

SCRIPTING THE SAINTS

Convener & Moderator: Lawrence S. Cunningham, University of Notre Dame
Presenters: Robert Ellsberg, Orbis Books
Wendy M. Wright, Creighton University
James Martin, *America Magazine*

This panel was organized by John Thiel, the incoming president of the CTSA, with the precise purpose of discussing how some writers on the saints became interested in the topic and what their writing about the saints have taught them. Chaired by Lawrence S. Cunningham (University of Notre Dame) three writers took up this topic with short presentations followed by some dialogue between the presenters and a vigorous exchange with the audience. Robert Ellsberg (Publisher of Orbis Books) talked about his desire to “expand the canon” beyond the official one to describe what the late Simone Weil called a saintliness appropriate for the demands of the time. James Martin, (Culture Editor of *America Magazine*) discussed his desire to capture the life and paradigmatic values of the saintly life by resisting the notion of “perfection” and over emphasis on the miraculous; he saw how those kinds of emphases can distort by drawing an analogy between high Christology and low Christology arguing that a true picture only comes when the two are held in tension. Wendy Wright (Creighton University) described how she came to the saints via her training as an historian. A recognized expert on the Salesian School of Spirituality, she said that her interest in the saints derived from a focus on the saint as person. She argued that the saint produces an “edge effect” (not to be confused with marginality) that sheds some light and offers hope for the dis-ease in life.

The audience participation ranged over a vast number of topics from the current law concerning canonization to the intercessory place of saints as well as how the creedal affirmation about the “Communion of Saints” enlarges our understanding of worship and, by extension, ecclesiology.

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