

SEMINAR ON SACRAMENTAL AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

The focus of our seminar study was the relationship between faith and marriage. Michael Lawler (Creighton University), author of *Symbol and Sacrament* and *Ecumenical Marriage*, began with a precis of his work on "Faith, Contract, and Sacrament."

He presented three theses: (a) Christian faith (an act of the will and therefore "free") is one's comprehensive relationship to God; (b) faith is necessary for salvation and sacramental validity; and (c) faith is necessary for right sacramental intention.

The difficulty of restricting our understanding of "sacramental theology" to that defined by the Council of Trent is that Trent only considered where the Reformers went wrong. While scholastic theology treated sacrament as a "thing," the contemporary approach is to emphasize interaction and therefore treat sacrament as a graced interaction.

What makes the institution of marriage a sacrament is the active faith of the two baptized Christians. This includes awareness of what the Church does as well as the intention to participate in a sacrament—a "Christ event." Faith directs intention, and where there is no active faith there can be no right intention.

JoAnn Heaney-Hunter (St. John's University, New York) responded by addressing herself to the question "What does active faith look like?"

Familiaris Consortio indicated that "minimal faith" is sufficient, just intending permanency. *Lumen Gentium*, by contrast, develops the covenantal nature of the marriage commitment. To determine "active faith," Heaney-Hunter proposes the initiation of a process similar to the catechumenate, underscoring that "remote" preparation would generally take place in childhood, "proximate" preparation in whatever program/process might be developed, and "immediate" preparation would include a retreat before celebration of the sacrament.

Why speak only of the "active faith" of the marriage partners? Doesn't the concept extend to the community as well? Shouldn't the faith of the community be predicated and emphasized in this case just as it is in discussions of infant baptism? A good discussion followed.

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