

CTSA STATEMENT ON PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

The CTSA began as a learned society of Roman Catholic priests engaged in seminary teaching. Since the Second Vatican Council, we have changed enormously. Our membership now includes people from various constituencies lay women and men, members of religious orders and congregations, priests and bishops, members of different Christian traditions and religions, scholars and friends. The CTSA is no longer a relatively homogeneous association but reflects a variety of standpoints. Additionally all the members have been socialized within a particular sector of their own culture and society and have been at least partially formed by that process. Consequently, the CTSA shares the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows that are common to other members of the church as well as the rest of the larger communities in which we live.

Within the CTSA we find the traditional disciplines of Catholic theology. However, within each of the disciplines, there is a continuous discussion of methodologies, standpoints, and various philosophical and epistemic presuppositions. Varieties of hermeneutical practices are in evidence in the papers, lectures, and other presentations (including the business meeting) that are part of our annual convention. We are in a methodological transition that began in Europe, was highlighted in Vatican II, and has been carried forward by various kinds of liberation theologies. Catholic theology is multidisciplinary and multicultural. We do not always have a common language, common methodology, common experiences, or a common culture. Yet, for all this diversity, the CTSA is united by the aspiration shared in our mission statement: to provide resources so we can better understand our heritage and how we might live it out today.

Additionally, as a professional society the CTSA is committed to furthering research, engaging our theology with contemporary problems, fostering more effective means of theological education, and providing a forum for an exchange of viewpoints. In view of our increasing diversity in formative cultural experiences and theological commitments, the following questions arise: How do we as a professional society model fidelity to our mission statement? How do we act both to build up our society and to model the behavior that can serve to enhance our church community?

IMPLEMENTING THE MISSION STATEMENT There are several steps that we can take, particularly during our convention, to insure that we promote our mission.

First, we must respect the integrity of one another's research and teaching. Respect for best practices of research means that while we respect the methods of the past, we are also open to new approaches in methodology as well as in teaching methods. There is much innovation in play and while not all of it will be fruitful or useful for everyone, we must be open to different ways of approaching our research and teaching.

Second, we must respect the diversity of our learned society. While we may not share ties of friendship with every CTSA member, nonetheless we share a common humanity and aspire to a common desire of serving people of faith. These bonds provide a strong foundation for the respect we are to show one another.

Such respect is especially called for when engaging with those whose life experiences and backgrounds differ markedly from our own. Our membership now reflects, though not proportionally, the racial and ethnic demographics of the church as well as differing sexual orientations and gender identities. Along

with this diversity of population, we also have a diversity of perspectives, viewpoints, and methodologies. Courtesy and decency are the least we can offer one another in such circumstances. Also in the necessary task of intellectual disputation and criticism, we must remember that those who present ideas and proposals are persons. Questioning methodologies, critiquing perspectives, and challenging arguments are essential for the advancement of knowledge and insight. However, we must make sure that we do not attack the person who proposes methodologies, perspectives and proposals with which we disagree.

Third, in the pursuit of our common mission and the resolution of our personal and conceptual differences, we strive to follow the advice of St. Ignatius, that we should argue and debate “that the truth might appear, and not that we should seem to gain the upper hand.”

The benefits of such an approach are that we presume the best interpretation of one another's motives and work and that differences are addressed through direct, open, and respectful dialogue with an individual about the issue at hand. Moreover, we strive not to rely or proceed solely upon what others have reported or from reports in other sources. Such a respectful engagement minimizes misunderstandings and the animosity that often flows from them.

Should this approach not resolve an issue or concern, the individual will approach the President of the CTSA and explain the situation. If the President and the individuals involved cannot resolve the issue among themselves, the President may take this concern to the full Board of Directors for their deliberations and decision about steps that can be taken to overcome the effects of any offense that has occurred and prevent any further harm.

Finally, in our life together and in our conventions, we highlight our common search for a deeper understanding of the Catholic tradition. This does not mean either a forced uniformity or a grudging truce. Our history reminds us that there has been a variety of schools of theologies--frequently associated with religious Orders--a variety of methods of resolving moral problems, different ways of interpreting the Scriptures. None of these were obstacles to unity in faith but rather enriched the faith by having different aspects of it illuminated by these different approaches. So it should be today.

Board Approved June 7, 2018