

LONERGAN—INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Various Applications of *Sensum Fidelium*
Convener: John Dadosky, Regis College, Toronto
Moderator: Daren Dias, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto
Presenters: Thomas Groome, Boston College
William George, Dominican University
Randall Rosenberg, St. Louis University

William George's paper, "Who are the *Fideles* and What is Their *Sensus*? Insights from Bernard Lonergan" suggests alternative ways of thinking about the *sensum fidelium* beyond ecclesial and "religious" boundaries. Drawing from Bernard Lonergan, George shows how key themes in Lonergan's thought converge to expand beyond ecclesial boundaries and the understandings of and judgments about "the faithful" and the "*sensus*." In this wise, he draws attention to four key positions in Lonergan's work that can help the church broaden the notion of *sensum fidelium*. These four key insights are: (1) Lonergan's observation about Catholic tardiness in staying abreast of the times; (2) his distinctive understanding of natural law; (3) his emphasis on God's universal salvific will and a concomitant emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit; and, (4) his related notion of "the emerging religious consciousness of our time." Questions raised by the audience centered on how to draw from and at the same time go beyond Lonergan. Here George centered the discussion on his years of academic and pastoral ministries, showing how the *sensum* can be located not only in religious traditions, but also where religious discourse is muted or altogether absent. To explicate this claim he suggests that international lawyers and the law they make, interpret, and apply can be understood as a locus for the activity and promptings of the Holy Spirit. This, in his view, is exemplified in the lives and work of two leading international lawyers, Antonio Cassese and the Sri Lankan legal scholar, teacher, and one-time International Court of Justice (ICJ) vice-president, Christopher Weeramantry.

Thomas Groome presented on "Lonergan's Dynamics of Cognition and Educating-in-Faith." The presentation centered on Lonergan's foundational insight on the dynamic structure of cognitional intentionality and its implication for Christian pedagogy—that a dynamically performed conscious intentionality is likely to encourage a person who performs these precepts (attending, understanding, judging, and deciding) to reach a life of self-transcendence, authenticity, and conversion. These Lonerganian precepts, according to Groome, are ideally suited to educating in Christian faith. In light of *Gaudium et Spes*' fundamental assertion that the "split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age" (GS 43), Groome raises some critical questions: how do we engage Lonergan's dynamics of cognition and its precepts to shape our own pedagogy in Christian education? Why might the dynamics of cognition, performed with conscious intentionality, be effective to educate in Christian faith? The audience were particularly interested in the practical applications of the Lonerganian precepts and how these can enhance Christian formation. Groome drew attention to Lonergan's idea that the knowing (wisdom) of Christian faith comes from both "below" and "above," and how Lonergan's dynamics of cognition suggests a pedagogy that encourages people intentionally do the following: (1) attend to, understand, and judge the data of "life"—around a generative theme of life or life in

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faith; (2) attend to, understand and judge the data of Christian faith apropos the generative them; and (3) make judgments and decisions that integrate these two “sources” so as to at least learn from the tradition and may be to become Christian—for life. At the end there was near unanimity that Lonergan’s work lends itself, as Groome proposes, to a pedagogy that moves “from life to faith to life in faith.”

Randall Rosenberg presented on “the Trinitarian Basis of Religious Experience in Doran’s *The Trinity of History: Therese of Lisieux and Etty Hillesum*.” Using the four point hypothesis of Doran and Neil Ormerod, Rosenberg suggests a comparison between the lives of Therese of Lisieux and Etty Hillesum. Discussion centered mainly on the “free” and “loose” life of Etty Hillesum.

CYRIL ORJI
*University of Dayton,
Dayton, Ohio*

JOHN DADOSKI
*Regis College,
Toronto, Ontario*