



# Networking Cedara

Volume 21, Number 15

17May – 25 July 2010

## The Coming Weeks at Cedara

**Tuesday, 18 May:** FRIDAY TIME-TABLE


**Tuesday, 18 May:** Institute Liturgy (5 pm, John Joyce SPS presiding)

**Thursday, 20 May:** Last day of lectures for the second term

**Monday, 24 May:** SJTI Post-Graduate Seminar (8-4.30, Board Room)

**Wednesday, 26 May:** Cluster Publications AGM (5 pm, SORAT)





**Exams: 24 May – 4 June**  
**Midyear Break: 11 June – 25 July**  
**Lectures Resume for the 3<sup>rd</sup> term: Monday, 26 July**

## Rahner's theology of grace

In Rahner's theology of grace nature and grace are so intimately connected that he cannot think of the one existing without the other. He develops this complex theology beginning with a reflection on the human existential reality. In his view grace is the dynamic self-giving of God that makes it possible for the human person to seek and also to receive the gift offered. The gift offered by God is God's very being.



### Grace



Rahner speaks of grace God's self-communication to the world. 'This self-communication is not merely transmission of information about God, but the giving of God's own self' (Duffy 2005:44). Rahner sees God as creator of human beings who has placed within them an openness and a yearning for fulfillment. This yearning, which is always part of the human existential reality, is in Rahner's view, God's presence within the human person.

Actual fulfillment of the human potential, however, cannot be actualized without the aid, grace of God. This fulfillment only takes place in and through God. In going out and receiving the gift of God the human person does not lose him/herself in God, but actually finds their the true self. True humanity is humanity grounded and fulfilled in God. Grace is God's transforming presence enabling the divinization of human beings and their participation in the divine life (Duffy 2005:44).

Another way to speak of this same reality is to say that grace 'is primarily God's orientation of God's creatures to the divine self, an orientation that occurs in the supernatural existential of being human' (Kelly 2005:44).

### Nature

Rahner sees nature as being distinct but never separate from grace. All of creation, for him, is gifted by an openness towards God. He cannot conceive of a "pure nature" in human beings that is completely lacking of God's offer of self. And so, what he calls nature is really human beings and their limited world to which God has addressed the gift of grace. Grace, in Rahner's understanding, is not wholly external to being human. It is not a superstructure built upon "pure human nature". It is in some way integrated into the very "nature" of being human.



Creation, therefore, become a necessary condition for grace. In order for God to offer God's self, there must be an addressee. God does not offer the gift of self by necessity, but freely chooses to create and to offer the self. The gift that God offers is not a second structure that is added to the primary nature of human beings. It is within the very nature of human being that grace is found. It is a gift from within. In this sense, grace is not reserved to Christians only nor is it mediated through organized religion alone. It is present where the truly human is present. In a sense, it is a 'co-constitutive principle of humanity' (Duffy 2005:45).

### ***“The gift is the giver”***

Rahner understands grace not as a static gift offered by God, but rather as a dynamic gift. Grace is at one and the same time the gift offered and also what makes it possible for the human person to accept the gift. What God offers is not some aspect or element that is divine, a part of God, but God offers God's very self. What God offers is divine life itself. This gift makes human beings capable of responding to God, and God makes it possible to actualize the gift offered.

Human beings cannot demand the gift as a right nor can they actualize the potential given them without God working in and with them. Grace is both a gift and responsibility.

### ***Supernatural existence***

When Rahner speaks of “supernatural existence” he means ‘that basic structure modifying the whole human existence and permeating every experience in which a person is impelled toward the divine’ (Kelly 1992:43). In other words, it is the actual existential reality of the person as oriented towards God. What gives the person this orientation towards true being is the presence of grace in the person. He further clarifies the meaning of “supernatural” by stating that it is supernatural because it is not something that a person can lay claim to simply by being human. It is freely given by God. It is not a human right! Kelly speaks of it as the ‘dynamic quality given to one's nature’, the ‘dimension of being human in which a person's whole being is brought into intimate contact with the God who, by virtue of a promised graciousness, eternally wills the beatitude of God's people’ (2005:43-44).

It is clear, therefore, that for Rahner there is no clear distinction between “natural” and “supernatural”, and that “pure nature” actually refers to no actual existing reality. Concrete existence is the “supernatural existence”.



### **Conclusions: Practical implications of Rahner's theology of grace**

Rahner's theology of grace has some practical implications. If grace is understood as always being given together with nature, what does this mean for the existence of human freedom? Are human beings so oriented towards God by this gift of God's self such that they cannot go in any other direction?

Rahner does not deny the existence of human freedom. For him, freedom is only possible because of the presence of grace. Human beings, by exercising their freedom, choose what particular acts will lead to the accomplishment of the basic orientation they have. Because of historical limitations not every choice leads towards fulfillment or God. In a paradoxical way, sin, failure to reach fulfillment, makes human freedom actual and not simply potential.

Rahner's theology of grace also has practical implications for understanding the universal salvific role of Jesus and of the church's role as mediator of grace. If all that is truly human can be, and is in fact, of God and leads to God, what is the meaning of salvation brought about by Jesus Christ? What about the church's role in the salvation of humanity? Finally, Rahner's theology of grace has implications for understanding the human person. In this theology, true humanity can only be understood as humanity grounded in and gifted by God. If this is true, then every human being regardless of actual situation must be treated as such.



### **Sources**

Duffy, S J 2005. Experience of grace, in Marmion, D and Hines, Mary E (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 43-62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kelly, G B (ed) 1992. Karl Rahner: An outline of his life, in *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the graced search for meaning*, pp 97-110;110-117. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Rahner, K 1978. *Foundations of Christian faith: An introduction to the idea of Christianity*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.

*Raymond M. Mwangala OMI*

### **Staff Meanderings**

**Sue Rakoczy IHM** will be on sabbatical during the second semester. She will be in the United States during June, July and August and in South Africa the rest of the semester, working on a book on discernment. She will attend the Catholic Theological Society of America conference 10-13 June in Cleveland, Ohio and will speak on “The Apostolic Visitation and Discernment”. She will teach a course on “Contemporary Spiritual Direction and Experiences of Differences” at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago 21-25 June.

**Raymond Mwangala OMI** will preach two retreats: 13-20 June (Matikwe) and 21-30 June (Jacob's Well). The rest of the vacation will be spent doing things which should have been done, but were not.

The **Institute choir** recently held elections to choose a new leadership team. The following were elected and accepted the task of leadership:

**Coordinator:** Thulani Gubula  
**Vice:** Clement Mahindo  
**Secretary:** David James Ojochemeni  
**Treasurer:** Xolani Zondi  
**Music Coordinators:** Mthokozizi Khumalo  
Josephat Umeoguego  
Vincent Umeh



Congratulations and may God grant you the graces you need as you serve in leadership!

**A reminder from the *Imbizo* editorial team**

As the first semester draws to a close we would like to start working on articles for the *2010 Imbizo Publication*. Please send in your articles, reflections, cartoons, poems, stories, etc. as soon as possible, to facilitate the editing process.

You may submit them on diskette, CD, memory stick or via e-mail at [imbizosjti@gmail.com](mailto:imbizosjti@gmail.com) to any of the team members: Nyamadzawo Sibanda CMM, Thapelo Kuzwayo and Rose Mary Rubushe OFS.

Make your articles brief and to the point - should not be beyond one page. The deadline for submissions is **6 August, 2010**.

Together we can make it!

*Rose Mary Rubushe OFS*



**The editor and team  
wish all *moti* success in exams  
and a restful vacation.  
Enjoy the World Cup  
and may the best team win!**



**Networking Cedara**

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*All articles must be submitted by Thursday afternoon*

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