

SEMINARIES AND ECCLESIAL TENSIONS

Panelists: Sr. Mary Ann Donovan Ph.D., Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, CA; Daniel Finn Ph.D., St. John's University, School of Theology, Collegeville, MN; Sr. Mary Christine Athans Ph.D., St. Paul's Seminary, MN; Fr. Russell Connors STD, St. Mary Seminary, Cleveland, OH; Fr. Jeremiah J. McCarthy Ph.D., St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, CA, Moderator.

The purpose of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for panelists and participants to discuss the issues confronting seminary personnel as they mediate theological learning in the context of ecclesial responsibilities for the formation of future priests. Each of the panelists made an opening statement and then the floor was opened for interchange with the participants, of whom approximately thirty were in attendance.

Mary Ann Donovan. Mary Ann spoke from the context of the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, which is located within the larger ecumenical context of the Graduate Theological Union, and also functions as a pontifical ecclesiastical faculty. In terms of the school itself, the quality of students is excellent, but there is a need to diversify the student body, and to raise sufficient funds to provide necessary financial assistance for enrolled students. Of some pressing concern is the feasibility of hiring non-Jesuit faculty members given budgetary constraints, and given the fact that all students attending JSTB receive a de facto subsidy from the supporting Jesuit provinces. The issues of lay salaries, coupled with the need to diversify the student body, remain problematic concerns. With respect to the location of JSTB within the larger GTU complex, there appears to be some retreat from the ecumenical endeavor with a lack of willingness on the part of students to engage in ecumenically taught classes. This phenomenon appears to mirror larger issues on the ecumenical front as the respective churches confront internal matters of structure and polity. Cross-registration, however, is not affected by this current development. The most present difficulty in terms of ecclesial tensions is with the pontifical status of the JSTB. The statutes of the school require approval from Rome, and promotion to full faculty rank requires a *nihil obstat* regarding faculty research and publication. The question arises as to whether the *nihil obstat* means that nothing in a publication is contradictory to church teaching, or whether it means that everything written is in agreement with an established criteria of theological convictions. Mary Ann concludes with the observation that the school takes its mission seriously, namely to prepare men for ordained ministry, and to serve as a research faculty for the larger church.

Daniel Finn. Dan addressed the tensions generated by the ongoing debate in ecclesiastical circles and higher education about the role of academic freedom in the academy. Both the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) are reviewing the issue. Com-

mittee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the AAUP in its 1988 spring meeting has challenged the assumptions underlying the religious exception clause in the 1940 statement on academic freedom. Due to a lessening of fear of ecclesial intervention, and due to less frequent invocations of the religious exemption, the harder line appears to be in the direction of classifying schools desirous of the exemption as "trade" schools rather than with the university community. ATS has most recently attempted to assist its membership by clarifying the role of religious adjudicatories vis-a-vis the internal governance structures of the institutions. In Dan's view, seminaries are not getting much help from either side in this complex question, and more dialogue is necessary.

Mary Christine Athans. Citing data from Sr. Katarina Schuth's new book, *Reason for the Hope*, Chris noted the issue of competing ecclesiologies as a source of tension for seminaries. Briefly stated, ecclesiologies can be categorized as vertical (i.e., hierarchically conceived with correlative implications for priestly identity and ministry) and as horizontal (i.e., inclusive of lay ministry and a broader conception of ministry with implications for priestly ministry and identity). The unexamined presuppositions of these different construals need to be explicated in order to avoid conflict as the seminary responds to its various constituencies. The historical development of St. Paul's Seminary into its present structure of a program offering the M.A. in Pastoral Studies and the M. Div. has resulted in a fruitful exercise in collaborative ministry preparation, and bodes well for the future.

Russell Connors. Speaking from the vantage point of a small, diocesan seminary, Russ focused on the tensions generated by commitments to the local church and larger theological concerns of the universal church. Russ's specialization in moral theology raises this issue in an acute fashion since the seminary moralist is regarded as an authoritative arbiter of church teaching, as well as a scholar committed to the pursuit of truth. The setting of the local church provides an opportunity for theological reflection and provides an anchor for the concrete, pragmatic concerns of the students. However, this very issue of concrete relevance has a "shadow side" because students can become preoccupied with "how to" questions at the expense of a more solid grounding in theory and intellectual rigor. Faculty development is crucial, particularly support for research and writing since faculty can become consumed by the formation demands of the program. The problem of small numbers of students is significant due to a concern for academic quality.

Jeremiah J. McCarthy. Jerry addressed the following concerns: (1) A need to examine the notion of integration outlined in the *Program for Priestly Formation* (PPF) in which the academic, pastoral, spiritual, and community life concerns are given equal valence in formation programs. Priorities need to be established, particularly academic concerns; (2) The need for long-range and strategic planning; (3) Curriculum planning must reflect the global context of theological education, the changing ethnic mix, ages and learning styles of students; (4) Reexamination of the mission statement of the seminary to deal with the reality of a collaborative style of priestly ministry is necessary.

Discussion. The subsequent discussion was far-reaching and insightful. Among the concerns raised were the following: (1) A need to delineate the role of Rector and Academic Dean, especially as more professional styles of management evolve;

(2) A need to clarify pastoral and academic dimensions of theological learning lest students become practitioners without substance; (3) A significant issue for many of the participants is the issue of justice and stewardship of resources in addressing quality priestly formation and collaborative ministry. Of some concern is the continuing viability of the freestanding seminary model; (4) There was a uniform consensus for critical work on a theology of priesthood by seminary personnel who are uniquely positioned to offer insights in this area; (5) The need to maintain high academic standards even in the face of low enrollments was underscored by all. The general consensus of the participants after this productive exchange is that a continuing seminar for seminary personnel should be part of the CTSA program.

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