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Media 'misses deeper justice issues' in papal coverage

Thomas C. Fox | Mar. 18, 2013 NCR Today

Despite their value, the media also have the power to distract us, writes Latin American theologian, Brazilian Sister of Our Lady Ivone Gebara. They lull our minds and keep us from allowing needed critical questions to surface. In the days leading up to the papal election, many in Brazil and around the world, she writes, were ?hijacked? by live broadcasts from Rome. What interests are leading the huge telecommunication industry to transmit every detail of the election of a new pope? Who gains by the millions of dollars spent on the uninterrupted coverage until the white smoke appears? What Vatican interests make it so willing to offer facilities for these transmissions?

"These questions, which may not interest the wider public, continue to be significant for groups concerned over the growth of consciousness among ourselves and all of humanity. In large measure, she goes on, the telecommunication industry is responsible for maintaining the secrecy surrounding Vatican electoral policies. Secrecy, oaths, and the consequent sanctions when they are not respected are an integral part of the industry. They create an impact and make headlines. But this isn?t about a centuries-old tradition that will have no real impact on the rest of the world. Rather, these are behaviors that end up derailing the pursuit of dialogue among groups, or excluding some groups from the necessary dialogue.

There is no criticism of this perverse system, which continues to invoke the Holy Spirit in order to maintain ultraconservative positions clothed in the pretext of religiosity and docile submission. Official coverage allots no space for dissonant voices to be heard (even at the risk of being stoned). Once in a while, light criticism is allowed to surface, but it is quickly drowned out by the ?status quo? imposed by the prevailing ideology."

Gebara is one of Latin America?s leading theologians. She writes from the perspective of ecofeminism and liberation theology. For nearly two decades Gebara has been a professor at the Theological Institute of Recife. The author of Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation[1], Gebara articulates an ecofeminist perspective that combines social ecofeminism and holistic ecology,

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