

Claire E. Wolfteich, ed. *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*. New York: Paulist Press, 2014. 386 pages. \$30.

While homiletics has long been a sub-discipline of practical theology in many theological institutions in the United States, the question of what practical theology is has not always been clear to many homileticians and pastors. Claire E. Wolfteich, a leading Catholic scholar in the field of practical theology, invites us to reflect on what we have been doing in a larger point of view: practice. In other words, though this book does not mention specifically about preaching, it provides its readers with a fruitful opportunity to ruminate on preaching as one of the Christian practices, allowing them to navigate many possible future trajectories of homiletics.

What, then, is practical theology? Wolfteich does not provide a clear definition because there are many different understandings of practical theology among practical theologians. Instead, she names three core components of practical theology from the Catholic perspective as follows: 1) A critical thinking about practice, i.e., what we do and how we live out our faith, 2) particularities of local contexts, cultures and communities (practice as *locus theologicus*), and 3) three dialogical stages of engaging and interpreting contemporary practice, deeply remembering and critically analyzing the tradition, and envisioning the future practice with theological imagination (2-7).

Based on these three components of practical theology, Wolfteich indicates that this book aims to advance a conversation between practical theology and Catholic theology, by focusing on practical theological resources of Catholic communities, traditions, and practices. It also seeks to contribute to interdisciplinary, ecumenical and interfaith reflection on religious practices, in terms of approaches, methods, and orientations in practical theology. Moreover, it intends to cultivate “practical theological agency within cultures and faith communities” (5). In this way, this book makes it clear that Catholic practical theology deals with the everyday life and practice of believers in order to shape lay *and* ordained leaders for the church (6).

The book is structured in three parts, including chapters all written by nineteen Catholic scholars. Part One contains three chapters which provide the historical contexts of Catholic practical theology and the initial understanding of key terms and issues. The nine chapters in Part Two explore a variety of concrete faith practices which are commonly understood as “theory-laden” and opening “epistemological horizons” (14). Areas included in the chapters are ecclesiology, practices of dialogue, family ethics, Latino/a popular religion, missiology, and spiritual direction. Part Three includes three chapters which deal with practical theological teaching and research. While it is quite profitable to read from the beginning to the end of the book, it is also beneficial to read selectively some of the chapters and later pick up the rest. For example, as Wolfteich suggested, the sequential reading of the chapters written by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Bryan Froehle (Chapter 2), Colleen M. Griffith (Chapter 3), David Tracy (Chapter 4), Thomas Groome (Chapter 14), Annemie Dillen and Robert Mager (Chapter 15), and Wolfteich (introduction and conclusion), is helpful to gain a clear understanding of practical theology (20).

Among these chapters, it is notable that Griffith’s essay, “Practice as Embodied Knowing,” focuses on practice as a source of theological and epistemological knowing and stresses the significance of balancing Aristotle’s three forms of knowledge—theoretical knowledge (*episteme*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and the know-how (*techné*). This chapter invites readers to rethink preaching as one of the most important Christian practices. Groome’s essay, “Practice of Teaching,” proposes shared praxis as a teaching method and insists that the

learning outcome of practical theology should be the students' knowledge and competency by informing and forming them in the habitus of doing theology, by taking account of their contexts seriously. This chapter is worthwhile for those who are specifically interested in hermeneutics and homiletical pedagogy. In addition, Wolfteich's essay, "Catholic Voices and Visions in Practical Theology," and Steven Bevans' essay, "Missiology as Practical Theology," are helpful resources for those who want to further develop their own spiritual, contextual, and missional homiletic and prophetic preaching. Both chapters clearly show the possibility of expanding the scope of preaching to the larger practical theological framework beyond the wall of the church.

While this volume opens a new vista for homiletical discourse, it has a couple of hurdles that are difficult to overcome, especially for the readers who do not have the previous knowledge about practical theology. The first hurdle is that, even though a variety of definitions of practical theology are offered sufficiently throughout the volume, they are scattered all around the book. The second hurdle of the book is that some essays focus too much on thick descriptions of certain practices, rather than developing theories from them. Nonetheless, I would recommend this book to homileticians, preachers, students, and lay leaders, because of its clear focus on everyday practice and its broad implications for our religious lives.

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