

of personal and collective guilt in a way that renders the judgment of the historian nearly useless. In support of this claim, Bellitto noted some of the problematic distinctions identified by Prusak: "the church" vs. her sons and daughters, holiness *of the church* vs. holiness *in the church*, magisterium vs. authority.

The reason for the act of the collective examination of conscience is to identify objects of reform so that we—as a body of members—can move forward in greater fidelity to the gospel. The issue of reform allows the historian to point out (as was understood in the medieval church) that the church as institution can indeed sin and be guilty. Thus both individual and institution are capable of reform. Bellitto ended by evoking his opening observation about timing. The sex abuse scandals today illustrate the tensions pervading this discussion of sin, crime, memory, and forgiveness and challenge the church to learn from examples of reconciliation in other contexts (Holocaust, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, ecumenism, etc.) in order to move forward.

Subsequent questions concerned the theological context of *MR*, the issue of collective guilt vs. collective responsibility, the pastoral difficulty of speaking of the sin of the church, and the magisterium/authority distinction. Discussion allowed a clarification of the presenters' critical assessment of the methodological presuppositions of *MR*, but positive appreciation for its goals.

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#### MORAL THEOLOGY

Topic: Virtuous Sex  
 Convener: Thomas B. Leininger, Regis University  
 Presenters: Edward Vacek, Weston Jesuit School of Theology  
 James F. Keenan, Boston College

Edward Vacek presented a virtue-centered, experiential approach to chastity. The current Roman Catholic approach to sexual ethics has largely abandoned teleological reflection in favor of an absolute deontology that emphasizes intrinsic evil. Yet human sexuality involves great complexity. As a consequence, there is great uncertainty concerning sexual ethics in the church, society, and individual lives. A personalist, teleological approach to sexual ethics that allows uncertainty and aspires to prudence is better suited to negotiate this complexity.

Building upon Aquinas, the Catholic tradition has provided a corrective to act-centered ethical theories through its emphasis on the virtues and anthropology. Differing views of God, grace, sin, and the world lead to different accounts

of human flourishing, which, in turn, determines what is a virtue and a vice. Vacek emphasized that an understanding of humans as rational animals means, in part, that there is an animal character involved in human sexuality. A key task is to differentiate among our semiautonomous desires in order to determine which ones should be developed and integrated. "Bodily knowing" should play a crucial role in this task.

Drawing upon section 2337 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vacek argued for an understanding of chastity with two primary components: (a) integrity of the person and (b) integrality in one's relationships. Integrity involves proper self-love. On the one hand, integrity should not be primarily concerned with self-mastery and avoidance of enslavement to passions (Augustine). On the other hand, integrity is not to be found in a Dionysian approach in which play and pleasure, viewed as intrinsic goods, are left unregulated. Instead, it is found in the rhythm of life with sexual expression appropriate to becoming sexually free, alive, and graceful.

Integrality refers to wholeness in relationship to another. It involves vulnerability but not what is often called a "total self-gift" to another. While Aquinas viewed sexual love in terms of one's contribution to the common good through procreation, for Vacek sexual sharing with another need not include procreation. Sexual sharing can and should vary according to different contexts and stages of relationships.

Vacek concluded by offering new questions concerning a potential choice (X): Is X contributing to chastity as integrity and integrality? Is it internally disordered? Is it socially inappropriate? Or is it healthy for self-unity and relational wholeness? Vacek's proportionalist prudence still relies upon rules for moral guidance. However, it shifts the emphasis from arguing that "an act is unchaste if it is wrong" (act-analysis) to "an act is wrong if it is unchaste" (virtue-analysis).

James Keenan described contemporary cardinal virtues that update the cardinal virtues of Aquinas and then applied these contemporary virtues to discourse concerning sex. This application gave particular attention to the issues raised by our ongoing moral maturity for sexual ethics. Keenan argued that because real conflicts arise between competing moral goods, we need an account of competitive virtues. To update the Thomistic virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, Keenan offered the revised virtues of justice, fidelity, and self-care. In this revised account, prudence continues to guide the concrete realization of each virtue. In the context of Roman Catholicism, mercy thickens the virtues.

Sexual justice demands that we see others as subjects rather than objects. We must see our partner as possessing an inviolable dignity. This requires special vigilance with respect to the most vulnerable who are subject to the threats of sexual abuse, commodification, AIDS, etc. A justice informed by mercy moves us to a concern for the marginalized. To those at the margins of society, justice

requires us to listen and learn from their experience and to offer support, sanctuary, and hospitality. Justice requires that we work to promote gender equality. More generally, justice recognizes and respects the fact that sexuality is the embodiment of our most vulnerable dimensions as persons.

Sexual fidelity requires us to defend and sustain loving relationships. Mercy, described by Keenan as "the willingness to enter into the chaos of another," thickens fidelity by directing it into that chaos. Merciful fidelity calls us to stand with those we love in their chaos. It calls us to anticipate this chaos and enter into its complexity, upheaval, and confusion through dialogue.

Sexual self-care means sustaining our own dignity as persons in our sexual relationships. Self-care informed by mercy recognizes our weaknesses and guards us against their dangers. For example, it takes steps to protect us from being taken advantage of in a sexual relationship. Thus, it avoids premature sexual relationships, not because sex is bad but due to the demands of justice, fidelity, and self-care. Merciful self-care requires patience with our own vulnerabilities and a refusal to use sex in an effort to solve our self-esteem problems.

What if fidelity calls us to realize the moral good of entering into the chaos of another yet self-care seeks to protect us from the dangers that such an act of fidelity could present? Keenan's call for competitive virtues seems to imply that this tension might be a healthy stimulus for the authentic realization of virtue amidst the complexity of real moral conflicts.

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#### KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

- Topic: Karl Rahner Society—Program Group  
 "Faith in Context: Rahner on the Possibility of Belief"
- Convener and Moderator: Howard Ebert, St. Norbert College
- Presenter: Richard Lennan, Catholic Institute of Sydney
- Respondents: Nancy Dallavalle, Fairfield University  
 Terrence Tilley, University of Dayton

Richard Lennan gave a summary of his paper followed by responses from Nancy Dallavalle and Terrence Tilley. The full texts of the papers were available in advance on the Society's web page. Following the presentations, a lively exchange occurred among the 24 participants.