

Preface

THIS ISSUE OF *Logos*, our first since the Vatican's publication of "*Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*," offers an opportunity to reflect on our own commitment to diversity. Though we cannot in a preface to a single issue say all that might be said, we can invite our readers to consider whether we are on the right track as we ponder the problems of our times and the current teachings of the Church.

We begin the issue with essays by **Michael J. Baxter, C.S.C.**, **David Schindler**, **David Hollenbach, S.J.**, and **Michael Novak**, presented earlier this year as part of the Fourth Annual Cardinal Bernardin Conference, and an essay by **Philip Gleason** providing a historical perspective for the other reflections. As **Sister Catherine Patten** notes in her introduction to these five pieces, Cardinal Bernardin's Catholic Common Ground Initiative was intended to "reconstitute the conditions for addressing our differences constructively." The annual conferences allow Catholics with conflicting views on an issue to talk together. This year the role of Catholics in the public arena and the opportunities for evangelization in the United States were the topics of discussion.

The range of diversity broadens dramatically with our next essay, in which two Cuban economists, **Vilma Hidalgo** and **Milagros Martinez**, address the question: "**Is the U.S. Economic Embargo on Cuba Morally Defensible?**" Perhaps the convergence between the

answer the Pope has given to this question and the answer defended by Hidalgo and Martinez signals common ground for discussion of differences.

Three philosophical pieces follow. **John F. X. Knasas** asks **“Whither the Neo-Thomist Revival?”** His verdict is that historically neo-Thomism is dead and gone, but philosophically it is alive and well. And perhaps, he suggests, a historical revival is possible. **John Haldane** surveys **“Thomistic Ethics in America,”** relating the project of developing a theory of value and conduct to the present state of American culture. He argues that moral thinking in American public life and culture can be advanced by showing how ethical claims are grounded in commonly known facts about human nature. **Russell Pannier’s** analysis of **“Aquinas on the Ultimate End of Human Existence,”** which draws on some of the same resources Knasas and Haldane discuss, clarifies Aquinas’s notion that the ultimate end of human existence is a *unified* end. As philosophers will immediately recognize, though the questions these three men address overlap, and though their answers are complementary, the answers have been shaped by diverse methodological approaches.

In **“Thomas Merton’s Vision of the Kingdom,”** **Patrick F. O’Connell** reflects on the mysterious unifying symbol of the kingdom of God. One who has faith in Christ identifies with Christ, and acts “as a member of His Body and a faithful citizen of His Kingdom.” Our public duties as citizens of a nation, and citizens of the wider, more diverse world, are ultimately shaped by the fact we are destined for God, and are citizens of the Kingdom. We are diverse members of a unified body.

Why do we value diversity?

Catholics who profess that Christ is the universal redeemer and that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church (dogmas re-articulated in *Dominus Iesus*) are of course sometimes accused of

antiecumenism, of unreasonable resistance to diversity. They are accused of an *arrogant* faith.

What is faith? Faith is assent that goes beyond the evidence. And why would a good God require such a strange thing from us? Don't we violate the epistemic rules if we consciously maintain beliefs that go further than the evidence? Why didn't God give us better grounds for belief, revealing himself more fully so that assent beyond the evidence would be unnecessary?

Perhaps one reason is that faith in God enhances our love for God: belief in a person that goes beyond the evidence requires trust, and trust develops love. Friends, spouses, parents, and children trust one another, and that trust strengthens bonds of friendship and love.

God asks for our faith and trust in him. In order to give it, we must first learn to trust one another. Trust among friends and close family is a beginning—but not an end to the matter. We must work *together* with the entire human family in order to understand all that we can of God, in order to sharpen and enlarge our dim sight of divine matters. That means Catholics must talk with and learn from other Catholics with different backgrounds and perspectives—and Lutherans must do the same, and Baptists, and so on. It means Catholics must talk with and learn from non-Catholic Christians, and Christians must talk with and learn from non-Christian theists, and theists must talk with and learn from nontheists.

Through discussion and collaboration we may rid ourselves of false opinions. We may appropriate positive truths others have discovered, extending our own vision. Together, with the benefit of an intellectual division of labor, with our different gifts and in our various roles, suppressing the individual arrogance to which we are naturally inclined, we are reciprocally enriched. We understand things that no one of us would apprehend alone. We work in trust, in charity, to build the body of Christ.

Because God requires faith from us, we rely on established mediators as we build the community of love, the Church that is Christ's

body. We rely on the authority of Christ's representatives. If we *saw* the things we believe on faith, we would not have to yearn for these things, reflect on them, work to appropriate them through partaking of the sacraments, and attach ourselves to the people of God as we struggle for greater comprehension. Our faith helps us love. And the love, in turn, forms and perfects faith: love of God makes possible wholehearted assent to belief beyond the evidence.

What is it that people imagine when they say that God should have revealed himself to us more fully? If astronomers worldwide claimed to discover detailed information about divine matters spelled out in the distant stars in Koine Greek—and if we believed them, discounting talk of practical jokes or hallucinations or tricks by aliens—the effect might not be at all salutary. We would have facts about God on the cheap, without the work needed to understand them. We would have the facts without plumbing the mystery of God's love for us. Meditative reflection on the incarnation, on Christ's death on the cross, on the economy of salvation is necessary in order for us to love God with our entire being. The meditative reflection is nourished and guided by membership in the diverse body of Christ. And the diverse body of Christ grows through contact with the entire human family, becoming eventually “the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

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