SECTION 1

AROUND THE THEME:
RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCE

The challenges and opportunities of living with an aware-
ness of the multicultural nature of all existence are legion—
and more awareness of the complex multi-variant identities of
groups and individuals increases the challenges. We now wise-
ly regard cultural competence as an elusive ideal. Cross-cultur-
al experiences are more than binary relationships in which people of differ-
ent cultures, religions, gender identities, sexualities, social classes, or races
come into alliance. Moreover, if we assume that every human encounter is
a cross-cultural one, then we cannot escape the need for humility, flexibility,
curiosity, respect, and empathy in every encounter if we are to minister re-
spectfully in increasingly globalized communities. The essays in Volume 34
of *Reflective Practice* seek to examine the expanding forms of cultural com-
plexity in power, privilege, particularity, shame, fear, and regret that affect
care, supervision, and the formation of future religious leaders.

The persistence of ethnic cleansing, tribal conflicts, unrelenting and in-
creasingly hidden forms of racism and sexism, and political willingness to
seek for the common good all indicate that there is much more individual and
collective work to do in this society and around the globe to foster ways of
respecting difference and living with diversity. Many people still regard dif-
ference as dangerous and find safety only in sameness—or they fear losing
their uniqueness if they honor the Other. That fear is exacerbated by the per-
sistence of western individualism and its growing global influence. Both Da-
vid Augsburger and Daniel Louw, in their essays in this section, argue for the
need to transcend 'cultural encapsulation' or 'self-preference' at the expense
of common life. Daniel Louw puts it this way: "In this regard, I propose that
the *Ubuntu*-principle of communality and the *Ũtugi*-principle of hospitality
can help caregiving to establish a kind of *hospitium publicum*, that is an inclu-
sive public space for doing pastoral care as a mode of hospitable outreach to
all human beings irrespective of race, gender, and cultural diversity" (p. 24).
Finding a balance between respecting the particularity of each individual and
group and fostering common humanity amidst diversity is, it seems to me, **the**
challenge for this present time. Each essay in this section seeks that balance.

We are grateful that David Augsburger was willing to revisit the con-
cept of *interpathy* that he introduced 30 years ago. Interpathy is intention-
al cognitive and affective envisioning of the thoughts and imagining the

feelings of a truly separate other "as they occur in another world of reality—another culture, another worldview, another epistemology" (p. 16). As diversity increases and multiculturality becomes our daily experience, *interpathy* becomes more and more necessary for human sustainability, even as it becomes more difficult to achieve. Augsburger is particularly helpful in identifying all the changes that have occurred since the word *interpathy* was coined. Writing from South Africa, Daniel Louw proposes that African spiritualities, because of their deep commitment to communality and hospitality, have much to contribute to interculturality in pastoral caregiving. Instead of xenophobia, Louw argues, "the metaphors of host and hospitality in pastoral caregiving, exchange fear of the stranger into *philoxenia*: the mutuality of 'brotherly' love" (p. 36).

"Beyond the Boundary of Race" by Laurie Garrett-Cobbina is a bold essay with a daring and challenging proposal for ending racism. "The possibility of disrupting racism by reducing and eliminating race exists. I think that racism depends on race, and that without race white supremacy would not have the power to impose racism" (p. 56). In order to end racism and promote human emancipation, Garrett-Cobbina would be willing to abolish her blackness as a radical politic of inclusion. Would I, as a privileged white, be willing to abolish my whiteness for the same purpose? With whiteness reconstruction, white persons get relief from the undesirable consequences of a system of white supremacy, such as emotional tension, pain, guilt, paranoia, and operational stress for the sake of the same radical politic of inclusion.

The concluding essay in this first section addresses the tyranny of exclusion by proposing a new language for the work of reflecting on daily living and the practice of ministry. Edward Foley, OFM, seeks to reimagine theological reflection in the face of growing religious pluralism, non-affiliation, and atheism in English-speaking North America through the term 'reflective believing.' He defines *reflective believing* as "a meaning-making practice, exercised in light of one's individual or shared wisdom-heritage, that honors the experiences and stories of its participants" (p. 72). Foley continues the theme of 'the one and the many' in this section. Both 'holy envy for other ways of believing' and "the bond of humanity between all participants" in the practice of reflective believing respecting the common good while at the same time exercising humility "in knowing how to contribute to that good" (p. 72).

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