

SACRAMENTAL AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Eucharistic Theology for the Twenty-first Century:
Theory and Practice
- Convener: Bruce T. Morrill, Boston College
- Presenters: Robert J. Daly, Boston College
James L. Empeur, San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio

Addressing the general theme of this year's annual meeting, Robert Daly reported on the theoretical, text-based work of Edward Kilmartin, while James Empeur presented an exploration of eucharistic experience and practice.

Daly described his project of bringing to publication the late Kilmartin's notes and manuscript on eucharistic theology in the West as an exercise in "decompressing" dense scholarly material. In his effort to liberate eucharistic theology from the long regnant Western scholastic synthesis, Kilmartin relies on the compelling but controversial theory of Cesare Giraudo. Given Giraudo's thesis that the Christian anaphora has its origins in the Jewish *toda*, Kilmartin argues that the basic structure of the eucharistic prayer is bipartite: an anamnestic section and an epicletic section, into either of which an embolism (the institution narrative) is inserted. Daly admitted that this is, analytically, a very simple thesis upon which to base so ambitious a project as recovering the priority of the *lex orandi* in relation to the *lex credendi*. Daly defended Kilmartin on this sticking point, however, by arguing that precision in historical and theological analysis of the bipartite structure of eucharistic prayers (East and West) is not necessarily the fundamental criterion. Daly holds, rather, that we know instinctively from our liturgical experience that what Kilmartin is pursuing is right.

Empeur noted that Kilmartin's call for a reintegration of the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* in the third millennium begs the question of *where* this *lex orandi* is actually happening. Simply stating the premise does not make the axiom a reality. Empeur posited that, rather than focusing on eucharistic texts, the theological task is to search for the eucharist experience. We theologians cannot presume that we know what that experience is at present, let alone what it will be in 2005, 2030, or 2080. Nor can we presume that the eucharistic celebration itself will be what informs us as to what people's eucharistic experience, and therefore theology, actually is. Building on Nathan Mitchell's work, Empeur argued that we must take the focus off the cultic actions of the eucharist and turn to what Jesus was doing, and with whom. The cultic focus blinds us to the eucharistic experience of Jesus. Empeur's conjecture is that where and how Christians

break the bread is the key, rather than focusing on how Jesus takes form in the bread and action. Empeureur recognizes a similar conclusion in David Power's *The Eucharistic Mystery*: the liturgy is never its own justification or truth.

As for the twenty-first century, Empeureur projected some "eucharistic scenarios." In the year 2050 we shall most likely see lively celebrations like those now in Zaire. On the other hand, we could wake up in 2080 and discover the whole world celebrating communion services. The question would then become: What is the doxological event on which we focus? Those who live and work with the poor inform us that when people of faith have less, they try harder. Another place to look for the eucharistic experience is among Hispanics, where the eucharistic experience outside the celebration of official rites will surely continue to grow. In the end, the search must be for Jesus and the types of experiences he had in meals.

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