

## **INTAMS Colloquium 1995**

### **Spirituality of the Permanent Sacrament? A Colloquium on Marital Spirituality and the Sacrament of Marriage**

In November 1995 INTAMS organized a colloquium in Brussels on the theme "Spirituality of the Permanent Sacrament". Married and unmarried people, priests and religious with various academic and other professional backgrounds came together from different European countries and from the United States to exchange ideas and experiences via lectures, round table-discussions and working groups.

Although the concepts of "marital spirituality" and "sacrament of marriage" had been linked in the working-title of the colloquium, it was clear from the very beginning that the combination of these themes called for prior reflections on each of them.

On the one hand one can observe today's yearning for a spirituality and the attraction of the notion of "spirituality" is unbroken, but the content behind the concept remains often vague and unclear. The same applies to the still unusual expression of "marital spirituality". In his introductory lecture Prof. Gisbert Greshake, dogmatic theologian from Freiburg i. Br., therefore tried to specify the meaning of marital spirituality fromout a christian context. By doing so, he stimulated further reflections on the subject - a task INTAMS is especially committed to, bearing "spirituality" in its name.

On the other hand, speaking about marriage as a sacrament raises many questions. Contemporary christian men and women wonder how they can realize properly this very special promise as well as the great challenge of this choice of life. Prof. Herwi Rikhof, systematic theologian from Utrecht, concentrated in the second lecture of the colloquium on the specific sacramental meaning of marriage as a permanent and life-long task. In his relecture of the sacramentology of Thomas Aquinas, he suggested to look at marriage in analogy with the sacraments who confer a seal, the so-called sacramental character.

In several language-groups the participants of the colloquium had the opportunity to reflect upon the two conferences and to enrich themselves by exchanging own experiences. Once again it was obvious that marital spirituality needs a substantial input from life wisdom which at the same time provides the foundation for a theology rooted in lived reality.

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