

THEOLOGY AS A COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISE

- Topic: The Church, Sexuality, and Public Policy
Convener: Paul Giurlanda, St. Mary's College of California
Moderator: Jack A. Bonsor, Santa Clara University
Presenter: Jon D. Fuller, Boston University School of Medicine

Using Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance as a metaphor, Fuller argued that the Church is in an analogous state when comparing the traditional understanding of homosexuality with that evident in contemporary pastoral practice in two areas: the burgeoning ministry to gay men and lesbians, and the formation of healthy religious.

The traditional approach presupposes a negative, *a priori* judgment about homosexuality which, Fuller argued, is psychologically damaging to homosexual persons and also raises fundamental questions for Christian anthropology. In contrast to the traditional approach, successful pastoral ministry and the formation of healthy religious have been marked by the notion that a positive regard for one's sexual orientation (whether homosexual or heterosexual) is necessary for the promotion of an individual's integrity, happiness, productivity, spiritual maturity and union with God.

Fuller suggested that the integrity of the tradition and the welfare of the Church's members and ministries would be better served by theological reflection and dialogue on this recent fruitful experience, rather than by denying an evolution which is already occurring in practice.

Most of the more than forty attendees spoke in the lively discussion period. The emphasis seemed to be on practical pastoral concerns.

PAUL GIURLANDA
St. Mary's College of California
Moraga, California