



A RESPONSE TO BISHOP KLAIBER'S PAPER

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1. We are indebted to Bishop Klaiber for laying out for us in a succinct and professional manner the basic features of holiness in the world of religions and especially of the Bible. He calls his paper "an outline" but it is surely more than that; it leads us into the heart of the subject of holiness, the theme of our discussions this week.

2. It is clear from Bishop Klaiber's paper that holiness is basically an attribute of God. God is holy, which means that God is transcendent, removed from that which lies in front of the temple, removed from impurity. God is holy, but creatures can share in the holiness of God; this is what we wish to explore this week: how we share in the holiness of God.

3. Bishop Klaiber makes it clear that holiness is not just an eschatological phenomenon, something to be awarded only at the journey's end. Holiness characterizes the Christian community now, especially in its social relationships to one another and to the world at large.

4. Bishop Klaiber also makes it clear that Christians are not mere passive instruments in the process of holiness. In some mysterious manner they work with God's Spirit in the achievement of holiness. Bishop Klaiber is aware, I am sure, of the large amount of ink that has been spilt over this question of God's gift of salvation or holiness and human cooperation. Other speakers will have to deal

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with this subject more in detail, especially since the monastic movement often has been characterized as a works movement, a human striving for perfection.

5. Bishop Klaiber stresses the social dimensions of holiness, the social consequences of being in a holy relationship with God. To stress the social dimensions of holiness, however, does not exclude the personal dimensions. Catholic theology through the ages has often dealt more directly with the personal dimensions of holiness: What happens to the person who becomes a believer, receives baptism, and is sanctified by the Holy Spirit? This person needs to act differently just as the whole assembly of believers needs to act differently. The different action, even social action, it would seem, comes from a change deep within the mind, the heart, the spirit, the soul, and the body. Holiness seems to have something to do with the individual member of the Body of Christ.

6. The Lutheran tradition has stressed considerably the abiding presence of both holiness and sin in the believing Christian. Catholic theology too has struggled with this phenomenon and has learned from the controversy with the Lutheran tradition. Even if this is not our immediate subject this week (the relationship between Lutheran and Catholic theology in this regard), I think we would do well to pay some attention to the matter of the presence of holiness and sin in the Christian, who as a believer, accepts the word of God and seeks to live it out. A discussion of holiness should not neglect the law of sin in our members (cf. the letter to the Romans).

7. On page one of his paper Bishop Klaiber makes this statement: "I doubt, however, whether any of the monastic fathers would have said that human beings are sanctified by faith." I am acquainted with only a part of monastic history, but I notice in the *Rule of Benedict* some statements that would seem to be similar to the problem which Bishop Klaiber puts before us. Both statements are found in the prologue to the *Rule of Benedict*. In verse 21 we read: "Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him who has called us to his kingdom." In this verse seeing God requires faith and the performance of good works. I assume here that seeing God requires holiness. The other passage is verse 49: "But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love." Surely love is another way of expressing the basic holiness of the Christian; it is a love that cannot find progress and perfection except in faith.

8. I am happy for the challenge which Bishop Klaiber puts before us (by us I mean especially Orthodox and Catholics): "What does it mean in this context that some Christian traditions have reestablished special signs of holiness within the Christian church by establishing sacred places or persons?" Let me offer a few reflections by way of answer. We are agreed that holiness resides in God primarily and that God shares holiness with humans, and here we are speaking directly of Christian believers.

If the human-divine Christ shares in the holiness of God, and if the body of Christ shares in the holiness of God in Christ and the Spirit, the church as the body of Christ, gathered or not, is characterized as holy. Just as the holiness of God extends to the world at large and to the assembly of believers, so also the holiness of the church extends to the place where the word of God is heard and the bread and wine are shared. The church building is holy because of the people who gather there. It is also holy because of the word and the sacrament. Saint Paul seems to point to the holiness of elements, bread and wine, when he refers to the words of the Lord that are handed down: "This is my body, which is for you," and "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:24f.). Saint Paul complains about those who do not recognize the bread and the wine. The point I wish to make, all too briefly, is that some assemblies are holy because of the people, some earthly elements are holy because of their use. Some places are holy because of people who are involved in sacred actions of word and sacrament. These reflections, however, still make us think about the extent to which we have sanctified places and persons. Let us continue to approach this subject during our discussions this week.

9. Finally, Bishop Klaiber could only allude to the meaning of holiness for the care of the world. If Christians have been known to exploit the world to their own advantage and even as a sign of their right relationship with God, what have we learned more recently about the need to respect our environment and how will the notion of holiness help us in our care for the human community and the world?

