

Claire E. Wolfteich, ed. *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*. New York: Paulist Press, 2014. 386 pp. \$29.95. Paperback. ISBN: 9780809148905.

Reviewed by Christina Zaker  
Catholic Theological Union

*Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, edited by Claire E. Wolfteich, brings together an outstanding collection of voices on practical theology. The book seeks to provide a Catholic perspective on the field of practical theology that recognizes the deep traditions of Catholic practical theology as well as to engage and expand the current praxis. The intention of the book is to open the lines of discussion around a broad approach to what constitutes practical theology and particularly Catholic practical theology in North America.

The chapters are concentrated in three sections: Part I introduces the reader to practical theology and the Catholic context. Part II gives voice to current practices and conversations from various contexts in order to showcase how practical theology can be applicable to a wide audience. Part III focuses on the teaching and research aspects of practical theology and lays the foundation for future research and development in the field of Catholic practical theology.

Part I provides a substantial introduction to the field of practical theology. Students who are new to practical theology or theologians of different fields looking to see how they might dialogue with practical theologians will find this section invaluable. The three essays in this section detail a historical look at Catholic practical theology, and they offer an introduction to important considerations and terms of the field.

Part II is replete with well-crafted essays from a range of disciplines that highlight the Catholic contribution to practical theology. With a focus on the day-to-day practices of life and faith, essays on such diverse subjects as liturgy, aesthetics in Latino/a popular religion, family solidarity and missiology put the fabric of everyday life into conversation with theology. Each essay is the contribution of a theologian exploring the practical side of his or her discipline. Although these authors may be liturgists, systematic theologians, ethicists or writers trained in spirituality, in this volume they are all practical theologians and they offer the reader more than a few roadmaps to engage any discipline in critical dialogue with Catholic practical theology.

Part III focuses attention on the area of teaching and research in practical theology. This is the area most in need of development in the Catholic context. The essays here attempt to guide the reader to take up the challenge in order to give Catholic practical theology more credibility in the wider theological conversation. Wolfteich ends the volume pointing to this area as the piece that needs careful development and attention. “The time is ripe for a more concerted focus on practical theology as a rigorous field of research that bridges academy, church and culture” (340).

*Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Vision* is a valuable collection of essays that work well as an introductory text for students and academics alike. The language is accessible and clear and the host of contributors, all prominent in their own fields, lends credibility to the ongoing conversation of Catholic practical theology. Throughout the text is the basic assertion of practical theology: these conversations must make sense and have an impact on the day-to-day life of the average believer. As Wolfeich concludes; “this book argues persuasively that practical theology is actually essential to *traditio*, the passing on of a tradition” (331). *Invitation to Practical Theology* is an excellent resource for Catholics who hope to pass on the rich traditions of faith, and for those interested in the Catholic voice in the widening conversation of practical theology.