

Introduction

The minister in a post-conciliar Church is seen less exclusively as the one who brings God and more as one who helps discern God already present. How to discern God's presence in a Church and world which is increasingly pluralistic? The statistics may startle us. In the next few decades our nation and Church will continue to be challenged by increasing numbers of "minorities" in our society. By the year 2020, the so-called "new ethnics" will make up the majority of Catholics in the United States. By the year 2056, the "average" U.S. resident will trace his or her heritage to somewhere other than Europe. It will be a different nation and a different Church.

We have asked authors and keen observers of our pluralistic society to contribute to this issue of *New Theology Review* in order to shed light on the new contexts of our ministry. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., the founding editor of this journal, who teaches at the Catholic Theological Union and has lectured and written extensively on this topic, leads us wisely through the conflicts and opportunities of ministry in a multicultural world and calls us to create "linked communities." Peter C. Phan, a native of Vietnam and theology professor at The Catholic University of America, presents a paradigm for helping others encounter God in the particular cultures of today's "second wave" of immigration. It is a paradigm that helps spiritual directors to become intercultural bridge-builders. Terrence Merrigan, born in Canada and now professor at The Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, focuses our attention on Catholic theological education in a pluralistic context. He argues not for ideological pluralism which seeks to make the many into one but epistemic pluralism which promotes open-ended dialogue where respect is given to being a very particular one among the many. In our fourth essay addressing the theme of ministry amidst diversity, Stephen Dudek, a presbyter of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan, shares his experience and vision of replacing a church building destroyed by fire, which is the home of English-, Spanish-, and Vietnamese-speaking people.

Donald Buggert, O.Carm., professor of systematic theology at Washington Theological Union, explores how we are to understand the claim that God is our Father. His essay nicely situates that claim within the evolution of Jewish and Christian faith. Also included in this volume are our regular columns and a number of book reviews. We hope you will find in the following pages new insights and strategies for ministry in a rapidly changing world.