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INTRODUCTION

K. SAMUEL LEE* AND MELINDA A. McGARRAH SHARP**

* Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, USA
** Columbia Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA, USA

This issue of the Journal of Pastoral Theology contains sustained attention to an often-neglected topic in the journal, Roman Catholic Pastoral Theology. In the June 1992 Society of Pastoral Theology meeting, pastoral theologian Roslyn Karaban presented a work-in-progress entitled “Pastoral Counseling as an Emerging, Professional, Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,” publishing it in the January 1993 volume of this journal. In that article Dr. Karaban describes tensions of inclusion and exclusion for women pastoral counselors within Roman Catholic categories of authorized ministries and for Roman Catholic pastoral counselors within the mostly Protestant Society of Pastoral Theology. Pastoral theologian Sharon Thornton’s reply, published in the same volume, recognizes Dr. Karaban’s call for justice that “challenges us to consider the way we structure our profession so that it is consistent with the aim and vision of healing and wholeness we profess” (p. 67). For over twenty-five years in presentations, publications, and in conversations, Dr. Karaban has challenged the field of pastoral theology to include Roman Catholic perspectives not as a peripheral issue but as a central contributor.

In this volume of the Journal of Pastoral Theology, Dr. Karaban has convened a group of authors and conversations partners (more than appear in print have surrounded and supported the process) to invite readers of this journal to learn about texts, practices, and conversation partners that Roman Catholic pastoral theologians draw upon in their work as scholars, teachers, lay and ordained ministers. Across Dr. Karaban’s guest editorial overview of the volume and the four articles which follow, the issue addresses Roman Catholic political theology as pastoral theology (Lamothe), recommendations for the field of pastoral theology from a Roman Catholic perspective (Canales), a Franciscan pedagogy of inclusion in church and academy (Park and Mayer), and a eucharistic theology of encounter that can unfold in the Roman Catholic parish (Gillespie). We are grateful for Dr. Karaban for conceiving and curating this special issue of the journal. As pastoral theologians ourselves, we join with diverse readers in engaging these articles on teaching, learning, and living Roman Catholic Pastoral Theologies. We join Dr. Karaban in challenging readers of the journal to collaborate more mutually with and celebrate the unique contribution of colleagues across ecclesial and other differences around the topics addressed in these pages and the many other topics in need of collaborative pastoral theological engagement.