

FROM THE HEART OF OUR PEOPLE

Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology

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*Dime con quién andas
y te diré quién eres*

(Tell me with whom you walk,
and I will tell you who you are)

We Walk-with Our Lady of Charity



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The chapter title, an oft-cited aphorism among U.S. Hispanics, expresses the importance of relationships in constituting who one is. Aphorisms are wisdom phrases "frequently used in daily life to explain circumstances, to communicate meaning, to teach values and expected behavior, and in general to share among the members of a community the wisdom of living learned by many generations."¹ While such aphorisms are not the exclusive creation of any community, their uniqueness lies in their ability to reflect and transmit specific communal convictions concerning the nature of persons. Because they emerge within particular linguistic and cultural contexts, they are often valuable sources for gaining communal self-understanding.²

The aphorism *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* affirms that particular relationships (not simply *relationship* in the abstract) constitute persons, and that the specific persons with whom we relate mediate self-understanding.³ The active sense of the expression *andar-con* (to walk-with) suggests an understanding of what is human, defined not so much as static

presence but, rather, as a dynamic being-with others.⁴ Moreover, since "walking-with" others presupposes an embodied anthropology,⁵ we accompany persons within spatial and cultural landscapes. Consequently, implicit in this aphorism is not only "who" mediates self-understanding, but also "where" and "how" such mediation occurs. The wisdom of this aphorism will guide the theological reflections of this essay.

Were we to consider theologically, *from the heart of our people*, particular persons who reveal this anthropology, we would have to recognize (beyond the crucified Christ⁶ and specific saints that accompany U.S. Hispanics⁷) the "Marys" of U.S. Hispanic popular Catholicism.⁸ As Orlando Espín notes, "Under different names, in different locations, and with different external appearance, the veneration of Mary is so pervasive in Hispanic popular religion and daily life that it would be practically impossible to understand U.S. Hispanic cultures without the Marian symbol."⁹ Mary, Espín goes on to emphasize, says more about the persons she accompanies than about the New Testament figure identified as the mother of Jesus. In her accompaniment of U.S. Hispanic communities, I will argue, Mary provides a central locus from which to construct U.S. Hispanic theological anthropologies.

Upon close examination of any U.S. Hispanic popular devotion to Mary (for instance, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or Our Lady of Charity, or Our Lady of Monserrat),¹⁰ one realizes how each of these devotions reveals not only a specific community of persons (i.e., Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Puerto Ricans, etc.), but also the distinctive cultural nature of her accompaniment. In other words, Mary walks-with persons who have been culturally marginalized. As she looks at, welcomes, and assumes the cultural face of those who have been rejected, forgotten, and oppressed, they are welcomed, remembered, and resurrected.

The present essay will highlight the story of Our Lady of Charity. This story, as all other Marian stories, emerges from and reflects local communal experiences.¹¹ Building upon U.S. Hispanic precedents, we understand the story of Our Lady of Charity as a popular faith expression. Its widespread appeal among Cubans and Cuban-Americans does not necessarily make this story popular. Rather, the popular element of this story derives from its association with communities who have been or continue to be marginalized.¹²

Retrieving a popular story as a source for theological reflection may not be universally accepted. To associate any kind of normativity, let alone to attribute theological wisdom, to a popular faith expression has been generally uncommon for theologians, especially after changes brought about in post-Tridentine Christianity.¹³ Indeed, "for a long time popular religion was by and large denigrated by theologians as a way of expressing faith that needed to be overcome sooner or later by a more sophisticated understanding of the gospel."¹⁴ Notwithstanding this trend, some

of the most respected theological voices of our times have recognized popular religion as essential for Christian theological reflection. For instance, the late Karl Rahner notes:

If the Church, despite its institutional character and hierarchical organization, is the Church of the "People of God," a pilgrim Church, in which everyone not only receives but also gives and serves, is "popular religion" then not a *constitutive moment of this Church of the one and entire people of God, whose faith is the point of reference for theology and the real object of its reflection?* We would then still have to determine within this one Church as the People of God the precise relation, one to another, of the magisterium, official church doctrine, the life of faith, popular religion, and so on. But it would be impossible to deny that popular religion has a fundamental importance for theology (and not just the other way round).¹⁵

Recognizing the importance of popular religion as an indispensable source in theological reflection and as a constitutive moment in the life of U.S. Hispanic communities, this essay explores the story of Our Lady of Charity as a locus in theological anthropology.

The story of Our Lady of Charity, like other U.S. Hispanic Marian stories, has been primarily transmitted by and as an oral tradition.¹⁶ A comprehensive theological study would require listening to and documenting the varying voices that make up and embody this tradition.¹⁷ Such a task lies beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, we will highlight the recently discovered testimony of Juan Moreno as a key theological source within the oral tradition.¹⁸

This *locus theologicus* makes sense for four reasons. First, Moreno was an African slave who in storylike form recalled how he, along with two Amerindians,¹⁹ found the statue of Our Lady of Charity and witnessed thereafter some of the key events that constitute the tradition.²⁰ Second, as a story of someone who could not read or write,²¹ his testimony reflects the oral basis of this tradition. Third, as a representative of an enslaved community he witnesses the popular nature of this devotion. Indeed, the devotion is popular because it emerged from and flourished within the heart of a marginalized copper-mining community.²² And fourth, Moreno's story is consistent with the Christian oral testimony that has kept alive the memory of Our Lady of Charity.²³

In what follows, we will first briefly examine the anthropological nature of stories and then summarize Moreno's account of Our Lady of Charity. Second, we will discuss how this story reflects a Christian understanding of what it means to be human: to be a human person in the image of God means to be relational as God is relational.²⁴ To image how God is relational is to walk preferentially with marginalized persons within their

specific sociocultural landscape. Similar to Jesus' accompaniment of the marginalized, the poor, the suffering and the oppressed, Our Lady of Charity walks-with enslaved Amerindian and African slaves in their struggle to overcome sociocultural marginalization. Finally, we will discuss how this story speaks to the reality of Latinos/as in the United States today.

DIME LO QUE CUENTAS Y TE DIRÉ QUIÉN ERES
(Tell me your stories, and I will tell you who you are)
STORIES GIVE RISE TO HUMAN IDENTITY

Our culture is a culture of stories. We live our stories.²⁵ Generally speaking, stories give rise to human identity. They suggest how persons act and are acted upon in the world. They describe relationships that influence and partly determine who persons become. And they offer Latino/a communities an alternative to modern and postmodern distortions of the human person.²⁶ Stories resist the temptation to abstract persons from their social location because "neither disembodied minds nor mindless bodies can appear in stories. There the self is given whole, as an activity in time."²⁷ Stories often recall a "dangerous memory," foster communal solidarity, and evoke human liberation.²⁸ Stories, argues contemporary theologian Terrence Tilley, come in different genres: myths, parables, and actions.²⁹

Myths are stories that create worldviews. They foster traditions that address the origins of a people. Myths often legitimize established authorities, symbol systems, and the like, and attempt to give persons within a particular social structure a sense of belonging. Conversely, parables are stories that upset and overturn the worldviews created by myths. Parables work within a mythic worldview to subvert such a view. Finally, actions refer to stories that simply explore human experiences in the world. Actions describe either fictionally or factually specific world events.

The story of Juan Moreno is primarily an action that describes the relationship between the slaves living and working in the easternmost province of Cuba in the seventeenth century and a religious object—the statue of Our Lady of Charity.³⁰ This statue mediates, in a sacramental fashion, for this community what it means to be human. The miracles associated with Our Lady of Charity function parabolically to upset expected patterns of relationships.³¹ Who, where, and how she accompanies the community, and consequently, who and what she saves, reveal the parabolic nature of these sacramental relationships. Her miracles challenge, from the perspective of the marginalized, the "normative" ways of conceiving answers to the question of what it means to be human.

We will now proceed to a summary of Moreno's story of Our Lady of Charity and some theological reflections on the nature of her accompaniment.

THE STORY OF JUAN MORENO

Juan Moreno recounts how, as a ten-year-old child, he went along with Rodrigo de Hoyos and Juan de Hoyos (two Amerindian brothers) in search of salt. They spent some time on a cay located in the middle of the Bay of Nipe (in the northeastern part of Cuba), waiting for good weather before heading out on their mission. With the arrival of calm waters, they began to row, and then they noticed a floating object. Upon close examination, they realized that it was a statue, recognized by the Amerindian brothers to be that of the Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms. They were surprised to discover that her clothes were not wet.³²

Rodrigo de Hoyos read the following inscription on the base of the statue: *Yo soy la Virgen de la Caridad* (I am the Virgin of Charity). They brought the image into their boat, took it ashore, and notified the appropriate Spanish authorities of their find. While they waited for the news of this event to reach Sánchez de Moya, the administrator of the local copper mines,³³ the statue of Our Lady of Charity was placed on an altar within the living quarters of their settlement.³⁴ Rodrigo was charged with the responsibility of always keeping her lamp lit.

Numerous miracles began to be associated with the *Virgen de la Caridad*. For instance, Moreno notes in his testimony how Rodrigo de Hoyos and Matías Olivera, a local lay hermit, witnessed on various occasions the disappearance and reappearance of the statue from her shrine. Each time she returned wearing wet clothes.³⁵ Moreno also recalls how various persons who worked the mines would hear Olivera addressing the following questions to Our Lady of Charity: "Where do you come from, Lady? Why do you leave me alone? Why do you dirty your clothes if you know that you do not have any others, nor any money to buy some more? How is it that you bring them wet? From where do you come wet?"³⁶

Moreno relates that the site for a shrine to Our Lady of Charity was determined by miraculous lights seen on top of a copper hill, and that Olivera was saved by bystanders when he fell into a mine shaft located near that same hill.³⁷ According to the Moreno testimony, Matías Olivera was heard to say that on one occasion the oil for the lamp of Our Lady of Charity was not consumed for two consecutive days until supplies of lard arrived.³⁸ Finally, Moreno recalls that upon prayerfully processing with the statue of Our Lady of Charity, her miraculous intervention ended a severe drought.³⁹

DIME CON QUIÉN, DÓNDE Y CÓMO ANDAS Y TE DIRÉ QUIÉN ERES
(Tell me with whom, where, and how you walk, and I will tell you who you are)
OUR LADY OF CHARITY
AND THE NATURE OF HER ACCOMPANIMENT

Moreno's story highlights sacramental interactions between the various members of this copper-mining community and the statue of Our Lady of Charity. These interactions reveal not only who the *Virgen de la Caridad* accompanies, but also where and how she accompanies these members. While these interactions suggest affirming relationships—persons care for her, abide with her, converse with her, and even disagree with some of her actions (for example, her unexplained disappearances)—the story also witnesses less affirming relationships. The vanquishment of the members of this copper-mining community and the pillaging of the land they abide in reveal the kind of oppressive relationships challenged by the *Virgen de la Caridad*. The following five points explore the preferential nature of her accompaniment.

Our Lady of Charity walks preferentially with marginalized persons who struggle to survive.

The most obvious example comes from her accompaniment of Juan Moreno, Rodrigo de Hoyos, and Juan de Hoyos. Those who first encounter this image are members of an enslaved copper-mining community. Similar to Jesus, who begins his public ministry among the poor and outcast (Lk 4:16-19), Our Lady of Charity begins her public ministry, if you will, among "representatives of Cuba's most exploited and poor classes: two Indians and a black slave, whom she fills with the joy of her presence."⁴⁰

She also accompanies others in the community who struggle to survive. Recall for instance, how Matías Olivera was miraculously saved after falling into a mine shaft. Although Moreno describes him as a big man, he is able to hold onto a branch of a maguey tree. From there, he invokes the *Virgen de la Caridad* and calls for assistance. She answers his prayer. The branch does not collapse, and those nearby rescue him by using ropes.

There is nothing unique in the miraculous intervention of Mary to save persons. For instance, Our Lady of Charity in Castile, Spain—a Marian image some have associated with the Cuban *Virgen de la Caridad*—was also known for its numerous cures and miraculous interventions.⁴¹ What is significant is the parabolic nature and social location of this relationship.

For example, Olivera's "salvation" comes as a result of his accompanying a community. In all likelihood Olivera was a Spanish religious, charged with the care and evangelization of the African slaves at this copper-min-

ing community.⁴² His presence among (his "being-with") the marginalized mine workers saved him.⁴³ An unexpected parable-like miracle occurred: the branch that held a strong body (Olivera's) did not collapse, and the community of weak bodies (the mining slaves)—who struggle to survive—bestow life upon a representative of the very community that exercises enslaving power over them. In other words, in this story the lives of persons who marginalize others are related intrinsically to the lives of those who are marginalized. The story invites the reader to realize that oppressive relationships affect all persons within a given community. Those who marginalize are also deprived of their humanity. Indeed, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed:

whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.⁴⁴

Our Lady of Charity walks with persons in ways that recall their marginalized cultural identity.

Religious expressions reveal cultural identity and vice versa.⁴⁵ The miracle associated with how the statue of the *Virgen de la Caridad* was found at sea wearing dry clothing, her various reappearances on land while wearing wet clothes, and the lights seen on top of the copper hill may suggest how her presence could have evoked the memory of the suppressed Taíno culture.⁴⁶ The dryness of the statue at sea as well as its wetness on land resonate well with Taíno cosmology. As some have noted, characteristic of Taíno metaphysics is the dual nature of all reality and the ability of "inanimate objects to move and glow."⁴⁷

Moreover, given the materials from which the statue of Our Lady of Charity is made, and her association with water, she probably mediated for Juan de Hoyos, Rodrigo de Hoyos, and the other remaining Taínos of this copper-mining community the cultural memory of their *zemí*, Atabex.⁴⁸ Similar to Atabex, who was the mother of Yúcahu (the Lord of the all-important cassava plant), Our Lady of Charity is, for Christians, the mother of a Son who is confessed to be Lord of all creation. Again in a way similar to Atabex, Taíno goddess of the waters, the *Virgen de la Caridad* has always been associated with waters.⁴⁹

The ability of religious objects to mediate cultural meaning has been amply explored. As William Christian has argued persuasively, images communicate cultural values because,

as symbols for social identities, as measures of belonging, as cultural boundary markers, they have a function that is primeval. They are

virtually totem objects, embodying in some way the essence of the humanity of their devotees.⁵⁰

Seen from a theological perspective, Our Lady of Charity invokes a thoroughly "incarnational" understanding of what is human. Were we to agree that in Jesus Christ, God embodies a specific marginalized cultural reality, namely, that of a Galilean Jew,⁵¹ we could perhaps embrace the symbolic accompaniment of Our Lady of Charity as an ongoing expression of how the Christian God identifies with marginalized persons and assumes their marginalized cultural reality.

Seen from a "New World" Christian perspective, what the *Virgen de la Caridad* accomplishes is in continuity with "Old World" Christian traditions. There is nothing new about bridging cultural and religious traditions and birthing forth persons who live, as we could colloquially say, *con un pie de cada lado* (with a foot on each side). At the heart of the Christian story is a theology that affirms how God, in Jesus Christ, bridges two realities—what is human and what is divine—without in any way undermining either of these. At the heart of Our Lady of Charity's story is an anthropology that affirms how persons can bridge cultural worlds so as not to subordinate or sacrifice an essential part of their humanity. In the *Virgen de la Caridad*, what is Spanish does not subordinate what is Taíno (or what is African).⁵² Rather, in her person cultural and religious expressions accompany one another.

Our Lady of Charity walks in a marginalized landscape.

She walks in places where the marginalized live and work—namely, the copper-mining settlement's living quarters and the hill above the mines. Moreover, her accompaniment of this community, in both the private and the public places (the living quarters and the mines), suggests the direct relationship that exists between these two aspects of a person's life. Persons marginalized privately also generally experience public marginalization, and vice versa.⁵³

The relationship between the natural landscape and the persons who inhabited and worked that land is also striking. The pillaged land that had supplied the raw materials to make the Spanish artillery became the place where Our Lady of Charity dwelled. The miracle of the lights became the sign that indicated to this copper-mining community where she would reside. They placed her on a hill on top of the mine, directly above the place where the slaves worked.⁵⁴ While it is commonly assumed that the statue of the *Virgen de la Caridad* was immediately placed in the main Spanish shrine of Cobre Hill (the hill of the copper mines),⁵⁵ some recent scholarship suggests that the statue may have been placed "in the chapel

of the hospital for slaves, which was adjacent to the shrine in El Cobre."⁵⁶ This is no minor detail. Our Lady of Charity's first shrine implies a preferential relationship consistent with those who first encountered her. She is to be found in the place where persons struggle to survive.

This preferential relationship between the *Virgen de la Caridad* and the marginalized land can be further exemplified in the miracle that ends the drought (according to Moreno's testimony). Matias Olivera, the lay hermit, literally walks with Our Lady of Charity, prayerfully expecting that life-sustaining waters will overcome a severe drought. Olivera takes the statue out in procession, and Moreno tells us that in this very act that which had been made lifeless (the exploited land) returned to new life ("and in an instant the river grew and the drought ceased").⁵⁷

The barrenness of the river and of the land suggested the marginalization of all creatures, while their resurrection implied a new way of relating for all creatures that lived in this copper-mining community. The new life and power of nature ("and the rain began to come down so heavy")⁵⁸ mirrored the new life and empowerment offered by Our Lady of Charity to the copper-mining community. The copper miners "dwelled-in" the landscape, and the landscape "dwelled-in" them. This connection between the land and its people should not surprise us.⁵⁹ As Sallie McFague has noted:

The link between justice and ecological issues becomes especially evident in light of the dualistic, hierarchical mode of Western thought in which a superior and an inferior are correlated: male-female, white people-people of color, heterosexual-homosexual, able bodies-physically challenged, culture-nature, mind-body, human-nonhuman. These correlated terms—most often normatively ranked—reveal clearly that domination and destruction of the natural world is inexorably linked with the domination and oppression of the poor, people of color, and all others that fall on the "inferior" side of the correlation. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the ancient and deep identification of women and nature, an identification so profound that it touches the very marrow of our being: our birth from the bodies of our mothers and our nourishment from the body of the earth.⁶⁰

Our Lady of Charity walks in solidarity with marginalized persons.

Charity as solidarity among the oppressed is the primary meaning of this narrative.⁶¹ God's solidarity with this copper-mining community manifests itself through the expression of a Marian symbol that empowers this community to recall a dangerous memory. "To reduce someone to the status of a non-person, to keep someone quietly in the situation of bond-

age, a dominating power must take away the memory of an individual's personal history, ancestors, and traditions."⁴² As we have seen, however, Our Lady of Charity saves, frees, and evokes the traditions of persons within the community. The landscape and its people reveal her solidarity.

The names of Juan Moreno, Rodrigo de Hoyos, and Juan de Hoyos reveal their religious and social marginalization. Names recall relational, cultural, religious, and geographical origins. Names often reveal social and political status. The names of Juan Moreno, Rodrigo de Hoyos, and Juan de Hoyos reveal not only their post-baptismal Christian identity, but also their subordinate status. Their names suggest cultural and religious marginalization, since names often reveal the power of one person over another.⁴³ While their baptism signified that they were considered human (as opposed to being "a little less than human"), to Spanish authorities they were still seen as natural children with only a mind *in potentia*.⁴⁴ In other words, they were subordinate creatures, subject to the "rational" authority of figures such as Sánchez de Moya, the Spanish administrator of the copper mines.

Our Lady of Charity's accompaniment of this marginalized copper-mining community suggests an embodied anthropology.

As mentioned in the beginning of this essay, "walking-with" or "being-with" others presupposes an embodied relationship. The members of the copper-mining community relate sacramentally to Our Lady of Charity as an embodied person. They relate to her in ways that implicitly or explicitly acknowledge one or more of the five senses. For instance, Juan Moreno, Juan de Hoyos, and Rodrigo de Hoyos encounter the *Virgen de la Caridad* while searching for salt. Salt was used both as a flavoring substance and as a food preservative. Moreover, upon seeing her, they carried her into the boat. Recall too, how Matías Olivera questioned Our Lady of Charity, expecting to hear answers regarding her unusual disappearances. Finally, her lamp oil, or more precisely her lard (*manteca*), was said to be "a remedy for all illnesses."⁴⁵ Oil used as a remedy suggested the sacramental practice of anointing vanquished bodies—a practice that is both healing and fragrant.

In summary, as a woman, the *Virgen de la Caridad* favors and assumes the reality of the poor and marginalized. She reveals their identity as much as they reveal hers. She walked-with Juan Moreno, Juan de Hoyos, and Rodrigo de Hoyos, names that may have evoked the memory of other marginalized persons in the Christian tradition.⁴⁶ In so doing, Our Lady of Charity imaged who God is and called human persons to do the same. She was a symbol of God's ongoing solidarity with persons who struggled

to overcome various sociocultural forms of marginalization. In her solidarity, she witnessed what it meant to be created in the image of God. Being like God means walking-with others, especially and preferentially the socioculturally marginalized persons as they struggle to survive.

DIME CON QUIÉN ANDAS Y TE DIRÉ QUIÉN ERES SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY REALITY OF U.S. HISPANICS

As stories are told again and again, they have the potential to be reinterpreted and appropriated so as to influence the lives of many peoples. This is precisely why the gospel stories never cease to challenge, subvert, and reenvision patterns of relationships. The story of Our Lady of Charity can speak to contemporary U.S. Hispanic reality. To walk-with the *Virgen de la Caridad* and with those who today are like the marginalized of the copper-mining community, requires us to be-with the culturally marginalized of our contemporary U.S. landscape and to walk in the places where they abide.⁴⁷

The story of Our Lady of Charity strikes a chord primarily among Cuban-Americans. As Thomas Tweed's recent study has pointed out, Cuban-Americans continue to live this story, especially within the physical landscape of the shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami.⁴⁸ One can see why faith-filled Cubans find religious significance in the ongoing experience of exiles saved at open sea by ropes thrown to their rafts. Associated with water and the salvation of persons, the *Virgen de la Caridad* serves as a symbol of hope for such exiles who, like Matías Olivera, find themselves crying out for help as they face life-threatening experiences.

Yet, it is precisely the association of Our Lady of Charity with exiles that makes this Marian devotion capable of speaking to the reality of other U.S. Hispanics. U.S. Hispanic "exiles" come to this land not only on rafts that cross the Florida Straits but also on rafts that cross the Rio Grande. Indeed, the *Virgen de la Caridad* can be fittingly characterized as Our Lady of the Exile. Exile is our most basic shared U.S. Hispanic experience.

Some of us came to the U.S. fleeing various oppressive sociocultural conditions in our native lands, while others were "exiled" from their own lands and cultural heritage as a result of U.S. expansionist policies.⁴⁹ For most of us, exile has come to be identified more and more with the reality of sociocultural marginalization. The landscape where we live and the persons who rule it have not always been receptive to our cultural identity and our religious traditions.

There are three signposts that highlight this marginalization: (1) the experience of "naming" U.S. Hispanics, (2) the reception of U.S. Hispanic

religious expressions within ecclesial and educational institutions, and (3) the places where U.S. Latinos/as live and work.

As we have seen, naming implies power over an "other." In ways that parallel Juan Moreno, Juan de Hoyos, and Rodrigo de Hoyos, U.S. Hispanics⁷⁰ have been subjected to name changes. Take, for instance, the label *Hispanic*, a name given to us by the U.S. Census Bureau. Most of us, however, prefer a name that relates us to our own or our family's country of origin (Cuban-American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and so on). While many of us have increasingly embraced umbrella terms such as Hispanic or Latino/a, we need to remember the cultural limitations of these labels. These terms can "melt" away human differences and thereby marginalize the specific cultural identity of our peoples.

Perhaps more than ever, mutual relationships, common interests, and recent issues within the U.S. landscape (immigration policies, affirmative action, and various educational propositions) have prompted us to recall shared linguistic, cultural, and religious Catholic roots, and to create common ways by which to name ourselves as a whole. Without in any way undermining the importance of the present as a community-building moment among Latinos/as in this country, it is equally important not to allow names—or those who exercise the power to name and describe us—to suppress our particular cultural heritage. A U.S. Latino/a with Cuban roots is not the same as a U.S. Latino/a with Mexican roots. The "melting pot" theory, in all of its manifestations, must be resisted. Put religiously, there are many similarities between Our Lady of Charity and Our Lady of Guadalupe, but each assumes, reveals, and preserves the cultural identity of persons situated in distinctive spatial and cultural locations.

The reception of U.S. Hispanic religious expressions within ecclesial and educational institutions also reflects cultural marginalization. I recall being in a Midwestern parish where an image to Our Lady of Guadalupe had been placed near the left side of the main altar. One Sunday, as my wife and I walked into church, we realized that the image had been removed from center stage and placed in a side chapel. A white carved statue of a European madonna had taken its place. While no harm was intended, we could not fail to speculate on the sacramental implications of this move. The implicit yet subtle message for Latinos/as in that parish was clear to us: European culture and religion is better than brown *mestizo* culture and religion. And, yes, sacramental actions do mirror communal experiences.

The story of Our Lady of Charity resists the temptation to subordinate one form of religious or cultural expression to another. The story challenges anthropological and religious marginalization. The *Virgen de la Caridad* accompanied members of a marginalized copper-mining community in ways that recalled and affirmed their cultural/religious identity.

Similarly, those who accompany U.S. Hispanics (that is, persons in ecclesial and educational positions of leadership) should do the same.

Since religious expressions and human identity are intertwined, marginalizing the former often implies human marginalization. The present marginalization of U.S. Hispanic religious experiences in places with significant numbers of Latinos/as, such as parishes and educational institutions, exemplifies the point. The failure of pastoral leaders, religious educators, and non-Latino/a theologians to incorporate these experiences into overall liturgical life, educational programs, and theological reflection mirrors the concrete marginalization of bodies within locations that often claim—rather uncritically—a "catholic" identity. In many of these places, Latinos/as are under-represented in occupational and leadership roles.

Finally, as we have seen exemplified in the story of Our Lady of Charity, what is of God does not discriminate among the various sectors of the profane. Indeed, what is of God is intrinsically related with the profane, especially with those places where marginalized persons live and work.⁷¹ In ways parallel to the copper-mining community of the *Caridad* story, marginalization characterizes the places where large numbers of U.S. Hispanics live and work. While the oft-heard accounts of sweat shops and migrant camps have brought this issue to the forefront, we need to be mindful of other less visible but equally oppressive experiences. Many instances of labor injustice, long hours of low-paying work, mandatory overtime in places with a surplus of documented or undocumented bodies, linguistic barriers, the presence of Latinos/as in urban areas often neglected and plagued with violence—these instances and too many others also exemplify Latino/a marginalization in the United States. Given these experiences the challenge that Our Lady of Charity presents is clear: to walk in solidarity with persons who live and work within such places, so as to mediate God's saving grace.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This essay provided an exploration in U.S. Latino/a theological anthropology. It has done so mindful of this volume's efforts to reflect methodologically and theologically the *heart of our people*. A number of other loci could have easily served our purpose. Given the present limitations, I chose a devotion that resonates well with my specific cultural background and ecclesial experience—the devotion to Our Lady of Charity. As the essay's argument and footnotes witness, however, this article attempted to remain faithful to some of the leading insights emerging in U.S. Hispanic theological anthropology.

La Virgen de la Caridad offers a praxis for imaging who God is. Her lamp oil can become, to paraphrase the testimony of Juan Moreno, a "remedy"

for social diseases that afflict marginalized persons in our time. And unlike those who walked the road of Emmaus with Jesus (who neither knew him nor the purpose of his accompaniment), we can accept the invitation to know whom and what she represents by walking-with persons within her landscape. By walking-with Our Lady of Charity we affirm and reveal the popular wisdom of the aphorism *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres*. And in so doing, we become more God-like, truly "catholic," because we lift the lowly, depose the mighty, and feed the hungry—thereby fulfilling the promises God made to all our ancestors now and forever (Lk 1:46-55).

Notes

¹ Sixto J. García and Orlando O. Espín, "Lilies of the Field: A Hispanic Theology of Providence and Human Responsibility," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 44 (1989), 76. See also J. A. Cruz Brache, *Cinco mil seiscientos refranes y frases de uso común entre los dominicanos* (Santo Domingo: Galaxia, 1978); José Sánchez-Boudy, *¡Guante sin grasa, no coge bola!: El refranero popular cubano* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1993); and Germán Díez Barrio, *Los refranes en la sabiduría popular* (Valladolid: Ed. Monte de Piedad, 1985).

² See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 12; and J. G. Healey, "Proverbs and Sayings—A Window into African Christian World View," *Service* 3 (1988), 1-35.

³ This proposed interpretation is more concerned with anthropology and less with morality. While undoubtedly every relationship has a moral dimension, the wisdom phrase simply affirms relationship as constitutive and revelatory of persons without prejudging the moral character of these relationships. See Virgilio Elizondo, *Mestizaje: The Dialectic of Cultural Birth and the Gospel* (San Antonio, Tex.: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1978), 348.

⁴ In this essay we will use the expressions "walking-with" and "being-with" interchangeably. While the former connotes more explicitly the dynamic understanding of "person" we propose here, the latter resonates well with the ontologies of "person" in the West. Note, however, that by using the expression "being-with" we do not mean a mere standing next to an "other." Rather, for us, "being-with" presupposes participating in, and sharing the condition of another person. For instance, when we say in Spanish "estoy contigo" (I am with you), we do not mean that we are merely standing next to someone. What we mean is that we stand *in solidarity with* another person, sharing his or her experiences to the degree humanly possible. Moreover, note too how in Spanish the verb *estar* ("to be"), as opposed to *ser* (also "to be"), connotes the dynamic nature of persons we propose here. For a philosophical discussion of *estar*, see Juan Carlos Scannone, "Un nuevo punto de partida en la filosofía latinoamericana," in *Stromata* 36 (1980), 35-41.

⁵ See Roberto S. Goizueta, *Camínemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 68.

⁶ See *ibid.*, 65-76.

⁷ See Alex García-Rivera, *St. Martín de Porres: The "Little Stories" and the Semiotics of Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), esp. 97-105.

⁸ As a result of cultural, racial, and religious relationships that have yielded various *mestizo* and *mulato* religious expressions, it would be incorrect to simply identify any "Mary" of U.S. Hispanic popular Catholicism with Mary, the mother of Jesus. For instance, as we will later see, Hispanic expressions of Mary (such as Our Lady of Charity) are loci of cross-cultural and religious expressions. But since the present essay is written from a Christian perspective, we will use the name Mary (or the adjective Marian) even though we remain keenly aware of the theological complexity of this use within U.S. Hispanic culture.

⁹ Orlando O. Espín, "The Vanquished, Faithful Solidarity and the Marian Symbol: A Hispanic Perspective on Providence," in *On Keeping Providence*, ed. B. Doherty and J. Coultas (Terre Haute, Ind.: St. Mary of the Woods College Press, 1991), 89.

¹⁰ For a brief description of U.S. Hispanic "Marys," see Stephen Holler, "The Origins of Marian Devotion in Latin American Cultures in the United States," *Marian Studies* 46 (1995), 108-27.

¹¹ On the communal sociohistorical grounding of Marian devotions, see Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹² For U.S. Hispanic understandings of the popular element in popular religion, see Orlando O. Espín, "Popular Religion as an Epistemology (of Suffering)," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 2:2 (1994), 65-66; Goizueta, *Camínemos con Jesús*, 21-22; and García-Rivera, *St. Martín de Porres*, 16-18. For an alternative view, see Robert E. Wright, "If It's Official, It Can't Be Popular? Reflections on Popular and Folk Religion," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 1:3 (1994), 47-67. For a Latin American perspective on this issue, see Cristián Parker, *Popular Religion and Modernization in Latin America: A Different Logic* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 35-38.

¹³ See Espín's work on medieval and pre-Tridentine Christianity. Among other things, Espín's work highlights the normative role of popular expressions of faith. Of special interest is his argument that as a result of Claude LeJay's distinction at the Council of Trent between *traditiones quae ad fidem pertinent* (traditions that pertain to faith) and the *traditiones ecclesiae* (traditions of the Church), post-Tridentine theology witnessed the "separation between received, unchanging doctrine (*Traditio*, now with a capital T) and other (equally received) reformable traditions (*traditiones*, now with lower-case t)." Thus, Espín continues, "revelation came to be viewed as 'doctrinal,' and the rest of Christian living (spirituality, worship, the ethical life of communities and individuals) became dangerously demoted to reformable traditions" (see Orlando O. Espín, "Popular Catholicism among Latinos," in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, ed. J. Dolan and A. Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 318).

¹⁴ Robert J. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 122.

¹⁵ Karl Rahner, "The Relation between Theology and Popular Religion," *Theological Investigations*, XXII (New York: Crossroad, 1974), 142. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ Written accounts are available, but such accounts are not the primary means through which this tradition has been communicated. For instance, see Onofre de Fonseca, *Historia de la aparición milagrosa de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre* (Santiago de Cuba: Impr. del Real Consulado de Santiago de Cuba, por Loreto Espinel, 1830); Ismael Testé, *Historia eclesíastica de Cuba* (Burgos: Editorial El Monte Carmelo, 1969), 3:346-412; Leví Marrero, *Los esclavos y la Virgen del Cobre. Dos*

siglos de lucha por la libertad de Cuba (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1980); Irene A. Wright, "Our Lady of Charity: Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre (Santiago de Cuba), Nuestra Señora de la Caridad de Illescas (Castilla, Spain)," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 5 (1922), 709-17; and, most recently, Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre: Símbolo de cubanía* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1995).

¹⁷ The recent ethnographic study by Thomas A. Tweed in relation to the impact of this tradition on Cuban-Americans, as well as the historical study of this tradition by Cuban historian Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, provide helpful signposts for undertaking this task. See T. A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Zúñiga, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*.

¹⁸ The testimony of Juan Moreno was discovered in 1973 by Cuban historian Leví Marrero in the Archives of the Indies, in Seville. See Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo 363. This document has been transcribed and printed in several places. Throughout this essay we will be using and referring to the complete transcription published in Mario Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad, Patrona de Cuba* (Miami: Instituto Pastoral del Sureste, 1981), 10-27.

¹⁹ See Glossary.

²⁰ According to Juan Moreno, the events took place around 1612. In the Spanish inquiry, Moreno says that he was (at the time of the inquiry) eighty-five years old, and that he was ten years old when the image of Our Lady of Charity was found. Subtracting 85 from 1687 (the year the Spanish inquiry took place) and adding 10 yields the year 1612. See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 23.

²¹ Moreno infers in the declaration that he could not read and explicitly states that he could not write. See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 23, 27.

²² See Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 22-23.

²³ We say "Christian" because there are various counter voices that have provided a different interpretation of this narrative from the perspective of Yoruban religion. For instance, see Raúl Cañizares, *Walking with the Night: The Afro-Cuban World of Santería* (Burlington, Vt.: Destiny Books, 1993), 65-66.

²⁴ See Catherine M. LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," *The Christian Century* 109 (1992), 681-82.

²⁵ Jeanette Rodríguez, *Stories We Live, Cuentos que vivimos: Hispanic Women's Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 7, 15.

²⁶ On the anthropological presuppositions of modernism and postmodernism see Roberto Goizueta's essay in this volume.

²⁷ See Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," in *Why Narrative: Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 85.

²⁸ See Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 184-237.

²⁹ For what follows, see Terrence W. Tilley, *Story Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), 18-54. Tilley now recognizes that sagas also usually function as myths (personal communication, 21 July 1997).

³⁰ For a brief history of this community, see Marrero, *Los esclavos y la Virgen del Cobre: Dos siglos de lucha por la libertad de Cuba*.

³¹ In many ways, Jesus' miracles can also be characterized as parabolic actions. Because they are often directed at persons considered to be "unclean," Jesus' miracles shatter common expectations and upset expected patterns of relationships. See Paul W. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-

Historical Study," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49:4 (1981), 567-85.

³² See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 23.

³³ In 1597 King Philip II of Spain charged Sánchez de Moya with the responsibility of administering the copper deposits in Cuba. He was given the official title of captain of artillery for Cuba. He administered the mines until 1620. See Wright, "Our Lady of Charity," 710; and J. J. Arrom, *Certidumbre de América: Estudios de Letras, Folklore y Cultura* (Madrid: Editorial Gredes, 1971), 202-3.

³⁴ Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 23-24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See *Encuentro nacional eclesial cubano: Documento final e instrucción pastoral de los obispos* (Havana: Publications of the Cuban Episcopal Conference, 1987), 44, my translation.

⁴¹ See William A. Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 84-87. On the relationship between the Cuban and Spanish devotions to Our Lady of Charity, see Wright, "Our Lady of Charity." See also Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 20-21.

⁴² In a document entitled "Declaration of Agustín Quiala," a sixty-year-old slave of the copper mines tells how black slaves who worked in the mines would hear the lay brother speak to the Virgin. Note how the close association of a religious brother with African slaves is in continuity with the Spanish royal edict of 1577, which gave specific evangelizing instructions to religious for the care and evangelization of African slaves. For Quiala's story, see Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 68.

⁴³ Note how Moreno's story explicitly confirms that it was copper miners who heard him question Our Lady of Charity. See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 26.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 72.

⁴⁵ For instance, Orlando Espín argues that there is no such thing as an "acultural Christianity." He further argues that the way "a people experientially perceive the love of God, and the way they respond to it, will always be cultural." See Orlando O. Espín, "Grace and Humanness," in *We Are a People!: Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992), 145.

⁴⁶ The Taínos were the Amerindians who inhabited most of Cuba. They were quickly exterminated as a result of the Spanish conquest. See Irving Rouse, *The Taínos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 1-25.

⁴⁷ For instance, see Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, "The Persistence of Religious Cosmopolitanism in an Alien World," in *Enigmatic Powers: Syncretism with African and Indigenous Peoples' Religions among Latinos*, ed. A. M. Stevens-Arroyo and A. I. Pérez (New York: CUNY Press/Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies, 1995), 130-31.

⁴⁸ The *zemís* were divinities as well as their representations in religious objects made of wood, stone, bone, shell, or pottery. See Rouse, *The Taínos*, 13.

⁴⁹ On the relationship between Atabex and Our Lady of Charity, see Salvador Larrúa Guedes, "La aparición de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre. Tres

hipótesis," *Palabra* 50 (1996), 6. Note too how Guedes mentions an incident, recorded by Cuban historian Ramírez, of a Cuban Taíno chief who attributed his victories to a Marian statue, and of how on one occasion the chief threw the statue into the sea for fear that his opponents would steal it. On the relationship between Atabex and Yúcahu, see Rouse, *The Taínos*, 13.

³⁰ William A. Christian, *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), 100.

³¹ On the Galilean identity of Jesus, see Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 49-66.

³² Note that while our arguments have been primarily concerned with Taíno culture, a similar process probably occurred with the early African slaves. Indeed, as later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Lucumí associations between Our Lady of Charity and the Yoruba *orisha* Ochún witness, Our Lady of Charity also walks-with Afro-Cubans in ways that assume their cultural roots. (The Lucumí are the Yoruba in Cuba.)

³³ On the anthropological relationship between public and private places, see Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 191-211.

³⁴ See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 26.

³⁵ *Cobre* means "copper" in Spanish.

³⁶ See Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 22.

³⁷ See Vizcaíno, *La Virgen de la Caridad*, 26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ See Jeanette Rodríguez's essay in this volume.

⁴⁰ Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 85.

⁴¹ For a discussion of charity as solidarity, see the work of Cuban-American ethicist Ada M. Isasi-Díaz, "Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the Twenty-First Century," in *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 87-88.

⁴² Elizabeth Johnson, "Reconstructing a Theology of Mary," in *Mary, Woman of Nazareth: Biblical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Doris Donnelly (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 71.

⁴³ For the biblical implications of "naming," see, for example, Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 99-105 and 133-35.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of these anthropological categories as they emerged in the Valladolid debate of 1550, see García-Rivera, *St. Martín de Porres*, 97-98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Take, for instance, the "beloved disciple" traditionally identified as John, who stood with Jesus at the climactic moment of his marginalization, and Juan Diego, the marginalized protagonist of the *Nican mopohua*. Note that in colonial Spanish texts "Rodrigo" was often confused for "Diego."

⁴⁷ For this insight I am indebted to Roberto Goizueta (see his *Caminemos con Jesús*, 191).

⁴⁸ See Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, esp. 99-133.

⁴⁹ See Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1990), 41-42.

⁵⁰ See Glossary.

⁵¹ See Karl Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," in *Theological Investigations, V* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 97-114. More specifically related to Our Lady of Charity, note Teok Carrasco's mural behind the altar at the shrine in

Miami. This mural weaves the ecclesial and national history of the Cuban people. At the center is an image of Our Lady of Charity surrounded by Cuban history's main ecclesial and political figures. As Carrasco observed in his description of this mural, "the Cuban community, *el pueblo cubano*, encounters its salvation in the arms of the Virgin of Charity" (see Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 107).