

Book Reviews

- Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*, Orbis Books, 2007, ISBN 9781570756962.

First published in April 2007, this book has already received several reviews. This one is hinged on the ecumenical perspective, which the author hardly touches. *Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* is an excellent exploration of the issues of poverty and globalization and one drawn from the vision of Catholic social teaching and a life-sustaining spiritual praxis. It is an excellent contribution to the critique of globalization, which is a phenomenon driven by human greed for power and wealth. Groody explores the signs of alternatives to globalization that begin with the human heart in which soul and the spirit reside. "Correcting the disorders in society challenges us first to understand the terrain of the heart," the author asserts. He continues, "Correcting today's abuses requires more than 'market logic' if we are to overcome the economic polarities that negatively affect the global village". The world, according to Groody, is crying out for more moral and spiritual wisdom to help us navigate the path to peace. He continues to weave this theme beautifully in his book at a time when the world has entered a turbulent era caused partly by Wall Street greed, which has resulted in a global food crisis and a financial storm.

The author is a Holy Cross priest and assistant professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, where he directs the Centre for Latino Spirituality and Culture. He was raised in the suburbs of the northeast United States, grew up in a household of corporate America and worked for one of the largest corporations in the world. Groody says, "I am a citizen of empire." Because of his history, he sees himself as unqualified to write about global inequities but he encourages others to move beyond guilt and seek different ways of living and being in this world. He has lived with immigrants, orphans and the homeless, all of

whom increased his insights. He has consulted sources outside the Roman Catholic Church, though he missed the wealth of work the World Council of Churches has done on globalization.

The author has written several other books but the focus of this one is an exploration of how Christian theological and spiritual reflection, rooted in the reality of poverty and dialogue with other religious traditions and academic disciplines, can help us understand better and respond to the challenge of justice and the call to build a more humane global village. He describes the kind of village we live in as one of extreme inequality. "The richest person in this village of, let us say, 100 people has as much as the poorest 57 taken together". He narrates the inequality manifested in access to food, water, health, sanitation, education and housing. The statistics provided are shocking. To demonstrate the reasons for this polarization of civilization, Groody examines the theoretical foundations of the current global economic system.

He points out that the root cause of global injustice is anchored in a fundamental theological and anthropological error, referred to as "money-theism". This is expressed as the worship of gods of the market place, often practiced through the rituals of the market and liturgies of global capitalism. The author underlines the need to reverse the system and to do so by reflecting on what it means to be human before God. "Money-theists" also must remember that to be human means that one is made in the image of God and salvation is not to be thought of exclusively in terms of material and economic progress. Groody calls us to convert ourselves from believing in "money-theism" to monotheism.

The first of nine chapters outlines the planet as a gift of God given to humanity but now facing challenges. The second chapter has details of core narratives of the Bible: the Empire, the poor, Yahweh, idolatry, the gospel. The voices of the early church against idolatry and excessive wealth follow in chapter three. Readers are

introduced to "A God of Life", as seen from Catholic social teaching, in chapter four. Chapter five touches on basic social teachings from interreligious perspectives, such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Bahai faith, non-Judeo-Christian and African Indigenous religions, in order to demonstrate that social justice is a concept not limited to Christianity. Chapter 6 outlines the icons and models of people who lived their lives for justice. Chapter 7 highlights God as seen from the perspectives of people in poverty. This is a very good chapter to read.

Chapter eight introduces readers to our worship life and the nature of the liturgy, which embraces God's creation and calls us to live in right relationships with God, ourselves and the Earth. Sacraments are therefore linked to social teaching.

The moral and spiritual theme is well summarized in the final chapter with the title "Spirituality and Transformation" and inspires us to act and promote justice in the world through solidarity, prayers, etc.

Groody's book triggers hope for the future. It is written with questions for reflection, analysis and action, which should be addressed at all levels of our churches and institutions. The book is highly recommended for students of transformative mission, ecumenism in the 21st century and those who are part of the AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth) process of the World Council of Churches.

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