

In Memoriam
Paul G. Crowley, S.J.
(Sept. 12, 1951 – Aug. 7, 2020)

The Editors and Board of Directors of *Theological Studies* remember with deep gratitude and reverence our Jesuit colleague, Paul Crowley, who died on August 7th after a long bout with cancer. He served as editor in chief of *Theological Studies* from January 1, 2016 until poor health required him to hand the reins of the journal to our interim editor, Phil Rossi, in June of 2019. Paul had a wide circle of friends and associates. He relished their concern. And because he was forthcoming about his health, news of his illness traveled throughout the theological world. When he stepped down as editor last year it came less as a surprise than as a further stage in an ever-deepening journey of grief and gratitude. Aware of the weight of this loss, *TS* remembers this generous colleague whose life as a fundamental theologian, a visionary editor, and a faithful friend left a remarkable imprint on many people, including his Jesuit brothers, his students, his colleagues at Santa Clara, in the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the worldwide theological academy and, not least, on *Theological Studies*.

In Everything, a Theologian

Having finished his doctorate before entering the Society of Jesus in 1986, Paul's theological journey as a student and later as a professor, writer, and editor began at Stanford University and led to stops at Woodstock College, Union Theological Seminary, and Columbia University in New York; the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies and Regis College in Toronto; Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Jesuit School of

Theology and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California; and Santa Clara University where he served as a professor of theology and religious studies for nearly thirty years. He read voraciously, learning from liberation and feminist theologians, Black and Latinx theologians, classical thinkers, philosophers, and a host of important public figures, including Pope Francis, whose writings he probed for their theological ramifications.

Paul's initial training in systematic theology was influenced by the methods of phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics, as well as the penetrating vision of Karl Rahner and the inspiring thought of his mentor and friend, Michael J. Buckley, S.J. A complex thinker, he drew on a variety of sources and methodologies. He also taught nearly every subdiscipline of systematic theology. In his research, writing, and teaching he probed a wide range of important theological concerns, including the origins and development of doctrine – especially ancient Christology and ecclesiology – and an astonishingly wide spectrum of urgent contemporary questions having to do with suffering, sexuality, the relationship between religion and science, ecology, spirituality, ecumenism, atheism, religious pluralism, Christian ethics, Ignatian spirituality, and theology and education. He spoke in later years of how his energies shifted away from systematic theology to what he called “the fundamental questions,” including the meaning of belief and the possibility of saying anything at all about God in a world rife with suffering and evil. The battle he waged with these essential questions found expression in his book, *Unwanted Wisdom: Suffering, the Cross, and Hope* (Continuum, 2005), and in his last and perhaps most important work, *The Unmoored God: Believing in a Time of Dislocation* (Orbis, 2017). In everything, his longing for God and his passion for the many sides of every truth suffused all his classes, public presentations, and writings.

Editor with a Practical Vision

When Paul became editor of *TS*, he came with a wealth of experience including several edited book projects and a stint as editor of the *CTSA Proceedings* (1990-1995). Likewise, he brought to *TS* a capacity to read widely and deeply in a range of fields. Authors whose essays found their way to his desk often noted that he approached every submission with an open mind and enormous generosity. He would work hard, especially with younger authors, encouraging them and finding ways to help them make their arguments crisper and their best insights more accessible. He loved the work of editing and he reveled in the creativity required to shape each individual volume he edited. He paid attention to the administrative requirements of producing the journal, giving due attention to budgeting, working with the publishing house, and communicating with the Jesuit Conference and other *TS* stakeholders, above all, our editorial board, our authors, and our readers.

Paul's attention to detail and creative imagination mirrored Pope Francis's exhortation that the Church (and its theology) go to the margins. As editor, he actively noticed and sought out voices who were missing: underrepresented groups here and abroad, including the voices of younger scholars and of women. One example of his enthusiastic support for the latter involved his work with women religious theologians from various parts of Asia. Despite their advanced theological degrees, they too often found themselves discouraged from teaching in universities or seminaries. Likewise, they would rarely receive invitations to attend scholarly conferences or to join academic societies. Their primary work tended to involve internal governance, religious formation, and direct work with the poorest and the least. All of which is of vital importance! But Paul saw the added importance of giving a platform for *their thought* and to that he dedicated a place on the *TS* homepage. He participated by zoom in a writing seminar for Indian

sisters hosted in Bangalore, and four of those theologians published their work in scholarly journals in their country. He published two articles from another writing seminar held in Vietnam. In a letter that arrived just a week before he died, a religious sister working in Taipei wrote: “Thank you for so deeply believing in empowering people across the globe! I am grateful especially for your vision for the women religious in Asia. We need it very much.” Paul labored to realize such dreams to the very end of his life.

A Generous, Humorous Heart

Those of us who were privileged to work with Paul knew a wonderful person. He displayed a rich sense of humor matched by his dark, dancing eyes and loud guffaws, and his ironic, irreverent way of showing genuine reverence. His enormous heart was wired for generosity and compassion: so many people have given witness to that. And his theological friends recount the endless conversations about the mystery of life and death, of suffering, and of God’s seeming absence. We could say of him what Ignacio Ellacuría said of Karl Rahner: “he bore his doubts with great elegance.”

Paul’s relatively brief but incredibly rich tenure as the editor of *TS* has launched the journal into a bright future. In the larger context of his vocation as a Jesuit priest, especially in his Christian service as a systematic and fundamental theologian, Paul’s life illustrates what Johann Baptist Metz called a “theological existential biography” in which “the mystical biography of religious experience, one’s life history before the hidden face of God, is inscribed into the doxography of faith.” Paul Crowley’s eloquent life of faith speaks in our unquiet age with a simplicity, power, and depth that mirrors the biblical witness. It is a gift to remember him.