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**FOSTERING "UNITY IN DIVERSITY":  
A CASE-STUDY OF A CHURCH MULTICULTURAL  
RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

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Throughout the United States religious communities face increasing diversity in terms of race and ethnicity both in terms of the makeup of their congregations and that of the surrounding civic communities. Pastoral theology "engages general theological questions from the perspective of the pastoral situation and relates them back to the situation's ongoing needs and demands."<sup>1</sup> In this instance, over the past five years I have formed and chaired a "multicultural relations committee" at St. Jerome's Church in Houston which has drawn upon and amplified the Catholic articulation of "unity in diversity" so as to build more community between the parish's three linguistic constituencies—English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Though we claim to be "one Church," realistically we have been a "divided parish" in which "three or more parallel parishes [function] physically at the same place. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Arturo, a Mexican immigrant who serves on the committee, notes:

*Es muy común encontrar a parroquianos de muchas de las mas de 70 organizaciones que actualmente funcionan en la parroquia decir: "Los Hispanos están organizando su fiesta para La Guadalupana," "Los Anglos están teniendo su cena anual de Navidad," "Los Vietnamitas están festejando su inicio de año." Es muy triste ver como entre Católicos nos dividimos unos a otros. [It is common to find parishioners, in many of these 70 organizations that actually function in the parish, say: "The Hispanics are organizing their Guadalupana celebration," "The Anglos are having their annual Christmas dinner," "The Vietnamese are cel-*

ebrating their New Year.” It is very sad to see how among Catholics there are divisions one from the other.]<sup>3</sup>

Whereas the leadership structure and ongoing practices have reflected the concerns of the English-speaking community—specifically the European-Americans—largely because they have more education and are the founders and financial base of the parish, a quick look at those receiving baptism, receiving First Communion, and being confirmed in recent years suggests a marked increase in the percentage of Latino and Vietnamese parish members.<sup>4</sup> Now, there are as many, if not more, Latinos than European-Americans. The pastoral challenge has been to effect a dialogue through which the English-speaking community would begin to see its destiny in the other two communities and the newer, growing communities would begin to carry forth the legacy built over three decades by the longstanding community.

What follows is a reflection on the philosophical and theological concepts and organizational practices that have informed the multicultural relations committee’s efforts to generate community through, not in spite of, diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups. If pastoral theology, as Jernigan claims, is an integrative, relational, inductive, and transcultural discipline, then the experiences of the St. Jerome’s committee offer insight for anyone in the field wrestling with the challenge of cultural diversity.<sup>5</sup> In turn, as much as psychology has been the lodestone for much of pastoral theology, this case study also reveals the relevance of political theory and public administration concepts for pastoral theology.

## THEORY

### A Substantive Pluralism

As a political theorist, I have been exploring the notion of a substantive pluralism: that a normative common good can be engendered in a democratic politics through the interchange of a community’s diverse moral, cultural, and linguistic traditions. This notion is different from liberalism that contend that when moral

and cultural traditions are so diverse, the best we can do is to ensure that every individual retains certain rights under the law and public policymakers not legislate morality. Simultaneously, a substantive pluralism is different from communitarianisms that contend that a shared set of morals is only possible in homogeneous settings.

This opposition between liberalism and communitarianism manifests the fallacy in the social sciences to separate the community from the individual. As Sara Lawrence Lightfoot points out, in the context of public school education, social scientists tend to separate community from individual or plural pursuits, instead of recognizing how they are integral to each other:

Social scientists often talk about forming the collective as being opposed to individual initiative. But my sense is that it doesn't have to be that way at all. There can be a difficult but harmonious coming together—the building of a rich community and individual expression. As a matter of fact, if we would let some of those individual gifts thrive, there would be more possibility for a rich community life.<sup>6</sup>

Community understood this way is an intersubjective network of relations: 1) what we understand to be as our shared community norms is an undertaking being revised daily by the contributions of each individual, new and old, present and past and 2) individual identity is only fully realized through interaction with other persons in the community. Personal and community well-being is realized through the “gifts” each person reveals in public life.

My elaboration of Lightfoot's insight is drawn from phenomenology. As opposed to philosophies that reduce human conduct either to the workings of an inner ego detached from the world or to behavioral or physical causation by the environment, phenomenology focuses on each human being's “consciousness-of” the world. Phenomenology accents the intersubjective space of meaning constituted both between human beings and with the surrounding world—reality neither as subjectivist nor objectivist in orientation, but being somewhere “in-between.”<sup>7</sup>

In terms of political theory, this orientation has been most fully realized in terms of Hannah Arendt's emphasis on how personal distinctiveness is realized in the company of others. Freedom is realized through being responsible to our equals who mutually constitute the public space—the “inter-est” or “web” of human relationships.”<sup>8</sup> However, as much as Arendt accents how persons disclose who they are in the company of others, I am putting more emphasis on the community norms which emerge from this intersubjective interaction.

Moreover, I amplify Lightfoot's and Arendt's notions by emphasizing not just how individuals can interact to generate community, but how different cultures can mutually build community without abandoning the core of their own traditions.<sup>9</sup> Michael Perry's work on an “ecumenical politics” in which diverse moral traditions can engage in a civil dialogue regarding the moral parameters of the political community is akin to a substantive pluralism, but his focus is still on explicit religious, theological, or philosophical norms, not ethnic or racial cultures.<sup>10</sup>

Criticism of my approach claims that 1) in terms of American politics and history, I am abandoning the merits of individualism and 2) a substantive pluralism would actually “institutionalize social fragmentation along group lines.”<sup>11</sup> First, note that both arguments fall into the individual v. group/community dichotomy pinpointed by Lightfoot. Actually, I welcome a moral or purposive individualism or liberalism, but what has prevailed in our political practices is an atomistic self-serving individualism that undermines rather than cultivates community.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of the second claim, I am not advocating a corporatist scheme by which in Congress or on church councils one would have proportional representation based on race or ethnicity. My focus is rather how, in an age of increasing cultural diversity in the United States, these cultures can interact and transform each other in a positive way, in contrast to both assimilationists who claim that we need to give up our cultural backgrounds and adopt a universal political identity or separatists who contend that the only way to ensure cultural integrity is to keep cultural communities apart.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, such criticism does reflect a larger liberal political critique of multiculturalism: that although we must recognize how important cultural socialization is to the cultivation of personal identity, liberal democracy guarantees “difference-blind” universal human rights. Stressing cultural norms eventually leads to an illiberal repressive politics.<sup>14</sup> As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. argues, in terms of *E Pluribus Unum*, the ethnocentrism now in vogue ends up glorifying *pluribus* at the expense of *unum*.<sup>15</sup>

As captured though by Charles Taylor, what cultural groups respond regarding such presumably universal political rights is that “the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture.”<sup>16</sup> The challenge becomes to reconcile diverse sets of values which comprise a heterogeneous community with liberal democratic practices in the case of secular political communities and Christian practices in the case of Christian churches. A substantive pluralism moves in-between not just the false dichotomy of the individual v. the community, but also *unum* v. *pluribus*.

Although scholars who stress the integrity of ethnic/racial cultural norms have not criticized my approach, my suspicion is that they would contend that my articulation of a substantive pluralism is not radical enough. Specifically, that once one recognizes how decision-making structures so easily reflect the hegemony of one culture over others, one also grasps the breadth and depth of the chasms that lie between cultural groups.

For instance, admitting that women have been subordinate to men in most professional workplaces does not necessarily mean the remedy is just to equalize pay scales and the number of each gender at every workplace level: it may mean a complete restructuring of the workplace due to differences in communication styles between the genders and child care issues that were traditionally left to women in the home. This comprehensive recasting of both the workplace and the home can result in very agonistic interaction between the genders both as professionals/workers and as parents. Therefore, a substantive pluralism may too easily assume that one can generate mutual interchange that is not agonistic or hegemonic.

If, in response to liberals, I contended that cultural differences need recognition, in response to the radical critique, I maintain it is still possible to seek mutual understanding between diverse cultural groups that does not culminate in hegemonic decision-making practices. Genuine communities in a lateral, intersubjective fashion strive to integrate—not assimilate or separate—the cultures that comprise it, as trying as this undertaking might prove.

### Roman Catholic Philosophical and Theological Sources

Based on the insights of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and personal experience, to move another person's perspective toward a substantive pluralism, one should work with the ideas of that person's moral or cultural tradition. Since I coordinate the multicultural relations committee at a Catholic parish, I will review the sources within Catholic philosophy and theology that articulate a substantive pluralism. In turn, the Catholic articulation of "unity in diversity" offers a great deal toward pursuing a substantive pluralism for the larger civic community.

There are numerous sources within Catholic political and social thought relevant to a substantive pluralism: Jacques Maritain's discussion of integral humanism and a "practical consensus;" John Courtney Murray's discussion of the broadening of the American political consensus and a "growing end;" Papal encyclicals since *Mater et Magistra*—especially *Octogesima Adveniens*, the documents of Vatican II—especially *Gaudium et Spes*; Andrew Greeley's discussion of the analogical or sacramental imagination; and liberation and inculturation studies within Latino theology, among other sources.<sup>17</sup> I will review just a few of these sources and their key themes.

Greeley, borrowing from David Tracy's distinction between the dialogical v. analogical imaginations of God, contends (and proves this contention through sociological studies) that Catholics accept diversity because they envision human affairs as basically good and full of grace.<sup>18</sup> Though Catholics give the transcendental relationship with God its just due, just as important are the human relationships between human beings in this life—especially socioeconomic

and political matters. Consequently, Catholics place great emphasis on the dense intertwined networks that comprise this life—family, neighbors, church activities, political and social groups. Diversity is integral to the expression of Catholic faith.

Greeley articulates diversity without specific reference to cultural differences. Church documents provide more specificity. Paul VI in *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) contends that worldwide diversity makes it “difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution that has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission.”<sup>19</sup> Instead, Paul VI looks to “cultural and religious groupings . . . to develop in the social body . . . those ultimate convictions on the nature, origin, and end of man and society.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops’s “Cultural Pluralism in the United States,” (1980) characterizes America as a “multicolored marble . . . of many hues and patterns; in their joining and confluence they contribute their own element of beauty to the Church and the land we love.”<sup>21</sup> Unlike the “melting pot” which stresses assimilation or a “mosaic” which stresses separatism, the “multicolored marble” captures how cultures influence each other yet retain distinctiveness—the Catholic accent on relations.

Within American Catholicism, the document “Many Members, One Body: A Pastoral Letter on the Cultural and Ethnic Diversity of the Church of Galveston-Houston” has developed in greater detail the challenges of seeking “unity-in-diversity.” Specifically, that confronting diversity, especially in a church context, means interacting with “the other” in a lateral, nonhegemonic way:

. . . embracing cultural diversity is not simply a matter of being tolerant of others, nor is it merely a matter of accommodation, accepting a temporary difference in the practice of the faith until others are ready to embrace our expression of the faith. Each person must come to see a positive engagement with other cultures as a means of enriching one’s own faith. . . . To put the matter more strongly, we cannot be content with diverse cultures simply co-existing at

a respective distance. The catholicity of the Church demands that these diverse cultures engage one another in conversation and extended social and liturgical interaction.<sup>22</sup>

This pastoral letter rejects both cultural uniformity and separatism in favor of a cultural interaction in which each contributing culture and the overall church community are mutually enriched and transformed.

By far, inculturation studies—how the Christian faith is realized through the concrete experience of particular cultures—have the most relevance for the issues raised by a substantive pluralism. In particular, the notion of *mestizaje* from Latino studies, provides an answer to the challenge posed by multicultural congregations: how to sustain a Christian community with several particular understandings of the faith.

*Mestizaje* refers to the origin of the Mexican race and culture through the interrelationship of the Spanish conquerors and the previously existing indigenous tribes. What is Mexican is distinct from the contributing Spanish and indigenous cultures yet retains elements of both: Our Lady of Guadalupe seems Spanish because of the conquistadors' Catholicism, yet she appears in indigenous form to the native Juan Diego.

Within Latino theology, Virgil Elizondo contends that a new *mestizaje* is emerging along the U.S.-Mexico "border," by which Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and other Latinos are becoming Anglocized while simultaneously European and other Americans are becoming Mexicanized: "Neither group is simply allowing the other in; rather, both are forming a new human space wherein all feel more at home."<sup>23</sup> Through *mestizaje*, Elizondo shows how cultures can combine without being reduced to the other or to a generic universal. By moving beyond the opposition of universal v. particulars and of assimilation v. separatism, *mestizaje* offers a basis for culturally diverse congregations to engage in constructive "social and liturgical interaction."<sup>24</sup>

## PRACTICE

### Vision and Charge

I referred to ideas from a substantive pluralism when I proposed the multicultural relations committee to the pastor and the parish council, but not in a lecture or scholarly format. Following Greeley's cue, I have appealed to the authoritative values **experienced** by parish leaders as Catholics—the accent on relations—to incite them to risk engaging each “other.”

At the very least, I have tried to focus the attention of parish leaders on the fact that given the changing demographics of the parish and the surrounding community, the question was not whether or not our future was to be multicultural, but whether we responded with a long-term vision that dealt with this reality rather than letting fate just takes its course. Arturo notes:

*Existen también dos tipos de Católicos, los que al ver situaciones como ésta, deciden alejarse y buscar otra parroquia en donde los hacen sentirse mejor, or se alejan por completo de la religión. El segundo tipo, muy escaso, decide ser parte del cambio y ponerse a trabajar para que dicha situación mejore. [There are two types of Catholics, those that seeing these situations decide to leave and look for another parish to feel better or abandon their religion altogether. The second type, quite scarce, decides to be part of the change and to work on improving the situation.]<sup>25</sup>*

Rather than seeing multicultural relations as a burden, the committee envisions the moral growth of the parish ensuing through, not in spite of, the parish's diverse cultures.<sup>26</sup>

In order to effect this vision, the committee has been 1) primarily advisory, not administrative, in its conduct and 2) fluid in terms of its scope—all topics and concerns are potentially under its purview. If the committee assumes too many administrative responsibilities, then it becomes just another “turf conscious” entity.

A fluid scope gives the committee free rein to uncover the obstacles that deter greater interaction between the parish's cultural communities. Thus, the committee, is 1) a clearinghouse of ideas and experiments that other parts of the parish can draw upon and 2) a forum, in the manner of an ombudsman, for those who feel they "are not being heard" or lack access to existing communication channels.

### Recruitment and Representation

At the initial meeting of the committee in May 1991, the committee had equal representation for each of the linguistic communities which have liturgies each weekend—English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The English-speaking community includes not only many types of European-Americans, but African-Americans, non-Vietnamese Asian-Americans, Mexican-Americans who primarily speak English, and essentially anyone whose first tongue is not Spanish or Vietnamese. Although our Spanish-speaking community largely consists of Mexican and Mexican-Americans, it also includes others from throughout Latin America—especially El Salvador.<sup>27</sup> The committee has had approximately equal numbers of women and men since its inception.

The initial members were chosen by the pastor, the chair of the pastoral council, and myself. I recruited individuals whom I thought 1) would be congenial to the notion of substantive pluralism, 2) would contribute a great deal based upon their professional background or my previous dealings with them, and 3) would not use this opportunity just to advance personal agendas.

At least three of the original Spanish-speaking members I knew through a monthly bilingual healing service and the fourth representative was suggested by one of them. In the Vietnamese case, I simply started with the one Vietnamese person I knew through the Cursillo prayer movement. He also happened to be an officer of the Vietnamese community council and I relied on his choices for the other representatives. In terms of the English-speaking community, those selected were people whom I knew I could work with and shared the vision of "unity in diversity."

Five years later, only one of the original Latino members remains—the one I did not know previously—and at least a dozen members from that community have at different times served. It has not been easy to find representatives who see themselves as representing the views of their communities as opposed to just voicing their own perspective—what political scientists term being “delegates” rather than “trustees.”

In the Vietnamese case, rarely have we had as many as four representatives at a meeting and over the past three years, we are fortunate if we have at least one representative present. The Vietnamese representatives, when present, have indeed been “delegates” chosen by their leadership council. However, their insistence on unanimity among themselves and not embarrassing others in public at times has obscured both the differences of opinion within their community and the degree to which their community is congenial to the committee’s charge.

In the English-speaking case, there has been the most continuous representation, which suggests that the conduct and orientation of the committee still reflects primarily the cultures and backgrounds of these individuals. The outlook of the English-speaking members reflect those who want the parish to move in a multicultural direction, not those who would argue that the forums are already in place, albeit European-American in orientation, for anyone who wants to get involved.

### Format

The atmosphere at the meeting has been crucial for cultivating dialogue. The stress on the dignity of the human person in Catholic social thought is essential for having good meetings. Often I have attended secular and church meetings in which a “free for all” ensues in which the interlocutors persistently cut each other off and the loudest personalities dominate the discourse. One never gets a feel for what the demure members of the meeting think. Put otherwise by Arturo:

*Otro de los grandes problemas que me he encontrado es el de ver que quien tiene mas poder en la parroquia, y demostrarlo. Se nos olvida que él que no vive para servir no sirve para vivir.* [One of the greatest problems that I have encountered is the need to see who has most power in the parish and to demonstrate it. We forget that one who does not live to serve leads a purposeless life.]

If a group is making its decisions by consensus, especially when there are multiple cultures represented, it is imperative for all members to have genuine access to the discourse if the “consensus” is to have any legitimacy.

I have tried to conduct the meetings in a way that strives not to privilege any one community yet tries to bring out “the gifts,” in Lightfoot’s terms, of each committee member. At the outset, we often set the tone by praying and singing in all three languages. Second, although we primarily conduct our meetings in English, if anyone attending speaks primarily Spanish or Vietnamese, then we translate back and forth as much as possible.

To thwart strong personalities from dominating the discourse, as chair I decide who has “the floor” and ensure that the discourse remains focused on the agenda. To deter interruptions and simultaneous speakers, some small faith communities give a small seashell to the person who wishes to speak: they hold it only as long as it takes to make their point, then give it to the next person who wishes to respond. In this fashion 1) everyone is made to feel part of the group, 2) people learn how to disagree without putting each other down, and 3) each individual learns how to make their point but then yield control over the discourse to the next speaker.<sup>28</sup>

Although as a committee we have not employed the seashell tactic, we strive to emulate these principles of fair and effective discourse.

My endeavor to ensure an atmosphere that does not privilege any one culture or language has prompted the committee to also deal with the subtle or hidden forms of discrimination: cultural habits, level of education, and style of speech and clothing among others. These almost unconscious prejudices by which we distinguish ourselves from “others” are very difficult to bring out in the

open, but nevertheless obstruct understanding and cooperation.<sup>29</sup> Still, whatever discomforts committee members have felt, just getting them to talk with each other in an atmosphere of dignity, openness, and trust over time has led to friendships that makes coordination between the communities on parish-wide events like Confirmation liturgies much easier.

### Open Agenda

As much as I thought the committee could undertake certain issues, especially regarding liturgy, youth ministry, continuing education, and social activities, the committee for the most part has set its own agenda. Were the committee not to operate in an open fashion or worse were to follow a blueprint formulated by an outside expert, it could never claim with much legitimacy that a particular issue was being ignored.

By gathering members from the different communities to talk with each other, we have started to “clear the air” of mutual misperceptions. For a long time, a rumor circulated the parish that the Vietnamese intended to build their own church. Well, was that in fact true, for knowing this would be important for the parish’s future plans? Was the Latino community content with Spanish masses only on Sunday afternoon and evening, especially since they were rapidly becoming the majority in the parish?

In practice, several committee projects have been suggested by our pastors. For instance, the committee has coordinated the discernment process for parish council members. Prior to the committee’s involvement, the pastoral council was comprised almost entirely of members from the English-speaking community. Spanish- and Vietnamese-speaking parishioners were not intentionally prevented from serving, but the way the process was structured and advertised was reflective of the mores of the English-speaking community. By taking advantage of alternative channels of communication and mores, the committee has enabled more Latinos and Vietnamese not only to participate in discernment, but to serve on parish council.

Given that women are frequently active in church activities, one might expect that gender issues would be raised by the committee. However other than the need for childcare during liturgies and other church activities, gender issues have not been broached by the committee. This does not mean they are not present in the parish: to the contrary, akin to the above discussion of parish council discernment, the channels and mores of communication may very well obstruct their discussion.

Without a doubt, much of feminist literature dovetails with ethnic/racial critiques in terms of acknowledging and overcoming the processes and structures which promote hegemonic rather than egalitarian decision-making. Ironically, contrary to the feminist claim that women bring holistic and lateral (not hierarchical) outlooks and communication styles to decision-making, some female leaders of St. Jerome's can be as dominating in a top-down fashion as any of the male leaders, nor do they necessarily practice the principles of fair and effective communication stressed earlier.<sup>30</sup> Rather than the struggle being one of gender, in the committee's experience it is between those who practice collaborative decision-making and those who do not.

### Measuring Progress "In Process"

The committee has not plotted its course nor measured its success in the conventional goals and objectives format. Even if this method can be "operationalized," the claim that a goal can be clearly established and then in a deductive fashion all steps to realizing that goal can be neatly compartmentalized and measured is contrary to the committee's collaborative format.

Instead, the direction of the committee has been unfolding in an inductive, holistic fashion—what Virgil Elizondo describes as "living in process":

The Latino is one who accepts the totality of life. He is realistic in this sense and idealistic in the striving for something beyond, in reaching for what ought to be. He aims in this direction which he may or may not reach. He is con-

stantly striving for the ideal, though often he does not know how he will get there. If it is God's will, it will work out. If not, why worry? In this combination of idealism and realism, the Latino will not hesitate to begin a project for which he does not have a plan, a time schedule, or a completion date projected. He sees the ideal vaguely and begins, knowing that the plan will emerge in the process and that someone, some day, will finish the job. The Latino is very comfortable living in process, and a quick termination of the process is not part of his objective.<sup>31</sup>

Arturo's evaluation of the committee's accomplishments provides a concrete illustration of this perspective:

*Ver los resultados del Comité Multicultural no es facil. El gran reto es que cada uno piense que podemos aprender algo del otro, sin importar de que país vienes, que lengua hablas o que cultura tienes. Le lograr que cada uno piense de esta manera no es facil. En esto, mucho es sembrar la idea y no sabemos si dicha semilla va a germinar o no, posiblemente tarde mucho tiempo y la mejor no veremos los frutos. La mayoría de los resultado no es facil de medir, solo de palpar al darte cuenta como la gente va cambiando y empiezas a vislumbrar un rayo de luz de unión entre los miembros de una parroquia dividida por muchos problemas, pero con un gran futuro en el cual Dios juega el papel mas importante.* [The results of the Multicultural Committee are not easily seen. The challenge is to think that everyone can learn from each without regard of where you were born, what language you speak, or the culture you have. To achieve that everyone think in this manner is not easy. Much of this is **sowing** the idea and we don't know if this seed will germinate or not, it may delay or we may not see the fruits. The majority of the results are not easily measured, you can only feel for yourself the realization of how people are changing and then you begin to glimpse a

ray of light from among the union of members of a parish divided by many problems, but with a great future in which God plays the most important role.]

The way one measures progress can reveal as much about one's mores and practices as any outright discussion of prejudice or discrimination.

Committee initiatives have especially led to conflict with parish leaders who subscribe to an expertise model of leadership in which one has to go through intense specialized courses and workshops in a narrowly defined area before getting access to the decision-making structure—an epistemology dating back to Descartes. Instead, our committee proceeds on a basis drawn from inculturation studies, phenomenology, and Aristotelian practical reason, that 1) there is not just “one best way” of doing things, 2) most everyone has natural inclinations and worldly experiences—albeit different ones—that prepare them for leadership roles, and 3) formal training merely cultivates and hones these capacities.<sup>32</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

As much as the committee's activity is still “in process,” committee initiatives have born fruit: for instance, the present parish council is divided evenly between European- and Latino-Americans. Still, the multicultural relations committee has “its mountains to climb”: at least half of our Vietnamese community have agreed to build a separate church. Judith, a member of the committee since its inception, offers that committee's successes, as little as they may seem, eventually outweigh the setbacks:

As an African-American female, I have been able to appreciate both the disappointments and the accomplishments the committee has encountered. The disappointments have really been nothing new—I've faced them before in my own struggles for recognition and equality. The accomplishments, though many of them small, have seemed like large successes . . . more Latino and Asian representation is

present on the parish council, more dialogue among key members in the different communities has occurred, the MRC has been sought out by some of the Anglo [European-American] groups to assist them in their inclusion of the other groups. . . . This has not been an easy ride, I'll be the first to say so. It has been, however, a lesson of individual and communal growth that I hope will continue in the years to come.

Seeking "unity in diversity", is neither a "live and let live" tolerance, nor is it an idealistic convergence of cultures in the manner of Esperanto. One cannot bring about harmony overnight between diverse cultures because the values and perspectives which shape the members of these cultures have been cultivated over generations. In turn, multicultural interchange creates new cultural combinations which defy any sort of tranquil, monistic unity. We will never achieve complete understanding nor are we fated to complete misunderstanding.

The multicultural relations committee at St. Jerome's in Houston has sought to enrich the well-being of the parish and the lives of its members by treating the principal cultures of the parish not as "possessions" which isolate one from "the other," but as "gifts" realized in mutual interchange. Arturo concludes:

*El reto es continuar con esta tarea y tal vez, algún día no muy lejano todos los Catolicos y los de otras religiones estaremos unidos sin tratar de demostrar quien es mejor o quien tiene mas poder, como Martin Luther King tuvo un sueño, este también es un sueño, difícil, pero posible. [The challenge is to continue this task and some time in the not so distant future all Catholics and those of other religions will be united without trying to demonstrate who is better or who has more power; as Martin Luther King had a dream, this also is a dream, difficult, but possible.]*

In this spirit, the committee has provoked the parish to engage rather than begrudge its multicultural destiny.

## ENDNOTES

1. Rodney J. Hunter, "Five Questions and Polemical Suggestions For the Future of Pastoral Theology," Journal of Pastoral Theology 5 (1995): 9.
2. Allen Figueroa Deck, The Second Wave (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 62.
3. All translations have been made by Mary Jane De La Rosa Burke and myself in consultation with Arturo.
4. Latino and Latino-American are umbrella terms for all persons whose ancestry can be traced to the countries of Latin America. European-, African-, or Asian-Americans are similar terms for persons whose ancestry can be traced to those continents. Mexican refers to persons born in Mexico whereas Mexican-American refers to those of Mexican ancestry born in the United States.
5. Homer L. Jernigan, "Teaching Pastoral Theology From A Global Perspective," Journal of Pastoral Theology 5 (1995): 95.
6. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, Interview by Bill Moyers, A World of Ideas: Conversations with Thoughtful Men and Women About American Life Today and Ideas Shaping Our Future, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 159.
7. Sources from anthropology, phenomenology, and pragmatism which I draw upon to articulate a substantive pluralism include John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1954); Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982); Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973); G. B. Madison, Understanding: A Phenomenological-Pragmatic Analysis (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); G. B. Madison, The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "From Mauss to Claude Levi-Strauss," in Signs, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 114-25; and Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Culture," in History and Truth, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 271-84.
8. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 182-183.

9. John Francis Burke, "A Substantive Pluralism: Cultivating Community Through Multicultural Relations," Texas Journal of Political Studies 16 (Fall/Winter 1993/94): 62-76.
10. Michael J. Perry, Love and Power: The Role of Religion and Morality in American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For resources within another religious tradition for articulating a substantive pluralism see my article, "Comenius and Multicultural Relations," The Moravian 23 (September 1992): 18-19.
11. Aaron Knight, "A Critical Reaction to 'Substantive Pluralism' by John Francis Burke," Texas Journal of Political Studies 17 (Fall/Winter 1994/95): 70-73.
12. John Francis Burke, "Response to 'A Critical Reaction' by Aaron Knight," Texas Journal of Political Studies 17 (Fall/Winter 1994/95): 74-75.
13. Burke 1994/95, 75-77.
14. Charles Taylor, Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition", Amy Gutmann, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1994), 40.
15. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 16-17.
16. Taylor 1994, 43.
17. Jacques Maritain, Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom, trans. Joseph Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968); Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason, trans. Pierre Brodin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 180-81; Jacques Maritain, Man and the State (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 108-14; John Courtney Murray, S.J., We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), x; Gaudium et Spes (1965) and Octogesima Adveniens (1971) in Joseph Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching Since Pope John (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975); Andrew Greeley, The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990); Virgil Elizondo, The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988); and Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990). Also see my article, "Cultivating Community Through Diversity: An Inductive, Hermeneutical Approach to Pluralism in Catholic Social Thought," Journal For Peace and Justice Studies 5 (Spring 1993) 15-30.

18. Greeley 1990, 47 and 298-99.
19. Octogesima Adveniens, #4 in Gremillion, 1976.
20. Octogesima Adveniens, #25 in Gremillion, 1976.
21. Cultural Pluralism in the United States, (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1980), #22. Similar documents include Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1979), The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment: A Pastoral Letter on Hispanic Ministry (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1983), and The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society (Vatican City: Pontifical Commission "Justitia et Pax", 1988).
22. Many Members, One Body: A Pastoral Letter on the Cultural and Ethnic Diversity of the Church of Galveston-Houston (Houston: Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 1994), #26.
23. Elizondo 1988, 94. Elizondo's use of *mestizaje* has its critics: Robert Maldonado reminds us that *mestizaje* remains "the product of conqueror and conquered." Maldonado, "¿La Conquista? Latin American (*Mestizaje*) Reflections on the Biblical Conquest," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 2 (May 1995): 25.
24. Many Members, One Body, #26.
25. Arturo adds that those choosing this second course will be criticized but that it will be to their credit: *Esta posición muchas veces como consecuencia lleva que esta persona sea criticada, pero eso no nos debe importar porque cuando los demás hablan bien o mal de ti, quiere decir que estás haciendo algo, si nadie habla ni dice nada de ti, entonces es que no estás haciendo nada.* [This position many times as a consequence leads to this person being criticized, but this should not matter because when others speak well or ill of you, this means that you are doing something, if no one talks or says anything about you, then it is that you are doing nothing.]
26. Put powerfully by a Houston Catholic Latina: "A fully respected variety in unity" must look upon cultural diversity "not as a burden to be borne . . . but . . . [as] a mystery to be acknowledged and accepted." "Ethnicity & Race," in Call to Action: An Agenda for the Catholic Community (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), 42.

27. At present, the number of African-Americans and non-Vietnamese Asian-Americans in the parish is insufficient to warrant liturgies in their own culture or language. Judith, a member of the committee, clarifies the situation further: "My vision as a Black female on the MRC is one of unity within diversity. Right now, our focus is primarily on the Latino and Vietnamese populations, since these two groups are the largest organized ethnic minorities in the parish. There is a strong but growing African-American community and each year we have sponsored an event for Black History Month. Some Negro Spirituals have also been included in some of our liturgical celebrations. As this African-American community grows at St. Jerome, the MRC will increase its focus on this community."
28. "Small faith communities: Theology meets life," Call to Action News 14 (December 1992): 7.
29. See Gadamer's account of "prejudices." Gadamer 1982: 235-74.
30. Within developmental psychology, Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) is a pivotal work regarding what I am terming a holistic perspective.
31. Virgil Elizondo, Christianity and Culture: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Ministry for the Bicultural Community (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1983), 170.
32. The phrase "one best way" comes from Frederick Taylor's notion of scientific management, a positivist organization theory if there ever was one. See Robert Denhardt, Public Administration: An Action Approach (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 306-311.

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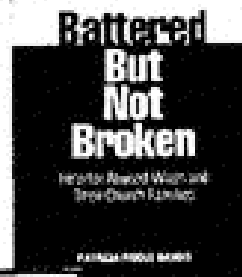
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