

About this Issue

MST Review vol. 25, no. 2 (2023) comes at an interesting moment in the life of the Catholic Church as the selection, peer-review, and publication of its articles also coincide with some key events that provide a glimpse of the current global situation. First, the Israel-Hamas War, which started on 7 October 2023, demonstrates how religious and national narratives continue to inform one's political identity and historical right to settle in a territory. While Israel legitimizes their territorial claims through Zionist narratives that God 'destined' them to return to their ancestral land, Hamas claims that modern Israel was merely created through the occupation of Palestinian territories. Second, Pope Francis published his apostolic exhortation *Laudato Deum* on 4 October 2023 to advocate for urgent actions against climate change deniers and the worsening climate crisis in anticipation of the COP-28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Third, Pope Francis' call for a Synodal process at the universal stage held on 4-29 October 2023 shows the need to listen to the different voices within the Church to strengthen the sense of communion, participation, and mission by journeying together with its members despite the polarizing theological orientations in recent years. Fourth, the European Parliament and European Council's political agreement of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 20 December 2023 shows how Global North's solution to control migration are detached from responding to the needs of impoverished peoples from the Global South. Such attempts to provide a generalizing or universalizing solutions to the Global South's concerns could be problematic when local issues are not well recognized, thus necessitating contextual or decolonial approaches not only in politics but also in theology. In

my view, these recent events could help enlighten us and broaden our horizon to better understand the following journal articles for this issue.

Julius-Kei Kato's article, "Confronting John's Shadows while Basking in Its Lights: A Theological Attempt to Deal with the Fourth's Gospel's Ambivalence," analyzes John's gospel for its ambivalent content which he describes as 'shadows' and 'light'. Following Donald Gelpi's insights, Kato's article systematically explicates the pastoral implications of John's gospel in the 1st century CE context by responding to these three key questions: 1) why is Jesus differently portrayed in John's gospel from the synoptic gospels? 2) why were the Jews portrayed as villains in John's gospel? and 3) why is John's gospel more influential than the earlier-written synoptic gospels? Against the context of Jewish hostility, Kato discusses how John's gospel provides a retrojected image of Jesus to establish his divine association with God the Father as an 'inferential' narrative articulated by early Christians. Despite presenting Jesus' teaching that loving one's enemies is a Christian moral ideal (light), it must be emphasized that John's gospel is historically a polemic literature to Jewish unbelief in Christ (shadow).

Edward Foley's article, "Is there an Anthropocentric Homiletic? Preaching in the midst of the Anthropocene Event," analyzes the liturgical implications of the term 'Anthropocene' for homiletic preaching to show how its developments are "driven by human concerns." As a geological epochal dating that denotes the age of increasing human activity or 'footprint' in nature, Anthropocene has often been implied to be the cause of environmental degradation and climate change. However, Foley states that the Anthropocene as an ongoing event can be applied to ground our liturgical and homiletical preaching based on a theological anthropo-

logy that gives deep respect to nature. Given that liturgical celebrations are events themselves, Foley argues for an “Anthropocene imperative” in preaching where he offers pastoral reflections on the implication of this approach as inspired by Pope Francis’ *Evangelii gaudium* and *Laudato Si’*.

Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman’s article “Polarising Doctrinal Division in the Catholic Church: A Proposal,” explores the possibility of a dialogue between the traditional and revisionist theological approaches to Church sexual teachings. Their article proposes a third position to go beyond these two conflicting approaches through “a dialogue in charity” as promoted by Pope John Paul II’s *Ut unum sint* and Pope Francis’ *Amoris laetitia*. While the traditional Church sexual teaching of procreation of children as marriage’s primary end based on a reductionist theological anthropology rooted in biology, the revisionist position emphasizes marriage’s interpersonal good between spouses by seeing human sexuality as a product of socio-historical changes. For Lawler and Salzman, these opposing moral positions are reminiscent of the divide between the *cathedra pontificalis*, the Church’s teaching authority from ordained pastors, and the *cathedra magistralis*, the Church’s teaching authority from the expertise of theologians. Through dialogue in charity, these two sources of teaching authority should lead to a “a mutual appreciation of their complementary charisms.” In this regard, Lawler and Salzman see that a dialogue in charity would require giving primacy to the role of experience, apart from tradition, scripture, and secular disciplines (the ‘Wesleyan Quadrilateral’), as key sources that will guide our pastoral actions to address moral issues arising from homosexuality.

Michael Schüßler and Eva Maria Daganato’s article “Facing Ruptures and Entanglements of a Global World:

A Contextual Theological View from Germany,” reflects on their pastoral experience of encountering the urban poor during their stay in the Philippines, realizing how theological concerns from the Global North, which claim to be universal, are detached from the quotidian struggles of people from the Global South. Their struggles reveal how globalization casts shadows over ordinary people who struggle in poverty and are forced to find work abroad, which comes as a remote concern in Western countries. Following the Indian postcolonial scholar Leela Gandhi, Schüssler and Daganato argue for the practical need to do theology from specific contexts to decolonize Western theology whose lofty aim is often geared toward creating ‘order’ out of the chaotic world. A decolonized political theology thus necessitates the deconstruction of oppressive theologies by responding to the suffering of peoples of different backgrounds at various local levels instead of assuming Western theologies have the universal solutions to Global South’s problems.

Isaac Vasumu Augustine’s article, “James Turner Johnson’s Reading of Augustine’s Just War Reflection and its Relevance to Just Peace Debate,” argues that Augustine of Hippo’s ‘just war theory’ (JWT) should not be seen as an ahistorical doctrine that provides ethical reasons to wage war. Following James Turner Johnson’s reception, the article sees the ongoing relevance of JWT in the ‘just peace’ discussions by understanding Augustine’s teaching according to its historical context and literary influences. By neglecting these factors, treating JWT as an “unbreakable moral code” could lead to the continuing legitimation and “proclivity towards war.” This proposition entails, even though it might be challenging, that any discussion on ‘just peace’ necessitates a continuing discussion on JWT since its main goal is to achieve peace and not to wage war.

On behalf of the MST Review's editorial team, I hope that these article contributions will inspire readers to uncover their practical paradoxes, rough social contours, and pastoral implications. As we reflect on these various themes, may this issue compel us to journey together with the oppressed, those gravely affected by climate change, the people who yearn for compassion and acceptance, and the marginalized poor around the world.

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