bishops in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. At this crucial meeting, the Bishops of Latin America committed themselves to move from an elitist and Eurocentric praxis of pastoral ministry to a ministry that surged from, and was directed to, "*el pueblo*" (the people).[9] At Medellín "*el pueblo*" was defined as the poor, the masses, the workers, those who were marginalized and voiceless and who made up the overwhelming majority of the membership of the church in Latin America.[10]

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[8] *Concientizar's* literal translation is "raise consciousness." It is often used as the Spanish language translation of the English language term "empower." *Concientizar*, as it is most often used is a critical consciousness process that places praxis in dialogue with theory resulting in an awakening, a new horizon, or a new hermeneutic. *Capacitar* can be translated to the term capacitate which has been rendered archaic in contemporary English usage. In Spanish it is most often used to refer to a relational pedagogical process that builds on preexisting capacity and provides the one who is *capacitado* with the tools or instruments to succeed in the field that is the subject of the *capacitación*.

[9] This hermeneutical shift, grounded in the "preferential option for the poor," is the cornerstone of the methodology of liberation theology. See: Gustavo Gutierrez *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), and what Juan Luis Segundo calls the "hermeneutic circle" in *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982).

[10] Luis Maldonado, *Introducción a la Religiosidad Popular* (Santander: Sal Térrea, 1985), 35-58. For a comprehensive reading of the history of the church in Latin America see: Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation, 1492-1979* (Grand Rapids: Edrmans, 1981).

At the meeting in Medellín, the Bishops from Argentina were a voice of dissent in reference to how "*pueblo*" was being defined. They argued in favor of a definition of "*pueblo*" that was inclusive of the cultural dimensions and characteristics that identify "a people." At the Latin American Bishops' meeting in Puebla, Mexico in 1979 the critique of the Argentine Bishops was heard. As a result, at the bishops' Puebla meeting, "*pueblo*" begins to be understood not only in terms of the downtrodden masses, but also in terms of the culture and history that binds and defines a people, a nation. This nuanced understanding is important because now the reflection on the experience that would characterize the pastoral thrust and praxis of the church in Latin America would include not only an analysis of the socio-political and economic reality, but would also include a reflection on the semiotics of culture.[11]

The cornerstone of the methodology of the practical theology that was being developed in Latin America was that its point of departure and its final destination was *el pueblo* or *la base*. It was theology done from the underside of history and human experience. This grassroots-based method was embraced by U.S. Hispanics in the process of the *III Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral*[12] that began in 1982, culminated in 1985, and included the participation of between one half and three quarters of a million Hispanic Catholics.[13] The methodology employed was one of "pastoral discernment that focuses on the needs and aspirations of the faithful, judges that reality in light of the

[11] III Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, *Puebla: La Evangelización en el Presente y en el Futuro de América Latina*, (Bogotá: CELAM, 1983), 385-393.

[12] III Nacional Hispanic Encounter. It will be hence forth referred to as the *III Encuentro*.

[13] Presmanes, 38.

Scriptures and Tradition, and moves into transforming action."[14] Popularly referred to as *ver-juzgar-actuar-evaluar* (see-judge-act-evaluate), this methodology with roots in the Young Christian Worker's Movement founded by Msgr. Joseph Cardijn in 1914, was the methodological backbone of the pastoral planning process of the *III Encuentro* and continues to be the method of choice in U.S. Hispanic ministry.[15]

The fruit of the *III Encuentro* was the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*.[16] The heart of the practical theology and ecclesiology of the NPP was an "analysis of the reality wherein the church must carry out her mission."[17] By reality the bishops mean the whole cultural context of those who are the object of the church's pastoral ministry. As part of the analysis of the reality that was the "*Ver"* stage of the process, a careful study of the history,[18] popular religious expressions,[19] the socio-political and economic reality,[20] and other elements of the culture of Hispanics were undertaken.[21]

These varying perspectives were termed *marcos.* The literal translation of this word is "frame" but in the way that it is used in the context of the analysis of the reality in the *Ver* stage, a better translation would be windows. *Marcos* are windows through which one looks to find a unique perspective of the reality. In terms of the efficacy of

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[14] U. S. Catholic Bishops, *Encuentro & Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry*, (Washington: USCCB, 2002), 21.

[15] Ibid.

[16] U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1988). It will henceforth be referred to as the NPP.

[17] NPP, 6.

[18] Ibid., 7.

[19] Ibid., 10.

[20] Ibid., 11.

[21] Ibid., 10.

the method, the greater the number of *marcos* or windows used the better the understanding of the reality, the more precise the theoretical analysis in the *Juzgar* stage, and ultimately the more effective the pastoral action in the *Actuar* stage of the methodological process.

U.S. Hispanic Practical Theology as Methodology for a Practical Theology of Preaching

The practical theology method employed by U.S. Hispanics in the praxis of pastoral planning outlined above will be the methodology that will be used to map out a theology of preaching in this thesis. The rest of this first chapter will be devoted to the *Ver* stage or the analysis of the reality of St. Dominic Catholic Church in Miami, Florida. Eight *marcos* will be utilized to analyze the reality that will be *locus theologicus* for the practical theology of preaching that will be developed in the subsequent chapters. These are:

- *Marco Histórico* (Historical)
- *Marco Demográfico* (Demographic)
- *Marco Socio-Económico* (Socio-Economic)
- *Marco Político* (Political)
- *Marco Eclesial* (Ecclesial)
- *Marco de Religiosidad Popular* (Popular Religiosity)
- *Marco Litúrgico* (Liturgical)
- *Marco de la Predicación desde la Perspectiva de la Base* (Grassroots/ Focus Group Perspective on Preaching)

The chapter will close with preliminary observations of the reality of St. Dominic parish culled from the analysis of the reality as revealed by the perspectives of the above

marcos. The *Juzgar* stage, in which the praxis will be placed in a relationship of dialogue and dialectic with theory and theological tradition, will be the subject of the second and third chapters of the thesis. Finally, in the *Actuar* stage the fruit of the first two stages will be concretized in a practical theology of liturgical preaching in the Hispanic/Latino community.

Marco Histórico

The Parish of St. Dominic was officially founded on May 20, 1962 by the Dominican Friars of the Province of Spain. The friars had been invited to the Diocese of Miami by Bishop Coleman Carroll two years earlier and had been diligently working as chaplains of the "Spanish Catholic Refugee Center." These Dominicans were ministering to the first wave of Cuban refugees that had arrived in south Florida in the immediate aftermath of the revolution on the island that was just 90 miles south of the southernmost point of the Miami diocese.[22]

The boundaries of the new parish were carved from the territory of three previously existing parishes: St. Brendan Church to the west, St. Michael Church to the east, and the Church of the Little Flower to the South. The first three ministerial priorities established by the friars were liturgical (Sunday and daily Eucharist), catechetical (religious education of children), and the care of the poor (the St. Vincent de Paul Society).[23]

By 1968 a great variety of groups, movements, and ministries thrived in the parish and the members of the community were concerned enough with the desire to respond to

[22] Dominican Friars, "Document of the Dedication of the Church," (Miami: St. Dominic Church, March, 15, 1981).

[23] May Malone, "History of St. Dominic Parish," (Miami: St. Dominic Church Archives, 1978), 1.

the actual needs of the faithful, that on June of that year an open meeting was held to "discuss problems affecting the life of the entire community of the parish."[24] Though from the emergent stages of the community there was a large Hispanic/Latino presence, the leadership was non-Hispanic. In attendance at the June 12th meeting were representatives of the "Spanish Club." At the meeting, some of these were appointed to positions of leadership in the parish community.[25] This marked a turning point in the ethnic make-up of the parish's leadership. As the neighborhood became increasingly more Hispanic, so also the membership and the lay leadership of the parish became more Hispanic.

In 1970, in an effort to promote the spirituality of the Dominican Order, the friars commissioned an effigy of Our Lady of the Rosary. The following year a large image of the patroness of the Order was installed in a grassy area on the north end of the property.[26] This shrine quickly became a widely used venue of popular worship that continues to be central to the life of community. A more complete analysis of the religious expressions that surround this image will be presented in the *Marco de Religiosidad Popular* below.

In 1978, the preliminary plans for the construction of a permanent church were approved. Up to that point, the place of worship had been an old building that at one time had been the National Children's Cardiac Home and had been moved to the parish property from its original location. In 1979, ground was broken for the edification of the new worship space for the Sunday assembly. It was dedicated on March 15, 1981. The

[24] Ibid., 6.

[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Malone, 8.

new worship space was designed to reflect the post-Vatican II ecclesiology of communion and the call to full and active participation of all God's people in the liturgy.[27] Its design also took into consideration the facilitation of the revised liturgical rites.[28]

From the perspective of preaching, the liturgical space is ideal. The semi-circle nave enables the preacher to be close enough to all the worshippers to make eye contact possible and allows the congregation to perceive the non-verbal bodily movements of the preacher that, with the words of the homily, communicate the intended message.

From its birth, the parish has been home to innumerable pastoral ministries and apostolic movements. The presence of these groups in the parish has provided an array of spiritualities that have greatly enriched the community's life of faith. But the prevailing spirituality from the very beginning of the community was Dominican. This is palpable not only in the Christian iconography of the church, but also, and among others, in the liturgical celebrations, the preoccupation for Christian formation and study, and in the fomentation of community life. These elements will be further explored below in subsequent *marcos*.

Marco Demográfico

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the territory that St. Dominic Parish comprises is 51,928.[29] The parish territory is 90.1% Hispanic/Latino

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[27] *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 41. Henceforth this document will be noted as SC.

[28] Dominican Friars, 15.

[29]U. S. Census Bureau, "Census 2000 Summary File," (World Wide Web: Factfinder. Census.Gov., 2004). The parish territory is comprised of Census Tracts 48, 49.1, 49.2, 56, 57.3, 57.4, 58.1, 58.2, and 91.

which in raw numbers totals 46,807. The Hispanic/Latino Catholic population in the parish is anywhere between 45,000 on the high end (calculated at 95% of the total Hispanic population) and 35,000 on the low end (calculated at 75% of the total Hispanic population). Approximately 3,000 people worship at the parish on an average weekend. Of these, 98% are Hispanic.

Of the total Hispanic/Latino population in the territory of the parish 21.5% are 18 years old or younger, 61.3% are in the age group between 19 and 65 years of age, and 17.2% are over 65 years old. In comparison to the national average, the parish leans to the older side. This is demonstrated by a comparison of the percentage of those under 18 years of age (4.4 percentage points below the national average) and those over 65 years of age (4.8 percentage points above the national average).

The country of origin of the Latino population of the parish territory is overwhelmingly Cuban (71.8%). The second largest group is Nicaraguan (5.5%) followed by Puerto Ricans (2%), Colombians (1.8%), Honduran (1.6%), and Dominicans (1%). The remaining 16.3% represent a population from other Latin American countries and Spain. Of the total population, 75.6% are foreign born.

There is a high level of mobility in the parish. Only 42.7% of the population lived in the same house in 1995 in which they were living at the time of the 2000 census. Of those who were not living in the same house in 1995, 38.7% moved into the parish territory from other areas of the county. There is also a large population of recent arrivals from Latin American countries (31.8% entered the U.S. after 1990).

Marco Socio-Económico

The population in the territory of the parish is considerably poorer than the countrywide average. The per capita income is $12,786 which is 31.7% below the national average. The median family income in the territory of the parish is $31,100 compared to a national median of $50,046 (37.9% below the national median). The percentage of families who live below the poverty level is 16.3% while the national percentage of families who live below the poverty level is 9.2%. Of particular concern are two vulnerable groups: those under 18 and those over 65 years of age. In the parish territory, 23.9% of children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level compared to 16.1% nationwide. The most vulnerable in terms of the level of poverty in the parish are the seniors. The percentage of those over 65 years of age who live below the poverty level is more than twice the national average (23.1% in the parish compared to a national average of 9.9%).

Of the adult population, 51.2% are in the labor force. This is compared to a national average of 63.9%. This reflects a slightly higher unemployment rate but this is mostly attributed to the fact that there is a higher rate of retired senior citizens in the parish than in the country as a whole. Of those in the labor force, 79% are blue collar workers. Of these, the majority work in the retail, service, production, and construction sectors of the economy.

From the perspective of education and compared to national statistics, the population of the parish is under-schooled. While 80.4% of the over 25 year old population of the U.S. has graduated from High School, only 56.7% of those in the parish have a High School diploma. The percentage of those with less than a 9^{th} grade education in the parish is almost three times higher than the national average (21% in the

parish compared to 7.5% nationally). In terms of higher education, 15% the population of the parish has a bachelor's degree or higher. In this category the parish also lags behind the national average (24.4%) though the difference is not as alarming as the statistic for those with less than a 9th grade education. Most of the population of the parish struggles with the English language (59.8% speak English "less than very well").

Marco Político

Of those living in the parish territory, 75.6% are foreign born and 44.9% of the population are not yet citizens of the U.S. This impacts the political participation because only 55.1% of the population can take part in the electoral process. There is active political participation of those who have become naturalized citizens of the United States. The parish hosts a polling precinct which consistently has a very high level of voter turn-out during elections. The representatives to the U.S. Congress and the State Legislature are both Cuban-Americans. Though the majority of the voters in the parish are registered as Republicans, the parish's precinct voted for a Democrat for the office of Mayor of Miami-Dade and their positions on social issues trend closer to those of the Democratic Party.[30] The issue of politics will be revisited below in the section on the *Marco de la Predicación desde la Perspectiva de la Base*.

Marco Eclesial

In 1992, St. Dominic Parish used the methodology of the *Encuentro* process to inculturate the NPP in the context of its own reality. As in the national level, the process

[30] Miami-Dade County, (World Wide Web, Elections.Miamidade.Gov/, 2004).

was grassroots oriented. Small reflection groups were formed representing the participation of a large cross-section of the parish membership. Meeting in parishioners' homes, the groups met on six different occasions. The first meeting consisted of an extensive analysis of the reality of the parish. Five *marcos* were used to analyze the reality of the parish: *marco histórico, marco demográfico, marco socio-económico, marco político and marco eclesial*.[31] The second meeting was focused around the development of a mission statement for the parish. The third through the sixth meetings were focused around each of the four specific pastoral dimensions that framed the NPP: *Pastoral de Conjunto,*[32] Evangelizing Communities, Missionary Option, and Formation.[33] The data and recommendations were prioritized at the *Encuentro Parroquial* (Parish Encounter) using a five-fold set of criteria: prophetic or evangelical, urgent, global reach, multiplicity, and feasibility. Also, the following mission statement for the parish was approved.

> We, the community of the Church of St. Dominic declare our mission: to build and preach the Kingdom of God with a compassionate and missionary spirit to all but with a preference for those who are most in need. We also declare that the youth and the family are targets of special interest in our evangelization efforts. We will diligently work so that unity, respect, communication and shared responsibility will reign in our parish community. We commit ourselves to an integral formation that will give us the tools to carry out this mission. Finally, we count on the love of the Father, the friendship of the Son, and the power of the Spirit that motivates us, the Word of God that brings us clarity of mission, the

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[31] Equipo Coordinador, *Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Parroquial*: (Miami: Parroquia de Santo Domingo, May 9, 1992), 2-6.

[32] *Pastoral de Conjunto* is often translated as collaborative ministry. This is a term born out of the experience of pastoral theologians and pastoral agents in Latin America. *Pastoral de Conjunto* is a model of ministry which calls for the "coordination among pastoral agents of all the elements of pastoral life and the structures of the same in view of a common goal." (NPP, 6) For a more complete definition, see: Presmanes, 75-76.

[33] NPP, Section VI.

> Sacraments that sustain us, and the intercessions of Mary the mother of God and ours to take this mission to fruition.[34]

Along with this mission statement three priorities in each of the specific dimensions of the NPP that responded to the reality of the local church were selected by those present at the Encuentro Parroquial. They were:

Pastoral de Conjunto

- Periodic meetings of the coordinators of parish groups and movements with the pastoral council.
- The creation of informative bulletins or newsletters that may serve not only for the facilitation of effective communication, but also that clarifies the common mission.
- Assign members of the pastoral team to cooperate with concrete projects of the different parish groups and movements thus assuring regular contact and facilitating a *pastoral de conjunto*.

Evangelizing Communities

- Create a ministry of hospitality that not only welcomes the newcomer but also facilitates their full participation in the life of the community.
- Develop a pastoral ministry targeted to those who attend Mass on a regular basis but are not actively involved in the ministry, groups, or movements in the parish.
- Develop a ministry to existing parish groups to help move from being simply a group that meets on a regular basis to being a community of faith.

Missionary Option

- Develop a pastoral ministry of evangelization geared to those in the parish territory that are "un-churched."

[34] Equipo Coordinador, 7. My translation.

- Develop social ministries that respond to the needs of the elderly, women, minority groups, the undocumented, and the marginalized.

- The promotion of a youth and young-adult ministry that is targeted to "un-churched" youth.

Formation

- Provide access for integral formation of the membership of the parish through preaching, retreats, conferences, and workshops.

- Create a theological institute at the parish level geared to the formation of lay ministers.

- Evaluate the possibility of establishing a parish library.[35]

These priorities framed the pastoral thrust of the ministry of the parish. In the year 2000 these priorities were once again assessed and evaluated. Though specific priorities were modified given the dynamic movement in the community, the Mission Statement and the pastoral thrust that flowed from it remain the same.

The ecclesiology of communion and participation in the NPP is the backbone of the current ecclesiological praxis of St. Dominic Parish. In his book, *Basic Ecclesial Communities*, Marcello Azevedo well describes the interrelationship between communion and participation. He writes:

> Communion (*koinonia*) is essential for effectiveness and credibility of the faith-community, whose life is to profess and bear witness, announce and denounce, and establish love and justice among human beings in the framework of truth and freedom. Participation is the commitment of all, with their differing personalities and vocations, to build and serve the community (*diakonia*) and to construct a society that dovetails with the postulates of faith in all their reach.[36]

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[35] Equipo Coordinador, *Plan Pastoral Parroquial*, (Miami: Parroquia de Santo Domingo, 1992). My translation.

[36] Marcello Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 194.

The ecclesiological elements of *koinonia* and *diakonia* were clearly embraced by the grassroots and the leadership in the process of inculturating the NPP in the context of the reality of St. Dominic parish. This commitment to build up and serve the church community has been a central focus of the parish's ministerial praxis.

The commitment to *koinonia* and *diakonia* in this local church is rooted in the community's baptismal spirituality that has been fomented by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.) and has permeated every aspect of parish life. Again, Azevedo sheds light on, and offers a theological framework for, an ecclesiology that respects the baptismal dignity of its members:

> 1. The power of Christ resides in the totality of members, in the whole People of God.
>
> 2. This power is diversified in specific functions, which emerge out of the basic equality of all. Their equality stems from the gift of faith and the oneness of the same Baptism. It also stems from the fact that all, as Christians and children of God in the Son, are sent out. They share the very mission of Jesus Christ.
>
> 3. The differences then arise within the framework of unity, for the sake and service of community.
>
> 4. This diversity of functions is matched by the diversity of charisms, the graces and gifts appropriate for carrying out the former. Since all share the faith and are sent out on the mission, every believer has a function. Hence every believer has his or her own vocation and charism. Thus charism is central and constitutive of the church as community. As a human group, the church will necessarily organize and structure itself. But the institutional configuration of the church is meaningless without community. What is more, it is in the community that the institution finds its source of intelligibility and orienting its functioning.[37]

[37] Ibid., 201-202. For a comprehensive reading on this ecclesiological perspective see: Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power, Liberation Theology, and the Institutional Church*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985).

The prevalence of this understanding of baptism in the parish has led to the full participation of the laity in the life and mission of the ecclesial community.

Determined by their Spirit-given-charisms, members of the parish have served and built up the church community through a variety of lay-led and coordinated ministries. Among others, they include:

- *Amor en Acción* (Love in Action, a missionary ministry in the Caribbean)
- *Renovación Carismática* (Charismatic Renewal)
- *Movimiento de Cursillos* (Cursillo Movement)
- *Camino del Matrimonio* (Marriage Preparation Retreats)
- *Encuentros Familiares* (Retreats for Families)
- *Encuentros Matrimoniales* (Marriage Encounter)
- *Encuentros Juveniles* (Youth Encounters)
- *Naim* (Ministry for Widows and Widowers)
- *La Legión de Maria* (Legion of Mary)
- *Caballeros Católicos* (Catholic Knights)
- *Nueva Vida* (Ministry to those suffering from alcohol and drug addiction)
- *Impacto* (Ministry to Families with young children)
- *Ministerio de la Pastoral a los Enfermos* (Pastoral Care of the Sick)
- *Instituto Pastoral del Sureste* (Southeast Pastoral Institute)
- *Ministerio a los Acongojados* (Ministry to the Bereaved)
- *Pastoral de Formación de Ministros Laicos* (Pastoral Formation of Lay Ministers)
- *Vida Ascendente* (Ascending Life Ministry)
- *Programa de Educación Religiosa Para Niños* (Religious Education for Children)
- *Programa de Formación de Padres* (Christian Formation of Parents)
- *Programa de Formación Bautismal de Padres y Padrinos* (Formation of Parents and Godparents of infants to be baptized)
- *Preparación Matrimonial* (Marriage Preparation)

- *Formación de Catecúmenos* (Formation of Catechumens)
- *Rito de Iniciación Cristiana de Adultos* (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)
- *Instituto de Teología Aplicada para la Formación de Lideres* (Parish Institute of Applied Theology)
- *Equipo Parroquial de Espiritualidad* (Parish Spirituality and Retreats Team)
- *Ministerio de San Martín de Porres* (Ministry of St. Martin de Porres, a ministry of pastoral care of the elderly in assisted living facilities)
- *Equipo de San Vicente de Paúl* (St. Vincent de Paul Society, ministry to the poor)
- *Mistagógica* (Ministry of mystagogical preaching)
- *Variedad de Ministerios Litúrgicos* (A Variety of Liturgical Ministries)
- *Ministerio de Anulación de Matrimonios* (Marriage annulments)
- *Ministerio a los Minusválidos* (Ministry to People with Disabilities)
- *Ministerio Generaciones* (Ministry in collaboration with a local hospital providing an on-site day program to senior members of the parish)
- *Pastoral de Jóvenes Adultos* (Ministry to the Young-Adults)
- *Ministerio de Información* (Ministry of Information)

Marco de Religiosidad Popular

Though most expressions of Latino popular religiosity are home based and more private manifestations of the faith of a people, St. Dominic parish is locus for many popular devotions that can readily be observed and analyzed. Of these, the majority of expressions revolve around three images of Mary. The image of *La Inmaculada* (the Immaculate Conception) is in the daily Mass Chapel fixed on the wall of the sanctuary adjacent to the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle. The second image is of *Nuestra Señora de*

la Caridad (Our Lady of Charity), the patroness of Cuba. This image is in a side entrance area of the main dominical assembly space. These two three-dimensional images are placed in a fashion that makes close contact difficult. The first image is rarely accessible given that two vandalistic desecrations of the image made it imperative to rope off the sanctuary area where the image is located. As a result, it is only immediately before or after liturgical celebrations that there is complete access to this image. In this brief period of time people get closer to the image to bring offerings of flowers and to touch it. The second image of Our Lady of Charity has been placed on a wall-mounted stand at a height that makes touching problematical. Before this image, that is so powerful for Cubans, candles are lit and flowers are offered.

The third image is not in the worship space. Mark Wedig, one of the friars at St. Dominic Priory has used the devotions surrounding this third image as *locus theologicus* for an article entitled "The Visual Hermeneutics of Hispanic/Latino Popular Religion and the Recovery of the Image in Christian Praxis." He writes:

> As one turns off a busy and congested street to enter St. Dominic's, an image towers over the farthest edge of the parking lot. Whether day or night, a slender female figure is discernable from a distance. At night dramatic lighting around the image makes her display even more sensational. Enshrined by a line of trees and by a waterway in the back of her effigy, she visually defies the chaotic surroundings by a certain spatial composure of dignity. A constant stream of people either walks or drives to the space which she inhabits in order to visit her likeness and presence. As a whole the shrine itself functions as a crossroads of social activity in a highly congested but flourishing area of West Miami. The busy street, nearby shopping centers, a hospital adjacent to the parish grounds brings a host of Caribbean and Latin American peoples to assemble at this environment.
>
> Faithful pilgrims enact a number of rituals ordered to Mary's image. She is the recipient of many gifts. Flowers of every kind, candles, and other votive offerings pay homage to the Virgin. On rarer occasions, and often to the embarrassment and amusement of parishioners, more extraordinary

> gifts are often given by those who practice the Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria. A live or slaughtered animal may appear before the image. Furthermore, touching Our Lady is often the pilgrim's last exchange with her before leaving. This gesture often consummates an individual's ritual pattern of contact with her. Various parish events are directed to the shrine. Particularly on October 7, the feast of the Holy Rosary, the Marian sodality processes there with great festive fanfare. Other public prayer meetings will spontaneously seek sanctuary in Mary's environment. It is common that the image is incorporated into religious education classes for children.
>
> The shrine embodies tremendous authority in its surrounding community. The fuller authorization of it has been established over the nearly thirty years of its vitality in the lives of the people from the parish environs. Much of that life has been played out quietly or anonymously in the personal anecdotes of parishioner's lives and in the tales of many others who pass through the locality on their way to and form the hospital adjacent to the parish. Nevertheless, a more dramatic record of divine favor, benevolence, and clemency can be retrieved from those who visit the shrine. Some of the best known ones center around graces granted for children and other family members of people exiled from their homeland. These narratives incorporate the strife, survival, and success of a people in a new culture.[38]

Wedig's descriptive narrative of the popular religious expressions surrounding the image points to two important elements that underlie the faith experience of those who visit these three Marian images: relationship and gratitude. Those who go to the statue to pray before it, almost always touch the image before they leave. This tactile act reveals the theological importance of being in relationship for Latinos. The importance of relationship in the faith of the Latino worshipper will be addressed once again in the *Marco de la Predicación desde la Perspectiva de la Base*.

In a series of informal interviews with those who visited the shrine, Wedig discovered that gratitude or the expression of thanksgiving was a primary motivator for

[38] Mark E. Wedig, "The Visual Hermeneutics of Hispanic/Latino Popular Religion and the Recovery of the Image in Christian Praxis," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*, 8:3 (February 2003), 7-8.

those who faithfully visit the image of Our Lady of the Rosary. The acknowledgement of divine favor as a motivating factor in visits to the shrine was highlighted in 1992 when South Florida was devastated by hurricane Andrew. As morning broke after a frightful night of violent winds that wreaked havoc on the city, throngs of people walked to our property and quietly made their way to the shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary *"a dar gracias a Dios"* (to give thanks to God) because though they had experienced great material loss, they were well; God had once again been gracious to them. The expression of gratitude is the underlying meaning behind the visit of the pilgrim to the shrine, the flowers that adorn it, the candles that illumine it, and the gentle touch that brings closure to a visit with a close and wonderful friend.

Marco Litúrgico

The parishioners of St. Dominic Church enjoy a rich life of public worship. This is a liturgically sophisticated parish community that is aware that "it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ."[39] As outlined above in the *Marco Histórico*, from the founding of the parish the Dominican friars have taken meticulous care of the liturgical life of the community. This was highlighted by the placement of the liturgy as the principal of three pastoral priorities when the parish was founded and by the care that was taken in the design of the liturgical space when the new temple was built.

[39] SC, 2.

The space for the dominical assembly's worship at St. Dominic parish is a neo-colonial structure rich in Christian iconography and architecturally designed to facilitate the post-conciliar liturgy. The fan-shaped space for the liturgical assembly, which seats comfortably over 850 worshippers, is arranged and appointed in such a way that illumines the centrality of the assembly and provides physical and ocular access to the entire congregation. The clarity, simplicity, and transparence of the worship space not only points to the assembly as the active subject of the liturgy, but invites communion and participation among the faithful gathered in worship.

There are seven Sunday Eucharistic celebrations. Two of these are Vigil Masses; one is in English and one in Spanish. Of the remaining five masses, one is in English, one is bi-lingual with children and translated to American Sign Language, and the rest are in Spanish. Each liturgy has a coordinator of liturgical ministries. The coordinators of the different liturgies form a team that is charged with the coordination of the liturgies on feasts and high holy days. A representative from this team has an ex-oficio seat on the Parish Pastoral Council.

Besides the ministry of planning and coordinating the liturgy there are numerous liturgical ministries at St. Dominic Church. There are over 70 Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist who not only serve the Sunday assembly, but also exercise the ministry of the pastoral care of the sick to those who are either homebound or are patients in the hospital that is adjacent to the parish grounds.

The Ministry of the Word is performed with great care and intentionality. All lectors have undergone training to develop their charism of proclamation. The lectors attend an annual workshop in the parish that provides them with continuing formation.

There is a Master of Ceremony whose service is utilized on high holy days. He is charged with the coordination of the Altar Servers. There are ministers of hospitality who provide a welcoming environment and ushers who attend to the needs of the assembly.

The Ministry of Music at St. Dominic is exercised to assure that the assembly experiences a beautiful and moving experience of liturgy. There is a Director of Music who is charged with the coordination of the music ministry at all the masses. The Director of Music also conducts the parish choir on feast days. She also has an ex-oficio seat on the Parish Pastoral Council.

The Lent-Easter season is the liturgical time in which the parish sees the greatest liturgical attendance. In particular, the most popular liturgies at the parish in terms of numbers present are on Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Easter, and Ash Wednesday. The R.C.I.A. is the cornerstone of the liturgical life of the parish. Careful attention is given to the scrutinies and rites of the R.C.I.A. The liturgies of the *Triduum* are celebrated with great reverence and dramatic flair that enable the worshipper to enter into the mystery of the Paschal event.

Marco de la Predicación Desde la Perspectiva de la Base

In order to obtain the input and reflections of those who are the recipients of the pastoral ministry, three focus groups were formed for the purpose of reflecting on their experience and expectations of liturgical preaching. The focus groups were made up of committed parishioners from St. Dominic Church. Their make-up was as follows:

- ***Focus Group No. 1: Young Adults***. This group was composed of 10 young adults (ages 19-27).

- ***Focus Group No. 2: Married Couples***. This group was composed of 8 middle age couples (ages 45-55).

- ***Focus Group No. 3: Senior Parishioners***. This group was composed of 20 senior and active members of the parish (ages over 60).

The focus groups gathered for a period of approximately two hours. Each focus group was asked the same series of questions regarding their experience of liturgical preaching. They were given the freedom to interject and comment on the general topic as they wished. The following are the questions that they were asked and a synthesis of the responses.

Name three characteristics of what you consider an ideal preaching. Why?

There was great consensus in response to this question among all three focus groups. The respondents identified as ideal preaching one that is clear, concise, and with a message that impacts their daily life. Ideal preaching for the respondents is one that helps them grow in their process of conversion and nourishes their life of faith. They underlined the need for the preacher to be aware of and understand the concrete reality that defines the congregation and to preach in a way that adequately addresses this reality.

The respondents also said that ideal preaching is simple and accessible to all and delivered with a passion that demonstrates a conviction to the proclaimed message on the part of the preacher. Lastly, for the respondents, an ideal preaching is one that nourishes their hunger for God and strengthens the worshipper's commitment to the hope-filled and faithful following of Jesus Christ.

How has your experience of liturgical preaching made a difference in your church life? In your faith life? In your personal life? Why?

All of the respondents contend that preaching has made a great difference in their church and faith life. There was less agreement on the question regarding the impact that preaching has made in their personal life. The reason given by those who held that at times preaching failed to impact their daily life was that preaching is often over-spiritualized. They held that when preaching is not contextualized in the reality of their daily lives, the result is a compartmentalization of the sacred and the profane. The respondents were quite clear that the sacred-profane split is due to the failure of many preachers to speak directly from and to daily life experience.

As in the ideal homily, the relationship between preacher and worshipper was considered important to the impact that preaching can have on their participation in the life of the church, on their personal life of faith, and on their personal daily life. It is in response to this question that there was greater clarity in this aspect of preaching. A relationship and bond between preacher and worshipper is nurtured, according to the respondents, by preachers who do not separate themselves from the congregation in terms of both content and context of the preaching event. In reference to content, a bond is made when the preacher uses "us" instead of "you" language and when the preacher, instead of providing a prescription in response to the Gospel, reveals his or her own struggle in responding to the demands of the Gospel. In terms of context, the relationship between preacher and worshipper is nurtured by the use of rhetoric and bodily movements that non-verbally communicate the preacher's commitment to and passion for the Gospel message.

One final point was made in all three groups in reference to this question. Those who participated in the focus groups were aware that they play a part in whether the preaching impacts their life. They held that even when presented with excellent preaching, the impact will be minimal if they are not "open" to the proclamation.

For you, does the preaching in the liturgy enhance or detract from your liturgical experience? When and how does it detract from your liturgical experience? When and how does it enhance your liturgical experience?

The response to this question proved to be a window on how important the preaching was for a complete and fulfilling experience of worship. Many respondents pointed to the fact that for them preaching provides access. For the respondents, preaching allows them entrance into an ancient liturgical rite. While it can be a great provider of access to the rite, preaching can also be for them an impediment to a rich liturgical experience.

According to the respondents, preaching enhances the liturgical experience when the homily has the above mentioned characteristics of an ideal preaching and when it is connected in content and context to the rest of the liturgy. Again, relationship was important for the respondents. For them, an important element in preaching which helps them enter into the liturgy is when the homiletic event helps them connect not only to the preacher but also to the other members of the community gathered in worship.

To the question of when and how preaching detracts from the liturgical experience, the respondents were quick to point out many examples. The detractions included: poor preparation on the part of the preacher; the reading of the homily; homilies that are too "elevated," abstract, "theological," and removed from human experience; homilies

delivered in a monotone; preaching that is moralizing, "negative," and focused on what a Christian "should" or "should not" do. Almost every respondent mentioned that a homily that is too long caused them to lose attention and thus moves them out of a prayerful liturgy.

What was the best preaching you have ever heard? Why?

The response to this question once again highlighted and clarified the responses to the first question. Again, the respondents articulated that what constituted an ideal preaching was the context (both personal and liturgical) of the preaching event. Some examples include: "the homily at my wedding because it was personal; the homily at last year's Holy Thursday celebration because it was filled with joy and because it was connected to the washing of the feet; the homily at my son's first communion because I was touched by the story the priest told; the homily at an Easter Vigil because the hope articulated in the homily was contagious; a homily I heard one time when I was going through a divorce and the priest used a story that was similar to what I was going through at the time; the homily I heard at my father's funeral because it was just what I needed to hear."

Other responses not connected to context included comments that had to do with getting an insight from a homily that was fresh and original and opened a new horizon which made the respondent see the Scriptures and their faith in a new light. Again, memorable preaching was associated with the worshipper bonding or connecting with the preacher and vice-versa. Others referred to well structured and articulate homilies that

use human experience or an anecdote from life to make a point and it was so well done that it became memorable.

What was the worst preaching you have ever heard? Why?

It was difficult for most respondents to name one homily that was the worst preaching they had ever heard. Apparently, they had infinite examples of very bad preaching. What appeared very easy for them to articulate was what they clearly considered to be components of bad preaching. There was overwhelming agreement in all three groups that long, rambling, unclear, pointless, moralizing, and unprepared preaching assured an unsatisfying homiletic experience. Again poor preaching context (e.g. reading a homily, a monotone delivery, lack of passion and conviction) made for bad preaching in the opinion of the respondents.

Do you think that the preacher should use stories from life experience in the preaching? Why?

"Elementary my dear Watson," was the response of one of the participants that seemed to articulate the universal opinion of the respondents. Another made the point that to fail to connect the biblical readings to the current reality relegates Scripture to an ancient and static text that is meaningless to a contemporary Christian. There was a clear consensus that stories from life experience in preaching are essential if the preaching is to be relevant and impact their life. In each group respondents articulated that preaching that is strictly abstract and theological leaves them cold and unengaged. One person, whose response seemed to find much resonance with other participants, said that "the preacher needs to make a clear connection between the biblical text and their daily life."

That connection, claimed the respondents, enables them to make further connections on their own.

In all three groups a caveat was articulated. The caveat is that the use of stories from life experience in homiletic preaching is to be used in the service of a central theme or message. They held that great forethought must be taken on the part of the preacher so that anecdotes from human experience are used carefully and purposefully. There was unanimity in the opinion that stories or anecdotes that are used solely for comic relief or for entertainment purposes have no place in a homily and do a disservice to the homiletic experience.

Do you think it appropriate for a preacher to address political issues in liturgical preaching? Why?

The response to this question proved to be highly volatile in all three groups. It was also the question in which there was much discussion and dynamic movement in the position of the participants. Initially, in all three groups, the majority position was negative. They believed that politics had no place in the pulpit and held strongly to this position. In all three groups there were dissenters from this majority opinion. These felt strongly that not only was it appropriate to address political issues in liturgical preaching, but also that it was essential to do so for preaching to be relevant and authentically evangelical.

In all groups the discussion at one point moved to the question of whether the church should remain silent on issues such as abortion, or the death penalty, or euthanasia, or poverty, or racism, or social injustice, or what constitutes a just war. In all groups this question caused a shift in the opinion of many because the majority felt that

the church should address these political issues given that they had been officially addressed by the *magisterium* of the church and were part of the faith tradition.

Most participants opined that the church had to articulate its position clearly so that the faithful could make informed decisions in their political and electoral participation. What was quite apparent in both those who favored and those who opposed addressing political issues in liturgical preaching was that: a.) that the liturgy not become another "cable news network or talk radio" where people are giving their personal opinions; b.) that official teaching as it impacts contemporary political issues be addressed but not the endorsement of a particular candidate running for public office; c.) that political issues be addressed rarely and only when current events demanded the interjection of the position of the church; and d.) that the preacher not abuse his power and impose his own personal opinion on the congregants.

Do you prefer to hear preaching in English or Spanish? Why?

Age made a difference in how the participants answered this question. The older the participant the more the answer leaned to hearing preaching solely in Spanish. Some of the participants in the middle-aged group said that it didn't matter though they preferred Spanish. The young adults were the ones that consistently responded that it did not matter to them. Those who had no preference often said that as long as the preacher spoke the language well it didn't matter to them in which language the homily was given. When the conversation in the groups turned to which language they used in prayer or which language they preferred in the liturgy in general, the overwhelming majority

leaned to a Spanish language preference because "*me llega mas al corazón cuando se habla en español*" (it touches my heart more when Spanish is spoken).

Where do you think the preacher should stand when preaching? In the ambo? In front of the altar? Does this matter to you?

Most participants hold that the preacher should stand where he is most comfortable. However, if the preacher is comfortable both in and out of the ambo, the overwhelming preference of the respondents was that he stand out of the ambo and in front of the altar. This, they said, facilitated their being more attentive to the homily. They also said that when the preacher stands in front of the altar and closer to them it helps create a "closer relationship" between them and the preacher.

How do you feel about preachers who use a written text and read from it in the liturgy?

The initial response in one of the focus groups to the question of how they felt when a preacher read his homily was: "*que lo fusilen*" (take him to the firing squad). This comical and hyperbolic response articulates the complete consensus of the participants' response to this question. Though the majority of the participants believe that written notes or an outline that is used in reference is perfectly fine, reading a homily was considered to reveal the absence of the charism of preaching in the homilist. They also hold that to read a homily shows little respect for the worshipper and demonstrates a lack of competence and preparation on the part of the preacher. It was the consistent opinion of the respondents that they prefer to lose some of the content or carefully crafted word choices which a written text provides than be bored and "turned-off" by a read homily that leaves them detached and feeling indifferent.

Preliminary Observations of the Analysis of the Reality

We are at a point in the method of Hispanic/Latino practical theology where one is often tempted to jump the gun and begin to judge the data that has been unveiled thus far in the process of the *Ver* stage. Showing a modicum of restraint so as to not begin the *Juzgar* stage before the *Ver* stage is completed, the following are preliminary observations of the analysis of the reality presented above.

Marco Histórico

- The parish is clearly marked by the identity and spirituality of the Dominican Friars.
- From the founding of the parish, the friars fomented an ecclesiology of communion and participation.
- The Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary has been a venue of popular worship since its edification and continues to this day to be central to the life of the community.
- The founding of the parish coincides with the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of liturgy. Thus, the ecclesiology, the operative theology of ministry, the praxis of the liturgical rites, the dominical assembly space, and traditions of the community demonstrate a fidelity to the ecclesiology and liturgical theology of the Council.

Marco Demográfico

- Though the geographical territory of parish is 90.1% Hispanic/Latino, this segment of the population represents 98% of the active members of the community.
- Over 90% of the Hispanic Catholic population is “un-churched.” This figure is based on a calculated Hispanic Catholic population of 40,000 and an average weekend Mass attendance of 3,000.

- The over 65 years of age population of the parish is higher than the national average.

- The parish is overwhelmingly Cuban (71.8%).

- There is a high level of mobility in the parish. 57.3% of the population of the parish moved into its territory after 1995.

- A large segment of those who live in the parish are recent arrivals to the U.S. (31.8%).

Marco Socio-Económico

- The membership of the parish is considerably poorer than the national average.

- 16.3% of the families of the parish live below the poverty level.

- Of the population of the parish, the elderly are the poorest. The percentage of those over 65 years of age who live below the poverty level is more than twice the national average.

- Almost 80% of the members of the parish are "blue collar" workers.

- Compared to national statistics the population of the parish is under-schooled. The percentage of those with less than a 9^{th} grade education is almost three times higher than the national average.

- Almost 60% of the parish's population does not speak English very well.

Marco Politico

- Almost 45% of the population of the parish are not yet U.S. citizens and thus cannot participate in electoral politics.

- Those who are citizens are active in the electoral process.

- The community as a whole is conservative on foreign policy issues and more liberal on social concerns.

Marco Eclesial

- The operative ecclesiology of the parish community is one of communion and participation in which the baptismal dignity of the faithful is respected.

- The community has a mission statement that declares the mission of the parish to be the preaching and edification of the Reign of God with a preferential option for those most in need.

- This local church has declared special commitment to unity, respect, communication, and shared responsibility.

- The parish style of ministry has embraced the methodology of a *pastoral de conjunto.*

- There is great preoccupation for the fomentation and the building up of the community.

- There is a commitment to integral formation.

- The laity is aware of their baptismal identity and thus lay run and coordinated ministries have thrived in the parish since its foundation.

Marco de Religiosidad Popular

- Though most expressions of popular religiosity are private and home based, St. Dominic parish is locus for many popular devotions.

- These devotions are most often expressed in relationship to three Marian images.

- The most observable expressions of popular religiosity are centered on the shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary.

- A study of these expressions done by Mark Wedig points to two important elements that underlie the faith experience of those who visit the shrine: relationship and gratitude.

- There are also expressions that are tied to the syncretistic Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria. Wedig describes that this evokes the "embarrassment and amusement of parishioners." This reaction on the part of the parishioners and pastoral staff of the parish reflects an uncertainty as to how to deal pastorally with the faith that underlies these expressions.

Marco Litúrgico

- St. Dominic parish is a liturgically sophisticated community that enjoys a rich life of public worship.

- The main temple greatly informs the liturgical theology and praxis of the community. The clarity, simplicity and transparence of the worship space not only points to the assembly as the active subject of the liturgy, but invites communion and participation among the faithful gathered in worship.

- Great care and intentionality is given to the preparation of the liturgies.

- Sundry liturgical ministries thrive in the parish.

- The R.C.I.A. is the cornerstone of the liturgical life of the parish. Its rites and scrutinies are celebrated with great care.

- The Lent-Easter season is the liturgical time in which the parish sees the greatest liturgical attendance.

Marco de la Predicación desde la Perspectiva de la Base

- The respondents considered preaching to be extremely important for them in their process of conversion and Christian formation.

- Ideal preaching was identified as being clear, concise, simple, accessible, inculturated in the concrete reality of the worshipper and delivered with passion and conviction.

- The respondents held that homilies that are disconnected from human experience perpetuate a sacred-profane split and fail to impact their daily lives.

- Those who participated in the focus groups said that a connection or bond between them and the preacher is important for them in order to embrace the intended message of the preaching. This connection between preacher and worshipper is nurtured by the preacher by inclusive word choice, the use of rhetoric, and the context of the delivery of the homily.

- The bond between preacher and worshipper nurtured in the homiletic event, according to the participants of the study, also leads them to bond with the rest of the liturgical assembly.

- The homily is experienced by the participants of the focus groups as access to the liturgy and the Scriptures.

- The respondents identified the following to be elements that constitute bad preaching: homilies that are long, rambling, unclear, pointless, moralizing, and unprepared.

- There was great volatility when the participants were asked whether liturgical preaching aught to address political issues. The majority believed that politics should be addressed in liturgical preaching with the following caveats: that the preacher not present his or her personal opinion but the position of the church, that particular candidates for public office not be endorsed, that political issues be addressed only on rare occasions, and that the preacher not abuse the power entrusted to him by imposing his personal opinions on the congregation.

- The preaching context is of extreme importance to the respondents. This was illustrated by their preference for the preacher delivering the homily outside the ambo and their insistence that the homily not be read.

With these observations the description of the analysis of the reality of St. Dominic Church is complete. The next step is to *Juzgar* (Judge) the reality in light of the tradition of faith.

CHAPTER TWO

Preaching as Inculturation

Introduction

A couple of months ago a parishioner asked how my theological studies were going. At a point in our conversation I told her that I was going to do an analysis of the reality of the parish and form focus groups to consult some of the members of *la base* as part of my doctoral thesis. I asked her if she would like to participate in the study. "Sure," she replied and asked, "but what does the reality of our parish, and much less what I think, have to do with theology?" This simple question, posed by someone unschooled in the field of theology, illuminates the objective of this chapter—to address the relationship between the preaching of the faith and culture.

My experience of working in a multi-cultural setting for almost two decades clearly points to the fact that attentiveness to culture is essential to effective preaching. In this chapter, I claim that attention to culture is paramount to theologies of preaching for three reasons. First, it is in culture and human experience that the God who is preached is revealed. Second, culture is the key to the intelligibility of the preaching for it mediates the communication that is the preaching event. And third, it is within the concreteness of culture and human experience that the faithful respond in conversion to Christian preaching.

I will begin with a brief look at preaching in the New Testament. Particular attention will be given to the impact that culture had not only on preaching, but also the

impact that culture had on the ecclesiology and the theology of the primitive church. Given the importance of culture for Christian preaching, I will present a definition of culture drawing on the insights of anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Marcello Azevedo.

The relationship of culture to the tradition of faith, particularly as it impacts Christian preaching, will be subsequently explored. The insights of Yves Congar, Mary Catherine Hilkert, and Orlando Espín will provide the backbone for a theology of preaching whose point of departure is the conviction that it is in the concreteness of culture and human experience that God is found.

The impact of culture on theology from the perspective of inculturation, local church theology, and contextual theology will be presented. Toward this end, the insights of Azevedo on inculturation, Robert Schreiter on theology of the local church, and Stephen Bevans on contextual theology will be offered. Finally, using the work of Donald Gelpi, the chapter will conclude with the topic of conversion as the fruit of Christian preaching. I begin with Mary Magdalene, Christianity's first preacher.

Preaching in the Early Church

The First Preachers

"Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her."[40] With these words from the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene the tradition of Christian preaching begins. At its

[40] John 20:17-18, RSV.

most basic, Christian preaching is the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. Yet, the Christian tradition has defined preaching in a variety of ways. In the New Testament alone there are thirty-three verbs that are connected in one way or another to the ministry of early Christian preaching.[41] Of particular importance among these are *keryssein, euangelizesthai, martyrein, didaskein, propheteteuein,* and *parakalein* which, respectively, mean to proclaim as herald, to announce good news, to witness, to prophesy and to exhort.

C. H. Dodd attempted to promulgate a theory which claimed that in the early church there was a clear difference between preaching (*kerysson*) and teaching (*didaskon*).[42] The former is defined in terms of the proclamation of certainties, mainly, the certainty of the Paschal event. The latter was the explication of the Paschal Mystery as it concretely impacts the conversion that is the intended response to the kerygmatic proclamation. Furthermore, Dodd argued that in the early church preaching (*kerysson*) was a missiological ministry while teaching (*didaskein*) was a catechetical ministry. Yet, these distinctions have not proved helpful because essential to successful preaching is both proclamation and explication. Jesus himself is said to have done both as part of the same ministry. In the fourth chapter of Luke's Gospel Jesus taught (*didaskein* ver. 15) in the synagogues of Galilee and he exercised a preaching (*kerysson* ver. 44) ministry in the synagogues of Judea.

What appears to be evident in the analysis of New Testament writings is that in the early church preaching is a multi-faceted ministry of proclaiming, announcing good

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[41] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 6.

[42] Ibid.

news, witnessing, teaching, prophesying and exhorting.[43] There is yet another essential facet of Jesus' preaching and the post-resurrection preaching of the early church: praxis. By praxis I mean concrete actions or deeds that concretize the message of the preaching in human life and history: "And he went about all Galilee teaching (*didaskon*) in their synagogues and preaching (*kerysson*) the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people."[44] Jesus preached and taught with words and he also preached and taught with deeds (healed every disease and every infirmity). Jesus' preaching in word and deed becomes an integral facet of the preaching ministry of the early church: "Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked. He listened to Paul preaching (*kerysson*); and Paul looking intently at him…said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he sprang up and walked."[45]

Preaching, from the context of the experience of the primitive church, is a multi-faceted reality. For the mothers and fathers of the faith the preaching ministry was to proclaim Jesus as herald, to announce good news of the reign of God, to witness, to prophesy, to exhort, to teach and to match these words with deeds that concretized the preaching in human history. However, whether announcing or witnessing, prophesying or teaching, the elicited response was the same: the conversion of the hearer of the preaching. All of the many facets of this primordial ministry of the church are

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[43] Ibid., 7.

[44] Matthew 5:23, RSV.

[45] Acts 14:8-10, RSV.

indispensable links in the chain of God's redemptive activity which runs from Old Testament times to the times in which we live and minister today.[46]

The Jerusalem Council: A Case Study in Preaching and Culture

The zeal to preach the good news of the reign of God, in both word and deed, was central to the life and mission of the primitive church. The zeal to witness to the faith was clear. What was less obvious was to whom the Gospel would be preached (just to other Jews or to Gentiles as well). Moreover, if it was to be preached to other cultures, how would it be proclaimed so that the witness could be heard, understood, and responded to in conversion? Thus, the issue of the relationship between the preaching of the faith and culture was one of the primary issues that the first Christians had to address.

The question regarding to whom the witness of the faith would be directed was resolved quickly and decided in favor of a universal understanding of the evangelizing mission of the church: the good news of the Gospel was to be offered to all. The problem for the earliest Christians was not in embracing the universality of its mission but, rather, in how to deal with its particular manifestation: the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile community.

One of the challenges posed by the particular manifestation of this universal missiological stance for the first Christians is illumined in the Tenth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. At its most particular and practical level, the issue was whether Gentile men would have to undergo a painful adult circumcision as a condition for membership in the church. At a theological level, the issue was whether observance of Mosaic Law

[46] Greidanus, 9.

was necessary to maintain a right relationship with YHWH. For good Jews, who made up the membership of the church in its embryonic stages, it must have been scandalous to even entertain the question.

The conflict over whether Gentiles were to be forced to adhere to Mosaic Law was resolved ecclesiologically and theologically at the Jerusalem Council as noted in Acts 15 and Galatians 2. The theological outcome of the encounter between the faith of Christian Jews and the culture of those to whom the faith was preached was that justification is found through faith in Jesus Christ and not in obedience to the Law. On the ecclesiological issue, the Council affirmed the universality of the church by holding that the church was to follow Jesus Christ as one, but expressing itself in the context of a variety of cultures.[47]

Joseph Fitzpatrick has argued that there were theological and anthropological reasons for the conflict that faced the church at this moment in history. The former was problematic because it required the rethinking of salvation history and "the experience of religious tradition, which was particularly important in the life of the Jewish Christians." The latter was problematic because there is a basic human resistance to social change. Resistance to change is a common problem in every aspect of human life, but "becomes especially serious," explains Fitzpatrick, "when it is related to the continuity of religious tradition because it then involves the question of the ultimate meanings and values of life."[48]

Fitzpatrick clarified the nature of the difficulty in the decision to embrace the theological and ecclesiological shifts that were necessitated by the preaching. Karl

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[47] Joseph Fitzpatrick, *One Church Many Cultures*, (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1987), 21.

[48] Ibid., 21-22.

Rahner has addressed the result of such decision. He argued that the Pauline preaching in the Gentile culture caused a paradigmatic shift in church history that was of great importance "not only for the history of culture but for theology and the history of salvation." He explains:

> He (Paul) proclaims abolition of circumcision for Gentile Christianity, an abolition which Jesus certainly did not anticipate and which can scarcely be cogently derived from Jesus' own explicit preaching or from the preaching about the salvific meaning of his death and resurrection. And yet for Paul this principle belongs to his gospel and means revelation in some sense. It is the interruption of a salvation-history continuity which a human being cannot undertake on personal authority alone. Thus the properly theological question arises which Paul himself did not adequately pursue: What can still remain and must still remain from the Old Testament salvation history and from the Church, if circumcision could be done away with, one of the realities that pertained to the final substance of salvation existence for a Jew of that time, something that according to Paul could and in fact should have remained for the Jewish Christians of the time? This transition, for him, constitutes a genuine caesura or break.[49]

Rahner presents two points that would behoove us to underscore. First, Paul's dialogical and dialectical encounter with the culture of the Gentiles, to whom he preached the good news of salvation, became a locus of revelation. Second, God's revelation in the Pauline encounter with the Gentile community leads to a break with Old Testament salvation history as Paul himself and his community of faith and culture had previously understood it. The result for the young church was a difficult break with the past and a break with salvation history as it was understood by Jewish Christians as a result of Pauline preaching.

I have attempted to articulate that, at its most basic, Christian preaching is the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. The experience of the

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[49] Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental, Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (Dec. 1979), 722.

primitive church reveals preaching to be a multi-faceted reality of proclamation, witnessing, prophesying, teaching, exhorting. Furthermore, since Paul's preaching in the Gentile community, the issue of culture was paramount not just to the praxis of Christian preaching, but also to the theology and ecclesiology of the church-community. The posture of dialogue with the culture of the Gentiles that the primitive church embraced provides a method in preaching in which the tradition of faith is placed in a relationship of dialogue and dialectic with the culture that is the object of evangelizing effort. The result is the conversion of the culture and the conversion of the church. Now I turn to the inseparable connection between culture and faith.

Faith and Culture in Dialogue

Cultural Semiotics: Meaning Embodied in Symbol and Social Practice

In 1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures* by American anthropologist Clifford Geertz was published and quickly became a highly influential work on the semiotics of culture and religion. Influenced by the work Max Weber, Geertz espouses a concept of culture that is "essentially a semiotic one." Semiotics is a term derived from the Greek word *semeion* which means sign or symbol. Geertz agrees with Weber who held that the human person is an "animal suspended in webs of significance he himself [*sic*] has spun." For Geertz, these webs are the very essence of a culture. This perception of culture leads

Geertz to see the study of culture as "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[50]

The understanding of culture as webs of significance is the cornerstone of Geertz's definition of culture as the "historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life."[51] Geertz's definition of culture is married to a broad understanding of what constitutes a symbol. He recognizes the fact that for some a symbol is "anything that signifies something else to someone: dark clouds are the symbolic precursors of an on-coming rain." For others, he states, symbols are used for "explicitly conventional signs of one sort of another: a red flag is a symbol of danger, a white of surrender." For others, the understanding of symbol is "confined to something which expresses in an oblique and figurative manner that which cannot be stated in a direct and literal one, so that there are symbols in poetry but not in science." For Geertz however, a symbol is "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception—the conception is the symbol's 'meaning'."[52] He explains:

> The number 6, written, imagined, laid out as a row of stones, or even punched into the program tapes of a computer, is a symbol. But so also the Cross, talked about, visualized, shaped worriedly in air or fondly fingered at the neck, the expanse of painted canvas called 'Guernica' or the bit painted stone called a churinga, the word 'reality,' or even the morpheme '-ing.' They are all symbols, or at least symbolic elements, because they are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs. To undertake the study of cultural activity—activity in which symbolism forms the positive

[50]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

[51]Ibid., 89.

[52] Ibid.

> content—is thus not to abandon social analysis for a Platonic cave of shadows, to enter into a mentalistic world of introspective psychology or, worse speculative philosophy, and wander there forever in a haze of 'Cognitions,' 'Affections,' 'Conations,' and other elusive titles. Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other; they are as public as marriage and as observable as agriculture.[53]

Again, for Geertz, culture is defined in terms of a society's patterns of meaning communicated through webs of symbols (experiential notions fixed in perceptible forms). As noted above, Geertz is concerned with how the patterns of meaning are understood as opposed to an analysis of the structures that make lucidity possible.

Borrowing from British philosopher Gilbert Ryle, Geertz holds that a "thick description of culture" must be delineated in order to grasp how the patterns of meaning, that constitute a culture, are understood. Thus, the thick description in cultural analysis for Geertz is about first training the analysis on the "hard surfaces of life." The "hard surfaces" he is talking about are concrete realities observable in the culture—"the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men [*sic*] are everywhere contained." Thick description is the attentiveness to the "symbolic dimensions of social action—art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense." [54] What Geertz describes as thick description is what the pastoral praxis of Latinos has termed "*el análisis de la realidad*," the starting point of this thesis as outlined in the first chapter and the starting point of Christian preaching in the theology of proclamation that I am developing in this thesis.

Azevedo, a Brazilian cultural anthropologist and theologian, has embraced Geertz's semiotic understanding of culture in his work. However, he has critiqued

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 30.

Geertz's definition of culture on two points. First, Azevedo claims that Geertz promotes a static understanding of culture when, in actuality, it is highly dynamic because it is a living reality.[55] Because culture is a web of meaning created by humans it is necessarily a process of constant evolution. The evolution of culture is not dramatic but a slow process that is as initially imperceptible as grass growing on the front lawn. Like water, sun, and fertilizers that provide impetus for grass to change and grow, climate, geography, religion, history, and its contact with other cultures provide impetus for a culture's growth and evolution.[56]

The second critique that Azevedo poses to Geertz's definition of culture is focused around the key word, symbol. Azevedo argues that Geertz's understanding of symbol needs to be nuanced to include the social practices of a culture. Azevedo looks to French anthropologist J. Gritti who holds that there are two levels of culture. One level is the symbolic, which he defines in a way that mirrors Geertz's definition. The other level of culture, according to Gritti, is the practical which he describes as the "activities and ways of conduct of social life, tools and techniques, customs, forms of apprenticeship and instruction, etc. In one word: the social practice."[57] For Azevedo, the social practices of a culture are as pregnant with meaning as the symbolic level that Geertz describes. Thus, Azevedo argues that a definition of culture must include both "the set of meanings, values and patterns which *underlies* the social practice as well as the symbolic level." [58]

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[55] Marcello Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1982), 9.

[56] Southeast Pastoral Institute, *Documentaciones Sureste: Cultura y Evangelización*, (Miami: SEPI, 1981), 10.

[57] J. Gritti, *L'expression de la foi dans les cultures humaines*, (Paris: Cent., 1975), 13 quoted in Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 9.

[58] Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 9.

Azevedo prescribes to a phenomenological understanding of the social practice and symbolic levels. This is to say that these levels can be "observed, perceived and rightly described." While the social practice and symbolic level belong to the phenomenological order, Azevedo holds that the underlying meanings of both of these levels belong to the cognitive order. He believes that culture is understood when there is an "epistemological affinity" or "epistemological dialogue" between the phenomenological level (social practice and symbol) and cognitive level (the underlying meanings of both social practice and symbol).[59] The end result for Azevedo is an understanding of culture as

> the set of meanings, values and patterns which underlie the perceptible phenomena of a concrete society, whether they are recognizable on the level of social practice (acts, ways of proceedings, tools, techniques, customs and habits, forms and traditions), or whether they are the carriers of signs, symbols, meanings and representations, conceptions and feelings that consciously or unconsciously pass from generation to generation and are kept as they are or transformed by people as the expression of their human reality.[60]

I agree with Azevedo's nuance of Geertz's semiotic understanding of culture and it will be the operative definition of culture that this thesis will embrace.

Culture is thus the epistemological key that opens the door to the understanding of a particular human group or society. Culture determines how a human group understands itself, understands life, and understands the world in which the members of the culture live and express this understanding through social practice and symbolic activity. A human person is marked by and bound to his or her culture and it is through culture that members of a society relate to each other, to other cultures and even to God. In *Gaudium*

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[59] Ibid., 10.

[60] Ibid.

et spes, the Second Vatican Council points to the inseparable link between the human person and culture. "It is one of the properties of the human person that he [*sic*] can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture" wrote the council fathers and added that whenever "there is a question of human life, nature and culture are intimately linked together."[61]

One final point in reference to culture needs to be made. Culture is a universal reality manifested in the particular. Each culture is unique. There are no two cultures that are identical because each is shaped by the uniqueness of climate, history, geography, social practices, and symbolic structure. As a result and given that each culture is different, no one particular culture "may pretend to exhaust the full meaning of humanity. Culture therefore is at once richness and poverty, affirmation and negation, value and limit. Culture is at once particular and universal."[62]

Christianity as Faith and Culture

Faith, like culture, is also a universal reality expressed in the particular. In an article entitled "Christianity as Faith and Culture," Yves Congar addresses the relationship between faith and culture from an ecclesiological perspective. Congar argues that faith is the human response to God's request or offer to make humankind a loving community of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This offer by God, however, can only reach the person in his or her "human

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[61] *Gaudium et spes*, 53.

[62] Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 11.

particularity."[63] In other words, God's universal call to humanity can only be heard and understood within the particularity and concreteness of culture. In order for me to hear and understand God's call, God must communicate His message through the social practice and symbolic structure (e.g. language, metaphors, etc.) of my culture. So also preaching must be communicated through the social practice and symbolic structure of the culture for it to be heard, embraced and responded to in conversion.

Congar argues that not only is God's call bound by culture, but so also is its response in faith. He contends that whenever the human person "enters into the life of Jesus Christ" through a response of faith, the individual "lives within the limits and the particular forms of his [*sic*] given situation."[64] Just as the call from God cannot be heard and understood outside of the concreteness of culture neither can the response of faith (conversion) because, for Congar, the response is not some abstract philosophical construct but a concrete act of love that can only be made within the confines of human particularity and thus within a community of culture. He explains:

> One is a person in society, with others. One is a believer in the Church, with others. The Faith and its celebration, its practice, thus have their expression in a given cultural space, in a community of culture, of history and destiny. So faith is lived, clothed, enveloped, expressed in a culture. Its expression in and through the arts, literature, poetry and song, customs, feasts and festivities, which is called for by its totalizing and community character, is also necessary for its social radiation, at the same time that it is the sign of its vitality.[65]

The relationship, as held by Congar, between faith (the concrete and culturally bound human response to God's call to build up the Reign of God) and culture (patterns

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[63] Yves Congar, "Christianity as Faith and Culture," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 18:4 (1981), 304.

[64] Ibid., 305.

[65] Ibid., 308.

of meaning embodied in symbol and social practice) has underlying implications for both ecclesiology and theologies of revelation. Again, he writes:

> The revealing initiatives of God on the one hand, and the faith which responds to them on the other, do not exist except concretely, and thus they exist at the meeting points of time and place, of social context, of expression. The response of faith is not the response of someone, of a concrete human subject, unless it is given, lived, expressed in the flesh of a concrete humanity. Thus revelation and the Church are catholic only in some particular. 'Particular' is opposed to 'general' but not to 'catholic.' The Particular realizations or expressions of the Catholic Faith are *pars pro toto, totum in parte*.[66]

Both God's call (revealed in Christian preaching) and the faith response (conversion) expressed in the concreteness of a community of culture (the Church) are particular expressions of a universal reality. For Congar, the universality of the church is found not in uniformity but in its capacity to assume the particularity of the world's "varieties of languages and cultures in a common praise of God."[67]

Culture as Locus of Revelation

In an article entitled "Revelation and Proclamation: Shifting Paradigms," Mary Catherine Hilkert presents two paradigms in the understanding of revelation and grace: the Dialectical Imagination and the Sacramental Imagination. The former predominates in the works of the great protestant thinkers such as Barth and Bultman. The latter is represented by Catholic theologians of the 20th Century such as Rahner and Schillebeeckx.[68]

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[66] Ibid., 305.

[67] Ibid., 307.

[68] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Revelation and Proclamation," in Aquinas Institute of Theology Faculty, *In the Company of Preachers*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 113-138. For a detailed discussion of this matter see Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, (New York: Continuum, 1997).

The starting point of the Dialectical Imagination paradigm of revelation and grace is rooted in a negative theological anthropology. The emphasis in this classic Reformation understanding of grace and the human condition "highlights the utter transcendence of the wholly-other God and the brokenness (sin) and unfinished (eschatological) dimensions of the human person and human history." In this theological model, in spite of the depraved human condition, the good news of salvation (the paschal event) is discovered in the act of its proclamation. The preaching of the paschal mystery (the Word of salvation) opens a new horizon and creates an "utterly new human possibility." In other words, it opens the door for conversion.[69]

The radical split between the creator and the created found in the Dialectical Imagination paradigm is turned on its head in the Sacramental Imagination paradigm. In this theological model God is not wholly other, distant, and removed from human experience. Here, God is inseparably connected to humanity and revealed in human life and history. In Jesus' redeeming grace, "humanity has been transformed and empowered to share responsibility for the transformation of the world." In this model, God's spirit is alive and present in the midst of creation and there is no dualistic split between body and spirit. As a matter of fact it is because of the body-spirit nature of the human person that "the reconciling grace or presence of God, among us is necessarily enfleshed—first in Jesus, the very self-expression of God, and then in the Church, called to be tangible sign and herald of the good news of salvation."[70] While in the Dialectical Imagination paradigm grace is in the Word of salvation and absent from human experience, in the Sacramental model grace is found in the depth of human experience. As a result,

[69] Ibid., 132-133.

[70] Ibid., 133.

preaching, illuminated by the Word of salvation, is a process of discovering and pointing to God's grace hidden in human life, history, and culture.

Though the Dialectical Imagination model would stand in opposition to this statement, grace is found in both models and both make important contributions to the ministerial praxis of the contemporary preacher in any culture. While I have embraced the Sacramental Imagination model in my praxis and theology of preaching and revelation, I am convinced that I must be open to the challenge that the Dialectical model presents: that authentic Sacramental Imagination preaching cannot lose sight of the fact that the preaching of the Paschal Mystery as revealed in the preaching of the Gospel is key to radical conversion, the effect on human life, and the edification of the Kingdom of God.

The Sensus Fidelium as an Infallible Wellspring of Revelation

Given my proclivity for the Sacramental Imagination paradigm as described by Hilkert, I am a firm believer that God is revealed in the concreteness of time, history, culture and human experience. As a result, I, as a preacher, must be able to identify God's self-revelation in the human community that is at worship. According to Orlando Espín, one source where God's self-revelation is located is the praxis of popular religiosity. He holds that popular religiosity reveals the "faith-filled intuitions" of a community of culture and faith through patterns of meaning embodied in metaphorical and symbolic activity. [71]

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[71]Orlando Espín, "Tradition and Popular Religion: An Understanding of the *Sensus Fidelium*" *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, Allan Figueroa Deck, ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 65.

These faith-filled intuitions, according to Espín are the backbone of what he has identified as the "*sensus fidelium*." This sense of the faithful is a theological source because it is the fruit of the Spirit active in the church. Espín, building on the conciliar document *Lumen Gentium*, goes further to state that "because the foundational origin of the *sensus fidelium* is the Holy Spirit, it can be said that this 'sense of the faithful' is infallible, preserved by the Spirit from error in matters necessary to revelation."[72]

This Spirit filled sense of the faithful is a particular reality of great universal value. It is particular in the sense that it is concrete; that is to say, it is the expression of the faith of a local church. It is of universal value because the faith experience of a local church holds part of the universal theological truth that theologians are in search of and attempting to articulate. The theological truth revealed in the faith praxis of the faithful, is fruit of the Spirit of Truth at work in our midst.[73] For the purposes of this thesis and borrowing from Congar's definition noted above, I would describe faith as the church attempting to respond, in and through this Spirit of Truth, to God's call to make of the world a community of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Truth guides the church in this endeavor in its local and particular reality.

These faith-filled intuition or *sensus fidelium* is expression of the Holy Spirit at work in the community. Because the foundation of the sense of the faithful is the Holy Spirit, Espín holds that the *sensus fidelium* is not only a locus of God's self revelation but an infallible source of revelation.

The verification of the revelation, according to Espín, is the work of theology and the magisterium. In the verification process, the faith-filled intuitions must be "confronted"

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[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., 155.

with the Bible, written texts of tradition (to verify orthodoxy) and "historical and sociological context" (to verify orthopraxis) within which the popular religious expression is found. In other words, as a preacher who is attempting to name God's self-revelation in the faith-filled practices of my worshipping community, I must take the revelatory claims (faith-full intuitions) that have been identified and have them confront:

1. The primary source of revelation (the canon of Scripture) to assure that the revelatory claims are coherent with the Bible,

2. The dogmatic and normative tradition of faith as articulated by a long history of magisterial instruction, and

3. The promotion of the Reign of God manifested in the orthopraxis (conversion) of the worshipping community.

So far I have held that preaching is a multi-faceted reality. At its most basic, it is the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The intended effect of Christian preaching is the conversion of the individual, the church, and society. Furthermore, I have claimed that the praxis of Christian preaching is a dialogical and dialectical process between faith and culture. Using the work of Geertz and Azevedo, I offered a working definition of culture as patterns of meaning embodied in symbol and social practice and argued that no human thought or activity is void of cultural significance. Borrowing extensively from Congar, faith was defined as the human response to God's call to make the world a community of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I further claimed that faith and culture are inseparably linked; for, the call to faith and its response in conversion are both bound by culture. I have proposed that both, faith and culture are particular expressions of a universal reality. They are also inseparably linked

because, as Hilkert has so aptly pointed out, it is in human experience, in a community of culture, that God's self-revelation is often revealed. This locus of revelation, referred by Espín as the *sensus fidelium* is "infallible, preserved by the Spirit from error in matters necessary to revelation." Finally, I claim that it is the job of the preacher to seek God's presence in the community of culture and that the preaching event is, among other elements, the naming or the pointing to the God being revealed in the depth of human history. I now turn to the issue of faith and culture from three distinct theological perspectives: inculturation, local church theology, and contextual theology.

Preaching and Theology

Preaching as Inculturation

The most widely used term to describe the relationship between faith and culture, at least in Roman Catholic circles, is *inculturation*.[74] Azevedo holds that this is a theological term that is often confused with three other terms that are anthropological and sociological concepts: *enculturation*, *acculturation*, and *transculturation*.[75] The distinctions that Azevedo makes between these terms from the discipline of the social sciences and inculturation are helpful in attempting to grasp the meaning of inculturation.

Using the work of anthropologist Melville Herskovits, Azevedo defines the term *enculturation* as the "process by which the human individual becomes inserted into

[74] Robert Schreiter, "Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church," *Theological Studies* 50 (Dec. 1989), 746.

[75] Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 7-8.

his/her own culture."[76] From birth, every human being is taught through verbal and non-verbal instruction how to be competent in his or her culture. Our capacity to speak a language, to understand the symbolic structure that is common to our human group, our ability to distinguish between that which is moral, socially acceptable, or that which in our culture is taboo is fruit of the process known as enculturation. Herskovits defines enculturation as a "learning experience, which marks humans off from other creatures and by means of which, initially and in later life, they achieve competence in their culture."[77]

Azevedo defines *acculturation* as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups."[78] For example, the encounter in Miami in the early 1960's between the culture of Cuban exiles and the culture of non-Hispanic Miamians has resulted in radical changes in both cultures by their continuous first-hand contact.

Azevedo uses the term *transculturation* to describe a process of transferring the "cultural traits, symbols, meanings, patterns, values or institutions of a specific culture to almost all other cultures."[79] This process occurs when one culture fails to be open to "reciprocal influence from the other cultures." He explains further:

> Transculturation therefore would connote a powerful, ethnocentric posture which prevents the originating culture from accepting and respecting or even recognizing the identity and values of other cultures. Thus, transculturation, as I am using it here, implies a certain self-conscious

[76] Ibid., 7.

[77] Melville Herskovits, *Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1952) in Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 7.

[78] Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 7.

[79] Ibid., 8.

> affirmation of a culture which deeply influences other cultures while resisting their influence upon itself.[80]

In Miami in the 1960's, for example, many Cuban exiles originally experienced not acculturation but rather transculturation. The members of the pre-existing non-Hispanic Miami culture attempted to impose their culture on the recently arrived immigrants. "If you want to be in America," many were told, "then you must be like us, speak as we speak, think as we think." As opposed to acculturation, in transculturation there is no dialogue and or dialectic between cultures encountering each other. On the contrary, transculturation is a process of domination in which a stronger and more powerful culture imposes itself on a weaker and less powerful culture.

While acculturation, enculturation, and transculturation are terms from the social sciences that point to certain cultural phenomena, *inculturation* is a theological term that points to the relationship between faith and culture. A.A. Roest Crollius has defined inculturation as "the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people." For Crollius, the fruit of this integrative experience that is inculturation is a "new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal."[81] Unity and communion within the culture embracing the tradition of faith are essential elements in Crollius' vision of inculturation. Also essential for Crollius is that though inculturation is the particular "integration of the Christian experience" at the level of the local church it yields important significance for the universal church.

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[80] Ibid.

[81] A.A. Roest Crollius, "What is So New About Inculturation?: A Concept and Its Implications," *Gregorianum* 59 (1978), 735.

Azevedo, using Geertz's semiotic insights of culture noted earlier, defines inculturation as "the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture; an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them."[82] Azevedo's understanding of inculturation is missiological in nature. By this I am referring to the fact that he sees it as a method in the evangelization praxis of the Church.

Borrowing from both Crollius and Azevedo and placing their insights in dialogue with the U.S. Hispanic/Latino method in practical theology outlined in the first chapter, I have defined inculturation as a three-fold process:

> 1. A communal, dynamic, and experiential process of evangelization by which the Christian life and message are embraced by, and through, a culture;
>
> 2. it inspires and unifies the church and the members of the culture embracing the Christian life and message and empowers them not only to see God being revealed in their culture, but also enables them to be agents of transformation in their culture in the hope of making it more consistent with the Gospel; and
>
> 3. it is a dialectical process in which the church and the culture embracing the Christian message are both enriched, transformed and evangelized through a mutual commitment to openness and dialogue.[83]

From my 20 years of experience of preaching in the Latino community, I argue that preaching, when seen as a process of inculturation as defined above, becomes an enriching process of conversion not only for the hearer of the proclamation, but also an enriching process of conversion for the preacher and the church.

Preaching as Theology of the Local Church

[82] Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 11.

[83] Presmanes, 56-57.

Recently, I was asked to give a talk to a parish group about the work I have been doing on this thesis. During the question and answer period a young woman raised her hand and asked: "What's the difference between a preacher and a theologian?" Her intervention stopped me in my tracks because it is a great question. Drawing on my lengthy experience as a preacher and borrowing from Robert Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies,* I responded by arguing that some theologians are preachers but all good preachers are theologians of the local church. "Being a theologian," Schreiter writes, "is a gift, requiring sensitivity to the context, an extraordinary capacity to listen, and an immersion in the Scriptures and the experience of other churches."[84] I would add that the preacher, after completing the work of the theologian, orally proclaims the theology. Schreiter articulates well the praxis of preaching that I have embraced for two decades. Every time I preach I do local theology: I am bringing together the three elements that, according to Schreiter, are essential theological source: the culture, the Gospel, and the church/tradition. Preaching is, thus, the fruit of placing these three sources in a relationship of dialogue and dialectic with each other.[85]

Schreiter contends that each of these three elements in which the preacher-theologian must engage are themselves local theologies. The community is a text that is local theology because it is a local church with its own understanding and history of God's self-revelation in its midst. The Gospels are local theologies of four First Century communities. Finally, he argues that the tradition (in the context of my praxis, it is most

[84] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 17-18.

[85] Ibid., 22.

often expressed in the liturgical text) is a series of local theologies that have been handed on through the centuries.[86]

Perhaps another answer to this question is found in Schreiter's use of David Tracy's insight that there are three publics for theology: academy, church, and society. The preacher-theologian's primary public is the church gathered in worship and, on some occasions, society. On the other hand, the professional theologian's primary public is the academy and on occasions society and the church.[87]

Schreiter would argue that the preacher begins with an observation of culture (what I call the "*ver*" stage in the previous chapter and what Geertz has termed "thick description"). This is however in contrast to the seminary training of most preachers who are taught that the homiletic process begins with the text from scripture. Schreiter would say, and I would agree, that if the intent is local theology and not a translation of the tradition, the starting point must be the community. The preacher begins with the community because, as I pointed out earlier, it is text and source of revelation. Schreiter correctly holds that the "development of local theologies," which I contend is what the content of the preaching event is about, "depends as much on finding Christ already active in the culture as it does on bringing Christ to the culture."[88] Thus, the preacher must be ever attentive to the culture/congregation/community (the "*ver*" stage) because that is a privileged place where he/she will locate the very presence of the Risen Lord.

I argue that attentiveness to culture through a comprehensive analysis of the reality of the community of faith is not only source for the content of the homily/local

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[86] Ibid., 32-33.

[87] Ibid., 36-37.

[88] Ibid., 29.

theology; it is also source for the context of its delivery. If one accepts Geertz's and Azevedo's semiotic understanding of culture (a system of meanings embodied in symbols and social practice), then an analysis of culture will also be source for the context of the preaching. It will inform the style of delivery, the metaphors that are chosen, the mode of rhetoric that is employed as well as other symbolic activity and social practices that will facilitate the communication that is at the core of the preaching event.

Preaching as Contextual Theology

In 1992 Stephen Bevans made an important contribution to the theological implications of the relationship of faith and culture with the publication of his book *Models of Contextual Theology*.[89] Both Schreiter and Bevans hold similar views on the definition and source of local or contextual theology. They both agree that there are three fundamental wellsprings from which contextual theology flows: scripture, tradition, and culture or context. While Schreiter uses a semiotic understanding of culture, Bevans uses a more phenomenological method in his contextual approach. Bevans argues that beyond a semiotic understanding of culture there are three other aspects of theological context: personal and social experience, social location, and social change. These three points are of importance for a Hispanic/Latino theology because of the importance placed by the community on social interrelationship as has been noted in the previous chapter.

Why is human experience/context a source of theology? Why should I reflect on the context of my community and look at my own context and human experience before I preach? The answer to these important questions that a preacher must ask is found, according to Bevans, in the radical turn to the subject brought on by modernity. This

[89] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992).

epistemological shift rendered the classical view of theology as something objectively obsolete. Contextual theology, as is this Hispanic/Latino theology of preaching, says Bevans, is "unabashedly subjective."[90] Why do I reflect on human experience as text for preaching? Because I want my preaching to be real and the only source of reality is found in the concreteness of human life, of culture, of time and history.

The social location of the preacher is also a critical factor in authentic preaching. I am convinced that the preacher must be attentive to his or her own social location because, as Bevans argues, whether one is Latino/a or not, whether one is male or female, whether one is black or white, whether one is rich or poor, whether one is at the "center or on the margin of power" makes a difference. It affects how one interprets human experience, scripture, and tradition—the basic elements of preaching as local or contextual theology.[91]

One final point needs to be made in reference to preaching as contextual theology. When the starting point of the preaching process is human experience and social location and given that oppression, injustice, and human suffering are intrinsic to the human condition that is text for the preaching, then Christian preaching must necessarily address these death-dealing realities. The preacher is concerned with politics because to omit it from the pulpit makes preaching irrelevant. The preacher in the Latino community is concerned with social change because the Gospel, the tradition and the context that are text for the preaching demand it given that the fruit of preaching is conversion at both a personal and social level.

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[90] Ibid., 4.

[91] Ibid., 6.

In this section I have presented three theological perspectives on the relationship of faith and culture: inculturation, local church theology, and contextual theology. From the perspective of inculturation, preaching is a communal and experiential process of evangelization that is dialogical and dialectical in nature and its fruit is the transformation of not only the object of the preaching, but also the subject of the preaching (tradition of faith) as well. I further argued that preaching is the articulation of the theology of the local church and that the preacher is attentive to culture because it is text and source of theology. Finally, the perspective of contextual theology highlighted the importance of the social location of both the preacher and the community that is the recipient of the proclamation lest the preaching become an abstraction.

Conversion as Fruit of Christian Preaching

I return to the topic of conversion given that the building of the Reign of God, through the conversion of the worshipper and the worshipping community, is the intended response to the preaching event. Here Donald Gelpi's work on conversion is helpful.[92] He defines conversion as the decision to take responsibility for growth in all aspects or areas of one's life. Gelpi holds that there are two conversions, an initial and a continuous conversion. The initial conversion is the decision to move from irresponsible to responsible behavior in an area of one's life. Continuous conversion is the process of dealing with irresponsible habits that were formed prior to the initial conversion.[93] For example, a person who is a habitual procrastinator decides that he or she will no longer procrastinate. This decision is the initial conversion. The continuous conversion is the

[92] Donald Gelpi, *Grace as Transmuted Experience and Social Process, and Other Essays in North American Theology*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 97-141.

[93] Ibid., 102.

daily and intentional attempt to overcome the habitual patterns of procrastination that were firmly established in his or her life prior to the decision to procrastinate no more.

Gelpi holds that there are five areas of conversion to which individuals must be attentive: affective, intellectual, moral, socio-political, and religious. The affective conversion is the decision to be responsible in the development and growth of our emotional life. He holds that each individual is marked by his or her history in both positive and negative ways. One grows in affective conversion when one accepts the positive and intentionally works to overcome the negative. The affective conversion gives the individual freedom and hope.[94]

The intellectual conversion is the decision to be responsible in one's search for truth. The intellectual conversion is much more that an assiduous commitment to study. Its starting point is an appreciation for the limits of human knowledge and understanding and for the fact that no one is the sole proprietor of the truth. As a result, those in the process of intellectual conversion are open to a change in opinion, are curious, and eschew the inflexibility of fundamentalism. The fruit of the intellectual conversion is a passionate love for truth and a rejection of dishonesty and intellectual rigidity.[95]

The moral conversion is the decision to be responsible for the consequences of one's personal decisions. This conversion presupposes that every human act is fruit of a decision and that every decision has ramifications or consequences. One is in process of a moral conversion when one takes into consideration how one's decisions impact the other and modifies his or her decisions based on the ramifications of such decision.

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[94] Ibid., 103-104.

[95] Ibid., 104-105.

Those who are in the process of a moral conversion are sensitive, moderate, prudent, and are concerned for the other. The fruit of the moral conversion is love.[96]

The socio-political conversion is the decision to be responsible in helping (to the extent that one can) to make human institutions more just. Those in the process of a socio-political conversion are committed to the struggle for justice in society, take interest in the death-dealing problems facing the world, and believe that his or her efforts to overcome these social ills can and will make a difference. The fruit of the socio-political conversion is a commitment to justice and the struggle to eliminate in society all forms of oppression, marginalization, and human suffering.[97]

Finally, the religious conversion is the decision to be responsible in one's response to God's revelation and call. The Christian religious conversion is the decision to respond responsibly to the Father's call and revelation in the person of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Christian religious conversion is the knowledge of God and the spirit-filled grace that enables fidelity in the following of Jesus Christ.[98]

I claim that Gelpi presents a challenge for the Christian preacher because, much too often, the call to conversion made by preachers has been overly individualized and spiritualized to the detriment of a holistic and evangelical understanding of conversion. In his book on liberation spirituality, Gustavo Gutierrez writes:

> The spiritual journey has often been presented as a cultivation of individualistic values as a way to personal perfection. The relationship with God seemed to obscure the presence of others and encouraged individual Christians to be absorbed in their own interiority in order to

[96] Ibid., 105-106.

[97] Ibid., 114-115.

[98] Ibid., 106-107.

> understand and develop it better. For this reason the spiritual life was called the interior life, which many understood as a life lived exclusively within the individual. The important thing in it was the deployment of the virtues as potentialities that had to do with the individual and had little or no connection with the outside world.[99]

I am convinced, as result of my own process of conversion and as a result of the process of conversion of those to whom I have preached for almost two decades, that preaching that fails to explicitly address the fullness of the complexity of human experience fails the recipient of the preaching to address essential aspects of human conversion that are vital for the conversion of the individual and the conversion of society.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that culture is vital to theologies of preaching for three reasons. First, it is in culture and human experience that the God who is preached is revealed. Second, culture is the key to the intelligibility of the preaching for it mediates the communication that is the preaching event. And third, it is within the concreteness of culture and human experience that the faithful respond in conversion to Christian preaching.

I argued that preaching is a multi-faceted reality. At its core, it is the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I argued that the praxis of Christian preaching is a dialogical and dialectical process between faith and culture.

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[99] Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 14.

I further claimed that faith and culture are inseparably linked given that the call to faith and its response in praxis are both bound by culture. I argued that both, faith and culture are particular expressions of a universal reality. They are also inseparably linked because the culture through which humans live is a privileged source of revelation. I claimed that it is the job of the preacher to seek God's presence in the community of culture and that the preaching event is, among other elements, the naming or the pointing to the God being revealed in the culture.

From the perspective of inculturation, I presented an understanding of preaching as a communal and experiential process of evangelization whose fruit is the transformation of not only the object of the preaching, but also the subject. It was my claim that from the perspective of local church theology, preaching was the articulation of the theology of the local church. Furthermore, the preacher is attentive to the culture of the local church because within it rests not only an integral element of the content of the preaching, but also informs the context and delivery of the preaching event. The perspective of contextual theology pointed to the importance of the social location as a source of hermeneutical bias on the part of both the preacher and the community that is the recipient of the proclamation. Finally, I offered a holistic approach to conversion, the fruit and the verification of effective Christian preaching. Now the investigation is narrowed as we move from a broad and general concept of preaching to focus on the Sunday homily.

CHAPTER THREE

Liturgical Preaching: Remembering the Past in Gratitude; Anticipating the Future in Hope

> For the vast majority of Catholics the Sunday homily is the normal and frequently the formal way in which they hear the Word of God Proclaimed. For these Catholics the Sunday homily may well be the most decisive factor in determining the depth of their faith and strengthening the level of their commitment to the church.[100]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I began with the anecdote of the parishioner who asked what the experience of the faithful had to do with theology. Subsequently, I presented three reasons why culture is paramount to theologies of preaching. I argued that a reflection on culture was crucial to theologies of preaching and preaching in general because 1) culture is locus of revelation and thus source and content of Christian preaching; 2) because preaching and its intelligibility is bound by culture given that preaching is an exercise in communication and communication is bound by culture; and 3) because the fruit of Christian preaching is conversion and conversion must necessarily be concretized through love in the particularity of culture, of human time and history.

In this chapter, I will first present two reasons why culture is paramount to liturgical theologies of preaching in particular. Here I claim that culture is paramount to liturgical theologies of preaching because the primary reality in worship is the *ekklesia*

[100] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Fulfilled In Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*, (Washington: USCCB, 1982), 2.

given that "Christ is the assembly, the People of God."[101] Culture is also paramount in liturgical theology because the community of culture and faith gathered in prayer in the liturgy is liturgical text, the primary source for liturgical theology.

Subsequently, I will assert that liturgy is the church gathered in the act of memorial. What is remembered is God's saving deeds in the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The memory of the paschal mystery which is recalled in the liturgical celebration is juxtaposed with the cultural memory of the assembly. It is thus, the function of preaching to evoke, point to, and unveil loci of convergence of the memories of Jesus and of the worshipping community.

I further claim that the assembly of worship at St. Dominic Church in Miami is a community that has been indelibly marked by a corporate experience of otherness and exile. This experience of diaspora is a hermeneutical point of entry into understanding this community. Thus, it is also a hermeneutical point of entry into this community's act of memorial in the liturgy.

In the previous chapters I held that the fruit of Christian preaching is conversion. Here I assert that the fruit of liturgical preaching and of liturgical anamnesis is joy and confidence in God's solidarity with those who suffer. The joy of remembering a God who chose to identify himself with those on the margins of society leads to eschatological hope. Finally, I will emphasize the point that the eschatological hope that flows out of the liturgical commemoration of a diaspora community leads the community, with the assistance of preaching that *concientiza* (raises consciousness), to recommit themselves

[101] Ibid., 4.

in conversion to the baptismal life and the continuation here and now of the mission of Jesus to preach the Gospel in word and deed.

Preaching and the Church at Worship

The Centrality of the Assembly

In the NCCB document, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*, the authors insist that any treatment of the Sunday Homily has to begin with the "assembly rather than with the preacher or homily."[102] To begin with the assembly, a particular local church gathered in worship is, as I argued in the previous chapter, to enter into the complexities of the life, dreams, and hopes of a specific and particular community of faith. To begin with the assembly is also to begin with the risen Christ "for when two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."[103] To understand the assembly as the presence of Christ gathered in prayer echoes *Sacrosanctum Concilium* when it states that, "Christ is always present in his church, especially in her liturgical celebrations."[104] Thus the liturgy is a meeting point where God and God's people become one. Liturgical theology then uses the concrete experience of a particular and local liturgical *ekklesia* because within it the presence of Christ is found.

The liturgical *ekklesia* as revelation of the Risen Christ is also consistent with a Pauline understanding of the worshipping community as locus of revelation. In his

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Matthew 18, 20, RSV.

[104] S.C., 7.

article entitled "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians," Jerome Murphy O'Connor writes:

> The community mediates the salvation won by Christ. The word that he spoke is not heard in the contemporary world unless it is proclaimed by the community. The power that flowed forth from him in order to enable response is no longer effective unless it is manifested by the community…the community…is the incarnational prolongation of the mission of the saving Christ. What he did in and for the world of his day through his physical presence, the community does in and for its world. In terms of the reality of salvation the community is the physical presence of Christ.[105]

From a Pauline perspective, the assembly is central to the liturgy and a source for liturgical theology because the assembly or the *ekklesia* gathered in worship is Christ. Christ lives, moves, and speaks through the community. The claim that the assembly is *locus theologicus* for liturgical theology is backed by the saving force of Christ because "in the world it demonstrates the reality of an alternative mode of existence in which humanity is not dominated by the egocentricity that provokes possessiveness, jealousy, and strife."[106]

In as much as the liturgical community demonstrates an alternative mode of existence for the world, the Hispanic community offers an alternative mode of existence for the church in North America which is marked by the philosophy of modern liberal individualism. Roberto Goizueta argues that for the "modern liberal individual, human relationships are not constitutive of the self; they are voluntarily chosen and possessed by

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[105] Jerome Murphy O'Connor, "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians," in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982, R. Kevin Seasoltz, ed.), 6.

[106] Ibid.,16.

the self."[107] From the experience of the modern liberal individual, community is "nothing more than a collection of individuals who have chosen to enter into a contractual relationship with each other for some common purpose: e.g. to worship." Goizueta goes on to say that the individual "can and does exist as a distinct entity prior to any involvement in society or community, whose involvement is, in any case an option which he or she is 'free to choose' or, presumably, not choose." "Likewise," he says of the modern liberal individualistic sense of community, "once an individual opts for one particular community he or she is always free to leave that community when it no longer satisfies his or her needs."[108] In the context of the modern liberalism that predominates in the North American context, membership in community is the voluntary decision of a consumer.

Goizueta argues that a reflection on U.S. Hispanic popular Catholicism reveals an anthropology that is in contrast to the anthropology of the modern liberal culture and experience of community. In a Latino context, "community is understood to be fundamentally preexistent (therefore involuntary) and constitutive."[109] Thus, for the Latino membership in the *ekklesia* is not a choice but rather a pre-existent reality comparable to membership in his or her family. The implications for a Latino liturgical theology of preaching that attempts to identify and point to the presence of Jesus Christ in the assembly or *ekklesia* are clarified by Goizueta:

> For the U. S. Hispanic theologian, then it will not be sufficient to read books about Jesus Christ, or even to study relevant dogmatic declarations or biblical texts—as important as these might be. We must instead look

[107] Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 60.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 65.

> first—even if not only—to the concrete, historical presence of Jesus in our communities, for it is in our concrete historical relationship with Jesus that we come to know him, as surely as it is in our concrete, historical relationship with our families and friends that we come to know these.[110]

U.S. Hispanic/Latino theologies of preaching must begin with a reflection on the experience of the *ekklesia* because it is in the concreteness of human experience and culture that we come to know Jesus. Now I turn to the issue of the assembly as liturgical text.

The Assembly as Liturgical Text

James Empereur defines liturgy as "the symbolic articulation of the Christian community's relationship with God."[111] Liturgical theology is then a reflection of the faith expressed through the symbolic articulation of the Christian community's relationship with God. The fifth-century axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of worship is the law of belief) points to the long held understanding in the field of liturgy that the primary text for liturgical theology is the liturgical text. Thus, the experience of the particular community that is articulating its relationship with God through symbolic and metaphorical activity in its liturgy is liturgical text. In other words, the liturgical experience of a particular community (liturgical context) becomes liturgical text, the primary source for liturgical theology.[112] This assertion calls forth a methodological shift in liturgical theology. Kevin Irwin delineates this shift when he writes:

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[110] Ibid., 70.

[111] James Empereur, *Exploring the Sacred*, (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1987), viii.

[112] Kevin Irwin, "Method in Liturgical Theology: Context is Text," *Eglise et Theologie*, 20 (1989), 409.

> To state that the liturgical context is text means shifting the attention of those who do liturgical theology away from the exclusive compilation and comparison of liturgical texts (for instance, sacramentaries, pontificals, *ordos*) to the discussion of these sources in the context of celebration...I argue that when context is understood to comprise historical evolution, reformed rites and contemporary critical function, it becomes the text...[113]

Thus, the experience of the local church that articulates its relationship with God at worship is not only an adequate source for liturgical theology, but also an essential and primary one.

Careful study of the culture of the assembly is of great importance to contextual liturgical theologies of preaching because it offers a hermeneutical entry into the scriptural and liturgical texts. Ada María Isasi-Díaz in her article, "By the Rivers of Babylon: Exile as a Way of Life," argues in favor of a hermeneutical approach that holds that the text itself "is found in the relationship that is created between the reader, the writer, and the text."[114] She argues further that the hermeneutics of the reader is the point of entry into the text and will influence how the text is "understood to have meant and to mean today."[115] As in biblical criticism, the reader, or the assembly for our purposes, is the point of entry into the text, the primary source of liturgical theology.

In his seminal article, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” Fernando Segovia affirms Isasi-Diaz’s claims and argues that a new “flesh and blood” reader must be introduced in the praxis of biblical criticism. By this he means that in biblical criticism the context of the reading of the text is

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "By the Rivers of Babylon: Exile as a Way of Life," *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds.), 151.

[115] Ibid.

inseparable from the text itself. The introduction of the new "flesh and blood" reader in biblical criticism, he argues, is to acknowledge that "no reading, informed or uninformed, takes place in a social vacuum or desert."[116] This "reader-response" method in biblical criticism is helpful in the field of liturgics as well. As in biblical criticism, liturgy does not take place in a vacuum. Someone is praying those ancient texts in a particular place and time and moment in history. Because of the uniqueness and particularity of culture, as I outlined in the previous chapter, no other *ekklesia* has or will pray and understand the liturgical text in quite the same way. Furthermore, when liturgical theology embraces the experience of the worshipping community as text, or source, then theology becomes a liberating reality not only for the church, but also for theology itself. Segovia writes:

> I see this irruption of the flesh-and-blood reader into biblical criticism as a harbinger not of anarchy and tribalism, as many who insist on impartiality and objectivity often claim, but rather of continued decolonization and liberation, of resistance and struggle against a subtle authoritarianism and covert tribalism of its own, in a discipline that has been, from the beginning to end and top to bottom, thoroughly Eurocentric despite its assumed scientific persona of neutrality and universality.[117]

As the "irruption of the flesh and blood reader" is a liberating experience for the discipline of biblical criticism, so also the irruption of the "flesh and blood" worshipper can be liberating for liturgical theology. Now, I turn to preaching in the service of liturgical commemoration.

Preaching in the Service of Memorial in Christian Worship

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[116] Fernando Segovia, "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutic of Otherness and Engagement," Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, Eds., *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 57.

[117] Ibid.

Preaching and Liturgical Anamnesis

In the Second Century of our common era, Justyn Martyr, put forward what is the oldest record of the Liturgy of the Word as most contemporary Roman Catholics experience it today in the Sunday Assembly. He writes:

> "And on the day called Sunday an assembly is held in one place of all who live in town or country, and the records of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as time allows. Then, when the reader has finished, the president in a discourse admonishes [us] to imitate these good things. Then we all send up prayers."[118]

Frank Quinn argues that since the time of Justin Martyr, liturgical preaching has been "scripture's bridge to the contemporary world."[119] Quinn correctly points out that while the text from scripture is a primary source, so is the liturgical text. Unlike other forms of preaching, liturgical preaching is marked by and is in the service of commemoration, a fundamental element of the liturgical action.[120] Quinn explains:

> Liturgy is a corporate action whereby the *ekklesia* or assembly gives praise and thanksgiving to God for salvation achieved and offered. Such praise and thanksgiving centers on remembering (*anamnesis*) God's intervention in human history, especially in that climactic event which created us a Christian people, the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, and petitioning or invoking (*epiclesis*) God to continue to remember us by favoring us here and now in this grace-filled moment.[121]

The liturgical preacher, according to Quinn, must realize that the liturgy is not "simply a dramatic recalling of the story of redemption," but also a "celebration of our common story, which is as much present as past."[122]

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[118] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67.1 quoted in Frank Quinn, "Liturgy: Foundation and Context for Preaching," Aquinas Institute of Theology Faculty, *In the Company of Preachers*, 7.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Frank Quinn, "Liturgy: Foundation and Context for Preaching," in Aquinas Institute of Theology Faculty, *In the Company of Preachers*, 8.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

It has been frequently argued that memory is a universal reality of the religious celebration.[123] In Christian liturgy, memorial or anamnesis is its cornerstone. In the liturgy, the remembrance is invoked by the text through the juxtaposition of metaphors, symbols, and the elements of the *ordo*. What is invoked by the text, as alluded to in the above quote from Quinn, is the memory of a God who has been irrevocably committed to God's people throughout history. The fullness of the Father's commitment has been made manifest through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the preface to Eucharistic Prayer II states:

> Father, it is our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Word through whom you made the universe, the Savior you sent to redeem us. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. For our sake he opened his arms on the cross; he put an end to death and revealed the resurrection. In this he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.[124]

The memory of what God has said and done becomes the very content of worship.[125] But memory is not only the content of the liturgy; it is also the context because the memory of what God has said and done is remembered by the worshipping community in their present reality. Schaeffler writes:

> For the present in which the remembered past and expected future are combined *in such a way* that the religious I and we that can tell their stories only emerge from that combination in a special kind of present: it is not brought forth in an abstract act of thought or in the pure interiority of imagination, but in the speech-act of calling upon a name, in which the human being enters a correlative relationship with God and in that encounter experiences the saving actions of God, accomplished long ago,

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[123]Richard Schaeffler, "'Therefore We Remember...' The Connection Between Remembrance and Hope in the Present of the Liturgical Celebration. Religious-philosophical Reflections on a Religious Understanding of Time", *The Meaning of the Liturgy*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994, Angelus A. Haussling, ed.), 15.

[124] *The Roman Missal*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974), 548.

[125] Ibid., 16.

> as something present, and in such a way that thereby the saving actions of God that are hoped for in the future appear symbolically, but as effective also in the present.[126]

Schaeffler reminds us that the salvific act of the paschal mystery, which is remembered in the liturgy, becomes effectively present when the memory of the life of Jesus is juxtaposed with the memories of the life of the assembly. In the celebration of the Eucharist, salvation is experienced when the memory of the suffering and death of Jesus is juxtaposed with the memories of suffering as concretely experienced by the community of worship, and when the memory of the resurrection of Christ is juxtaposed with the memories of the dreams and hopes of those gathered in prayer for themselves, their families, their community, the Church, and the world. Though the juxtaposition of memories occurs in the *ekklesia* in the act of memorial, it is the job of the preacher to evoke, point to, and unveil points of convergence of the memories of Jesus and of the worshipping community.

Liturgical Anamnesis as Soteriological Event

I have pointed above to the fact that liturgy is the church in the act of memorializing and that at the core of the memorial is the salvific act of the paschal mystery. Through the community's invocation of God's name and recalling God's salvific words and deeds the community effectively experiences the salvific act. This is not a mystical reality that is disconnected with the church's mission. It would be a mystical reality if what was being remembered was some mere historical event. But the paschal mystery is not only a historical event. It is a soteriological event.

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[126] Ibid., 30.

In an article entitled *"Palabra de Dios y Evangelización,"* New Testament scholar Gustavo Baena makes an important differentiation between the historical act and salvific nature of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baena attempts to sheds light, from the contemporary experience of the Christian, on the Pauline kerygmatic statement in First Corinthians that the Christian is saved by the gospel that "Christ died for our sins is accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures."[127] Baena claims that "the third day" is not a chronological fact but rather a theological reality. The kerygmatic formula, he states,

> …does not point directly to the death and resurrection of Christ as specific events that occurred at the beginning of our common era, but rather as to its salvific power or soteriological value. Thus, the death and resurrection of Christ are salvific when they occur in a salvific fashion, that is to say, when they occur in the very life of the Christian making a sinner a crucified Christ.[128]

Salvation for Baena is not primarily a mystical reality. In the context of the concrete life of the Christian, in the here and now, it is the experience of conversion. For Baena, the memorial of the salvific event that renders it effectively present in the liturgy must necessarily be transformative for the community gathered in worship. Thus, when the salvific act is recalled by church gathered in worship—evoked by the liturgical text and liturgical preaching—it is made effectively present and calls for a recommitment to continuous conversion. This ongoing process of conversion is the crux of the baptismal

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[127] 1 Cor. 15, 3b-4, R.S.V.

[128] Gustavo Baena, "Palabra de Dios y Evangelización," p. 405. Fr. Baena is Professor in Sacred Theology at the *Universidad Javeriana* in Bogota, Columbia. The article was provided by the professor in class. Publication information is not available at this time; my translation.

life as St. Paul defined it: "So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."[129]

Anamnesis as Cultural Memory

In an article entitled "*Sangre llama a sangre*: Cultural Memory as a Source of Theological Insight," Jeanette Rodriguez contends that cultural memory is a source for theology and locates cultural memory in tradition.[130] Tradition, according to Rodriguez, is that which a culture hands down from generation to generation: "all the experiences of a people: personal as well as communal experiences; implicit and explicit understandings; myths; stories; affectivities—anything that actualizes the potential of the human person."[131]

Rodriguez holds that tradition has two distinct parts: the process (*traditio* or the act of remembering) and the product (*traditium*). *Traditio* is the process by which how those who remember (a people, a society, and a culture) evoke the memory through celebration, oral story telling, and in writings (the act of remembering). Christian worship and its preaching is an example of *traditio*. *Traditium* is the content of the memory that evokes feelings, biases, modes of action, forms of language, aspirations, interpersonal relations, images, ideas, and ideals (this is the fruit of remembering which

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[129] Matthew 6, 11, R.S.V.

[130] Jeanette Rodriguez, "*Sangre llama a sangre*: Cultural Memory as a Source of Theological Insight," in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 117-133.

[131] Ibid., 118.

she calls the remembrance). Finally, Rodriguez claims that it is in the act of remembering, through celebration and poetics, that culture and memory merge.[132]

When applied to homiletics, I find her categories invaluable for they reveal that it is in the preaching event (*traditio* or the act of remembering) that culture and memory merge resulting in new feelings, modes of action, images, ideas, ideals, aspirations, devotions, direction and hope (*traditium* or the remembrance). For Rodriguez, remembrance is not bound just to past events but it is rather a contemporary event because it gives meaning to the present.[133] Furthermore, it has transformative potential as well. In homiletics, remembrance or *traditium* is the fruit of effective preaching (*traditio*) that leads to conversion and the baptismal life.

When Rodriguez's understating of tradition is applied to homiletics, three elements must come together in the *traditio* or preaching event to achieve *traditium*: the memory of the Paschal Mystery, the past and present realities of those who are doing the remembering (the congregation) and the poetics (the context and content of the homily). My experience points to the fact that most preachers are very apt and knowledgeable of the first of these three crucial elements (the memory of the Paschal Mystery). A smaller group is apt at both the first and last crucial element (the memory of the Paschal Mystery and the poetics of the preaching event). But it is the second crucial element (the past and present reality of the congregation) that is most often the major problem for the preacher. I believe this is so because to be well versed in the past and present reality of the congregation requires entering fully into the life of the congregation. It requires

[132] Ibid., 120.

[133] Ibid., 122

convivencia[134]—a radical entering into the life of a people through which the triumphs, the defeats, the joys, and the sufferings of past experience and the dreams, the hopes, and the direction of an anticipated future are revealed.

Liturgical Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination Paradigm

In the previous chapter the "Sacramental Imagination Paradigm" of revelation as delineated by Hilkert was presented. In this theological model, God is recognized as inseparably connected to humanity and revealed in human life and history. In this chapter I argued that liturgical preaching is the process (*traditio*) of evoking the memory of God's presence in a community. For Hilkert, the evocation of the memory in Christian preaching is the process of pointing to and "naming the grace" of God's presence in the midst of the community of faith, in the midst of human experience.[135] In agreement with Rodriguez, Hilkert proposes an understanding of tradition as a continuous process of revelation which is the Christian "story in the making."[136] To preach within the paradigm of the Sacramental Imagination is to tell the story of the relationship between God and God's people from the uniqueness and particularity of the social location of the *ekklesia* at worship.

Given that in the Sacramental Imagination model of revelation, preaching is the process of pointing to God's presence revealed in the community of faith, it is the job of

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[134] There is no single word in the English language that captures the meaning of *convivencia*. Literally translated it is co-living. I would translate it as the corporate sharing of life or communal solidarity.

[135] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Naming Grace: A Theology of Proclamation," (Worship, 60, Sept. 1986), 434. See also: Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, (New York: Continuum, 1997).

[136] Ibid., p. 447.

the preacher to uncover the Kingdom's presence, and to expose its apparent absence. In other words, preaching in the Latino community names *la gracia* (the grace) and denounces *la desgracia* (this word is used to mean "the tragedy" but its literal translation is "the lack of grace," which is indeed a tragedy). To preach from the context of the Latino reality and to tell our story is essential because if we do not do it, no one will. Again, Hilkert writes:

> Never before has the Christian story been heard or proclaimed in the way we will hear or announce it from our own unique moment in history and cultural context. What new dimensions of the story unfold when it is retold by women, by Nicaraguan peasants, by prisoners, by married Christians, by refugees…If we do not hand on the tradition by telling the story of salvation from the context of our own experience, no one else can or will.[137]

The narrative of salvation is thus a dynamic reality that is expressed in the concreteness of history and culture. The preaching event is the handing on of the tradition by telling the continuously evolving story of salvation. If preaching is understood in terms of telling the salvation story, then if the story is not told from the context of our own experience, then the tradition is incomplete. To fail to include our own experience of faith in Christian preaching is, in essence, the silencing of the faith community and the God who is revealed in their midst. From the context of the U.S. Hispanic, to exclude *la gracia* that is veiled in our history is to fail to see God revealed concretely in the life of our community. As a result, preaching becomes another painful memory of exclusion.

The Diaspora Experience of Latinos as Hermeneutical Key

[137] Ibid., 446.

The analysis of the reality of the liturgical *ekklesia* at St. Dominic, as noted in the first chapter, reveals that its membership is 98% Hispanic and, of these, almost 72% are Cubans who self-identify as exiles and see themselves living in a state of diaspora. My experience in this community points to the fact that diaspora is also experienced by the other 28% of non-Cuban Hispanics that are members of the St. Dominic *ekklesia*. I claim that the experience of diaspora is the hermeneutical key that opens the door to the understanding of the flesh and blood text that is source for the liturgical theology of preaching that is the undertaking of this thesis.

The dictionary definition of a diaspora is "a dispersion of an originally homogeneous people."[138] Yet, this definition does not do justice to the reality of what we Latinos have experienced. The experience of diaspora is multivalent. It is a place of alienation where a sense of radical otherness is experienced as a way of life. This otherness may have its roots in being a person from one country and culture living in another, as is my case. However, it is not limited to being an exile or an expatriate.[139] The diaspora of otherness is experienced by women in a patriarchal society, by Gay men and Lesbian women in a heterosexist social milieu, by African-Americans in a culture of racism, and by people with disabilities in a world that continually limits their access and mobility. Each experience of diaspora is unique.

The experience of "otherness" and "homelessness" is crucial to the understanding of diaspora. Segovia argues that for Latinos/Latinas the diaspora experience is a "very

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[138] *The New American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982).

[139] Segovia, Fernando. "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement," *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

paradoxical and alienating situation involving a continuous twofold existence as permanent strangers or aliens, as permanent 'others'."[140] As a Cuban-American who is bi-cultural and bi-lingual, I am permanently other in relationship to the dominant culture in the United States (here I am a Cuban exile) as well as in relationship to the culture in Cuba (there I am an American). Explaining this two-fold experience of alienation and "homelessness" that is at the heart of the diaspora experience of Latinos, Goizueta identifies with the "New York-born Puerto Rican writer who, when asked whether she felt more at home in New York or in Puerto Rico, responded 'I feel most at home on the airplane." Goizueta further clarifies this experience in the words of Justo Gonzalez when he observed that Latinos are "no longer Latin Americans living in exile in the United States but Hispanic Americans, people who have no other land than this, but who nevertheless remain exiles."[141]

This experience of "otherness" or "homelessness" that marks the diaspora of the Hispanic/Latino community is well described by Segovia:

> ...we find ourselves always defined by somebody else--in our traditional world by those whom we left behind and in our present world by those with whom we live; silenced and speechless--without an autochthonous, self-conscious, and firm voice; and without a home of our own--excluded and condemned by such external definitions and such lack of voice. On the other hand, we know and understand, however regretfully and painfully, the definition of those we left behind--a permanent and living association elsewhere does remove one slowly but surely from one's traditional world. On the other hand, we suffer and fail to comprehend the definition of those with whom we live--our permanent and everyday association is disdained and rejected. Such 'otherness,' bestowed upon us and defined for us, overwhelms and overrides us, depriving us not only of a present, past, and future but also of self definition, self-appropriation, and self direction."[142]

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[140] Ibid., 62.

[141] Goizueta, 6.

[142] I bid., 64.

Those who experience the radical “otherness” that is intrinsic to the reality of diaspora can allow the experience of “other” to deprive them of their identity or define their identity. They can be oppressed or liberated by it. If they choose the latter, then the experience of otherness becomes their voice. "From such a voice," Segovia writes, "emerges a profound commitment not to overwhelm or override the other but rather to acknowledge it, value it, engage it--a theology of mixture and otherness, a hermeneutics of otherness and engagement."[143]

Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory

In *Faith in Society and History*, Johann Baptist Metz writes about the “dangerous memory” or memories of suffering that are impetus for social change as the cornerstone of his political theology.[144] Sharon Welch, building on Metz’s work, holds that memories of marginalization and oppression are painful recollections that “become dangerous when they are used as the foundation for a critique of existing institutions and ideologies that blur the recognition and denunciation of injustice.”[145] She argues that dangerous memories are intensely powerful because they have the ability to impel those that have been rendered powerless to action. For us Latinos, the memories of otherness, of being pushed to the margins, of being silenced, of alienation and oppression, are indeed dangerous because they are memories that have transformed many of us into authors of our own destiny and agents of change in society. She writes:

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[143] Ibid.,.67.

[144] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in Society and History*, (New York: Crossroads, 1980).

[145] Sharon Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1990), 154.

> Dangerous memories fund a community's sense of dignity; they inspire and empower those who challenge oppression. Dangerous memories are a people's history of resistance and struggle, of dignity and transcendence in the face of oppression. Dangerous memories are stories of defeat and victory, a casting of the past in terms of a present of joy, hope and struggle. Memories of oppression and defeat become dangerous when they are used as the foundation for a critique of existing institutions and ideologies that blur the recognition and denunciation of injustice.[146]

Memories of suffering, marginalization, and otherness can become debilitating or liberating. Segovia claims that memories of suffering become a liberating experience when the memories are:

> ...turned into a point of departure for the formulation of our own voice, a voice that not only makes explicit the spirit of independence, resistance, and rebellion that so often lies beneath the surface of the friendly and hospitable colonized but also gives rise to the classic pattern of the colonizer, the pattern of manifest destiny--self-confidence, self expression, and self determination. For me it is precisely this latter option that gives rise to the voice behind the theology of otherness... [147]

Segovia's insight that these memories of otherness become liberating when they are "turned" into the vehicle for claiming the voice that had been rendered silent is crucial for the development of a liturgical theology of preaching.

As noted above, liturgy is memorial or anamnesis when it is invoked by the texts (the ancient text being prayed and the "flesh and blood" text that is doing the praying) through the preaching event and the liturgical juxtaposition of metaphors, symbols, and elements of the *ordo*. For the Latino community, what is invoked by these texts is the memory of a God who has been irrevocably committed to God's people throughout history and specifically throughout the exile experience of their diaspora.

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[146] Ibid., 154-155.

[147] Segovia, 64.

The memories evoked by text of an infinitely compassionate and loving God who accompanies God's people result in joy and gratitude. In his book *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue*, Bruce Morrill writes:

> A vision for praxis in the world comes from the joy and confidence experienced in the liturgical remembrance of Jesus, who proclaimed and enacted the kingdom of God, which in this world and its history is ever a seed awaiting the full yield of its eschatological harvest. This is not to imply that joy and confidence are always and univocally the experience of each and every participant in the Eucharistic action. The liturgy is, however, primarily the possession not of individuals but of the Church; it is fundamentally a communal entity. In commanding his followers to enact the gestures with bread and cup as a remembrance of him, Jesus gave what he commanded. Only if people perceive the command and the gift as given to the Church as his body now in the world (and not as the possession of individuals) is its power to transform able to be realized.[148]

The joy and confidence that, according to Morril, is fruit of remembrance has been confirmed time and again by the witness of the membership of the St. Dominic *ekklesia*. Recently, one of the members of the parish who had arrived in the United States on a raft less than three years ago tells the story of her treacherous crossing of the Florida straights. After almost two weeks of constantly facing death on the high seas, still weak and dehydrated, she insisted upon being released from I.N.S. detention, and before going home to her family, on being taken to the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity, the patroness of Cuba, to offer God her joyful gratitude "porque El no me abandonó (because He didn't abandon me)."

As noted above, remembrance occurs not in abstract thought but by the community entering into a "correlative relationship with God" that renders God's saving

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[148] Bruce Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 186.

memories of the past effective in the present.[149] Thus, from the social location of the Latino diaspora, the salvific act of the paschal mystery which is remembered in the liturgy becomes effectively present when the memory of the suffering and death of Jesus is juxtaposed with the memories of the death and suffering of the experience of otherness of our community and when the memory of the resurrection of Christ is juxtaposed with our dreams and hopes for a new order in society in which otherness and exile no longer exist.

This juxtaposition of memories in the liturgy is transformative and therefore dangerous. This transformation is wed to the salvific nature of what is remembered. As I pointed out earlier, it is through the community's invocation of God's name and the recalling of God's salvific words and deeds that the community effectively experiences the salvific act. Again, this is not a mystical reality that is disconnected from the Church's mission. It would be just a mystical reality if what was being remembered was only a historical event. But the paschal mystery in not merely a historical event, it is a soteriological event. For its redemptive power to be made present, it must manifest itself in concreteness of conversion and the Baptismal life.

I argue that the anamnetic juxtapositions of the life, death, and hope-filled resurrection of Jesus Christ with the dangerous memories of the diaspora are the catalyst for transformation. Thus, through the Church's liturgical event, memories of defeat are transmuted into hopeful anticipation. In other words, the dangerous memories of otherness and exile help us define our identity as Latinos; the dangerous memories of the paschal mystery help us define our identity as baptized Christians; the juxtaposition of

[149] Schaeffler, 14.

the two in the liturgy help us define our identity as joy-filled Christians and hopeful agents of transformation for the world.

Preaching in the Service of Eschatological Hope

Preaching and the Kingdom of God

In the analysis of the ministerial praxis presented in the first chapter, the mission statement of St. Dominic parish was presented. The statement begins with the definition of what the community sees as its mission: "to build and preach the Kingdom of God with a compassionate and missionary spirit to all but with a preference for those who are most in need." In essence, this local community of faith sees as their mission the continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. In his book, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Albert Nolan presents a Christology from the underside of the experience of the marginalized and oppressed. He writes:

> We have seen what Jesus was like. If we now wish to treat him as our God, we would have to conclude that our God does not want to be served by us, he wants to serve us; he does not want to be given the highest possible rank and status in society, he wants to take the lowest place and to be without any rank and status; he does not want to be feared and obeyed, he wants to be recognized in the suffering of the poor and the weak; he is not supremely indifferent and detached, he is irrevocably committed to the liberation of humankind, for he has chosen to identify himself with all people in a spirit of solidarity and compassion. If this is not a true picture of God, then Jesus is not divine. If this is a true picture of God, then God is more truly human, thoroughly humane, than any human being.[150]

Nolan's understanding of Jesus as revealed in his missiological praxis has been explicitly embraced by the community of St. Dominic and contextualized in its mission statement and the *Plan Pastoral Parroquial* as outlined in the first chapter. From the diaspora

[150] Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 137-138.

experience of exile, the community of St. Dominic has embraced a Christology and eschatology of liberation.

Preaching in the context of communities that have collectively experienced marginalization and otherness demands that the preacher, in such a community, struggle with the Word of God embracing a hermeneutical bias in favor of those on the margin, of those "most in need," as was articulated in the mission statement of St. Dominic parish. The preacher goes to the "scriptures bearing the whole weight of the problems, the sorrows, and hopes of the poor, seeking light and inspiration from the divine word."[151] In light of, and from the context of the diaspora experience, the preacher does not repeat the tradition in his or her preaching but transforms the tradition. He or she does not go back to the ancient world to find answers to 21st Century problems, but rather looks at the scriptures as a model for of struggle and eschatological hope. Hilkert writes:

> Is the same creative Spirit of God who was active in the history of Israel in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, in the church of the past, in the lives of the saints, still active among us today? If that's part of our theology of revelation, then reflection on culture, people's lives and human experience, is necessary not merely to make a homily relevant but to hear God's word today. Then the preacher listens with attentiveness to human experience because he or she is convinced that revelation is located in human history, in the depths of human experience—a mystery which should not come as such surprise to those who profess belief in the incarnation.[152]

My listening with attentiveness to the experience of diaspora of my faith community has helped me see God revealed in their struggle and pain. This divine revelation has challenged us, as a community, to embrace the process of *concientización* as an instrument of liberation.

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[151] Clodovis Boff and Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 32.

[152] Hilkert, "Naming Grace: A Theology of Proclamation," 441.

Conclusion

Latino preaching based on the principles of communion and participation as outlined in the first chapter, is committed to the process of *concientización* (raising consciousness). The word *concientizar* stands in contrast to the popular term "empower" which presupposes an ecclesiology in which an elite group accumulates power and subsequently shares that power with the powerless. C*oncientización* is a process through which people embrace their baptismal power and use it as an instrument of their liberation. Through this process, the oppressed "discover the causes of their oppression, organize themselves into movements, and act in coordinated fashion."[153] Thus, preachers in the Latino community do not empower people to participate because the members of the community, by their baptism, already have the power. Instead of empowering, *nosotros concientizamos* (we raise consciousness). To do so is to call forth the coordination of the many charisms present in the community to serve the community.

Preaching that *concientiza* calls not only the individual to conversion, but also calls oppressive systems to conversion. There are many people who believe that the political element of the process of *concientización* has no place in the pulpit. For those people the preacher, who grounds his or her preaching in human experience, must point to the fact that "political life is so all pervasive in human experience that to expurgate any references to it" from the preaching can only move preaching to "the margins (and so irrelevant) of society."[154] In their book, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the*

[153] Ibid., 5.

[154] James Empereur, *Models of Liturgical Theology*, 41.

Oppressed, Justo and Catherine Gonzalez apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to the church's homiletic praxis:

> Why is it that in so much preaching and teaching in the church "sin" is usually equated with an inner attitude, or at best with private misdeeds, and so seldom with the sort of sin most often condemned in the Bible?…Why is it that our society, partly through the influence of Christian preaching, has practically come to equate sin with sexual disorders, while ignoring social injustice? Could it be that once again, and quite unwittingly, Christian theology has been serving the interests of the powerful?[155]

Preaching that *concientiza* calls for the conversion not just of the individual but also calls human institutions to conversion as well in the eschatological hope of a new order in society in which love and justice reigns.

Paternalism is a possible pitfall for the preacher. This is often experienced when the preacher presents himself or herself as a wisdom-figure who always dictates to the congregation what it should or should not do. Preaching, as the process of *concientización,* challenges paternalistic tendencies in the homiletic event. To avoid paternalism, the preacher in the Latino community does not moralize in his or her preaching. The job of the preacher is not to tell others what to do, but rather to provoke the listener into a deeper reflection of their life with God. To do so is to allow the members of the community to draw their own conclusions and make connections of the Christian narrative to their own life and the life of the community. Thus the preacher in the Latino community struggles with the Word of God and in his or her preaching openly unveils the struggle. James Empereur provides clarity:

> Prophetic preachers who proclaim the demands of biblical justice to others must be less concerned to preach to them than to struggle with their

[155] Justo and Catherine Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 23.

> congregation. The bearers of the message of justice cannot prescind from the complexities of global problems. We need less naïve certainty and more struggling reflection in the pulpit. This is not to say that preachers cannot be clear, make use of dramatic images, or call for responsible action. But the rhetoric must be matched with thoughtful questioning and some agony of searching.[156]

The paternalism that flows from simplistic, unreflective and moralizing preaching perpetuates oppression. The preacher thus must be diligent to avoid using frivolous platitudes in his or her preaching because their use is insulting to the community of believers and renders the preaching meaningless and irrelevant.

Preaching as *concientización* embraces the principles of *communion* and *participation* in the life and mission of the Church as the cornerstone of the ecclesiology of the Latino community as experienced at St. Dominic Church. As I argued in the first chapter, this understanding of Church contends that the power of Christ resides not in an elite group (i.e. priests, religious, lay leaders), but in the *koinonia* (communion) of the baptized, the community who continues Christ's mission in its unique and contemporary historical context. In preaching that *concientiza*, each member of the community is called by the Church's preaching to participate in its mission through the members' commitment to *diakonia* (service).

The preacher, aware that community is an all-embracing reality from which all else flows, calls forth, through the process of *concientización*, a new order of relationship within the Church in which the laity participate fully and thus exercise their baptismal responsibility of building up the Church community through their Spirit-given charisms. Because the experience of being silenced and rendered other has no place in

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[156]James Empereur and Christopher Kiesling, *The Liturgy That Does Justice*, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), 12.

the Church, the preacher reminds the community that we are all equal in *koinonia* and in our commitment to *diakonia*. The preacher should be careful not to equate equality with the absence of differences in the community. There are differences, but they are meant to be used for the building up of the community. There is richness in the differences for they enable a diversity of functions to be realized. Every member has a function in the community that is charismatically determined, but each function has the same goal: the building up of the Church community and the establishment of the Reign of God.

Chapter Four

Predicando: Toward a Method and Theology of Liturgical Preaching From the Social Location of St. Dominic Catholic Church in Miami, Florida

Introduction

In June of 2003, I facilitated a series of workshops for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' continuing education program for clergy working in the Latino community entitled "Bringing Liturgy to Life, Bringing Life to Liturgy."[157] In the process of the workshops on preaching in the Hispanic/Latino community, those present came up with six elements of preaching to which the preacher in the Latino community must be attentive in the homiletic process. They were: the assembly, the texts, the content, the context, the evaluation, and the spirituality of the preacher. These six categories will frame the Latino method and liturgical theology of preaching presented here. But before I deal directly with these six vital elements of preaching, I offer a few words on the method that underlies these essential elements of the preaching process.

In the first chapter the method of choice in U.S. Hispanic pastoral ministry was presented. The Latino practical theology hermeneutic circle, commonly referred to as *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar*, is one that begins and ends in the concreteness of culture and human experience. As noted in the first chapter, the *Ver* stage is the "thick

[157] Archdiocese of Los Angeles Continuing Education for Clergy, "Bringing Liturgy to Life, Bringing Life to Liturgy," (Camarillo: St. John's Seminary, June 16-20, 2003).

description" or analysis of the reality of the community of culture that is the recipient of the pastoral action. In this stage, the pastoral agent is attentive to as many elements of the culture as possible through the prism of a variety of *marcos.* These *marcos,* as noted earlier, are windows that offer a unique perspective of the reality. The greater the number of *marcos* that are used, the greater clarity the pastoral agent will have of the reality of the community.

In the *Juzgar* stage, and from the concrete experience of the faith community as revealed in the *Ver* stage, a critical analysis of the reality is performed in the light of the theological tradition. Here, a comprehensive analysis of the faith tradition (scripture, magisterial teaching, and theology) is carried out. In the *Actuar* stage, a revised or "second" praxis is developed by placing the analysis of the reality in dialogue and dialectic with the tradition of faith. It is the intention of this stage to arrive at a new ministerial praxis that more authentically responds to the concrete reality of those to whom the pastoral ministry is directed. It is also the stage in which the concrete experience of a particular community may influence or even transform the theological or faith tradition. In the final step, the *Evaluar* stage, an evaluation of the outcome (the "second praxis" in the *Actuar* stage) is performed. The results of the evaluation lead to new information, insights, and perspectives that are then taken to a new analysis of the reality and the process begins anew.

In the first chapter I argued that the *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar* was the methodology that this thesis would embrace in developing a Latino liturgical theology of preaching from the underside of the community of culture and faith at St. Dominic Church in Miami. Here I argue in favor of the *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar* as the

methodology for preaching. This methodology is in direct opposition to the training that most preachers, including myself, have received. What most of us preachers have been taught in seminary training, is to begin with the scriptural text and its exegesis and then reflect on the congregation to figure out the best and most effective way to communicate to the congregation the faith tradition expressed in the text from scripture. Robert Schreiter contends that this method is an example of adaptation or translation.[158] In other words, and from the context of preaching, the faith tradition that is revealed in the scripture text or even liturgical text is adapted or translated in a way that the intended and fixed message can be effectively communicated to a specific culture. In contrast to inculturation, in adaptation there is no dialogue or dialectic between the culture or assembly and the tradition which results in the transformation of both the culture and tradition as noted earlier.

Even Frank Quinn, whose work has made an important contribution in the area of liturgical preaching as demonstrated in the previous chapter, embraces a concept of preaching as translation or adaptation when he argues that "preaching is Scripture's bridge to the contemporary world."[159] In other words, the statement presupposes that the preaching process begins with the text of scripture and in the preaching the meaning of the text is translated, adapted, and subsequently "bridged" to the congregation. I argue that when preaching is embraced as a process of inculturation that is concretized in the *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar* methodology then the bridge will have two-way-traffic and thus mutually enrich the culture and the faith tradition.

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[158] Schreiter, 9-16.

[159] Quinn, 9.

The *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar* methodology that I offer as a method in preaching is an example of inculturation, which using the work of Geertz and Azevedo was defined in the previous chapters in terms of a three-fold process. First, inculturation is a communal, dynamic, and experiential process of evangelization by which the Christian life and message are embraced by and through a culture. Second, inculturation is in the service of *concientización* (the process through which people embrace their baptismal power and use it as an instrument of liberation through coordinated communal activity). Third, inculturation is a dialectical process in which the church and the culture are both enriched, transformed and evangelized through a mutual commitment to openness and dialogue. Now that the methodological bearing has been set, I begin with the first stage of the Latino practical theology method.

Step One: The *Ver* Stage (See)

The Assembly

Throughout this thesis I have referred to the assembly as a community of faith and culture. I have argued that culture was the epistemological key that opens the door to the understanding of a particular human group or society. Culture defines how a human group understands itself. It is the mechanism through which the members of a human group understand life and understand the world in which they live and express this understanding through patterns of meaning embodied in symbol and social practice. Culture is also a universal reality manifested in the particular. Each culture is unique and shaped by the uniqueness of climate, history, geography, social practices, and symbolic structures. I argued as well that culture is a dynamic reality. Though very slowly, culture

is constantly changing due to the dynamic nature of the elements that define a culture and the culture's contact with other cultures.

Faith, as noted in the second chapter, is the human response to the offer made by God to humanity to make the world a community of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. As was pointed out earlier, both the offer from God and the response of faith are bound by culture. Just as Jesus proclaimed God's offer to humanity from within the context of the Jewish culture of First Century Palestine, the same offer communicated in Christian preaching must be inculturated in the culture of the assembly lest the offer be unintelligible and subsequently dismissed.

In his book, *The Liberation of Theology*, Juan Luis Segundo describes a process he calls the "hermeneutic circle." Segundo holds that there are two preconditions to the hermeneutic circle. First, there are "profound and enriching questions and suspicions about the real situation." Second, there is a "new interpretation of the bible that is equally profound and enriching."[160] In other words, and from the perspective of this liturgical theology of preaching, the preacher begins the preaching process with the assembly, attempts to understand the daily life and struggles of the assembly, and identifies with the reality of the assembly in a spirit of solidarity (*Ver* Stage). The preacher begins with the assembly because he or she is convinced that the perspective of this unique and particular community will lead to a unique and particular reading and interpretation of the texts (both scriptural and liturgical).

Segundo argues that the two preconditions described above lead to four factors in the hermeneutic circle. First, the way in which one experiences reality leads to

[160] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982), 9.

ideological suspicion. Second, this suspicion is applied to the "ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular." Third, this leads to an exegetical suspicion that the "prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into the account." Fourth, there is a new hermeneutic or a way of interpreting the Christian faith through scripture.[161] This new way of interpreting the Christian faith, or new hermeneutic, from the unique and particular social location of the assembly and the concreteness of human experience is at the core of the theology of liturgical preaching presented here.

After 13 years of ministry at St. Dominic Church, I have found that there are three realities that have made an indelible mark on this community and are the hermeneutical keys that provide access to the understanding of this graced community of faith and culture. They are the diaspora experience of otherness and exile, an anthropology that sees Latinos as intrinsically relational and communal, and a faith that is nurtured by a profound sense of gratitude to a God who has been irrevocably committed to them in a spirit of compassion and solidarity.

In the previous chapter and using the work of Roberto Goizueta, I proposed that a Latino anthropology sees the individual as a relational being with an understanding of community as a preexistent reality and a constitutive element. Given the importance of community and of belonging, the experience of diaspora and exile which is marked by rejection, alienation, and otherness only aggravates the isolation that is experienced. While our experience of diaspora is one in which we experience homelessness, our

[161] Ibid.

understanding of community tells us that it is in the community of faith that our true home is found and where our sense of belonging is never (or ought never be) questioned.

The experience of diaspora is marked not just by pain and suffering, but also by gratitude and hope as well. The pain and suffering that are fruit of rejection, exclusion, and the experience of being rendered other is that which defines the diaspora or exile experience of Latinos. The political theology of diaspora as articulated by Segovia and Isasi-Diaz claim that transformation is fruit of suffering when one embraces the suffering as source of self-identity and moves to challenge structures in society that perpetuate human suffering. While I agree that embracing suffering as source of self-identity is crucial, I contend that it is not the primary motivating factor in the process of *concientización* of the community and its commitment to become agents of change in the world. The primary motivators for *concientización* in the community, as I have observed in the St. Dominic diaspora community for over a decade, are gratitude and hope.

It is my experience that, in the Latino community suffering is interpreted through the prism of faith. When suffering is interpreted through the lens of faith gratitude becomes the driving force. To say that gratitude is the guiding force when faced with difficulty, struggle, and suffering is to recognize that God, in God's infinite goodness has freely chosen to walk with us and struggle with us and sustain us through difficult times. Gratitude is not a "white-wash" for suffering, nor an opiate for the oppressed. On the contrary, gratitude gives us strength to persevere in a struggle to defeat the causes of the oppression that leads to suffering and pain. We feel gratitude to a God who helped us to not be defeated by oppression. We are grateful that just as God used the suffering of Jesus for something greater (the building of the Kingdom and the salvation of

humankind) God will use our suffering to capacitate us, to make us stronger, to give us a voice, and grant us the ability to become agents of the Kingdom of justice and compassion, and in the process we work out our own salvation, the salvation of our community and the salvation of the world.

The fruit of faith-filled gratitude (the recognition of God's love and solidarity with us) leads to eschatological hope: being convinced that God will continue to walk with us, to be in solidarity with us, and that the Kingdom of love and justice where no one is rendered other, where no one is rejected for being different, where all are valued and included will come. Thus, preachers in the Latino community are ever attentive to how God walks with and sustains the community in *lo cotidiano*.[162] Preaching that fails to flow from the concreteness of the daily life of the assembly, their daily struggles, joys, and disappointments will not bear its intended fruit of making a difference in the life of the congregation, in the life of the church, and in the edification of the Kingdom of God

Step Two: The *Juzgar* Stage (Judge)

The Texts

In the third chapter I argued that liturgical preaching was in the service of three texts: the scriptural text, the liturgical text, and the flesh-and-blood text that is the *ekklesia* at worship. Culture, I claimed, provides the hermeneutical entry point to these three texts. In the *Ver* stage, preaching begins with an analysis of the reality of the

[162] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 66-73. In *mujerista* theology, *lo cotidiano* is the everyday lived experience of Latinas. It includes the joys and disappointments, the triumphs and struggles, the whole of the realities that Latinas face day-in and day-out. It is also a hermeneutical term because it is inscribed with the subjectivity that serves as lens through which their reality is seen and interpreted. *Lo cotidiano* also has epistemological significance. It is a way of seeing reality as uniquely different from non-Latinas in as much as Latinas see that "the goal of their daily struggle is liberation."

assembly because the cultural context of the assembly will determine how this particular community of faith and culture will understand the scriptural text, will understand the liturgical text, and how the God who is preached is revealed in the flesh-and-blood text that is assembly itself. In the second chapter I maintained that Christian preaching is the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. I further argued that the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus has three sources in which it is revealed: the assembly, the scriptural text, and the tradition as articulated in the liturgical text.

I have argued that this liturgical theology of preaching is unabashedly subjective in nature. To read a biblical or liturgical text from the unique perspective of the particularity of a given culture and human experience is for some in the theological academy a betrayal of the objectivity that, according to many in the academy, is essential in the theological discipline. To the criticism of the subjectivity that is the cornerstone of the theology presented here, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz responds from the perspective of reading Psalm 137 from the social location of the diaspora experience:

> Much more important that trying to be objective, I believe, is to identify one's subjectivity, to make clear one's perspective and purpose when dealing with any biblical text. Second, the reason for disinterested objectivity is, supposedly, so that the scholar can come closer to the original meaning of a text. But this seems to me to ignore that the meaning of every text is found in the relationship that is created between the reader, the writer, and the text. It has always been obvious to me that the richness of Psalm 137 has to do as much with what it means to me as with what it meant to the Israelites in Babylon, while at the same time what it means to me is influenced by what it meant to them. This is true not only for me but for all who study and pray the Bible. The point of entry is precisely the reader: she is the one who frames the questions being posed about the text and to the text; her hermeneutics will ultimately influence what the text is understood to have meant and to mean today.[163]

[163] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "'By the Rivers of Babylon:' Exile as a Way of Life" in Segovia and Tolbert, Eds, *Reading from this Place*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995), 151.

What Isasi-Diaz argues in terms of the reading of scriptural texts from the subjective reality of the reader is apropos to the reading (or praying) of the liturgical text. Thus the point of entry into the liturgical text is the assembly and the assembly "will ultimately influence what the text is understood to have meant and to mean today."

To say that this liturgical theology of preaching is highly subjective because of the contextual nature of the theological method is not to imply that the theology presented here, or preaching for that matter, is void of objectivity. I argued earlier using the work of Orlando Espín that the subjective reading of the faithful intuitions of the assembly gleaned in the *Ver* stage must be verified in the *Juzgar* stage. First, it must be verified by the canon of Scripture (the primary source of revelation) to assure that the faith-filled intuitions and revelation perceived in the *Ver* stage is coherent with the Bible. Second, the insights and intuitions gleaned from the *Ver* stage must be confronted with the dogmatic and normative tradition of faith as articulated by magisterial instruction. In liturgical preaching, an important source for the dogmatic and normative tradition as articulated by magisterial instruction is the liturgical text: creeds, prefaces, collects, Eucharistic prayers, etc.

Finally, after the intuitions are verified for ortho*doxy* in light of Scripture and magisterial tradition, the intuitions are verified for ortho*praxis*. Given that the goal of Christian preaching is conversion, then insights must be verified to assure that they are consistent with the mission of the church to preach and build the Kingdom of God in word and deed. In other words, the insights must be verified to assure that they promote the conversion of the individual, the conversion of the local church, and the conversion of oppressive structures in society that are the antithesis of the Kingdom of God. This

method for verifying the faith-filled intuitions of the assembly—a community of faith and culture—in the analysis of the reality in the *Juzgar* stage is also an invaluable verification instrument in the *Evaluar* stage. I will return to this important aspect of preaching later in this chapter.

I argued in the previous chapter that liturgical preaching is in the service of the liturgy or the assembly of faith and culture gathered in the act of memorial through the juxtaposition of metaphors, symbols, and the elements of the *ordo*. As noted above, understanding liturgy as memorial is grounded in the New Testament tradition. The last supper which the primitive community understood as the institution of the Eucharist is rooted in Jesus' command to enter into the ritual meal in his remembrance (Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:25). Also noted in the previous chapter was that the most ancient Eucharistic texts such as the Eucharistic Prayer of Hyppolytus of Rome, ca. 220 C.E. which is the basis for Eucharistic Prayer II in the Roman Missal, holds that Eucharist is a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father through his beloved son Jesus Christ. The thanksgiving itself is a memorial of what God has said and done through Jesus Christ. At the core of the memorial is the paschal mystery.

In the 13th Century, St. Thomas Aquinas sees the Eucharist as a memorial of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. This memorial for Thomas is a mediator and communicator of grace to those in the act of remembrance and is a provider of hope in the pledge of future glory. Thus, the Eucharist for Thomas is a memorial that is effective in the present, and it is also a promise for the future. [164]

[164] *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 76.

After the Council of Trent there is great emphasis placed on the sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist. A new focus on the memorial character of the Eucharist surged with the work of Odo Casel (1886-1948) in the mystery theology he initiated. Casel held that the mystery of the act of salvation is made present when its memorial is celebrated. There is considerable agreement among liturgical theologians that Vatican II demonstrated the triumph of Casel's understanding when the council combined Trent's sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist with Casel's mystery theology to claim that Eucharist is a sacrificial memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Given that Eucharistic liturgy is an act of memorial, I argue that all operative liturgical texts in their celebration are in the service of the remembrance. Much too often in Christian worship, the Liturgy of the Word, comprised of the proclamation of scripture, preaching, profession of faith, and supplication, is experienced as separate from the rest of the liturgy. But in reality, in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Word is intrinsically anamnetic. In the reading of the scriptures the memory of a God committed to God's people in a specific time and place in history is recalled in its proclamation. The homily that follows is a process of remembering and naming God's presence not only, nor primarily, in the ancient community of faith as recorded in scripture, but in the community of faith gathered in the act of remembrance in the Eucharist.

In the celebration of the liturgy, preaching is a liturgical text that is in the service of liturgical memorial. What is unique about this text is that while the other liturgical texts point to the memory of God and God's intervention in ancient history, the homily is a text that points to not just nor primarily to God's intervention in ancient history but to

God's intervention in contemporary history; the history of the assembly gathered in the act of remembrance.

Step Three: The *Actuar* Stage (Act)

The Content

As was presented in the previous chapter, the content of liturgical preaching is fruit of the preacher's efforts to place the text that is the assembly, the text from scripture, and the liturgical text in a relationship of dialogue and dialectic. The second chapter pointed to the fact that preaching in the New Testament was a multifaceted ministry. Today the same is true. At times the dialogue between the texts will yield a content in preaching that is clothed in a proclamation, or the announcing of good news, or a witness, or a teaching, or an exhortation. All these facets of liturgical preaching, however, are in the service of the liturgy's primary focus: the memorial of God's saving deeds in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I have held that the paschal mystery which is memorialized in the liturgical text and liturgical preaching is first and foremost a salvific event. As noted earlier, the paschal mystery is salvific when it is lived through the baptismal life of conversion. Preaching that evokes the memory of the salvific act of the paschal mystery cannot be reduced to the historical events that became the concrete life of Jesus, namely, his arrest, his

suffering, his death on a cross, and ultimately his resurrection. Thus, the basic function of preaching is to evoke, point to, and unveil points of convergence of the memories of Jesus and of the worshipping community. When preaching juxtaposes the memories of the paschal event with the historical memories of the assembly, these historical events become salvific. The salvific nature is made concrete through the commitment of the members of the community to the baptismal life of conversion. This conversion is made concrete by the community's solidarity in and compassion for those in need, in the community's commitment to generosity, to peace, to justice, and to unconditional love. Thus the liturgical preacher is attentive to the manifestations of the baptismal life of conversion for it is locus of the presence of grace in the community.

Hilkert's definition of preaching as "the art of naming grace" or naming the presence of God's love and compassion (that is palpable in and mediated by the community of faith and culture) is the cornerstone of this theology of preaching from the social location of the St. Dominic *ekklesia*. Preaching as naming grace or pointing to the presence of the Risen Christ in the community is nothing new. As a matter of fact it is the theology of preaching embraced by Christianity's first preacher, Mary Magdalene. As quoted in the previous chapter, the pericope from the Fourth Gospel's resurrection narrative, in which she encounters the Risen Lord by the tomb and instructed by him to share with the disciples what she had experienced, Mary Magdalene goes to the disciples and the first thing she says to them is: "I have seen the Lord." These first five words of Christian preaching are the cornerstone of the theology of preaching presented here, one in which the preacher hunts for the presence of the Risen Christ in the culture and in the

preaching proclaims to the congregation: “I have seen the Lord among us and here is where I have seen Him.”

I argue that to name the presence of a God who is actively present in our midst in Christian preaching is to render preaching as “Fifth Gospel,” the Good News of God’s self-revelation in the particularity of a community of faith and culture. The first four Gospels, as I argued in the second chapter, are local theologies of four First Century communities. When viewed in this fashion, preaching that names the presence of Christ in the *ekklesia*—a unique community of faith and culture—becomes a unique and particular Gospel that like the Gospels of the canon provide a narrative of a God who is irrevocably committed to God’s people. Preaching as a “Fifth Gospel” is the memorial of God’s compassion and solidarity with God’s people in a unique moment and place in time. I have argued that the fruit of memorial is gratitude and that gratitude leads to hope. It is this eschatological hope, fruit of the preaching of the “Fifth Gospel,” that renews and strengthens our commitment to preach and build the Kingdom of peace, justice, and love.

As noted in the first chapter, the mission statement of St. Dominic Church begins with a declaration: “We, the community of the Church of St. Dominic declare our mission: to build and preach the Kingdom of God with a compassionate and missionary spirit to all but with a preference for those who are most in need.” As noted in the mission statement, the Latino community at St. Dominic locates its hopeful anticipation in the Reign of God. We are a hope- filled people convinced that the Reign of God can and will be built. Thus, Latino preaching is hope-filled preaching. It is grounded on the hope that flows from the paschal event and the conviction that the Reign of God is at

hand. The primary concern for the preacher in the Latino community is to call attention to the Reign of God, to uncover its hidden presence, and to expose its apparent absence. For example, there is much lack of grace in the St. Dominic *ekklesia* as noted in the analysis of the reality in the first chapter. It is a *desgracia* that in the St. Dominic community there are divisions and power struggles among some elite lay ministers. It is a *desgracia* that there exists among us racism and sexism and xenophobia. It is a *desgracia* that 90% of the Latinos in the territory of the parish are un-churched. It is a *desgracia* that 16.3% of our families live below the poverty level and that the percentage of those over 65 years of age who live below the poverty level is more than twice the national average. Preaching in the Latino community must not fear the denunciation of sin and injustice within and without the community.

It is my experience that the thrust of the preaching that our people have experienced is one that has been overly focused on the "cultivation of individualistic values as a way to personal perfection."[165] As result, Christians were encouraged to become self-absorbed in their own interiority and to see the Christian life as the development of individualistic virtues that are totally disconnected with social change. Though this form of preaching is highly attractive to Christians in a therapeutic culture, it is inconsistent with the missiological endeavor of the Church. Thus, this Latino theology of preaching challenges overly interiorized Christian preaching and proposes a Christian praxis that is linked to social context which in turn advocates systemic conversion.

Preaching that perpetuates a spirituality focused solely on the conversion of the individual betrays the dangerous memories of the diaspora experience. Our experience of

[165] Gutierrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 14.

oppression and marginalization leads us to the conclusion that injustice and oppression spring from the history of a society. Therefore, while no one is individually responsible for oppression, everyone has a hand in it. If change for a more just and less oppressive way is to be actualized, then what is needed is to convert the system or institution from which oppression springs. And because all individuals have a hand in it, they also must change. However, the view that the system will change when people are converted is a fallacy. Preaching in the Latino community must be a catalyst for both individual and systemic conversion.[166]

From the experience of marginality that many in the Hispanic community experience, the preacher in the Latino community preaches justice. But the preacher of justice must be careful not to induce personal guilt in the worshipper. Many preachers live in the security of a middle-class existence and often feel personally guilty for having a privileged status in society. Often as a result of preaching justice, preachers project their sense of guilt on their congregations as if they and their congregations chose to be born into a privileged class. The guilt that is being projected on the congregation is personal guilt, one that is attached to individual action. What the preacher should denounce are oppressive structures. Given that no one person is individually responsible for structural injustice, feeling personally guilty about such things is counter-productive to the active and concrete effort to change these death-dealing structures.

If we turn to the experience of the diaspora and its corresponding dangerous memories for insight, we find that instead of personal guilt preachers must embrace their

[166] NPP, 56.

own reality. Integral to this reality is the fact that everyone in the Latino community is both oppressed and oppressor. Caucasian Latinos have a hand in the oppression of Black and Amerindian peoples, male Latinos play a role in the oppression of women, most Latinos in the United States by simply living in the First World are considered by many in the Third World to be the oppressors. Yet all Latinos by our experience of diaspora in the United States are oppressed by a society that continually silences us and renders us other.

An area of marginality that affects most members of the St. Dominic community, as delineated above, is the experience of diaspora that is marked by marginalization and exclusion. As a result of *la desgracia* of the diaspora experience the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry called for a new Church that authenticated community "open to the diversity of cultures."[167] It admonished those in leadership to facilitate the full "integration and participation" of the Latino people "in the life of our Church and in the building of the Kingdom of God."[168] The ecclesiology articulated by the Latino community in the NPP and embraced by the St. Dominic Community in their *Plan Pastoral Parroquial* as noted in the first chapter, is grounded on the principles of communion and participation. Communion, as noted earlier and as defined by Azevedo is "essential for effectiveness and credibility of the faith community, whose life is to profess and bear witness, announce and denounce, and establish love and justice among human beings in the framework of truth and freedom."[169] Participation is the commitment of

[167] NPP, 17.

[168] Ibid., 10.

[169] Azevedo, *Basic Ecciesial Communities,* 194.

every baptized Christian "to build and serve the community…and to construct a society that dovetails with the postulates of faith."[170]

This understanding of communion and participation in the life and mission of the Church is the cornerstone of the ecclesiology of the Latino community. The use, the abuse, and the absolutization of power are important issues in this ecclesiology. Such ecclesiology rejects the absolutization of power by any group, be it the ordained, the religious, or elite lay ministers. This understanding of Church contends that the power of Christ resides not in an elite group, but in the *koinonia* (communion) of the baptized, the community who continues Christ's mission in its unique and contemporary historical context. Each member of the community is called by the Church to participate in its mission through the members' commitment to *diakonia* (service). The *diakonia* of the membership is called forth and determined by the *ekklesia* after discerning the charisms of the Spirit that each baptized member of the community has received.

To view community and power in this fashion in no way threatens the hierarchical component of community. The project of the Latino community is far from being one that deconstructs the hierarchy. On the contrary, the hierarchy is integral to a Latino view of Church and community. We greatly respect and hold dear the role of the hierarchy in its magisterial authority, and in the governance and pastoring of the Church. What this Latino ecclesiology insists on is that the hierarchy be part of the community, that it exist within the community and for its sake as part of the community. Again, the community is united by its common faith in Jesus Christ and by the mission of preaching and building the Reign of God. The mission is carried out in coordinated fashion through

[170] Ibid.

the varying ministries in the Church. Some of the ministries are "fully called into being by the Spirit, others are associated with the laying on of hands and bound up with the institution and mission of the Twelve...thus we replace the linear scheme with one in which the community shows up as the all embracing reality."[171] Key to the Latino theology of liturgical preaching here is an ecclesiology and corresponding theology of ministry in which community is the all embracing reality.

Given the centrality of community as an evangelical and grace-filled response to the diaspora experience of otherness and exile, an appropriate preaching metaphor for the Reign of God as home and place of inclusiveness in the Latino community is *la familia* (the family). This is a multivalent image not only because the Latino culture is family oriented, but also because in the experience of diaspora, the family takes on even greater significance as locus of identity and cultural grounding. The Latino community understands family in a more ample fashion than the dominant culture of the United States. For example, in the Latino community, the distinctions between nuclear and extended family are blurred. In the Latino context it would also include the *abuelos y abuelas* (grandparents). The extended family includes the nuclear family plus aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors, close friends and *compadres*. The literal translation for *compadres* is co-parents but the term is used to refer to the relationship and familial bond that exists between the godparents and the parents of a baptized child. For all practical purposes the *compadres* are members of the family. The word itself, which is not easily translatable, points to the broad and highly inclusive understanding of family that Latinos

[171] Yves Congar, "Ministeres et communion ecciesiale," (Paris, 1971) 19, cited by Azevedo *Basic Ecciesial Communities*, 207.

have embraced. Thus, this theology of preaching draws on the image of the extended family, one that is real and palpable to Latinos, and uses it as a metaphor for the Reign of God.

Using the extended family as a primary preaching metaphor, the preacher in the Latino community calls the Church to authentic *koinonia*. Because the community is the all embracing reality, the preacher does not impose his or her agenda on the community. Rather, the preacher embraces a bias for the community's common vision. In the preaching, the people are called to embrace and recommit themselves to the *diakonia* of community. Given that in the extended family the weakest and those in need are given the most concern, so also in the preaching in God's extended family. Latino preaching pays close attention to those who are on the margin of our own community and gives voice to their experience and marginality, thus facilitating the process of *concientización* through which they become authors of their history and destiny. Finally, aware of the experience of the poor, Latino preaching witnesses a sense of poverty in the preaching itself by being simple, honest, and faith-filled.

The Context

There are many reasons for the widespread prevalence of the practice of popular religiosity in the Latino community. Jaime Vidal has argued that one of the reasons for the appeal of popular religiosity in the Latino community is that the culture of Latinos is a "high context/low content culture."[172] This is to say that what is said (content) is often

[172] Jaime Vidal, "Popular Religion Among the Hispanics in the Archdiocese of Newark." *Presencia Nueva*. (Newark: Archdiocese of Newark, 1988), 260.

secondary in importance to how something is said (context). This cultural dynamic has implications for the theology of preaching presented here. Vidal writes:

> a cerebral form of preaching, which relies primarily on the verbal element, will leave the Hispanic worshipper cold and unconvinced. Just as important as the content is the context. The preacher must learn to use his face, his arms, his whole body, to convey and re-enforce the meaning of his verbal message: he must rediscover the arts of rhetoric, so discredited in current low context circles. Once again this is not to be done in a pretentious or overly theatrical way, but preachers from low context backgrounds must learn to feel comfortable and natural with forms of non-verbal communication which will at first seem to them artificial and embarrassing.[173]

To say that the Latino culture is high context does not mean that what is said is unimportant. When the preacher in the Latino community preaches, however, he or she must be aware that the mystery of the faith "cannot be effectively communicated by merely verbal explanation; it needs to be expressed also in 'body language'." For Latinos, the message of the preaching does not come merely from words but from the entire preaching event. Thus, the style or context of the preaching must be congruent with its content. When the context is incongruent with the content, the intended message is often missed or dismissed.

The responses of the participants in the three focus groups that were conducted as part of the thick description in the first chapter confirm Vidal's claims. Those who participated in the focus groups were quite clear that the context of the preaching is integral to an enriching homiletic experience. In overwhelming congruence in opinion, the participants in the focus groups held that crucial to successful preaching for them was that in the preaching event a bond between preacher and worshipper be nurtured. This

[173] Ibid.

bond between the assembly and the preacher is fomented by many factors such as style of rhetoric, accessibility of language used, and where the preacher locates himself or herself in the content of the preaching. For example, one way through which the preacher locates himself/herself in the community is by the use of "us" instead of "you" language. A bond is immediately ruptured, according to the focus group participants, when the "preacher provides a prescription" for what aught or aught not be done in response to the Gospel. Instead of being told from on high in the pulpit what they need to do, the participants pointed out that what foments a bond with the preacher and a bond with the mission of the community is preaching that reveals the preacher's own struggles in responding to the demands of the Gospel.

The most effective context for preaching as noted in the consultation of *la base* in the focus groups is that preaching be a clear and articulate communication of the faith rooted in the complexities of *lo cotidiano*. They held that they had little appreciation for preaching that is inaccessible. They correctly pointed out that when preaching is "too elevated," or "too abstract," or "too long and drawn out," their response is often simply to "tune out." The participants felt that at times "preachers make preaching more about themselves than about the Gospel." The examples they cited were preachers who use an overly elevated vocabulary in their preaching. It was the interpretation of the members of the focus groups that this represents an element of insecurity in the preacher that is compensated in the homily by trying to impress others with his or her command of the language.

Not only is accessibility through appropriate language and metaphor an important factor according to the consultation of *la base*, but also important to them was that the

homily be delivered by the preacher with passion and conviction. They considered that the greatest impediment to preaching with passion and conviction is the reading of the homily from a prepared text. Most participants held that notes to be used as reference was acceptable but that the reading of a text was considered offensive and demonstrated at best, a lack of preparation on the part of the preacher and at worse, demonstrated an absence of the charism of preaching.

As noted earlier, in high-context/low-content cultures, as is the Latino community, communicating in body language is of great value. The use of the hands for emphasis, for example, as well as gestures with the face and body help the congregation embrace the content and connect and bond with the preacher. Also, where the preacher stands is of enormous importance. There is no doubt that the pulpit is the primary place from which the homily is delivered. Moving out of the pulpit occasionally, if not on a regular basis, and standing in front of the altar is an excellent preaching move because the bonding that is so important for Latinos between the preacher and the assembly is nurtured in this fashion. The preacher in the Latino community should not be afraid to interject his personality and human relations skills in the delivery of the homily in order to provide access for the content of the preaching.

While accessible preaching for Latinos requires that the personality of the preacher be revealed, careful attention needs to be taken in order to avoid the relegation of preaching to a performance that is disconnected with the solemnity of the liturgical event and that ultimately demystifies the liturgical experience. M. Francis Mannion offers insight into this potentially problematic pit-fall in preaching. He writes:

> In the shift toward intimacy, personality rather than rite tends to become the medium of liturgical communication and performance. Indeed, the personalities and charismatic qualities of clergy and liturgical ministers easily become the crucial success factors in liturgical celebration... In the process of intimization, liturgical rites and symbols lose the scale and complexity capable of engaging the Christian assembly with society, tradition, and history. As liturgy is conceptually repositioned within the configuration of intimate groups, it is shorn of broader cosmic symbolism and consequently loses the traditional ethos of grandeur, glory, and majesty.[174]

Mannion's comments echoes the statement made by a woman in one of the focus groups when she said, "*es importante que el sacerdote salga del ambón y se conecte con nosotros pero siempre y cuando la liturgia no se convierta en el Show de Cristina.*"[175]

Step Three: The *Evaluar* Stage (Evaluation)

One of the most enriching experiences that I as a preacher at St. Dominic Church have experienced is the homily evaluation and preparation meetings that I held every Monday evening. These meetings were invaluable for effective preaching in the parish. Our first order of business was an evaluation of the previous day's preaching. For me the evaluation feedback was valuable in terms of improving both the content and the context of my preaching. After the evaluation of the previous day's preaching, preparation for the following Sundays' homily began. Here the participants were asked to come to the meeting having reflected on the texts for the following Sunday from two perspectives:

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[174] M. Francis Mannion, "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture," *Worship* (Vol. 62, No. 2, March 1988), l12-ll3.

[175] "It is important that the preacher get out of the ambo and connect with us as long as the liturgy is not turned into the Christina Show." The Cristina Show is an Oprah Winfrey style talk show that is broadcast daily on Spanish language television.

from the perspective of the participant's daily life and from the perspective of the experience of the community.

The need for a homily evaluation and preparation group stems from the awareness that the preacher is not the sole proprietor of the truth being revealed in the experience of the community. Thus, great effort must be made to allow a plurality of voices to be heard from the pulpit. Because the majority of preachers in our community today are middle class men, the preacher must find creative ways to allow the voice of women and the poor to be heard. To this end, the preacher in the Latino community, with the knowledge that others have part of the truth that he or she is to proclaim, calls forth members of the community to form part of a homily evaluation and preparation team. In the reflection of the Scriptural text and the text that is the community's life with God, the Spirit of Truth reveals the truth that is to be preached.

The homily preparation team meeting is also a venue where the preaching may be evaluated. The evaluation is important not just to assure the effectiveness of the delivery of the sermon, but also to assure that the preacher has properly named *la gracia* and exposed *la desgracia* in the community. The process of evaluation is also the best home for the community to verify that its experience has been adequately theologized by the preacher and that their unique story of salvation has been properly presented in the preaching event.

After every liturgy, as I stand outside the front doors of the Church to greet the congregation, it is inevitable that a few people will come up to me and say, "great homily, Father," or they say "your homily was exactly what I needed to hear, thank you." To these, I always want to ask why they thought it was a great homily or what was it that

they needed to hear. Unfortunately, this is not an opportune time to ask for feedback. The best way to get feedback from a larger variety of people that do not participate in the Homily Preparation Team is simply to occasionally hand out an evaluation form to a handful of people and have them give you feedback. It is a rich source for assuring effective preaching of authentic Good News.

The Spirituality of the Preacher

The effective praxis of the theology presented here is heavily dependent on the preacher embracing preaching as a process of inculturation. Mark Francis argues that a "key characteristic of those who are able to carry out successfully the ministry of inculturation is a willingness to listen and learn from the people to whom they minister." He goes on to say:

> Ministers that want to facilitate responsible inculturation also need to see the cultural context of their ministry as a potential source of the revelation of God's grace. They must be willing to take the time to learn from the surrounding culture. Peter Schineller describes the ministry of inculturation this way: 'The ministry of inculturation means serving, putting the needs of the situation before one's own agenda. The agent of inculturation enters the situation with respect and humility, knowing that he or she treads on holy ground and at the invitation of those concerned. He or she comes with the conviction that God is already present in the situation.'[176]

What Francis and Schineller are presenting is a spirituality of inculturation rooted in the conviction that God's self-revelation is found in the *ekklesia*—the community of faith and culture. The spirituality of the preacher within the theology of preaching

[176] Mark Francis, *Shape a Circle Ever Wider: Liturgical Inculturation in the United States*, (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 2000), 71.

presented here is one that demands that the preacher be committed to the search for the God being revealed in the community.

Again Schineller sheds light on the topic:

> Among the many attitudes or dispositions needed by the agent of inculturation are the following. One must be patient, since the acceptance of the gospel values depends on human freedom and the grace of God…At the same time that one ministers as an agent of inculturation, one must let oneself be ministered to. And in addition to offering resources as a teacher, one must be willing to learn. It is this last point that makes the process of inculturation so exciting, for in the process of sharing and giving, one receives some portion of the hundredfold. One's own faith is deepened and one's vision broadened. Above all one needs a listening heart—an ability to listen to the call of God as it comes through the tradition, and equally important, an ability to listen to the call of God as it comes through the persons in the situation where on is ministering.[177]

In essence, the spirituality of the preacher in the Latino community is grounded in a commitment to solidarity and walking with the community. Preachers who embrace the ecclesiology of communion and participation see themselves as members of the community who use their charisms and position to serve the community.

Shortly before he was slain, one of America's greatest Christian preachers, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., preached a sermon entitled "The Drum Major Instinct." The text from scripture was the tenth chapter of Mark's Gospel beginning with verse thirty-five in which Zebedee's sons, James and John, ask Jesus to let them sit at his left and his right when Jesus is in his glory. In the sermon, King refers to the motivation that underlies the request from James and John as the "Drum Major Instinct." The "drum major instinct," according to King, is rooted in a person's "basic desire for recognition and importance" for all humans have the "same desire for attention, that same desire to be

[177] Ibid., 72

first." Those who hold positions of power, as does a preacher over his or her congregation and as does a Drum Major who wields power over those who follow him in music and march, can be seduced to use their power for their own benefit and aggrandizement. The Christian who holds power, King admonishes, must use the power to serve the other.

Power is not a dirty word. We all have and need power to achieve self-transcendence, to become agents of change in society, to become authors of our history and destiny. The power that surges from baptism and faith and that has been given to the *ekklesia* is intended for one reason: to be used in the service of the building up of the church community and the edification of the Kingdom of God. Given that most preachers are clergy they are been given extraordinary power by the *ekklesia.* But even when the preacher is not ordained he or she, by exercising the ministry of preaching, is given great power by the congregation. Preachers in the Latino community must be aware of the "Drum Major Instinct" and reject it firmly. Instead, the wealth of power given us is used to preach as Jesus preached in a spirit of radical compassion for the other, in humility, and in service for as scripture tells us, Jesus did not come to be served but to serve.

I end with the last few paragraphs of Dr. King's "Drum Major Instinct" sermon and offer it as a prayer that the Latino community may be blessed with servant-preachers who preach God's love and compassion with the eloquence of their words and with the witness of their deeds. I pray for preachers in our communities who when their time comes to be among God's family in heaven, those who remember them on earth will simply eulogize them by saying that they were "Drum Majors" of Christ in the

community of the faithful and builders with them of the Kingdom of compassion, justice, and peace.

> If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. And every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards—that's not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school. I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.
>
> Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind…If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, if I can show somebody he's traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain. If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I can bring salvation to a world once wrought, if I can spread the message as the master taught, then my living will not be in vain.
>
> Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your left side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition. But I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.[178]

[178] Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct," Delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA on February 4, 1968, World Wide Web, Stanford University, MLK Papers Project.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have made numerous references to the encounter between the risen Christ and Mary Magdalene as recorded in the 20th Chapter of the Gospel of John. Since Mary Magdalene's proclamation of Easter hope wrought of her encounter with the risen Lord, the preaching of the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus has been the cornerstone of Christianity's missiological endeavor. The declaration that the Lord had risen indeed and was in their midst gave the bewildered disciples the vigor to joyfully persevere in the eschatological mission with which they had been entrusted. Today, Christian preaching, born of the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst continues to engender the hope that moves disciples to perpetuate, through self-sacrificing love, the building up of the Church and the Reign of God as envisioned and preached by the Lord Jesus.

In continuity of the ministry begun by the Magdalene's diffusion of the Good News of the resurrection, preachers have sought the most effective ways to exercise this fundamental ministry of the Church. Through the years, I have searched for and experimented with various homiletic styles and theologies of preaching, but I have yet to find any that surpasses what Mary Magdalene did that Sunday morning. In her five-word proclamation, "I have seen the Lord," a fundamental theology of preaching is revealed. To preach is to simply unveil and point to the presence of Christ among us. As a result, the homiletic process becomes a spirituality of preaching. Such spirituality is rooted in a sacramental imagination that moves preachers to be contemplatively attentive to human

experience for it is there that they will find the primary source for their preaching: the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst.

I have claimed that the preaching that flows from a sacramental imagination theology of revelation challenges the training that many preachers have received. What is often taught in homiletic seminary training is a method of adaptation which begins with the scriptural text and its exegesis. The faith tradition that is revealed in the text is then adapted or translated in a way that the intended and fixed message can be effectively communicated to a specific culture. In adaptation, unlike the practical theology method that has been proposed here, there is no dialectical relationship between the culture of the community of faith and the tradition which often results not only in the grace of the conversion of the culture, but at times, the faith tradition itself is also graced with the conversion that is the fruit of God's loving and compassionate presence in human experience.

In this thesis project I have presented a Latino practical liturgical theology of preaching. I began with a cursory sketch of the methodology and then applied it to the practice of liturgical preaching. I further claimed that the practical theology method employed in this thesis maps out the preaching process itself. Key to the method of Hispanic/Latino practical theology is the emphasis that it places on a communal dimension that drives the entire methodology.

The first stage of the process is a comprehensive and communal thick description of the ministerial praxis and its social location. The insights garnered in the first step are then taken to theological reflection. This step is an interdisciplinary historical-critical analysis of the theological tradition as it specifically informs the ministerial reality in the

first praxis. The insights garnered from the dialogue between the first praxis and the theological reflection of the second stage are then verified and tested for orthodoxy (Scripture, Magisterial Teaching, and the Theological Tradition) and orthopraxis (the ethical demands that are essential to the building up of the Church community and the edification of the Kingdom of God).

Once the insights are tested for orthodoxy and orthopraxis in the second step of the hermeneutic circle, the insights are implemented in the ministerial praxis. Thus, the second praxis is a modification of the first praxis incorporating the nuance that the theoretical stage provided. The final step is a communal evaluation of the revised ministerial praxis. The result of the evaluation then becomes a first praxis as the hermeneutical process begins anew.

The foundation of this practical theology of preaching is the thick description stage. This comprehensive analysis of the local church is crucial for two reasons: effective communication and because it is locus of God's self-revelation. These two elements are highlighted in the pastoral statement titled *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* by the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. At issue here is inculturation, the theological term to refer to the relationship between faith and culture. For effective communication, a comprehensive understanding of the culture of the congregation through an analysis of its symbolic structures and social practices, is essential. The preacher must attempt as thorough an analysis of the culture as possible in the thick description process because the community's self-identity, how it understands the world, and even how it understands God is mediated by culture.

Faith and culture are intrinsically connected because God's universal call to humanity is necessarily mediated through the particularity of culture lest the call be silenced or misunderstood. Yet there is another reason for the bond between faith and culture: faith is manifested in the concreteness of human relationship which is always mediated by culture. The liturgical homily is thus a mouthpiece through which God communicates his universal call in the context of the particularity of the culture of the assembly. For the preacher then, a thick description of the congregation is essential in order to communicate clearly God's call to faith.

I have claimed that the second principal reason why the homiletic process begins with the assembly rather than the preacher or the homily is because in the liturgy a privileged place where the real presence of Christ is found is the assembly gathered in worship as noted in the number 27 of the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

As a result the preacher begins the homiletic process with the assembly not just because it is critical for effective communication, but because it is locus of God's self-revelation; it is where the presence of the Risen Lord is found. If Mary Magdalene's proclamation, "I have seen the Lord," is the paradigm of Christian preaching, then the homily is the articulation of the presence of the Risen Lord among us or the pointing to God's saving action in the midst of human experience.

To name the Risen Lord's active presence in our midst in Christian preaching is to render preaching a "Fifth Gospel." If the first four Gospels are local theologies of four First Century communities, then it is the job of the preacher to proclaim the "Fifth Gospel" by uncovering the Kingdom's presence and exposing its apparent absence in the

concreteness of history and culture. Consequently, preaching that unveils the treasure that is the presence of Christ in a unique and particular community of faith and culture becomes a unique and particular Gospel, that like the Gospels of the Canon, presents a unique narrative of the relationship between God and God's people.

I have argued that a primary and essential task of the thick description process for liturgical preaching is to search for God's self revelation in human experience, in the unique and particular culture of the faith community. Yet this process cannot be done solely by the preacher. It must be a collaborative process between the preacher and the community of faith. To illustrate this point from a missiological perspective, Steven Bevans uses the analogy of a treasure hunt to describe the quest to find the presence of the Risen Lord in the culture of those to whom we minister. He writes: "In order to find the treasure that is hidden [in the culture]; [missionaries] have to dig deep into the soil of the new culture that they are encountering. And since the missionaries cannot really do the digging alone, they have to enlist the help of the people of that culture and trust them to do most of the digging."[179]

In this thesis I have held that there are three primary preaching texts: assembly, Scripture, and rite. The assembly, however, is not just a revelatory preaching text, but also the hermeneutical entry point to the text from Scripture to be proclaimed and preached in the liturgy. Using the work of Segovia and Isasi-Díaz, I argued that in biblical interpretation the context of the reading of the text is inseparable from the text itself because no reading of Scripture takes place in a vacuum. As in biblical criticism, the liturgical text is also not celebrated in a vacuum. Someone is praying the Church's

[179] Stephen Bevans, "Seeing Mission Through Images" in *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994, James Scherer and Stephen Bevans, eds.), 160.

texts in a particular place and time and moment in history. Because of the uniqueness and particularity of culture, no other community has or will pray the liturgical text in quite the same way.

The preacher then, as in contextual biblical criticism, approaches the other two preaching texts through the hermeneutical lens provided by the communal insights harvested in the thick description. These other two texts to which I refer are the readings from Scripture presented in the Lectionary and the liturgical rite presented in the Roman Missal.

From the perspective of the culture of the assembly, the preacher begins the exegetical process employing the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. With great respect for this indispensable method of scriptural analysis, the preacher approaches the biblical readings from the particularity of the social location of the assembly for it is in the relationship between the reader and the text that an understanding of text will be achieved.

In reference to the Church's liturgical rite, the preacher must study the collects, preface, the feast that is being celebrated, and the other elements of the Eucharistic prayer. Once more, a historical-critical method must be applied to this text. But the Church's liturgical text must be analyzed through the hermeneutical lens of the assembly. This is crucial because when the official text is prayed by the assembly, in its unique social location, it is transmuted into a contemporary and living text by those gathered in worship.

Detractors of contextual theology, such as the one presented here, criticize it as being overly subjective. There is no doubt that unbridled subjectivity is detrimental to

the validity of this theological method. As a safeguard against radical subjectivity, the contextual reading of the texts (assembly, Scripture, and rite) must be verified. Thus, the preacher must carefully ensure that the new and unique interpretation of the texts is orthodox which is to say that it is faithful to Scripture, Magisterial Teaching, and Theological Tradition. The verification is not just a test for orthodoxy; it must also be checked for orthopraxis. In order to accomplish this, the preacher must make certain that the fruit of the insights are consistent with a Christian ethic that foments participation in the edification of a new humanity rooted in the love of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

When the practical theology method is applied to the ministry of liturgical preaching, the resulting second praxis is a theology of proclamation from the underside of culture that is the fruit of the dialogue between the concrete experience of the liturgical assembly and the theological tradition. While the theoretical insights in the second step of the practical theology hermeneutic circle is evaluated in terms of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, the revised praxis that is the homiletic event must also be evaluated and verified.

As in the previous stages of this homiletic methodology, the process of evaluation must also be a collaborative venture between the preacher and members of the community. The criterion that is utilized in this stage is neither orthodoxy nor orthopraxis but cultural and theological, the criteria articulated in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*. Thus, the homily evaluation team must attend to the following questions: Was the homily adequately inculturated? Did it enable the assembly to hear God's call and respond to it in faith? Did the preacher address the congregation's needs and wants? Was

the presence of the Risen Christ, revealed in the community, correctly identified and unveiled in the homily? The answers to these questions then become fodder for the "first praxis" when the process of hermeneutical circle begins anew.

The preaching that flows from the encounter between the thick description and the historical-critical analysis in this practical liturgical theology is one that points to God's active presence in the community of faith and culture. Preaching as the act of unveiling the hidden treasure that is the presence of the Risen Christ among us is rooted in a theology of revelation that sees God revealed in the particularity of human history and culture. This is, after all, the theology of proclamation that underlies Mary Magdalene's own preaching to the disciples upon returning from the tomb and says to them: "I have seen the Lord." As I have noted above, these first five words of Christian preaching are the cornerstone of the theology of preaching presented here, one in which the preacher hunts for the treasure that is the presence of the Risen Christ in the culture and opens the treasure chest in the homily: "I have seen the Lord among us and here is where I have seen Him."

To preach is to hand on the tradition by telling the story of salvation. Yet if the story is not told from the context of our own experience, then the tradition is incomplete. The liturgical preacher in the Latino community must tell the narrative of salvation from the concreteness of our experience because, if we don't, no one else can or will tell the story of God's loving and compassionate presence among us.

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