

MORAL THEOLOGY (II)—TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
Moderator: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
Presenters: Jozef Zalot, Mount St. Joseph University
Matthew Petrussek, Loyola Marymount University

Zalot's paper, "Divest or Engage? A Moral Challenge for Socially Responsible Investors," opened the second session. He examined the moral questions which arise concerning an academic institution's moral responsibility when a corporation's stock it owns is engaged in ethically questionable activities. Framed within the context of the extraction and marketing of fossil-fuels, Zalot's paper asked whether an institution should divest and free itself from any material cooperation in these corporate actions, or should it maintain its ownership shares for the expressed purpose of positive corporate engagement.

Petrusek's paper, "The Gift and the Goal: Rationally Reconstructing 'Human Dignity' in the Catholic Social Thought Tradition," concluded the session. He argued that the principle of human dignity constitutes a foundational moral principle in Catholic social ethics, especially since Vatican II, yet despite its prevalence in numerous Church documents, including Pope Francis's work, no single ecclesial text has adequately identified, explained, and defended the full meaning and significance of the distinctively Catholic conception of universal human worth in a systematic way. With some help from the theology of Karl Rahner, his paper sought to refine the Church's understanding and practical use of "human dignity" by seeking to rationally reconstruct a comprehensive and coherent definition of the term from within the Catholic Social Thought Tradition.

Discussion in the second session began with Zalot's paper, as participants discussed the tension of Catholic academic institutions, including the CTSA, between having an investment portfolio that delivers strong returns on investment, returns which enable such institutions to fund projects, and programs that advance a Catholic ethical vision. Also discussed was the efficacy of influencing a corporation's policy to conform more to Catholic Social Teaching through ownership of its stock and participation in shareholder meetings. Discussion on Petrussek's work dealt with received understandings of human dignity in Catholic theology.

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