

María Teresa Montes Lara and Vincent J. Pastro. *Holy Presence, Holy Preaching: Santa María Tonantzín Guadalupe as Preacher and Community*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023. 182 pages. \$27.

Holy Presence, Holy Preaching is a refreshing interdisciplinary text suitable for preaching, worship, and theology classes as well as for non-academic settings. Montes Lara and Pastro, Catholic ministers who have primarily worked with Latino communities, engage multiple perspectives. They explore theological and philosophical concepts succinctly and thoughtfully in relation to the book's focus, which is Santa María Tonantzín Guadalupe, the Preaching Woman, as a model for preaching as community.

In the Foreword, Allan Figueroa Deck describes the work as “a theological-pastoral-homiletic *contemplation* with roots in church history and in the encounter of cultures and religions so characteristic of our age of globalization” (xi). He notes the authors' use of “evocative and metaphorical [language] in line with the styles used in many if not most parts of the non-Western world and certainly among great mystical writers. As such it may not appeal to readers with a dialectic imagination rather than an analogical one” (xiii). This includes the use of native languages, like Náhuatl, the Aztec language, throughout the text. In many cases, this allows for a more accurate understanding of words that have crossed into English, like *pueblo*.

In “Introduction: Preaching Woman, Preaching *Pueblo*,” the authors describe the book as examining “Guadalupe's intimate union with Word, Baptism, and Spirit and her proclamation of the Sacramental Word as preacher, pedagogue, and prophet” (xvi). The book's intent is “to assist preachers in a deeper self-understanding of their life and preaching as manifestations of the Sacramental Word... [with the] hope that it will be of interest to all readers wishing to know more about the *Guadalupana*” (xvi).

Twelve main chapters are evenly divided into three segments: “Holy Word,” “Holy Baptism,” and “Holy Spirit.” In “Holy Word,” chapter 1, “Poor, Woman, and Indigenous,” the authors propose a “a radically different Mariology, contextualized for women, the poor, the indigenous, those whose skin color is dark, the LBGTQ community, and others ostracized from dominant society” (4). This “Mariology for the third millennium,” examines the theological, pneumatological, and homiletical significance of Santa María Tonantzín Guadalupe, also known as Mary of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Guadalupe, as well as the context of her story amid the early 16th-century genocide and attempted cultural obliteration of the *Mexica* people (4). In 1531, Guadalupe appears to Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, an indigenous man, on the hill of Tepeyac. Tepeyac becomes a *locus theologicus* and a “New Word, eternally engendered in the fullness of time by the Spirit of life and the ‘yes’ of Mary, is enfleshed as Holy Preaching. The Word permeates the sacred body of the Preaching Woman... and the *pueblo* [community in relationship] she proclaims as God's very own” (17).

In chapter 2, “A Phenomenology of the Sacramental Word,” the authors explain their phenomenological method in which a European method, focused on Emmanuel Levinas' work, is used as an auxiliary to Latin American theology and theological methodology. They invite readers to look to Guadalupe to perceive of religious experience and the mystical as something available to all in everyday life. Citing John 1:14, they argue that the Word “comes to ‘pitch tent’ among the *pueblo*...and is proclaimed by...Guadalupe, the Preaching Woman. It springs forth from the silence of desolation.... Guadalupe assures the people that Life has the final Word and will never abandon them” (21). They further assert, “The Preaching Woman is as present to the

pueblo now as she was to St. Cuauhtlatoatzin. The promise to ‘pitch tent’ with the *pueblo* is eternal, ever-present in each instant” (28).

Chapter 3, “Evil, Preaching, and Santa María Tonantzin Guadalupe” begins by challenging the separation of demonic evil from everyday life. In support of their position, the authors cite Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hannah Arendt, and Marguerite Porete, among others. They “relate the question of evil and genocide to...Guadalupe and, especially, to the preaching event,” asking, “How do we prophetically denounce evil that is neither illusory nor part of God’s plan for humanity? How do we speak from the pulpit about genocide, injustice toward the poor, and the ‘banality of evil’?” (37). For the authors, Guadalupe provides a key as she “carries within her femininity and her indigenous culture and race the Incarnate Word she preaches through holy presence. To whom does she preach? To the poor, the *Mexica* people who have experienced genocide, culturally, racially, violently, in their living body” (37).

In chapter 4, “What Shall We Do?,” the authors put Latin theology in conversation with Paul Ricoeur’s work examining three ways of addressing evil: seeing [as looking into the victim’s heart as a form of solidarity], judging, and acting. They argue that Divine judgment does not shy away from naming injustice as evil and emphasize speaking of acting as responding to evil instead of as conquering evil.

Chapters 5 through 8 explore the authors’ contention that Holy Baptism “is, perhaps, more symbol than sacrament. Raimon Panikkar reminds us that the symbol *is* reality, while the sign points to something else only signifying reality” (52). Chapter 5, “Preachers by Baptism,” emphasizes helping people “recover the human dignity given through Baptism” with a realization that preaching is not only for clergy (55). In chapter 6, “*Imago Dei*,” the authors present Guadalupe as a model preacher whose proclamation, along with the *pueblo*’s Baptism, “says that they, as all peoples, are eternally born *into* this Word, *of* this Word, *from* this Word, *by* this Word, *through* this Word” with the eternal presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (88). Part two closes with the chapters “Living Our Baptism” and “Baptism by Clouds and Snow.”

Part three, “Holy Spirit,” explores the Preaching Woman as “the presence of the Sacramental Word among the poor *pueblo*” and the study of her as interweaving Pneumatology, Mariology, ecclesiology, and Christology in liberating and holistic ways (98). The chapters are titled, “Santa María Tonantzin Guadalupe, the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit,” “A Spirit-Filled Trinitarian *Pueblo*,” “Mother Earth, the *Pueblo*, and Synodality,” and “The Place of *Convivencia* with the Triune God.”

The conclusion, “Mothering God, the Divine *Fiesta*,” pays homage to Guadalupe with a focus on motherhood and the Divine Feast or Eucharist and a concluding prayer. The authors summarize their work stating, “all who are poor, or in solidarity with the poor, are carried with the Sacramental Word in the womb of Santa María Tonantzin Guadalupe. And the *pueblo* carries in its womb the divine presence and the *Virgencita*” (135).

In this work, Montes Lara and Pastro invite readers to understand and model Guadalupe. Like the Preaching Woman, contemporary preachers can recognize the Divine Word as it is embodied within and through us and the communities with whom we preach, especially those who society marginalizes.

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