

Crosby takes on church structures at theological gathering

Thomas C. Fox | Jun. 12, 2010 NCR Today



Despite the prophetic theme, "Theology's Prophetic Commitments,"

which runs through the talks at this year's Catholic Theological Society of America, there has been relatively little overt criticism of Catholic patriarchal and, allow me, dysfunctional and unjust church structures.

In private conversations, especially in the wake of several more months of yet another round of episcopal sex abuse cover-ups in media coverage, this criticism is much more common. Vatican directed efforts to take our church back into pre-modern times when the world has moved into the post-modern era has made theology - evangelical work - more daunting, especially in the West.

Meanwhile, the chill that descended upon the Catholic theology dating back to the ouster of Father Charles Curran from the Catholic University of America in 1986, has stilted theological research, especially in areas such as moral theology and ecclesiology.

Pressures on Catholic theologians to look over their shoulders is real. The need for each at the country's 235 Catholic institutions of higher education to have a mandatum, an assurance that he or she is teaching in accordance with the official church teachings, is a factor when measuring the current state of Catholic theology.

The traditional balance between the forces of academic freedom and episcopal "orthodoxy" has favored the bishops for some time now.

Perhaps because Franciscan Friar Michael Crosby, who writes on contemporary biblically-based discipleship, is not affiliated with any teaching institution, has more room to criticize our monarchical hierarchical structures.

In a talk, drawing on two decades of his interest in the Trinity and citing the Matthean Gospel's "Kingdom of God" as the governance of Trinitarian relationships, Crosby offered harsh criticism of our church's organizational structures. His talk was entitled "Trinity as a model of organization in both Science and Religion."

Said Crosby: "if the Church, especially in its Catholic version, is to be a sacrament of God the Economist, it must reflect the Economic Trinity at all its levels, especially in the way it becomes salt of the earth and light of the world. This involves words and deeds that promote the dignity of every person as equals, the resources of its Commonwealth (from organizational to sacramental) available to all with relationships of power ensuring that

there will be no more abuse of that power to protect interests, structures and dynamics that are unitarian and, to that degree, ungodly, and, to that degree, sinful.?

He went on: ?When we find patterns and structures manifesting untrinitarian dynamics, especially if they occur in our church, we should not be afraid to practice the truth in love to make those communities (including the institutional church) more Trinitarian. ? The integrity of the theological process is at stake; so is the integrity of the Economic Trinity we call God?

If anyone disagreed, he or she did not speak out during the question and answer period.

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