

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY / METHOD—TOPIC SESSION

- Convener: Peter Bernardi, S.J., Loyola University of Chicago
Moderators: John Thiel, Fairfield University
Daniel Rober, St. John's University
Presenters: Anne Carpenter, St. Mary's College of California
Theresa Ladrigan Whelpley, Santa Clara University
Gerard Mannion, Georgetown University
Respondent: Martin Madar, Xavier University

The 2015 Fundamental Theology and Method session comprised three very different papers, all dealing directly with the conference theme of *Sensus Fidelium*. Anne Carpenter began with a paper that analyzed the sense of the faithful as memory, and as such its relationship to tradition. She did this in dialogue with Hans Urs von Balthasar, as well with Continental philosopher Jean-Louis Chrétien. Carpenter's paper started with an analysis of memory, using a variety of sources from cognitive science and psychology. Chrétien's key insight for the paper is the idea that memory is most itself in the act of remembering, a notion that Carpenter links up to the remembering that takes place within faith. With this idea, she segues to Balthasar and to the idea of remembering as apprehension of the past in the present, an idea which she connects to the *sensus fidelium*. In response to a clarifying question, Carpenter was able to flesh out some more of the practical implications of this argument for the living out of tradition.

Theresa Ladrigan Whelpley's paper focused on the lay vocation and the *sensus fidelium*, dealing particularly with the ecclesiological neglect of the laity that has analyzed them in categories from the hierarchy. After addressing the approach to the laity at Vatican II, Ladrigan-Whelpley turns to the charisms of the laity, with special attention to the role that lay affiliation with religious orders has played in the development of a sense of lay vocation. She has done in-depth studies of these lay affiliates and was thus able to share direct insights from the interviews that she has conducted. Ladrigan-Whelpley draws from this research three major "marks" of the charismatic lay vocation: particular, that is, identified with a particular spirituality; communal, that is, supported and challenged by others in this vocation; and total, that is, a kind of lens that informs other contexts of their lives. The paper concludes by analyzing the reinvigoration of the vocation of the laity under Pope Francis after the centralization under the hierarchy by John Paul II.

Gerard Mannion's paper dealt with the International Theological Commission documents of 2012 and 2014, raising questions about the differences between these documents on the issue of *sensus fidelium*. The first document reflects various approaches to *sensus fidelium*, but on the whole reflects a subordination of this idea to the magisterium in a way that reflects the approach of Benedict XVI. The 2014 document, on the other hand, tends to speak more directly, particularly when it comes to *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*, giving what Mannion calls a more nuanced account of these ideas. In the constructive and comparative section of his paper, Mannion analyzes the question of what changed between these two documents that changed their overall tone and approach to a set of important issues. The most obvious change, Mannion argues, is that of the papacy itself, with Pope Francis revitalizing the idea of the church as the People of God and critiquing overly

hierarchical approaches. The 2014 ITC document thus reflects an incorporation of Pope Francis's approach into its own. Mannion concludes by calling for a more open discussion of *sensus fidelium* and of the role of magisterium.

Martin Madar's response began with a useful summary of the three papers that preceded it, noting that all three demonstrate a robust understanding of the church as People of God, which Madar argues can be used in developing greater dialogical and participatory structures in the church. There is also a need, he argues, for the magisterium to be accountable to someone beyond itself. This, according to Madar, can best be fostered by a strong sense of the local church and *sensus fidelium* among the laity.

After each panelist gave a brief response to Madar's response, a vigorous discussion ensued. There had been time for clarifying questions after the individual papers, so the general discussion was able to deal with broader issues and put the papers in dialogue with one another. In response to a question about Balthasar and the ITC documents, Carpenter argued that for her Balthasar would support the language of the 2014 document as he was not a theologian of narrowness and condemnation. Much of the discussion centered around interpretation of issues surrounding Mannion's paper, perhaps owing to its timeliness and connection to the response, including particularly informative comments made by attendee Peter Phan about recent changes in the disciplining of theologians under Pope Francis. The discussion reflected a strong interest among attendees in the topic of *sensus fidelium* and in the individual papers.

DANIEL ROBER
Saint John's University
Queens, New York