Dear theologians and colleagues,

Greetings to you all! I am delighted to be in touch with you again, and to inform you about some matters that concern our Network.

Meeting of the Executive committee 2016

The Executive committee held its annual meeting from July 27 to 31, 2016. The participants were Nancy Pineda-Madrid as vice-president, James McEvoy and Gaston Ogui Cossi as Board members, on July 28 Kochurani Abraham as newly elected Board member (see below), and myself as president. Érico Hammes, vice president, was unable to attend due to ill health.

The meeting was hosted at Dharmaram College in Bangalore, India, the major study house of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) congregation. Father Shaji George Kochuthara CMI was our contact person and I would like to thank him as well as Father Kaithavana Geevarghese “Jijo”, Research Centre Dharmaram, for the warm hospitality and for looking after us with a great deal of care.

The Steering Committee met at this venue because we plan to hold the 2017 General Assembly there (see below). The Board meeting was, therefore, a good opportunity to become both familiar with the place and acquainted with the leadership of Dharmaram College. We had a very interesting and informative colloquium with the Rector of the community of CMI Congregation, Rev. Dr. Thomas Aykara CMI, the President of the Pontifical Athenaeum Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly CMI, the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Dr. Saju Chackalackal CMI, and the Dean of the Theological Faculty, Dr. Joy Philip Kakkanattu CMI. We also experience the richness of the different liturgical rites in India by celebrating the Holy Eucharist with the community not only in Latin rite, but also in the Syro-Malabar and in the Syro-Malankara rites.

At the same time as our meeting at Dharmaram College, a conference on “Feminine Genius: Women’s Leadership for a Just and Compassionate Society” was held there (July 29–30),
jointly organized by Journal of Dharma and Globethics.net India. The Board of INSeCT attended one of the plenary sessions and listened to the papers of, amongst others, Dr. Shalini Mulackal PBVM (president of the Indian Theological Association) and Dr. Shaji George Kochuthara CMI. At this session I was invited to give a short presentation on INSeCT and its Research program on gender justice.

We had an outing one afternoon, visiting the community of my religious order of the Servants of Mary OSM. The community offered us a warm welcome, with dances and a delicious meal. The journey was also an impressive immersion in the notorious local traffic!

**New member of the Steering Committee**

James McEvoy resigned from the Steering Committee at the end of this 2016 Bangalore meeting, therefore, according to INSeCT’s statutes § 7 art. 3, the Board elected Kochurani Abraham to fill that vacancy until the 2017 General Assembly.

I’d like to thank James cordially for his huge effort in being the representative of INSeCT’s Board in the Asia-Pacific region for two years as well as for his work as secretary of the Board meetings!

Thanks also to Kochurani for her willingness to accept this task. She teaches feminist theology and feminist spirituality as a visiting professor in some institutes of theological formation in India. She has been the coordinator of the Indian Women Theologian’s Forum (IWTF) and of Ecclesia of Women in Asia (EWA). She is also an active member of Indian Theological Association (ITA), World Forum of Theology and Liberation, and Indian Association of Women’s Studies.

**Looking back**

One important element of the Steering Committee meeting was a review of our recent activities. This showed that the Board had success with some projects and initiatives, e.g. inviting member societies to make the INSeCT research theme part of their annual conference/symposium (see reports below); the creation of a Facebook group; the regular update of INSeCT’s webpage and the posting of any available information on activities of the single societies; and the publication of an annual newsletter of the president.

But we had to acknowledge as well that in regard to some of our commitments we have been less successful, e.g. the regular contact of individual Board members with the presidents of the societies of their respective regions; following up with presidents of each association and publishing a regional newsletter once a year in order to exchange information and promote a sense of belonging to our Network.

A further challenge consists in the fact that some theological societies, members of our Network, have few or no activities. The reasons are various, e.g. lack of financial resources or a weak structural basis. It may be useful to reflect on how the Network can support and assist these societies specifically.
INSeCT’s research project “A question of gender justice: the role of women in decision making in Church and Society”

Many of our member societies have responded positively to the invitation to engage in open and diverse discussion on the topic of the International Research Project 2014–2017: A Question of Gender Justice: the role of women in decision-making in different areas of church and society, with an open mind, an unambiguous option for the underprivileged, and a clear outlook on particular regional and historical contexts.

ESCT


ESCT – DaKaTeo

DAKATEO and ESCT held a joint Symposium on “Gender and Ecclesiology: An Intercultural Dialogue” at Tagaytay, Philippines, from July 14–17, 2016. The conference was organized with the participation of other INSeCT-Asia members (ACTA – Australian Catholic Theological Association, EWA – Ecclesia of Women in Asia, ITA – Indian Theological Association, and IWTF – Indian Women Theologians Forum), of St. Vincent School of Theology, Manila, and of ESWTR. Eight sessions treated eight topics, each one of them introduced from a European and an Asian perspective, followed by a generous amount of discussion and exchange. The topics and speakers were: “Women at the Grassroots’ Level of Church Leadership (e.g. BECs, social/political movements, etc.)” by Virginia Saldanha (IWTF, India) and Sr. Gemma Simmonds CJ (ET, Great Britain); “Female Deacons, Women Clergy Ordination” by Kochurani Abraham (ITA, India) and Angela Berlis (ESWTR, Switzerland); “Women from Spiritual Counselors to Confessors?” by Sr. Chris Burke (ACTA, Australia) and Sr. Rebeka Anic HSF (ESWTR, Croatia), “Women Religious as Vanguard of Women Participation” by Sr. Shalini Mulackal, pbvm (ITA, India) and Sr. Teresa Forcades OSB (ESWTR, Spain), “Women Leadership in the
Bible” by Sr. Margaret Beirne (ACBA, Australia) and Rita Perintfalvi (ESWTR Hungary/Austria), “A Church beyond Clericalism” by Ramon Echica (DaKaTeo, Philippines) and Eamon Conway (ET, INSeCT Ireland), “A Gender Perspective on Catholic Sexual Ethics: Who Defines the roles and issues?” by Sharon Bong (EWA, Malaysia), Martin M. Lintner OSM (ESCT, INSeCT, Italy/Austria) and Gunter Prüller Jagenteufel (ESCT, Austria), “Women in a New Ecclesiology of the Laity” by Agnes Brazal (DaKaTeo/EWA, Philippines) and Serena Noceti (ESCT, Italy). To help contextualize the topics, the Conference began with testimonies from female victims of sexual abuse in their families. The conference was an intellectually and culturally enriching experience.

ACTA (by James McEvoy)

The Australian Catholic Theological Association held its 2016 conference in Melbourne from July 7 to 10, and adopted INSeCT’s 2014–2017 research theme as its primary focus. The ACTA conference theme: “Theological Contributions Toward Re-Imagining Gender Justice.”

Three keynote sessions were held, the first a lecture by Sr. Mary John Mananzan OSB, from Manilla, entitled “Asian Feminist Theology from the EATWOT Perspective”; a second session led by Geraldine Hawkes, followed the methodology of receptive ecumenism: “Re-Imagining Women’s Participation in the Church through Receptive Ecumenism.” This session adopted a “fishbowl” format and involved six ACTA members who, in preparation, had engaged in dialogue with leaders and members of other churches, including the Uniting Church and the Lutheran Church, about their church’s path to recognizing the ministry and leadership of women. The third keynote session was multi-disciplinary, focusing on gender justice, with three speakers: Dr Veronica Lawson rsm (Biblical), Dr Maeve Heaney (Systematic), and Professor Robert Gascoigne (Moral). A lengthy and deeply engaged discussion ensued, with two formal proposals being made to the Doctrine and Morals Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Almost all the other members’ papers delivered at the conference took up some angle on the INSeCT research theme.

CTSA (by Nancy Pineda-Madrid)

At the Catholic Theological Society of America’s (CTSA) June 2016 convention (San Juan, Puerto Rico), INSeCT had an invited session entitled, “Gender Justice in Church and Society.” This session is CTSA’s contribution to INSeCT current global research project and was organized by INSeCT vice-president Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid. It advanced a conversation on the research project among the CTSA, the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA), and the Unión de Instituciones Teológicas Católicas en México, A.C. (UITCM). Dr. James McEvoy, president of ACTA, presented his paper, “‘Recognition’ and the Ministry of Women”; Dr. Christina Astorga, member of CTSA, presented her paper, “Gender Inequity is at the Root of Gender Violence”; and Dr. Carlos Mendoza-Álvarez, OP, former president of the UITCM, presented his paper, “A Critical Approach to Gender Identities in the ‘Muxe’ Case.”

2017 General Assembly

Date and venue

The General Assembly will take place in Bangalore at Dharmaram College in July 19–23, 2017. It will start in the evening of July 19 and end with the evening program of July 22. July 23 will be the departure date or, alternatively, a tourist program for those interested.
The venue was chosen by the Steering Committee in line with the decision of the previous Board, i.e. to hold INSeCT’s General Assembly not only in Europe or in the USA, but also in the Global South in order to include a larger number of theologians from these regions. It should be considered that it belongs to the mission of INSeCT to support Catholic Theological Societies in the Global South.

Program

The meeting will consist of four major parts:

I. A conference (1 ½ days) on the global research project 2014–2017 (“A question of gender justice: the role of women in decision making process in Church and Society”) in order to prepare an international conference on this issue in Rome in 2018.

II. The project “Theology Worldwide” (½ day): Since 2008 INSeCT has adopted this project to provide information about the state of Catholic theology in the various local, regional, and national contexts around the world. The attendees will present reports on the status of theology in their region. This part will be organized as a moment of encounter with Dharmaram College. The presentation of the different reports will be open to the academic staff and students of Dharmaram College. This will give an opportunity to the participants of the General Assembly to know and get in touch with the local academic theology and vice versa.

III. A ½ day of “local immersion” by visiting an institution in Bangalore which is engaged in matters of gender education and gender justice.

IV. The Business meeting (½ day): The Board has drawn up the agenda of the Business meeting and discussed at length one of the issues, i.e. the nomination of possible candidates for the next Steering Committee. The detailed Agenda will be forwarded to the ordinary participants in time for the meeting. The Board also outlined some modifications to INSeCT’s Statutes, to be proposed to the General Assembly.

Participants

The participants at the General Assembly will be the members of the current Steering Committee and one representative from each corporate member of our network, normally the president in office. Furthermore, the Board agreed on inviting as guests one delegate of each of the following associations in order to examine a possible membership of these theological societies: ESWTR (European Society of Woman in Theological Research), CATI (Coordinamento Associazioni Teologiche Italiane), Association of Indonesian Catholic Theologians (AsTeKia), and a Mexican Association of female theologians. Also to be invited are some theologians from Asian countries where no theological associations exist (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan).

Sr. Anne E. Patrick – R.I.P. (by Nancy Pineda-Madrid)

INSeCT mourns the passing of Sr. Anne E. Patrick, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names and the William H. Laird Professor of Religion and the Liberal Arts, emerita, at Carleton College (Northfield, Minnesota). Sr. Patrick passed on July 21, 2016 after a valiant struggle with cancer. She was a member of INSeCT’s first steering committee (1997–2002), a founding
vice-president of INSeCT, and past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). She specialized in Christian Ethics, Catholicism, feminist and liberation theologies, and religion and literature; and published extensively in these areas. INSeCT will miss her as a friend and collaborator. She actively supported INSeCT’s work through this past year. May she rest in peace.

**Networking requires keeping in contact and exchanging information**

As in my previous newsletter, I would like to encourage you again to exchange information on the activities of your theological associations. Such regular exchange is the basis of our networking.

INSeCT, in realizing its networking, prefers the use of electronic media.

- Please visit the web-presence of the Network: [www.insecttheology.wordpress.com](http://www.insecttheology.wordpress.com). There you can find information on INSeCT as well as on various initiatives and activities of the member societies.

- In order to share information more easily, we have created a Facebook group: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/insecttheology](https://www.facebook.com/groups/insecttheology). This platform is dedicated to sharing resources, blogs, posts, writings, questions, and discussion to support each other in engaging the International Networking of Societies for Catholic Theology.

- If you want to share ideas, projects, or initiatives, please post them on our Facebook page or send an e-mail to insecttheology@gmail.com, so the information will be posted at INSeCT’s blog.

In October 2016, I will address a separate letter to the presidents of our member societies about registration for the General Assembly 2017.

With best regards!

Prof. Martin M. Lintner OSM

*President of INSeCT*