

PRESIDENTIAL PANEL ON UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

TEACHING JESUS CHRIST TO UNDERGRADUATES

Presenters: Robert A. Krieg, University of Notre Dame
Jeanette Rodriguez, Seattle University
Otto H. Hentz, Georgetown University

Communication of theology is one of the theologian-teacher's tasks and was the focus of this "Presidential Panel." In order to examine the ways of communicating Jesus Christ, three panelists began the session with syllabi of their courses and explained their goals, methods, and pedagogical techniques. Krieg emphasizes scripture in his freshman course, and includes how historians and doctrines (Chalcedon and Vatican II) portray Jesus. Historical knowledge, mental flexibility, theological reasoning, and communication skills are the goals for the students.

Rodriguez teaches a quarter course on liberation theology to third phase students who have had two previous courses. She has two main concerns. First, students have a strong sense of individuality but little sense of community from which liberation theology derives its strength. Second, U.S. students have little experience of the economic, political, and social situation of other countries, most particularly, Latin America. She demonstrated two pedagogical techniques to present the needed experience and capture the imagination of the students. For the former, she used a segment from the movie *Romero* that expresses a Latin American perspective; and for the latter, she used Jackson Browne's music video "Lives in Balance," which expresses the students' contemporary pop culture. Her goal is not to deliver facts which inform but values which give power to live within and change the world. She seeks to have the students care about the material and about the real lives and deaths of people that are at stake in this theology; it makes a difference. To this end, students also have to give some time in visiting various agencies.

A third type of approach was presented by Otto Hentz, who tries to establish a demanding foundation from which any further theological understanding can be built. Unapologetic to his generally senior students, he demands a sophisticated, adult theological understanding that matches their other majors (e.g. economics). Hentz explained his pedagogical use of analogies for explaining such doctrines as grace, trinity, and prayer.

In the discussion which followed, all participants (approximately thirty-six), traded ideas and information on a variety of topics: (1) what works in making the students read the material and be responsible for it; (2) what works when people use group processes; (3) what works when people use high tech resources; (4) what works in different types of assignments; (5) how people teach subjects like the resurrection and the birth of Jesus; (6) what books were helpful.

Three summary observations can be made. First, it was clear that the presenters and participants take seriously continued research into teaching pedagogy and the communication of the best of current theological developments. Secondly, a vibrancy and vitality exists in the theologian-teacher when theology enters the arena of people's lives, both traditional and nontraditional students, some of whom come for a variety of motives, sometimes adversarial towards theology. Thirdly, creative theology is being done in teaching. Our best judgment is, that in the classroom where the theologian teaches, the best in theology, communication, and pedagogy concretely merge.

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WOMEN'S SEMINAR IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

ELIZABETH JOHNSON'S *SHE WHO IS*

Presenters: Christine E. Gudorf, Florida International University
Diana L. Hayes, Georgetown University
Julia A. Upton, St. John's University
Respondent: Elizabeth A. Johnson, Fordham University

This year's discussion of Elizabeth Johnson's *She Who Is* was a fitting indication of the distance covered in women's efforts in constructive theology since Johnson presented a segment of the book to the seminar as work in progress five years ago. Since its publication in 1992, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* has been the recipient of numerous awards and the subject of nearly countless reviews. Presenters considered Johnson's work from the point of view of ethics (Christine Gudorf), systematics (Diana Hayes), and pastoral theology (Julia Upton), pointing to areas for future development.