

## RESEARCH SEMINAR ON CATHOLIC THEOLOGIES OF FAMILY: REPORT AND PROSPECTS

Moderator: Christine Firer Hinze, Marquette University

Presenters: William P. Roberts, University of Dayton

Christine Firer Hinze, Marquette University

This session presented the work and final report of the Research Seminar on Theologies of Family/Family as "Domestic Church." Christine Firer Hinze summarized the history, work, and final disposition of papers prepared by the task force, originally appointed in late 1993 following an invitation by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (then chair of the NCCB subcommittee on family) to the CTSA and other scholarly societies to devote research efforts toward a positive theology of family, investigating in particular the theological concept of "family as domestic church." Members of the research seminar included cochairs Susan Secker (Seattle University) and Christine Firer Hinze (Marquette University), Sidney Callahan, Michael Fahey, SJ (Marquette), Richard Gaillardetz (St. Thomas-Houston), Diana Hayes (Georgetown), Joann Heaney-Hunter (St. John's, New York), William Roberts (Dayton), and Jeanette Rodriguez-Holguin (Seattle). Copies of the October, 1997 final report to the CTSA Board, including summaries of five research papers and two previously published essays submitted with the final report, were made available.

The papers reflect the range and complexity of the issues addressed over the life of the research seminar. Several note the difficulty of defining "family" and the importance of attending to variations and differences in social context and culture in discussing family ministry. Some papers highlight religious and moral aspects of families' interior relations and daily activities; others emphasize families' interactions with cultural, ecclesial and social patterns and institutions. Some critically probe or seek to develop the notion of "family as domestic church," and its implications for both the inner life and ecclesial and social mission of families. Finally, some work to bring interdisciplinary resources to bear on Catholic discussions of family.

Lifting up the theme of family as domestic church with a focus on the internal lives of families, William Roberts then presented a synopsis of his paper, "The Family as Church of the Home: An Approach to Contemporary Family Spirituality," and also noted important related issues raised in two other papers prepared for the seminar, Gaillardetz's "An Exploration of the Ecclesial Character of the Family," and Heaney-Hunter, "Christian Families: Creating Centers of Faith for the Next Generation." Hinze then offered synopses of two

interdisciplinary papers which highlight questions of families in relation to society, her own "Families as Transformative Agents: Toward a Catholic Feminist Ethic of Risk," and Rodriguez-Holguin's "Latino Perspective on the Family and its Encounter with the Dominant American Culture."

As in previous sessions of the research seminar, the conversation that followed indicated strong interest around this topic at both the research/scholarly and pastoral levels. Questions were addressed concerning plans for publishing the work of the seminar in an edited volume or some other format. Seminar members had at one point aspired to this goal, but time constraints and other circumstances had mitigated against it. Those in attendance expressed a high degree of interest first, in insuring that scholarly research on theologies of family and marriage continue to receive the attention of the CTSA and be visible on its annual convention agendas; and second, in seeing the seminar's research, along with other recent work in this area, made more widely available, possibly through publication in a separate project independent of the auspices of the CTSA.

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