

# The good shepherd report

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## 14. The Good Shepherd Report

The second meeting of a three-year theological consultation on Catholicity and Globalization took place from November 13 to 16, 2007, in New York, hosted by the Episcopal Church and gathering in the Desmond Tutu Center at the General Theological Seminary. Representatives of the Episcopal Church, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, and the Church of Sweden explored their churches' views on both catholicity and globalization through a combination of formal papers and informal conversations, learning from one another and reaching toward a way as catholic churches to address the economic and social issues confronting the world today. The group was welcomed by the Right Rev. C. Christopher Epting, bringing greetings from the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

The conference theme, "Being Catholic Churches in the Context of a Globalized World," shaped the first day's work. After a review of the St. Martin's Statement, which emerged from the November 2006 meeting of the consultation, two speakers addressed that theme. The Rev. Dr. William J. Danaher spoke on catholicity and globalization in Anglican tradition and in the Episcopal Church, suggesting ways for the churches to address exploitative social structures. He specifically noted two approaches grounded in specific cultural and social contexts, Robert Schreiter's "middle axioms" (evolving principles) and the Millennium Development Goals defined by the United Nations. In the next paper, the Rev. Dr. Franz Segbers distinguished between two kinds of globalization, one a process that has been underway for many centuries and the other an intentional project of neo-liberalism. Later in the day the Rev. Dr. J. Robert Wright and the Rev. Dr. Peter-Ben Smit presented papers about catholicity in the early church as related to Holy Scripture and in the context of the *Imperium Romanum*. Following these papers the participants considered the tension between the early church's claims of catholicity and the Roman Empire's claim of universal hegemony.

The second day's conversation also focused on catholicity in the context of globalization. Presentations explored the understanding of catholicity within the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Orthodox churches, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, the Church of Sweden, and the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. All

speakers agreed that catholicity is inherently a matter of ecclesiology, of what it is to be the church.

Two papers, from the Very Rev. Eleuterio J. Revollido and the Rev. Wilfredo Ruazol, were particularly helpful in articulating the Iglesia Filipina Independiente's perspective on globalization as inherently destructive, a tool of economic, social, and cultural imperialism. Fr. Revollido's response to the St. Martin's Statement called particular attention to the conflict between the perpetrators of oppression and its victims, the destruction of the global village by "venomous materialist globalization schemes." Fr. Ruazol explained the Philippine understanding of globalization "as an actuality in the Philippines . . . a modern-day form of colonial domination and control, a tyranny to the national and democratic aspirations of the Filipino people, aspirations which gave birth to the Iglesia Filipina Independiente."

Dr. Thomas C. Ferguson began the afternoon session with a synthesis of the morning's presentations, identifying three ecclesiological elements common to all: the centrality of a *communio/koinonia* ecclesiology, the way the missionary/missional work of each church informs the way it understands catholicity, and the way each church's understanding of catholicity is based on something outside itself (for example, the teaching and example of the ancient and undivided church). The next speaker, Dr. Derek Darves, pointed out that over the course of the first two days' discussion the group had moved from trying to find a consensus on the meaning and effects of globalization to discovering a shared understanding of catholicity and that through that understanding we had gained a new ability to address the globalized world.

## Catholicity

Although catholicity is one of the four *nota ecclesiae* (oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity), its meaning and significance developed slowly in the early centuries of the church. The group found the words of two of the Church Fathers to be particularly helpful in articulating the shared understanding of our churches. In the late fourth-century *Catechetical Instructions*, Cyril of Jerusalem outlined five aspects of the church's catholicity: it extends over all the world, it is united in doctrine, it includes all humanity, it can heal all sin and contain all virtue, and it extends over all time. Some decades later, in about 434, Vincent of Lerins formulated the classic definition of the term *catholic* in his *Commonitorium*. Vincent's formulation says that as the church as catholic "comprehends almost ev-

everything universally,” it holds “to that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.”

In addition to the understandings conveyed by these two definitional passages, the representatives of the churches discerned their own lived-out experiences of catholicity in a common understanding that proceeds from an ecclesiology grounded in the experience of the local church (the diocese) with its strong eucharistic focus, as all participate fully in the mystery of Christ’s redemption of humankind and every local church enters into communion with other local churches.

### **Catholicity and Globalization**

This ecclesiological understanding is grounded in the generosity and abundance of the Eucharist, for that is the focal point of our catholicity. As we all eat from the one loaf that is our Lord’s body and drink from the one cup that holds his blood, we become one with one another and with him. As we share his life, his suffering, and his death, we also share the life, suffering, and death of our catholic brothers and sisters – wherever they live, whoever they are, whatever their sin and virtue. We are bound in special solidarity with those with whom we share the Eucharist. So we may live together even when apart, praying together that like our Lord we may be bread broken to be given to all humankind, that his love in us may heal the wounds that we have made, and that his words on our lips may speak peace to all (*adapted from the Iglesia Filipina Independiente post-communion prayer*).

This eucharistic vision is an ethical one; through it our churches may seek to transform the dehumanizing effects of economic, social, and cultural globalization. Because the bread that we eat and the wine that we drink are the work of human hands, transformed by God’s saving grace into his own body and blood, we who share in that body and blood are required to challenge all those forces that would undermine the value of human labor, that would leave the poor to suffer and would demean human productivity. We seek through the power of the Eucharist to offer an alternative global understanding, confronting global economic, social, and cultural power and tyranny with the all-encompassing spiritual power of God’s church.

### **Continuing the Journey**

We come from different places, different experiences, different ways of understanding globalization. We recognize that we need not only to learn

together how to approach and transform globalization but even how to talk about it. One of the things we have learned this week is that as we talk about globalization our common words do not have common meanings. For some the word *globalization* includes both the benefits of worldwide communication and the advantages of the breaking down of borders, while for others the word echoes with the violation of national identity and cultural integrity, a tool of imperialism. One of the challenges before us is to develop a shared language that conveys those experiences that we do not yet share. We need to know more about one another's experience and thereby to learn how to hear one another more clearly and how to hear God speaking through others.

In aid of that process, the working group will meet for a third time in the Philippines in August 2008, hosted by the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. During those days we will prepare the final report on our charge, the consideration of globalization within the context of catholicity, formulating some proposals in accord with the commitment made in the St. Martin's Statement "to offer specific suggestions of how to counter the dire effects of globalization, to encourage its positive aspects, and to seek transformation through justice and compassion."

The group was unanimous in agreeing that one powerful way of living out our *communio* and signifying our catholicity would be to incorporate into the calendars of our churches Bishop Alberto Ramento, the ninth Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, who was brutally slain in October 2006. Such a liturgical expression would commemorate his life and witness against oppression and against the physical and social exploitation that results from globalization. Dr. Wright spoke to the group about the various ways in which the churches might accomplish this action. In May 2008 the Council of Bishops of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente will meet to report on their progress toward formal liturgical commemoration of Bishop Ramento. Their report, based on Fr. Revollido's research and documentation of Bishop Ramento's papers, will contribute to the other churches' discernment.

During the three days of the meeting, the participants were privileged to worship in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at the General Theological Seminary. At the Thursday noon Eucharist the Most Rev. Godofredo David, Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, celebrated the Eucharist according to the rite of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and preached. At Evensong of the same day, by the authority of the Board of Trustees of the General Theological Seminary, the dean and faculty conferred upon the Most Rev. David the degree of Doctor of Divinity *honoris causa*.

What has come about during the days of our consultation is a growing understanding of one another – of our differences as well as our commonalities. As we pray and talk and laugh and weep together, and as together we eat and drink of God's bounty, we not only experience but extend the Eucharistic catholicity of God's church.

*New York*

*The Feast of St. Margaret of Scotland 2007*

The Joint Working Group for Catholicity and Globalization was greatly aided in its consultation by the comments of the Council on the Renewed Concordat of The Episcopal Church and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, which met concurrently with and often joined the working group. Its members were

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The Most Rev. Godofredo J. David

The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting

The Rt. Rev. Ephraim Fajutagama

Dr. Thomas C. Ferguson

Dr. Johann Hasselgren

The Rev. Anders Lindow

Mr. Reynaldo Natividad

The Rev. Primitivo Racimo

The Rev. Wilfredo Ruazol

The Rev. Delfin San Jose

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