

EPILOGUE

THEOLOGY AS A WAY OF LIFE: A RESPONSE

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I think theology is basically a way of life. I would categorize the sources of whatever theologizing I have done under “multicultural exposure” and “political engagement.”

MULTICULTURAL EXPOSURE

As a member of a religious congregation that is quite open-minded and multicultural, I have been exposed from the start of my religious life to different cultures. Also, I became a member of international associations of religious so I have been active in many meetings of people of different cultures. But aside from this, it was probably intellectual curiosity that moved me to go beyond conventional boundaries to do interreligious dialogue before multiculturalism became an accepted element of standard theology. As a young sister in Korea, I went to shamanistic shrines and stayed in Buddhist monasteries. As a student in the US, I went to reservations of the Hopi and the Navajo and participated in their rituals. But one experience that stands out for me was when studying in the cosmopolitan city of New York, I had the privilege of staying some days at the Catholic Worker House. At that time sisters in habit did not go to places like that. I was fortunate to have my cot right next to the desk of Dorothy Day, “the most significant, most interesting, most influential figure in the history of American Catholicism” (D. O’Brien). She was probably intrigued by this young Filipino nun, and she talked and talked to me. Today she remains for me an icon of what Christianity is.

Some years later, I had another intense multicultural experience of being with people of indigenous cultures when I

chose to have my sabbatical in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

I was director and dean of the Sister Formation Institute, now Institute of Formation and Religious Studies during the early years of martial law. Together with a team of like-minded women, we formulated a curriculum that was different from the classic traditional, masculine curriculum. It was contextual, gender-sensitive, and involved exposure to people living in depressed areas, especially the urban poor. I was also asked to be the executive secretary of the Association of Major Superiors. That was a period of intense political activism for me, and also exciting and exhilarating. I would go to people's organizations in depressed areas, listen to their stories and witness their struggle. All that gave me a new vision. I was able to get in touch first-hand with the forces of society often at odds with each other and the resulting oppression. Those were the days when it was not acceptable for religious men and women to be out in the streets to protest, and the Vatican censured the leadership of the AMRS. That experience became a defining moment for me, and perhaps it made me understand what Johann Baptist Metz calls "mysticism with open eyes which sees more and not less...a mysticism that especially makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering, and convenient or not, pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it."

Hopefully, through the years, I have somewhat integrated these experiences and am able to help younger religious and priests to have a holistic theological perspective of life and mission, and to hold mission as actually the work of the Spirit who creates order out of chaos, what the reign of God tries incessantly to bring about.

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