

CTSA CONVENTION 2009

JUNE 4-7, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

THEME: "IMPASSE . . . AND BEYOND"

One of the signs of the time in both civil societies and faith communities is the reality of "impasse." Many divisions, tensions, and oppositions present in theology, church, and society stem from markedly divergent and even intractably conflicting understandings of church, political ideology, and cultural identity.

The convention's theme is inspired by a seminal essay authored by the Carmelite scholar, Constance FitzGerald, entitled, "Impasse and Dark Night" (available at www.geocities.com/baltimorecarmel/johncross/impasse.html). By "impasse" she indicates a situation in which "there is no way out of, no way around, no rational escape from, what imprisons one, no possibilities in the situation." Reason, technological progress, and scientific understanding are of little use, she maintains, when faced with genuine impasse. She believes that "impasse" describes our situation in the face of deeply embedded social chasms and ruptures.

Yet, FitzGerald also avows that "impasse" is a call to think – and act – in ways we are not accustomed. Bernard Lonergan, from a different vantage point, similarly declares that differences between interpretive horizons cannot be satisfactorily resolved through dialogue alone; they require a response of conversion (cf. *Method in Theology*).

The theme, then, is not a call for the CTSA to wallow in depression or self-pity. Rather, **"impasse . . . and beyond"** invites the Society to use its best energies of reflection and insight, serving the Church and our society through coming to a greater clarity of the reality suggested by "impasse," and the theologian's vocation and tasks in the midst of this situation.