

Colleen Mary Mallon. *Inclusivity and Institutional Change in Education: A Theologian's Journey*. Theological Education between the Times. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2024. 171 pages. \$19.99.

In *Inclusivity and Institutional Change in Education: A Theologian's Journey*, Colleen Mary Mallon explores what it means to embody *veritas*—truth—as a theological educator navigating the “in-between spaces” of institutional change. A theologian and a sister in the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), she chronicles her experience as director of mission formation at a Catholic high school reckoning with its legacies of racial inequity and white privilege. At the heart of her reflection is the Dominican tradition of “the holy preaching”—the conviction that one’s actions either validate or betray one’s public proclamation of the gospel. Throughout, she considers the implications of this Dominican tradition for contemporary institutional life.

For Mallon, transformation is both personal and communal. On a personal level, she recounts receiving an unexpected “pink slip,” a result of institutional financial constraints that compelled her to leave her position as an Associate Professor at a theological school. She writes, “This book is my story of reflecting on the call (or was it a shove? still to be determined!) to move out of traditional academic settings into an in-between space of theological education” (10–11). Standing at the threshold of a closed door, she followed a call to turn around and meet God somewhere new. As institutions of higher education—within and beyond the theological academy—increasingly target religion and theology programs for mergers, closures, and radical reinventions in response to financial precarity and political pressures, Mallon’s account of unexpected disruption and the grace that meets us there offers a timely book for scholars, teachers, or ministers navigating life’s contingencies.

On an institutional level, Mallon carefully details the steps she took in partnership with a predominately white Catholic secondary school striving to align its culture with its core value: *veritas*. Her intervention moves beyond what she calls “white damage control,” urging theological educators to ground their antiracist and anti-bias commitments not only in moral obligation and social justice rhetoric but in their desire to seek the *truth* for the sake of the gospel (20). In this sense, Mallon provides much-needed theological grounding for sustained institutional change. Drawing on her broader experience in Catholic healthcare, her role as a graduate theology professor, and her vocation as a Dominican sister, Mallon brings a rich perspective to the complexities that institutions face when trying to live out what they profess.

Administrators, in particular, will appreciate Mallon’s candid inclusion of real-world communications—emails, workshop prompts, community policies, mission statements, feedback protocols, event invitations, and more. Through these concrete materials, she skillfully weaves together Catholic Social Teaching with the school’s commitments to equity and inclusion, modeling how everyday practices can bear witness to God’s delight in human diversity.

One of the book’s many strengths is Mallon’s use of reflection prompts in each chapter, inviting both personal and communal discernment. Some are practical—“What policies and procedures are in place and are regularly evaluated to secure the kind of inclusion that Jesus is all about?” (78)—while others are introspective—“What have been the significant closed doors, pink-slip moments, and pivots you’ve had to make in your theological journey/career?” (6). These prompts are adaptable across a range of contexts. I can easily imagine them being used in theological classrooms, departmental meetings, spiritual retreats, and beyond.

The narrow scope of this project—its focus on an all-girls Catholic boarding school—may leave some readers wanting more: additional theological lenses, greater engagement with

Catholic anti-racism work beyond secondary education, or a longer institutional view. For instance, at times I found myself longing for a deeper discussion of missionary legacies in California. However, this desire for *more* is not a shortcoming of *Inclusivity and Institutional Change in Education*. Rather, it is a testament to the groundedness of Mallon’s work. She writes from where she stands—with clarity, courage, and a deep grasp of the theological stakes. As Mallon puts it, “Theological education is about midwifing the faith that wants to be born out of the questions that have made some kind of ultimate demand on us, questions that will not let us go, because something new wants to come to life” (141). What sets this monograph apart is precisely this blend of theological insight and practical wisdom. It’s an essential resource not only for theological educators, but for pastors, lay leaders, and administrators seeking to lead faithfully in the “in-between” times of disruption and change.

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