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## Latinos and Ecumenism: Compelling Servants in a New Era

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In the Gospel of John, Jesus prays: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16, NAB); "And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are" (John 17:11); "so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). The words of the Master's prayer still ring an invitation to Christians worldwide, an invitation to end the shame of separation that has divided us for almost a millennium.

Through the use of several personal anecdotes, this essay argues that Latinos in the United States are currently in a strategic place to contribute significantly to a new *kairos* for ecumenism.<sup>1</sup> Because of their historical and cultural ties with Latin America, a geographic area which is witnessing the demographic shift of world Christianity to the southern hemisphere, together with their acculturation to the United

<sup>1</sup>See Carmelo E. Alvarez, "Ecumenism in Transition? Hispanic Responses from the United States," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 4:2 (Nov. 1996) 60-74. This particular issue of the journal provides an excellent background on the question of Hispanics and ecumenism. Aside from Alvarez' article the issue includes two others, Jeffrey Gros, "An Agenda for the Unity of the Church in the Western Hemisphere: Encounters with the Living Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America," and Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Naming the Other: U.S. Hispanic Catholics, the So-Called 'Sects,' and the 'New Evangelization.'" All three provide not only a thorough introduction to recent general developments in ecumenism but also stipulate what shape it is taking among Hispanics in the United States. Its pastoral suggestions, situated within an environment of recent organizational breakthroughs, are especially noteworthy. Another commendable piece is by Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996). See Alvarez, "Ecumenism in Transition," 219-25.

States which has a history of religious pluralism, U.S. Latinos can help demonstrate that ethnic, racial, and religious diversity are not necessarily problematic. In fact, by reflecting on their current lived faith experience, the substance of theology, they can help provide a new vision of the contours of unity.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1997 I found myself in Atlanta, Georgia, being interviewed for a Hispanic Theological Initiative post-doctoral research grant. The Pew Charitable Trusts made significant funds available so that Latina/o scholars could continue their theological research and benefit from precious mentoring, an element previous studies had found desperately lacking. Amidst the nervousness of explaining my project to the selection committee, as well as to fellow applicants, I tried to calm my nerves and still my anxious heart by focusing on the community which had brought me to this point in my theological career. My parents and *abuelos* had deliberately placed me in a community where I would come to know not only the God who is present within me, but the God who challenges me to work for unity among all believers and all people of good will.

Around that time, besides teaching at the University of Texas at El Paso and doing campus and parish ministry on the U.S.-Mexican border, I was also part of the Mexican American Cultural Center's San Fernando video and book project which was being funded by the Lilly Endowment.<sup>3</sup> By that time the video was complete and I was quite excited by the finished product because it reflected vividly the communities represented at our previous consultations. Having drawn from both media professionals and people in the pew, the film, produced by Adán Medrano and directed by Gerardo Rueda, is an example of how media not only reflects a reality but also helps to shape it. Through its stunning photography, music, and interviews, parishioners of San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Texas, and then pastor Virgilio Elizondo shared with us their struggles of trying to live the Christian life in a modern city. It resplendently revealed the faces of a people absorbed in worship and filled with a faith I have come to know personally from the many times I have visited the cathedral. The first time I saw the video I felt the warm flow of tears on my cheeks. Even though

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Gros sees enabling people to live in a pluralistic society as one of the most pressing challenges facing ecumenism in the United States today. See "Ecumenism in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino Community: Challenge and Promise," *El Cuerpo de Cristo: The Hispanic Presence in the U.S. Catholic Church*, ed. Peter Casarella and Raúl Gómez (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1998) esp. 211–12.

<sup>3</sup>The video, twenty-eight minutes in length, is entitled *Soul of the City/Alma del Pueblo* and is distributed by JM Communications.

I have now seen it more than twenty-five times, it never fails to move me.<sup>4</sup>

Back to the HTI interviews and my nervousness! In recalling the faith of the people who now reminded me that I was not alone, I proposed to show the film to the finalists interviewing for the awards. Dr. Daisy Machado, then director of the program, graciously gave her approval. At the end of the screening I sensed many feelings in the room. At the risk of misreading what was taking place, I suspected that many of the Protestants in the class were struggling with what to make of it. Their silence disturbed me and made me wonder what shape the path to unity might take in the future. As Hispanics, we often see ourselves as passionate, embodied people whose approach to abstract theological truths is through concrete, tangible symbols. Yet that smooth, almost magical transition from contemplating the concrete symbol to experiencing the transcendent did not seem to be taking place here,<sup>5</sup> at least not in the way I thought it would. What I did not understand is that Latino Protestants, as perhaps some others, have preserved the use of symbols in their worship but not in the same way. For example, in light of an iconoclastic reformation, words—especially sung words—took on renewed vigor.<sup>6</sup>

Years later, when talking to an ordained Puerto Rican Baptist woman who had been at that screening of *Soul of the City* and who is now an esteemed friend and colleague, I heard her remark that she had been quite moved by the whole event. "For years we wondered what was going on inside of Catholic churches on Good Friday and you pulled back the mysterious veil and showed us." What strikes me about her recollection is that it was not just the film which moved her. It was the fact that I had taken a risk and showed it to an audience that might not be sympathetic.

<sup>4</sup>The same film and subsequent book, *San Fernando Cathedral: Soul of the City* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), were the subject of a faculty colloquium prepared by those of us who use this material in our classes at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley.

<sup>5</sup>An element which further frustrated my enthusiasm for the film and that kind of tangible, sensual worship often seen in Latino Catholic churches was a discussion I had with a Pentecostal pastor I invited to guest lecture in my university classroom. After a presentation which mostly consisted in trying to debunk Roman Catholic teaching around the papacy, he told me that what took place at San Fernando could not possibly be worship since it involved the use of idols.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, in describing Hispanic Protestant spirituality, describes various popular devotions. See "Hispanic Protestant Spirituality," *Teología en Conjunto: A Collaborative Hispanic Protestant Theology*, ed. José David Rodríguez and Loida I. Martell-Otero (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997) 125–45.

I open with this anecdote concerning *Soul of the City* to illustrate how, in trying to discern the movements of the Spirit among our Latino communities, we have much lived experience, both individual and communal, upon which to reflect. Professional organizations, such as the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States, are intent on fostering this type of theological reflection rooted in these various Latino faith communities.<sup>7</sup> I am convinced that if we ponder our present reality theologically, we will experience this third millennium as a time of new hope and unity among Christians, despite some prophets of doom who are announcing the opposite. Because of a significant affiliation with Latin American countries, Latinos in the United States not only have a common connection to the Iberian peninsula (therefore some common cultural elements for unity among these type of Christians),<sup>8</sup> but also a situation where social and economic struggles have created a passion for social justice. This common historical thread may very well be a vehicle for ecumenical dialogue.

Among Latino Protestants, the rediscovery of common cultural roots provides further motivation to unity. Justo González, in my estimation one of the leading ecumenists of our times, has written extensively about the need for Latino Protestant sisters and brothers to acknowledge and embrace their common heritage of Iberian Catholicism.<sup>9</sup> This heritage is not unsoiled by negative aspects, but neither is it lacking in spiritual contributions to the modern world, such as the Spanish mystics.<sup>10</sup>

Casiano Floristán describes practical theology as critical reflection about the activity of the church and of Christians throughout the

<sup>7</sup> As stated in the ACHTUS Bylaws and Constitution, "In order to carry out its mission, the Academy seeks to [among other things] accompany the Hispanic communities of the United States, helping to critically discern the movement of the Spirit in their historical journey" (Article 1).

<sup>8</sup> As Jeffrey Gros remarks, "With five million Protestant Hispanics in the United States, we might have a better opportunity for ecumenical interchange than any other Spanish-speaking community in the world. The ecumenical imperative is our common calling. All who live in the real, if imperfect, communion are partners by baptism in this pilgrimage toward unity" (in "Ecumenism in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino Community: Challenge and Promise," *El Cuerpo de Cristo*, 198).

<sup>9</sup> Justo L. González, "Hispanics in the New Reformation," *Mestizo Christianity*, ed. Arturo J. Bañuelos (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995) 238–59.

<sup>10</sup> Bemoaning an anti-Catholic polemic which often came with Protestant evangelization, González writes of one of these particular mystics of sixteenth-century Spain: "According to the version of history which we learned as Protestants, Ignatius of Loyola, one of the greatest saints of the Spanish tradition, was the scheming founder of an order devoted to hypocrisy and deceit. Left with no saints, and with tarnished heroes, we were forced to look abroad—mostly to the Anglo world—for our saints and models" (from foreword to *Teología en Conjunto*).

world, especially in regards to those of the Third World, that is, the poor and marginated. Thus, the subject of practical theology should be not only ecclesial action but also theology as liberative praxis.<sup>11</sup> Floristán draws partly upon Karl Rahner's view of pastoral theology as an existential ecclesiology versus an essential one. It is thus, "a theology of the practice of the Church."<sup>12</sup> Our Latina theologians, most notably Ada María Isasi-Díaz and María Pilar Aquino, have quite consciously engaged this liberative praxis.<sup>13</sup>

Such theological reflection on the practice of the Church reminds us that theology, because it is a reflective action, is the second moment or stage. First comes Christian life, then comes theology.<sup>14</sup> I am reminded of a saying which suggests the need to put things in proper order: "primero es comer, después ser cristiano" ("before being a Christian, one has to eat"). Relatively recent experiences have broadened my ecumenical horizons.

In the spring of 2001 I team-taught a course with Philip Wickeri, a Presbyterian colleague at the Graduate Theological Union, entitled "Syncretism, Popular Religion and Hybridities: Cases from Asia and Latin America." Working with someone who spent twenty-three years in Asia, I discovered how little I knew about Asia, about popular religion, about Latin America, about Protestantism, even about Roman

<sup>11</sup> Floristán distinguishes *practical* theology from *pastoral* theology. The latter traces its origins as a discipline to eighteenth-century Europe. Pastoral theology was seen as a theory of priestly ministerial practice and therefore of exclusive concern to the clergy. Because it was designed to guide pastors in their "care of souls," it was labeled "pastoral." The term "practical theology" not only attempts to be more inclusive of laity but also accents Vatican II's emphasis on the Church as the community of the people of God at the service of the world. "Ahora pues, gracias a la decisión conciliar de entender la Iglesia como Pueblo de Dios en estado de comunión, al servicio del mundo, en aras del reino, la teología práctica ha cobrado una nueva dimensión. La relación de la Iglesia con el mundo, sobre todo con el Tercero—el marginado y pobre—es esencial en la comprensión de la teología práctica, entendida como teoría, crítica y reflexiva, de la praxis de la Iglesia y de los cristianos en el mundo" (p. 5). See Casiano Floristán, "Naturaleza de la teología práctica," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 6:2 (Nov 1998) 5–17.

<sup>12</sup> "Teología de la práctica de la Iglesia." Translation mine. The Rahner reference is found in Floristán, "Naturaleza de la teología práctica," 9.

<sup>13</sup> See my brief summary of their contribution to Latina/Latino theology in *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972–1998)* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000) 65–71.

<sup>14</sup> "La acción pastoral es una práctica que actualiza la praxis de Jesucristo a través de la acción de la Iglesia y de los cristianos; la teología reflexiona sobre las manifestaciones e intervenciones de Dios en los hombres y en la sociedad a través de Jesucristo y de la Iglesia. Como la teología, es un acto reflexivo o teórico, a saber, un acto segundo. Antes de pensar, se es, y antes de tener una teología se tiene un cristianismo," Floristán, "Naturaleza de la teología práctica," 15.

Catholicism! Just being able to admit that, however, and noticing that my students did not hold it against me if I simply said "I don't know," I found myself learning a great deal, especially about Pentecostalism as a modern form of syncretistic religion.<sup>15</sup> I noticed that in general, students who are bicultural or even bilingual seemed to have a less difficult time understanding how faith and culture interact. Both Wickeri and I were encouraged to hear students talk about their experiences of being influenced by this "third force of Christianity" which is by far the fastest growing movement in worldwide Christianity. In 1997 David Barrett, the well-known statistician of Christianity, estimated the world figure to be at 497 million, or 27 percent of the Christian population, more than the total number of Protestants and Anglicans combined. He projects that by the year 2025, 44 percent of the world's Christians will be Pentecostal.<sup>16</sup> The great growth in Pentecostalism can be seen in sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, South Korea, and, as we all know, South America.

In terms of our own reality, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that the Charismatic renewal, a Catholic adaptation of Pentecostalism, has been among the most vibrant ecclesial movements in modern times, especially among Hispanics. In a world where the fastest growing group of Christians are Pentecostals, this common ground cannot be ignored. Yet, up until recently, I had never heard a student of the Graduate Theological Union identify herself or himself as Pentecostal or even Charismatic. References to Pentecostals or Charismatics have often been derogatory.

In light of the importance of Pentecostalism, especially in terms of its rapid growth among Hispanics in the United States and in Latin America, I was heartened to hear about the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue which took place in various stages from 1972 to 1989.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, in an ecumenical dialogue on the issues of evangelism and evangelization and the Hispanic community, of which I have been privileged to be part, I was comforted by the group's decision not to go further until there was Pentecostal and more Roman Catholic representation.<sup>18</sup> We seem finally to be awakening to the prospect that the Spirit

<sup>15</sup> See Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, ed. Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 19.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson and Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 165ff.

<sup>18</sup> There was a strong feeling among many of the participants that this dialogue would only be meaningful to the extent that we got to know each other's stories and faith traditions. As one person cautioned, "This issue [of evangelism] has been used to divide us far too long."

may also be moving outside of mainline churches, especially among the world's poor. Pentecostalism, a type of which is often alive in simple, storefront churches, is becoming the church of the global poor, not unlike the social classes present at its birth, the Azusa Street Revival of 1906.<sup>19</sup> Allan Figueroa Deck summarizes the reasons why Pentecostalism continues to appeal to poor Hispanics:

The stress on God's transcendence is enhanced by three typical features of evangelical Christianity that clearly appeal to Hispanics: 1) the emphasis on feelings expressed in music; 2) the stress on the accessibility of the Bible to the ordinary believer (not just to the exegete and the *savant*), and 3) the small faith community orientation which creates an atmosphere where peer witnessing and reinforcement can occur. These elements are often absent in the religious milieu of the more affluent and educated.<sup>20</sup>

If I may return momentarily to an image from the film *Soul of the City*, there is a black and white photograph of an elderly Hispanic woman whose dignified, worn face and hands speak volumes of the suffering she has witnessed. As we contemplate her face, we hear Virgilio Elizondo comment:

Ritual, in a way, allows us to go through the pain of having rejected one another; but also to begin to go through that pain to a new synthesis, and this allows us to dream, and the dream becomes through worship, because through worship we can pray for things that do not yet exist but we know that they can come about.<sup>21</sup>

In a very real way, our Latino ecumenical gatherings, times for worship and theological conversation, have been marked not only by an exchange of ideas, but also by a welcome into each other's hearts. As Elizondo's comment implies, this look into a painful past is not easy, but quite necessary. Both Catholics and Protestants have reason to lament some aspects of their common history in the United States. The nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth, for example, marked a period in which the United States not only took possession of about

<sup>19</sup> See Anderson and Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Allan Figueroa Deck, "The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism," *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, ed. by Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994) 431. Elsewhere in that chapter, Deck presents several convincing reasons for explaining why Hispanics convert to evangelical/pentecostal Christianity, among them is its ability to combine both personal and communal aspects of spirituality.

<sup>21</sup> Quote from the video *Soul of the City/Alma del Pueblo*.

half of Mexico's territory but also exerted a heavy hand through its gunboat diplomacy. As Timothy Matovina and Gerald E. Poyo report:

Protestant leaders attributed U.S. expansion to divine providence and adopted a view of religious "manifest destiny" which saw Hispanic Catholics as inherently inferior and Protestantism as a force that would inevitably conquer all of the Americas. For example, one Protestant minister wrote that the Anglo-American takeover of Texas as "an indication of Providence in relation to the propagation of divine truth in other parts of the Mexican dominions[,] . . . Guatemala and South America" as well as "the beginning of the downfall of [the] Antichrist, and the spread of the Savior's power of the gospel."<sup>22</sup>

The Catholic Church, however, was not exempt from applying its own heavy hand when its interests were at stake or when failing to take care of its own. Matovina and Poyo summarize the situation of Hispanics in the eastern part of the United States during the same century:

For the most part, during the nineteenth century Cuban exiles in the United States were skeptical if not outright antagonistic toward the Catholic Church. The church in Cuba, headed mostly by Spaniards, had generally supported Spanish rule on the island, alienating many of the thousands of Cubans who left the island during the century. Many abandoned Catholicism in exile and turned to other ideas, religions, and philosophies of life, including freemasonry, Protestantism, anarchism, and socialism. For the heavily working class and multiracial communities in New York and Florida, socialism and anarchism spoke more strongly than did Catholicism, as did the African-based religious tradition of Santería. Many of the prominent middle-class exile leaders in Key West tended to be Masons or Protestants, especially the Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists. A generally anticlerical attitude prevailed among Cubans and only a relatively few Cubans in this exile community identified themselves as practicing Catholics.<sup>23</sup>

The twentieth century often witnessed a similar failure of the Catholic Church to provide a pastoral presence. A group of parishioners, writing to the Bishop of Detroit in 1932, complained of losing many members of their communities to the Baptists. Grateful for Bishop Michael James Gallagher's establishment of a national parish for them, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Detroit, they nonetheless decry the lack of leadership present in their parish.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Matovina and Gerald E. Poyo, eds., *Present! U.S. Latino Catholics from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000) 49–50.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

We are thankful to your Lordship for your efforts in our behalf in the past by giving us a parish church dedicated to our Lady of Guadalupe, but we are afraid that the zeal and love that you have shown to us has not been taken up by Father Castillo, who is criticized and accused by many of a lack of priestly interest in our behalf. We feel abandoned and without any leader in this serious matter.<sup>24</sup>

Encarnación Padilla de Armas, a Puerto Rican pioneer in Hispanic ministry in New York in the early 50s, lamented a similar neglect of Hispanics by the archdiocese while noting at the same time the welcoming presence of Protestant communities.<sup>25</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, the need for a renewed ecumenism stems not only from an acknowledgment of a difficult and divisive past but also from a concern for a more just future. Christianity as we have known it is changing rapidly. Several aspects of our global demographic reality warrant a reconsideration of the contours of the face of Christianity in the third millennium. We have now become accustomed to hearing about "the coming of the third world church which signals that the majority of Christians are now in developing countries."<sup>26</sup> Will the Christian churches hear the cry of these escalating poor members?

In recent history, during a time when ecumenism has often taken the shape of common work for justice among Christians, César Chávez, the renowned farm labor organizer, lamented the lack of pastoral presence on the part of the Catholic Church among the farm workers, while praising the early support of the Protestants in the form of the California Migrant Ministry. Chávez' words still have a haunting, challenging ring to them:

When poor people get involved in a long conflict, such as a strike, or a civil rights drive, and the pressure increases each day, there is a deep need for spiritual advice. Without it we see families crumble, leadership weaken, and hard workers grow tired. And in such a situation the spiritual advice must be given by a friend, not by the opposition. What sense does it make to go to Mass on Sunday and reach for spiritual help, and instead get sermons about the wickedness of your cause? That only drives one to question and despair. The growers in Delano have their spiritual problems . . . we do not deny that. They have every right to priests and ministers who serve their needs. *But we have different needs, and so we needed a friendly spiritual guide.* And this is true in every community in this state where the poor face tremendous problems.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 110–15.

<sup>26</sup> Walbert Buhmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and the Future of the Church* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1976).

<sup>27</sup> César Chávez in Matovina and Poyo, *Present!* 208.

Later ecumenical and interreligious collaboration in defense of the United Farm Workers became a reason to hope for a more united, less antagonistic, and nonviolent front for the type of justice Jesus preached.<sup>28</sup>

Reflecting upon these historical situations, I am reminded that the persons I have met through ecumenical efforts at the Graduate Theological Union, the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI), the Hispanic Summer Program (HSP) in which I taught one summer, and the Latino section of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) are the living memory of these interdenominational struggles.<sup>29</sup> Not only are we now reading each other's writings, but we are in a position to bring to the dialogue table our own particular way of having embodied some aspect of Christian spirituality, be it present in common work for justice, a deeper understanding of the teachings of Christ which entreat us to welcome the stranger and embrace diversity, or embodied worship which not only reflects a commitment to a community but also helps to bring it about. Because we Hispanic theologians are so few in the United States, many of us know each other and therefore invite each other to collaborate on research projects or conferences. We have often been surprised by how our cultural ties and socioeconomic situation, coupled with a closeness to the faith communities which sustain us, provide a greater bond between us than the separation brought about by an excessively denominational focus. Jean-Pierre Ruiz reports Elizondo's observation:

During the course of his welcome address at the 1993 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in San Antonio, Virgilio Elizondo shared with the participants in glowing terms an account of the Hispanic ecumenical academic symposium that took place at the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) some fifteen years earlier: "At the first social on the evening of the arrival, everyone—Pentecostal, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Disciples, Adventist—expressed how much at home they felt at MACC. Our denominations had fought each other in the field, but here on common ground, it was more like a family reunion."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Recently in Berkeley when I met a Jesuit scholar from India who is studying the organizing methods of César Chávez so as to see how they might apply to the group of farmworkers he will return to in his native country, I rejoiced that we in the United States, who gained immeasurably from the influence of Ghandi on Chávez, could now give something back to his country.

<sup>29</sup> One of the conclusions I took away from teaching a course entitled "Mestizo Spirituality and Art" during the summer of 1999 was that the new *mestizos*, in the sense that they are often marginated from the two groups from which they stem, are Protestant Latinos, since both their Catholic family members as well as some of the leadership in their newfound mainline Protestant churches do not always understand them.

<sup>30</sup> As quoted in Ruiz, "Naming the Other," 58.

As theological and ministerial leaders in communities, we are in a position to broaden the ecumenical horizons of our congregations—just as they continue to broaden ours!<sup>31</sup>

After having heard a Hispanic Methodist friend describe his profound experience of worshipping with the *Penitentes* in New Mexico during Holy Week, for example, I can never read the attacks on this lay confraternity by some Protestants in the nineteenth century with the same feeling of disdain for their inability to see what apparently is so obvious to me, for their attacks are not the end of the story. One of their own sons has moved beyond an univocal, dismissive mind set into which both Roman Catholics and Protestants can sink.<sup>32</sup>

Crossing borders is something most of us have had to do in some way or other. The pastoral needs implicit in the history hinted at above only increase as the numbers in our Latino populations continue to soar. It is not uncommon that we be asked to address or teach a class to a specific group, be it students in a lay ministry formation program, parish groups or leadership teams, permanent deacons and their wives, or professional students of theology. Often we feel stretched because we are being asked to step outside of our area of expertise.<sup>33</sup> Aside from the linguistic challenges some of us face when having to teach in Spanish, a language many of us know more through everyday discourse than formal study, it becomes immediately obvious to us that we know so little! Yet, perhaps launching into uncharted waters, we go forward, trusting a gut instinct, a life of prayer, and whatever academic resources we have been able to put together. The beauty of it all is that we can only present ourselves humbly as fellow learners on a faith journey, persons fortunate enough to have acquired some analytical skills and knowledge of the wider Christian tradition, persons who can empathize immediately with what it means to feel inadequate for such a daunting task as faith formation. The grace, however, is that we walk away knowing we have gone beyond the limitations of our own particular expertise and been challenged to see the larger picture. Not a

<sup>31</sup> A man once posed this question to the group in a workshop I was directing: "Why must we continue to refer to Protestants as our 'separated brethren'? Either they are our brothers and sisters or not. Why 'separated'?" [a term found in the documents of Vatican II].

<sup>32</sup> Matovina and Poyo provide several examples from the nineteenth-century southwest, (*Presente!* 49). For some modern examples see José Antonio Rubio, "Bearing False Witness," *El Cuerpo de Cristo*, ed. Casarella and Gómez, 213–27.

<sup>33</sup> As when I was asked recently to give a workshop in Spanish on preaching the parables to a group of permanent deacons in training and their wives in the Diocese of Sacramento.

bad way to surrender to the mystery of "faith in search of understanding"! As the saying goes, "A ship in a harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are for."

I conclude with three items on my "theological wish list." One, that we keep researching our common history so that we be encouraged by how far we have come ecumenically;<sup>34</sup> two, that we listen to each other across denominational lines, trusting that the other probably holds some precious element of the wider Christian tradition, such as a preferential option for the poor and a passion for justice; three, that we stay open to discerning the movements of the Spirit among our communities, a Spirit, as Paul's letter to the Galatians indicates, whose abundant fruit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, and faithfulness" (Gal 5:22).

<sup>34</sup> For a masterful summary of institutional advancements in ecumenical dialogue, a dialogue to which Roman Catholics initially were "Johnny-come-lately" but soon, after Vatican II, made great strides, as well as some concrete challenges for the future involving the Latino community, see Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., "Ecumenism in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino Community: Challenge and Promise," *El Cuerpo de Cristo*, ed. Casarella and Gómez, 197-212.