

Jacoba Kuikman from Regina explored how the Western landscape has given birth to an expression of Roman Catholicism that is pragmatic and oriented to community and social justice. One of the challenges facing the Church in Saskatchewan today is the demise of rural communities and parishes as a result of the farm financial crisis as megafarms buy up land from bankrupt farmers. Religious groups, such as St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster, are struggling to counter the mechanization and overuse of chemicals and to assist local farmers. A shortage of priests has led to a vibrant lay ministry programme, but lay leaders often experience a lack of collaboration with clergy.

Ellen Leonard reflected on how a predominately Anglo-Saxon Protestant city has grown into an ethnically and religiously mixed megacity and how this is transforming the local church in Toronto. Approximately one-third of the population of Toronto are Roman Catholics. From a minority homogeneous community of mainly Irish Catholics, the Church in Toronto has grown into a rich microcosm of the universal Church with liturgies celebrated in both Eastern and Western rites and in twenty-five different languages. What was once a comparatively united Catholic community is now many diverse communities with differing and often conflicting needs and expectations. Toronto is an important voice within the Canadian Church. During the past twenty years, its clergy and hierarchy have become increasingly conservative.

In the discussion which followed, Bishop Remi De Roo from Vancouver Island and Rebecca McKenna from the Maritimes added their perspectives on the complexities which shape the Catholic Church in Canada.

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Topic: Sexual Ethics, Social Justice, and Human Fulfillment

Convener and Moderator: Thomas Poundstone, St. Mary's College of California

Presenters: Paul Giurlanda, St. Mary's College of California

Richard Peddicord, O.P., Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis

Session in Memory of André Guindon, O.M.I.

Paul Giurlanda sought to situate the discussion on homosexuality within a pastoral/rhetorical context, that is, how can magisterial teaching be presented convincingly in North American culture? Giurlanda surveyed several strategies, for example, the claim that homosexuality can be shown to be destructive of human happiness, the spiritual appeal to the cross or "extra burden," and James Hanigan's argument about the lack of "social meaning" of homosexuality. In his view, each of these approaches is inadequate. The literature of the social

sciences, while hardly of one mind, seems more and more to take homosexuality as a naturally occurring and nonpathological sexual variant. The cross cannot be an argument, though it can be a motivation. The argument from the social insignificance of homosexuality has been strongly opposed from within the Catholic community by, *inter alia*, André Guindon, who argued that committed homosexual relationships can, in certain circumstances, be of spiritual meaning and benefit for the Christian community as a whole. Also part of the problem, perhaps, is that we have not yet decided the relative seriousness of this question, i.e., should pastoral rhetoric employ the fear of "ultimate ruin" (damnation)? If not, why not? Giurlanda concluded with a question from Mark Jordan, asking whether Eros and the preaching of the gospel can be reconciled, not simply for homosexuals, but for anyone.

Richard Peddicord's paper, "Toward a Catholic Case for Supporting Gay and Lesbian Rights Legislation," raised the question about the stance the Church should take with regard to laws forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Peddicord surveyed the varied approaches American bishops have actually taken toward such laws. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York and former Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco, responding to quite different legislative initiatives, have taken somewhat contrasting views, basing themselves, respectively, on the Church's teaching on sexual morality, and on the Church's teaching on social justice. He then gave a summary of the position of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which holds that granting rights to homosexuals would, in effect, be entering into collusion with an objectively immoral lifestyle.

On the contrary, Peddicord considered that "judging that certain behaviors are immoral does not reveal how the practitioners of such behaviors ought to be treated." This is the domain, not of sexual ethics, but of social ethics. Reaching back to the document *Dignitatis Humanae* of the Second Vatican Council, Peddicord argued that, if one accepts the principle of freedom from coercion in following one's conscience in matters of religious belief and practice, a respect based on the inherent dignity of each individual, one must then admit that this same principle applies even more strongly in matters of intimate relationships.

In the lively discussion, several speakers expressed gratitude for the dedication of the session to André Guindon. Others spoke of the need for more honesty and openness on this topic, expressing fears that we in the Church have participated in structures which have compromised people's lives. Homosexuality, it was said, needed to be understood within the general topic of sexuality, including the issue of the commodification of sex in capitalist society. There seemed to be a consensus that this topic needed to be addressed at future conventions.

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