# PARISH LIFE CYCLE

## MATURITY

**Stable, Healthy Maturity**
- Stability provides base for change, new ways, risk. Allows more choices about how to shape parish life
- A balance between stability and change
- Regular and reliable processes to reengage issues of formation -- "listening process."

**Static Maturity**
- Stuck in status quo; on a plateau
- Planning seen as way to control future (an illusion)
- Fussing over small things
- Not responding to challenges or new opportunities
- Losing sense of vision & purpose; identity is focused on the past
- If not addressed at the stage – the system will in time decline

Improvement Process might involve redefining

*Improvement Process*

*Improvement Process*

*Parish Redefining & Development Process*

## FORMATION

- Vision for and development of identity, purpose, mission, culture and related programs/activities
- New people – staff, members
- Increasing level of competence & commitment
- A "fit" between vision, program, resources, and culture. A sense of integration.
- Establishing relationships with external "publics" or constituencies that have a stake in the parish

## DECLINE

- Denial, avoiding, stress, nostalgic climate
- Low or fragmented energy
- "Fear-blame" cycle increasing

*External Intervention*

## CREATION

- The "Idea", the "Dream"
- Founder(s)
- Initial funding

## DISINTEGRATION

- Rigidity, numbness, defensiveness
- All "fear-blame" cycle
- No internal leadership able to facilitate development

## DEATH

Developmental interventions need to fit where the system is in the parish life cycle. Seek the maximum degree of inclusion, open information, free choice from options, and internal commitment that can be attained at that stage (the further into decline the less this is possible). Parishes tend to have "reasons" to not engage the formation issues: In first formation – getting caught up in building projects or growth and not also spiritual formation. In Stable, Healthy Maturity – "we don't need it." In Static Maturity – embarrassment and denial. In Decline – denial, getting caught in trying to blame someone. As the system moves from Static to Decline to Disintegration there is more need for external assistance – consultants, the bishop's office.