



Theological Essay

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper, based on the assigned reading according to the syllabus for the sessions on May 29-30, 2009, presents a general summary of the reading and its significance. The study also expands the notion of charism in ministry and its implications for the practice of ministry.

II. READING SUMMARY

a. THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY BY THOMAS O'MEARA

In this book titled *Theology of Ministry*, Thomas O'Meara explains the expansion of ministry in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, and how this new ecclesiology vision of Vatican II influences church ministries. He explores the ministry between culture and grace; various models of ministry are examined. Most significance to me is the primal ministry: Jesus, Spirit, and Charism. Sources of ministry including the Spirit's Gifts and spirituality are considered. O'Meara also discusses history of the Church's ministry.

The notion of the kingdom of God is most important to me as it is the bestower of ministry. The kingdom of God is the source and the goal of ministry. The presence of God in our world enables ministry, gives ministry its life and its freedom. The church offers ministry within the kingdom as something derivative, fragile, secondary, and temporary. A theology of ministry is basically a meditation on the kingdom, a theology of the Holy Spirit, and a contemplative analysis of grace.¹ The theology of the Holy Spirit, the association of charism and ministry are of importance, and therefore I would like to expand on these subjects in section III. Charism and ministry are mainly in specific services whose names are taken from actions, for instance, from preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and healing. These names and actions differ according to place, culture, and time.² Ministry is a world of ordinary people expecting charisms, and willing to serve their community and change the world.³ On a side note, I am wondering if the following statement from page 127 of O'Meara has any biblical or traditional base: "The priest was placed in a mystical niche, exalted, described as metaphysically equal to, even higher than angelic beings."⁴ Finally, the definition of ministry sum-up my understanding what ministry is about: "Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve, and realize the kingdom of God."⁵

b. A SACRED VOICE IS CALLING BY JOHN NEAFSEY

I find this book by John Neafsey is very inspiring, and is often moving. His spirituality helps distinguish an authentic calling from those competing in today's world: the other distracting and counterfeit voices in our culture and in ourselves that steer us into the wrong direction. As a clinical psychologist, John Neafsey has combined his psychological background with his

spirituality to help us how to discern and discovery the meanings of vocation by listening to the Spirit, the sacred voices and the cry of the poor. Neafsey's book helps answer many questions about vocation, and how we "hear" the calls. We answer the calls and "make decisions during our earthly lifetime that affect our prospects for salvation in the world to come."⁶ For the same reason as in O'Meara's book, the discernment of the Spirit is most significant to me and shall be examined in section III.

c. ART OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION BY PATRICIA KILLEN & JOHN DE BEER

This book, titled "Art of Theological Reflection" by Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer is about receiving the power of our Christian heritage or sacred tradition through the practice of theological reflection. Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Tradition together "form one sacred deposit of the word of God" (DV, 10). In other words, through the practice of theological reflection, tradition and Scriptures integrate into one deposit of faith to continue the work of Jesus in the church. By experiences from one generation to the next, sacred tradition becoming unwritten Words of God revealed to Hebrew ancestors, prophets and at the fullness of time in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and orally handed down to their successors and becoming Christian heritage. Sacred tradition is a reliable source of guidance for our theological reflection as we search to discover the meaning of what God is doing in our lives. Theological reflection becomes part of personal faith practice as discussed in chapter 4. The practicality of the processes for theological reflection is very useful as demonstrated in the exercises on page 88 – 92 (see homework assignment).

What most significant to me is the Prayer technique in chapter 4 as "Jesus began his ministry with a time of retreat and fasting in the desert; he prayed on the cross and continued praying with and for his followers after the resurrection."⁷ Prayer has occupied a predominant place in Christian tradition. Prayer is a communion; as a bridge for belief and faith, prayer is the bridge into communion with God. For 2000 years, holy men and women have practiced techniques of praying; so that we can then be able to appreciate and rejoice in the presence of God by shaping our hearts to receiving what comes to us ultimately as a gift. Prayer is indispensable to our theological reflection and especially our pilgrimage here on earth. Prayer techniques are a school for theological reflection. Pope John Paul II uses that metaphor and says that "we are called to prayer so that we can enter a school to be trained in seeing and perceiving and receiving God's grace."⁸ Prayer then, is a school for theological reflection, a school of conversion, because when we pray, we pray to reflect God's presence in our lives; we pray to be changed; we pray in repentance; so that we may repent our blindness, repent of our thirsts for false idols, repent for the stench of our own lives that are locked in fear and self-absorption. We pray to be converted. We pray, also, in solidarity. Thus, each celebration of the mass we have intercessory prayer because the intercessory prayer is the solidarity prayer. We pray with those who suffer from disease and for those who are victims of violence, rape and murder of domestic violence in the homes. In solidarity, we stand in prayer with those who are victims of war; we stand in solidarity with the earth which is being exploited by pollution and the waste of

natural resources. We stand in solidarity when we make intercession. For when we make intercession, it is a way of standing together. And finally, we pray in wonderment, wonderment that ultimately is the wondrous bedazzlement of knowing that God is God, and we are not. The wonderful presence of God can be known in the myriad of ways in which we pray. True prayer is recognizing that whatever techniques of prayer we use; they are a way of letting God take over; so that our hearts and vision can be cleansed; so that we will know that we are not alone. Ultimately, prayer, whether it is toward theological reflection, conversion, solidarity or wonderment, whether it is for repentance or intercession or thanksgiving and praise, is meant to change us, not God.

d. THE SHAPE OF THE CHURCH TO COME BY TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE

In this article, Radcliffe describes how the church shapes itself by how it interacts with the world so that the church can flourish. With the Enlightenment age, we are becoming citizens of a global village, and here the church can lead the way. We are already the most global institution on the planet. The Second Vatican Council is seen as liberator of the church from the mental imprisonment according to Radcliffe, but it is hard to give up entrenched ways of thought, and so many Catholics still define themselves as either "traditionalist" or "progressive." Such polarization is deeply wounding and inhibits the flourishing of the church.⁹ What most interested to me are the ecological disaster and the rise of religious terrorism as the sign of our times on page 22:

ECOLOGICAL DISASTER: the neglect and exploitation of the earth and its ecosystems, all being created by God and all being pronounced by Him to be "very good" (Genesis 1:31), is an ethical, religious, and theological issue of great importance. Our environment is in the precarious state; global climate change affects all earthly creations; the implication of humanity and its activities in the ecosystems underlie a lack of respect for life, thus poses a great moral challenge. In examining its shortcomings in its responsibility of stewardship over the earth, Christian theology, specifically the Catholic Church seeks to amend these failures and, moreover, foster a nourishing relationship with the earth over which man has been given dominion.

RELIGIOUS TERRORISM: religion is a source of transcendence; it is supposed to teach peace, the value of human life, morals, and accountability, not to be used to legitimate "Jihad" - holy wars and the slaughter of innocent people. The attacks masterminded by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001 used Islam's criteria for a "just jihad" with any weapons or means. Because of the violence by the extremists, Islam has been interpreted to be a particularly violence-prone religion, one that educates and motivates terrorists who attack civilization. Islam has been used by extremists to justify their policies of violence against the Western world.

e. CO-WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD – USCCB STATEMENT

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord is a guideline for formation of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States. In this brief USCCB statement, the US bishops describe and respond to the call to all believers, the lay faithful and lay in church ministry as well as the reality of church ministry. The bishops also discuss the theology and the Church's teaching on lay ministry and the relationship between clergy and lay ministers. In part II, the pastoral applications are of great importance, the bishops outline the pathways to lay ecclesial ministry and the desire for lay ecclesial ministry. In this section, the bishops detail how church ministers should be formed and their roles as lay ecclesial ministers. Being in the diaconate formation, I am especially interested in the relationship between deacons and lay ecclesial ministers. "Like priests, deacons continue to live out their Baptism and have received in the Sacrament of Orders a participation in the pastoral ministry that is essentially different from that given to the lay faithful. As ordained ministers they necessarily depend for the exercise of their ministry on the bishop, who has the fullness of orders, and are placed in a special fraternal relationship with priests "in communion with whom they are called to serve the People of God. Deacons and lay ecclesial ministers often work together as members of parish staffs under the direction of the pastor. The mutual respect and close collaboration of lay ecclesial ministers and deacons in this setting and in all pastoral endeavors can be a wonderful witness to the one communion and mission that binds all disciples together in Christ."¹⁰

The formation of ministers is most important to me: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation.

HUMAN DIMENSION: To effectively carry out their ministry, the ministers must extend themselves generously in various forms of human relations without discrimination so that they are perceived by others as a credible witness to the sanctity and preciousness of human life.

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION: In Baptism, each disciple receives the universal call to holiness. Growth into holiness, therefore, is "a duty binding all the faithful." It includes the practice of the Christian virtues and the various evangelical precepts and counsels according to their own state of life.

INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION: The intellectual dimension of minister formation is an ongoing requirement of their vocation. The theological demands of their call to ministry of ecclesial service and pastoral servant require of them a growing love for the Church - for God's People - shown by their faithful and competent carrying out of their proper functions.

PASTORAL DIMENSION: Pastoral formation constantly encourages the minister to perfect the effectiveness of their ministry of making the service of Christ present in the Church and in society without distinction, especially to the poor and to those most in need.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT, CHARISM AND MINISTRIES (EXPANDED QUOTE, THOMAS O'MEARA)

“Charism. The graciousness (charis) of the Spirit is not only the plan of salvation-history (Eph 1:2 ff.) but the Spirit-enabled life of the baptized (Rom 8)... For Paul not only the grace of his apostleship exists but basically each person has a charisma in which the freely bestowed charis becomes concrete. ...Charism, gift, pneumatic are Pauline words for the silent promptings of the Spirit in a Christian personality toward service... Speaking of powers given by the Spirit, Paul sometimes turned spiritual into a noun, pneumatika, but Christians have preferred charism. The two words explains not a bizarre enthusiasm or a miraculous display but the source of life and action in the Spirit...¹¹ Living in the kingdom and Spirit of Jesus risen brings pneumatic gifts, charismatic services, of many kinds, like teaching, preaching, visiting the sick. There is a charismatic ground and source from which they all flow... That third member of a hermeneutical triad of the Spirit (charisms, spiritual gifts, energies) also leads to ministry.”¹²

a. ALL MINISTRIES ARE OF THE SPIRIT

The church is a charismatic community of all those who share a common experience of new life through their unity in God's Spirit. According to Karl Rahner, the Spirit sustains the life of the church by bestowing its diverse charisms on all those who constitute the Christian community.¹³ In other words, the Church flourishes through the charisms of the Spirit given to the members of the ecclesial body. Charisms are gifts of nature and of grace given for the fulfillment of the mission of the Church.¹⁴ The Spirit awakens natural human talents - gifts for teaching, preaching, artistry, music, healing, justice advocacy, reconciliation, peace-making, and so forth - and elevates them to a new level of orientation toward God in the love and service of others. Charisms are given to all members of the Church and take many different forms. "The Church receives the fullness of the Spirit only in the totality of the gifts made by all Her members."¹⁵ Each member of Christ's body has, therefore, his or her own gifts (Rom. 12:3.; 1 Cor. 7:7, 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10); no member lacks a manifestation of grace. Not all, of course, "have" the same charisma (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:17,19); and no individual manifests all the charisms (1 Cor. 12:18,20,29f). The gifts of the Spirit are not given to the faithful for their own pleasure, pride or self-advancement. They are gifts of service (diakonia, 1 Cor. 12:5) given through a particular believer for the common good, the enrichment and actualization of the church's life and witness in the world. From this perspective, charisms are of constitutive importance for the order and the structure of the church. Its vitality can be maintained only in the cooperative and at times tension-filled interaction of the various charisms and ministries. In the church "no one is useless, everyone occupies a decisive place in the community: "each member serves the other member" (Rom. 12:5). All enjoy equal dignity; there is no room for privileges that destroy the unity of the whole: "the eye cannot say to the hand I do not need you nor can the head say to the feet I do not need you" (1 Cor. 12:21). The golden rule that preserves the unity of the community is that "all members must be concerned for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25).¹⁶ This vision of charismatic community, however, encountered problems of disorder since its

early inception. St. Paul reminded the early Christians at Corinth that, while all of their gifts are indispensable and significant, a certain hierarchy of charisms should be recognized as God-given: "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..." (1 Cor. 12:28). Thus, ministry can be conceived as "specificity of relationship"¹⁷ within the unity of the body which makes the notion of the hierarchy inevitable because of the unity and the particularities of the ministries. The function and the notion of hierarchy in the church should be understood from the perspective of the Trinitarian faith which transcends any understanding of hierarchy as a structure of power that destroys the communion of love which presupposes freedom and sanctity of life.¹⁸

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of communion, distributes its gifts in the church for the up-building of the Church and for the unity of all (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:12) and, therefore, it does not create only good individual Christians but a community (Acts 2). Those who live by the Spirit of God, through their gifts, serve the Church in humility and love, and it is their task as ecclesial beings not only to recognize but additionally to actualize their own ministry for the enrichment of the church's life and witness. All ministries in the Church should be exercised in love, the highest gift of the Holy Spirit, which is not compatible with jealousy, boastfulness, arrogance, rudeness, resentfulness, and self-glorification, sources of serious divisions in the Church. For the church fathers discernment of the spirits is a gift by which a particular Christian community or a believer could identify the kind of spirit that speaks through a specific person or a group of Christians. In the Greek fathers, this gift is not the possession of any particular class of Christians or of all Christians. In the Latin tradition, discernment is a gift of grace given to Christians who are called to a specific vocation. Prophetic ministry within the church and in the world must be exercised in accordance with the ministry and gospel of Jesus Christ and it must lead all people to Him. The credibility of a prophet depends on one's willingness to suffer because of one's fidelity to the gospel. Prophetic judgments must be the result of intense prayer and should be expressions of God's love for the creation, indicating how the world and the alienated Christians can recover God's presence in their lives. Finally, prophetic ministry as a gift of the Holy Spirit must be sensitive to and serve the unity of the church by helping divided Christian communions and people recover their unity in Christ since "it is not in the midst of divisions, but in the union of hearts that the heart of peace dwells."¹⁹

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V. END NOTES

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- ¹ Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press , 1999), 38.
- ² *Ibid.*, 45.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 114.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁶ John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books , 2006), xxi.
- ⁷ Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The art of theological reflection*, (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1994), 84.
- ⁸ Donald B. Cozzens, *The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 147.
- ⁹ Timothy Radcliffe, "The Shape of the Church to Come," *America* (2009):22.
- ¹⁰ USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, (Washington DC.: USCCB, 2005), 25.
- ¹¹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 53.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 45.
- ¹³ Karl Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 157
Emmanuel Clapsis, "The Holy Spirit in the Church," *Ecumenical Review* 41 no 3 (1989):341.
- ¹⁴ Yves M.J. Congar, *Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, (New York: Seabury, 1983), 2.612-63.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 157.

¹⁷ John D. Zizioulas, "*The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church*", *Communio/International Catholic Review* (1974): 151.

¹⁸ Clapsis, "*The Holy Spirit in the Church*," 341.

¹⁹ Ibid., 343.1