

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SOCIETIES FOR CATHOLIC
THEOLOGY (INSeCT)

- Topic: Theology, Church and Society: Present and Future Challenges
Convener: Catherine E. Clifford, Saint Paul University, Ottawa
Moderator: Brian P. Flanagan, Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia
Presenters: Catherine E. Clifford, President of INSeCT (CTSA)
Jan Jans, Vice-President of INSeCT (ET: European Society for
Catholic Theology) University of Tilburg, Netherlands

The Steering Committee of INSeCT organized this session as a means of communicating the work of INSeCT and an opportunity for exchange with the membership of the CTSA. Catherine Clifford reported on the orientations given to the work of INSeCT at the International Colloquium of 2008, which focused on “The Theological Challenge of Intercultural Relations in an Age of Globalization.” The focus of this consultation was primarily on the “signs of the times,” including growing economic stresses and their effect on the migration of peoples, the growing gap between rich and poor, secularization and detraditionalization, and increasing concerns of fundamentalism and relativism. Since the 2008 colloquium, societies seem to be shifting their attention to consider in sharper terms the impact of these social and cultural trends on Catholic Theology in particular. The address of Dr. Lieven Boeve to the European Society of Catholic Theology’s biennial conference in August 2009, “Theology at the Crossroads of the Academy, Church, and Society,” begins to name some of these. Of growing concern are the sometimes competing interests of theological schools to the demands of civil and ecclesiastical accrediting bodies.

Dr. Jan Jans reported on the work of the European Society for Catholic Theology (ET), which is formed from a ‘consortium’ of groups of Catholic theologians from over twenty countries from across the European continent. A particular priority of ET is the inclusion of and support for developing networks of Catholic theologians in Central and Eastern Europe. To concretize this support, both the Curatorium, or governing board of ET, and the biennial convention have plans to hold future meetings in the East. ET is working to strengthen the appreciation of the contributions of lay theologians in Catholic institutions in Europe. The Bologna process initiated across the European Union for the standardization of university programs is introducing new demands in institutions which grant canonically recognized degrees and providing new opportunities for the exchange of scholars among theological schools and across disciplines. ET serves as a voice in matters of common concern within the Bologna process.

Plans have begun for the next triennial international colloquium in 2011, which will meet to consider the theme, “Transitions in Global Catholicism: Their Impact on Theology and Theological Education.” International colloquia provide an opportunity to gather together both representatives of the member societies and to hear from groups of Catholic theologians in regions

with little infrastructure or formally established societies. At present, INSeCT is soliciting “regional reports” from such regions for its website and is seeking financial aid to ensure the broadest possible participation in the 2011 colloquium.

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