Spirituality
Scripture for Life



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Globalization, driven by new technologies and economic expansion, is underway with both positive and negative impacts. What role will the church play, and what are the implications for the inculturation of the liturgy in a rapidly changing world?

Globalization: liberation or exploitation?

In the broadest sense, globalization refers to world-wide connections, growth and maintenance of transnational institutions and agreed upon ways of acting for what is perceived as the good of the planet. All of this is possible because technology has created multiple connections through electronic communications such as the Internet and has made it possible for one to travel long distances in a relatively short time.

The International Monetary Fund uses this definition:

> "Globalization is the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide caused by the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and international capital."1

Fr. J. Bryan Hehir sees this definition as inadequate because it does not address other aspects of human life such as the social and cultural dimensions. Many scholars today emphasize that it is impossible to separate culture from globalization. There is no such thing as a one-world culture. Globalization and localization go hand in hand. They have even invented the word "glocalization" to express this complex reality.

A study of the cultural and social dimensions on the local level reveals the considerable inequities that exist in so many countries. Mary Evelyn Tucker, a professor of religion at Bucknell University, sums up these inequities succinctly:

> "This is evident throughout the world in vast pockets of poverty (both urban and rural), the agricultural breakdown of small scale and organic farming, the widespread creation of imagined needs through advertising, the rampant waste and emptiness of mindless consumerism, and the relentless deterioration of the global environment. For all these reasons the growing tension between the developed countries of the North and the developing countries of the South remains the critical issue of contention

at the United Nations."2

The list of negative effects of economic globalization is long.

Globalization has been possible because of scientific and technological advances that, in themselves, can be considered a blessing for the human race. But when all of reality is reduced to what can be empirically measured, serious problems follow. There is the denigration of what believers know as wisdom. Spiritual experience, ethical sensitivity and faith itself are undervalued. Human development is equated with the solving of technical problems. Often there is an unquestioned trust in the ability of scientific and technological advances to provide for whatever makes life here more human and the planet more habitable.

There must also be development in the areas of peoples' lives besides the material one. "One does not live on bread alone" (Matt 4:4). One is also fed religiously and culturally. One's stomach may be full but one's dignity can be savaged and one's self-esteem can be diminished.

Globalization has become especially problematic in our present time because just as we are becoming more creation-centered, more aware of our interconnectedness not only with our fellow human beings but with the non-human world as well, our economic globalization is pushing us in the opposite direction. We are awakening to our need to care for and even nurture back to life our ecosystem. For instance, "Beyond oil, water is emerging as the resource of paramount importance for life. Similarly, food security will depend on our fundamental attitudes toward soil, water and pesticide use as well as issues of genetic manipulation and fair distribution."3

We are becoming increasingly responsible for our planet. Less and less is left to the evolutionary process and natural selection. The survival of the diversity of life which the earth has so wonderfully enjoyed for centuries is now in our hands. Not only is diversity in plant and animal life at risk, the use of our natural resources cannot be sustained at the present level.

Globalization is a very complex reality. Rebecca Todd Peters identifies four types of globalization: neoliberal, development, earthest, and post colonial.4

1. The neoliberal type is the most familiar one. It is the same as economic globalization which is characterized by growing trade among the nations. It is the reigning paradigm of the business world. Often it is shaped more by personal greed than altruistic ideals.

2. The second type stresses the importance of human development as an accompanying aspect of globalization. This type would be found in the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the United States Agency for International Development and other such organizations.
3. Peters' third type, which she calls "earthest," is a globalization from below. It resists the influence of the first two types of globalization and is a call to reverse the present trend of transnational corporations, what is called the "McDonaldization" of culture. It is a movement of localization. It intends to have local communities once again become the centers of economic, cultural and social life.
4. Peter's final type of globalization is called postcolonial because those who resist economic globalization see it as a form of neocolonialism. Most of the people who promote this type are poor themselves, although there are privileged people who are in opposition to the dominant paradigm of globalization. "They are people who stand in solidarity with the poor through their own advocacy and work."5

Solidarity with the poor

Catholic thinkers often refer to the words of Pope John Paul II that "globalization, a priori, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it."6 That is the question before us.

I have made the point that at the heart of the difficulty with globalization is the lack of imagination. Kenan Osborne makes this same point. He says that a church that is using its imagination is one that is looking outward, not gazing inward. In fact, he says it is the only thing that the church can do if it wants to have a role in the contemporary globalized world.

Not to imagine and not to dream will doom the church to sit on the sidelines of history. Imagination has a point of departure: the now. Imagination also has a point of arrival: the future. Imagination and dreaming, therefore, requires a two-direction vision.7

The question is: Why has the church's imagination failed? Why has it been dormant? The charter documents of Christianity — the scriptures, theological reflection, tradition and the liturgy — overflow not only with commands, prescriptions, and laws that call for a more justice-oriented world, but we Christians are surrounded by and

immersed in a world of symbols, metaphors and poetic expressions that help us to envision this more just world, a world freed from the deadening effects of globalization. Perhaps, in the past, these texts, images and symbols functioned prophetically in their time. But each age must discover the hermeneutical key to them so that they are free to function in the contemporary world.

Global sign of the cross

The Christian perspective must be found in terms of the cross. It is the scandal of the cross that gives new insights into the human person and the needed motivation to deal with human suffering.

"The cross opens our eyes to the perspective of the victims of history: more precisely, today's victims of globalization. The concern for the poor and the victims and respect for their interpretation of facts and their longing for liberation is not merely a Christian attitude; it is of concern for all of us."8

The cross is a constant check against a superficial engagement with suffering or a too optimistic trust in advancement solely through technological means. The presence of the cross can make the church ever watchful of being seduced by the market or the latest forms of communication. When the power of the cross sits in judgment on globalization, the cross calls upon the church to look upon the social, political and especially economic dimensions of life with new eyes.

Having access to a hermeneutical horizon that is different from the dominant interpretive frameworks of our time, and inspired by new root metaphors, it (church) can contribute to transforming globalization into a process of humanization.9

Four new root metaphors

So, what are the new root metaphors which are emerging from the life of the church? What is the different framework of understanding that comes from a church when it is in contact with the victims of globalization? Johan Verstraeten suggests four new root metaphors which he sees as critical for a new understanding on the part of the church as it strives to minister in a globalized world.

1. **The Invisible Handshake versus the Invisible Hand.** In economic globalization it is the "invisible hand" that is at work. It implies the God of Deism and a universe run by the great watchmaker. The purpose of society is

"the realization of the greatest good for the greatest number."10 When we use instead the metaphor of the "invisible handshake," it changes our view of society from a collection of individuals intent on achieving as much as possible to a group bound together in covenant and solidarity. It is basically what Pope John Paul II referred to as the globalization of "solidarity."11

2. **The House of Love versus the House of Fear.** Here, Verstraeten depends on an analysis made by Henry Nouwen, who made the point that fear "blocks our capacity to imagine a new future …. Fearful questions never lead to love-filled answers …. Fear engenders fear. Fear never gives birth to love."12 Being in the house of love means that our lives are guided not by the survival instinct but by an anticipation of a new and better world. When fear has no power over us we can fully give ourselves to the redemptive mode of God's relation to the world.
3. **The Earth:** more than Matter and more than a Sacred Space. Picking up on the redemptive mode of God's operating in the world from the previous metaphor; this is one which avoids the sacred/secular dichotomies. This is not a materialist interpretation of globalization as found in economic globalization, nor is it an over sacralization of the earth.
4. **Pentecost versus Babel.** This is a question about the direction that globalization will take. The way of Babel is to follow the logic of economic globalization. The way of Pentecost is the way of a renewed planet. It is to move in the opposite direction of the way which is based on money or profit at any price.13

These four root metaphors (Invisible Handshake, House of Love, Earth and Pentecost) make it possible to give globalization a new meaning. What is needed is a different way to look at the earth than that which has been provided by science and rationality.

In the case of globalization, it is the perspective of the cross as it casts new light on the victims of history and, in particular, the victims of globalization, that can provide this imaginative thrust. Looking at the cross can open our eyes to any attempts to take too optimistic a view of human progress that dismisses the sufferings of the poor.

The point is that the church cannot remain on the level of repeating certain moral principles, especially if they have the musty smell of natural law, and unchanging tradition or the attitude of "it has ever been so." That is not pastoral leadership

based on discernment. That is not the cross and the gospels that interpret it. Such an approach injects little energy or motivation to move beyond the status quo, still enclosed in a world dominated by the principles of modernism. Verstraeten's argument needs to be taken seriously.

By challenging the dominant paradigms with new root metaphors, "the church can contribute to transforming globalization into a process of humanization."14

Theological discernment is necessary but not enough. The other human sciences and forms of analysis must come into play. All this thinking must result in concrete solutions. The method must be more inductive — the wisdom of the local communities, of the victims of globalization themselves and of the diversity found within any community must be the starting point.

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Worshiping globally

What observations can we make on the areas where globalization must be taken into account in any project of liturgical inculturation?

1. The almost consecrated phrase of Christian social ethics is: think globally, act locally. This is true whether it refers to the church or the World Bank. For example, ethics must have a universal character based on the truth about ourselves as persons, but it must also avoid becoming too abstract. We can easily agree that any meaningful teaching of the church or principle of the World Bank must "take into account the experience of people at the grassroots level."15

As Kenan Osborne notes, globalization does not mean that the desired effect will be a uniform world. In fact, "Global trends produce different results in different cultures."16 The notion, "think globally, but act locally," raises the question of what kind of worship can manifest a faith that is universal as well as local. Osborne makes the observation that "since liturgical celebration is the celebration of the people, and since the people of this earth are culturally diverse, some level of cultural adaptation for church order, ministry and liturgy is a must. The way a Melanesian mother, a Chinese chemistry teacher, a Pakistani policeman, an inner-city Chicago nurse, or a Peruvian subsistence farmer in the Altiplano will do this, as one might expect, will be different."17

Most theologians would take for granted that since there is no church in general, there can be no liturgy in general.

To act locally must attend to the fact that globalization is an uneven process. One still finds the usual division of domination and subordination in many cultures, but what it means to control and to be controlled will be different concretely.

"The privileged players in the globalization process are the jetsetters, the ones receiving and sending the faxes and the e-mail, holding the international conference calls … But against this elite group are all those vast numbers who are affected by globalization but are not in control of the process, from labor migrants and favela dwellers in the Third World to the 'pensioner in a bed-sit in an inner city in this country, eating British working-class-style fish and chips from a Chinese take-away, watching a U.S. film on a Japanese television and not daring to go out after dark."18

There is a push-pull dialectic in contemporary globalization. The dynamics of a globalized world are ever in play, destroying one's sense of identity as tied to a specific locality. There is at the same time a clinging to a final place for identity purposes. This is because we are embodied and need to be physically located. Globalization cannot mean the end of locality. But even our physical space is being transformed into something more complex.19

2. It is the liturgy that should give us new eyes so we can read the signs of the times. It is here where we can break out of the "dominant individualistic economic and cultural paradigm of the day by playing with the new metaphors."19

One cannot accurately read the signs of the times if one still operates spiritually out of a sacred/secular dichotomy. Prayer life and work life must be brought together.

What is called for here is the development of a Catholic social conscience; a faith that does justice that is connected with all other dimensions of one's religious life. There have been repeated calls for a liturgy that does justice, but more is needed. Speaking of Catholic social sensitivity, William F. Ryan makes this suggestion:

"It needs to be preached regularly in every parish. However, I believe church leaders should put the highest priority in fostering the creation of small prayer and social-faith groupings of lay adults, such as the base communities in Brazil and elsewhere. Without such an ongoing adult lay formation in their faith, potential and actual lay

Catholic leaders will continue to be handicapped in finding Christ in their professional activity. And today, these small groups can be mutually inspired and challenged by relating regularly to believers of other faiths." 20

The liturgy is probably our best way to see with new eyes. We must see beyond not only economic, political and cultural globalization. We must see through the eyes of the poor. Increasingly, Catholicism lives among the poor. In the future the majority of Catholics will be living in poor countries.21 Only a fully inculturated liturgy will function realistically among that group of worshippers.

3. A major if not the most important consideration for liturgy in the 21st century's confrontation with globalization is ecological. We are at an important moment in our history. As we become more interdependent and realize that we live in the midst of a great diversity of cultures, we are also aware of our connection to the earth. We sense that it is increasingly fragile. More and more we realize that as we promote economic and social justice, as we spread democracy and peace, we must guard the environment by creating a more sustainable planet earth. Mary Evelyn Tucker writes:

"For without a healthy biosphere that can sustain ecosystems and nurture life in its myriad forms, all other issues remain secondary. If the life-support systems are destroyed irreparably, water shortages increase, food supplies decrease, fisheries are depleted, forests are clear-cut and topsoil lost, there will be no lasting security and military violence or terrorism will erupt."22

Applying the cross

The challenge is to apply the cross and the new root metaphors as well as the two previous observations about acting locally and seeing with new eyes to what Tucker calls an "ecological reformation." She suggests five areas which must be revisited with a new vision and the courage to reframe them,

1. The biblical notion of covenant and stewardship. What indeed does "dominion" or "be fruitful and multiply" mean for our time?
2. The Eucharist as thanksgiving for food and baptism as purification by water. Can these be sacraments with genetically modified food or polluted water?
3. The Cosmic Christ of St. Paul and the Incarnation theology of the Logos in all creation. If all reality is infused with the Logos, can we destroy it? In what ways is matter sacred?

4. Environmental ethics. If we have developed ethics for suicide and homicide, why not for biocide and ecocide?
5. The revelatory character of the natural world and the ongoing dialogue with science. How does natural theology contribute to our understanding of our embeddedness in an evolving universe.23

Who will do this?

And who is to do all of this? Who is to bring together a theology of the cross from the side of the victims of globalization with new root metaphors to provide a new hermeneutical key to a more contemporary understanding? Who can give attention to universals without leaving the realm of the local, and who can provide new eyes that can pierce through the darkness of world markets, international organizations and unabashed greed so that we may have a world made new?

This is the challenge now before the church with its rich liturgical tradition and vast intellectual resources. Globalization is happening. What kind of world will emerge from it is rightly our concern and work.

NOTES

1. J. Bryan Hehir, "Conflict and Security in the New World Order," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*, edited by John A. Coleman and William Fr. Ryan (Orbis Books, 2005). pp. 79-80.
2. Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Globalization and the Environment," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*,
3. Tucker, p. 95.
4. Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* , (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 10.
5. Peters, p. 15. See pp. 10-15 for the brief summaries of these four types which she develops extensively in the chapters of her book.
6. R. Scott Appleby, "Global Civil Society and the Catholic Social Tradition," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*, p. 132.
7. Kenan B. Osborne, *Orders and Ministry*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), p. 193.
8. Johan Verstraeten, "Catholic Social Thinking as Living Tradition that Gives Meaning to Globalization as a Process of Humanization," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*. (Verstraeten is a professor of theological ethics at the University of Louvain.)

9. Verstraeten, pp. 40-41.
10. Verstraeten, p. 31.
11. Verstraeten, p. 31.
12. Verstraeten. 31-32.
13. Verstraeten, p. 35
14. Verstraeten, pp. 40-41
15. Verstraeten, p. 38.
16. Osborne, p, 20.
17. Osborne, pp. 206-208.
18. Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1999) p. 131.Tomlinson, pp. 148-149.
19. William F. Ryan, S.J., "Personal Comments, reflections and Hopes," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought: Present Crisis and Future Hope*, edited by John Coleman and William F. Ryan (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 2005), p. 256.
20. Ryan, p. 265.
21. Tucker, p. 91
22. Tucker, p. 99-100

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