

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Practical Theology and Theological Education
Convener: Michael P. Horan, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles
Moderator: Mark F. Fischer, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California
Presenter: Thomas H. Groome, Boston College
Respondents: Mark L. Poorman, University of Notre Dame
 Gaile M. Pohlhaus, Villanova University

How does the fundamental notion of praxis influence the teaching of practical theology? If practical theology is no longer regarded as the "delivery system" of other theological specializations, then how does theological praxis exercise an impact on the theology professor's educational goals and concerns? These questions were at the heart of the presentation and responses given in the Practical Theology continuing group.

A presentation by Thomas H. Groome of Boston College began with Groome's invitation to the participants to bring their questions to bear on the session about teaching and learning by means of a praxis-oriented approach. Using the syllabus from a recent graduate course to illustrate, Groome invited wide participation from those present; then he reflected on a method that presumes an educational ethos, one that promotes conversation in a "community of colearners" engaged in a general dynamic of learning. Groome proposed that the general dynamic of "conversation" ought to include seven "commitments" that permeate practical theological education: (1) Engaging persons in active participation; (2) attending to the range of experience that theologians bring to the learning process; (3) expressing a variety of thoughts, opinions, feelings; (4) reflecting in dialogue with the community of learners and the tradition, employing reason, memory and imagination; (5) accessing the wisdom of the faith traditions, social sciences and other resources; (6) appropriating and evaluating knowledge and insights; (7) deciding to make choices and commitments in light of new insight that emerges from conversation.

In their responses, Gaile M. Pohlhaus and Mark L. Poorman each employed a course syllabus to illustrate their approaches to teaching and learning that engage students in praxis.

Gaile M. Pohlhaus focused on the formative and transformative aspects of learning that many undergraduate students can experience in a course on Christian Marriage. Through the use of written assignments and interviews, students can come to insight about their own vocations to married or single or religious life; such learning is based on the informative aspect of learning but exceeds the bounds of cognitive data. The challenge to growth in the formative and transformative aspects offers many possibilities for genuine theological reflection among undergraduate students.

Mark L. Poorman presented a syllabus as well as a series of creative questions that shape theological analysis for graduate students in pastoral ministry field education. Poorman emphasized the need to encourage students to engage in praxis by moving from their use of the social sciences as the preferred or exclusive lens through which to regard ministerial experience. Students use the praxis-oriented series of questions in order to integrate the concerns of the social sciences but also to push their reflection to the theological, to the use of Scripture and tradition in coming to awareness and decision about their pastoral action.

The general discussion occurred within the context of the presentation and responses; in that discussion many of the thirty persons in attendance contributed theoretical questions and practical examples of effective teaching aimed at moving students of theology beyond the initial stages of reflection to grounding in praxis.

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KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

- Topic: Rahner and the Development of Doctrine
 Convener: Melvin E. Michalski, St. Francis Seminary
 Moderator: Ann R. Riggs, Marquette University
 Presenters: Mary E. Hines, Emmanuel College
 Paul G. Crowley, Santa Clara University
 Richard Lennan, Catholic Institute of Sydney

The presenters' ten-minute summaries of their papers, which had been distributed in advance on the Society's web page (www.theo.mu.edu/krs), provided an occasion for a lively discussion among forty participants. The complete texts will be published in volume 12 of *Philosophy & Theology*.

Mary Hines' paper focused on the question: "How Relevant Is Rahner Today?" She cautioned that two extremes must be avoided: (1) to dismiss Rahner as having nothing to say to us today; and (2) to insist that Rahner has answers to all questions. Hines argued that Rahner continues to be relevant today for many reasons, among them the fact that while it is true that the earlier articles remain foundational to Rahner's thinking, there is development in his approach to dogma. He moved forward and took history more seriously than in his early articles. From a study of Rahner's early articles on development Hines concluded that Rahner saw the possibility for "new" expressions of faith arising out of: (1) theological discussion; (2) the sense of faith entrusted to the whole church; and (3) confirmation by the church's authoritative teaching office. In post-Vatican II