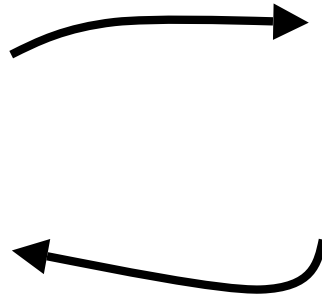


The Renewal – Apostolate Cycle: A Diagram Overview

The Renewal - Apostolate Cycle is a way of describing a central dynamic of Christian life. The Cycle focuses our attention on the Christian's movement between being renewed in baptismal identity and purpose and living as instruments of God's love and grace in daily life. The Cycle is interested in both the individual's movement and in the ways in which the parish church supports and facilitates that movement.

RENEWAL

Renewal in baptismal identity and purpose in worship, study and being equipped , for Christian action



APOSTOLATE

Participation in the work of Christ in service, evangelization and stewardship

In areas of:

- **Workplace**
- **Family & Friends**
- **Civic Life**
- **Church**

A Cycle

The cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation **and** a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, family, civic life and congregational life.

In that Cycle:

We need:

To accept our dependence on God

To accept responsibility for ordering our spiritual life

To accept our interdependence with others in the Church

Which is helped by:

Openness to spiritual guidance

Establishing a rule of life

Life in Christian community, a parish church

Which the parish helps by:

An emphasis in its life on worship; nothing comes before the Eucharist and Daily Office. Also, more attention to formation and spiritual growth than other programs or ministries.

Offering programs and guidance in creating, experimenting with, and revising a spiritual discipline.

Being a healthy and faithful parish church and by helping people relate to the parish community in ways appropriate to their personality and the parish's capacities.

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For more on the model see Robert Gallagher's *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Ascension Press, late 2006

The Cycle

The Renewal-Apostolate Cycle is a way of describing the Christian's movement between being formed in Christ and the apostolate of daily life. It is also a way of describing the work of the parish church.

In Renewal

In renewal we intentionally engage in disciplines and patterns of behavior that ground us more deeply in our identity and purpose as baptized members of the church. We grow up into Christ -- by living with others in a parish community that is healthy and faithful; by worship and prayer; and by learning about ourselves, others, and God. It is the process of becoming light, salt, leaven; of developing "an inquiring and discerning heart"; and of becoming what Evelyn Underhill calls "instruments of love."

When people are asked about how they are emotionally and physically renewed they talk about things like exercise, music, rest, sexual intimacy, time with friends, being hugged, walking city streets or country roads, having a pet, and dancing. When they are asked about what contributes to their renewal as baptismal people they speak of things like a priest's spiritual guidance, educational programs, the beauty of the worship space, a parish climate in which they don't have to always meet the expectations of others, being part of a special support groups, intercessory prayer groups, a discipline of daily prayer and spiritual reading, helping and serving others, and being exposed to other people's spirituality. The most common thing mentioned is the Sunday gathering of the community for the Eucharist. It's the week-by-week coming together of the community in Eucharist (and coffee hour) that people return to when describing the mystery of how they are renewed in the Christian life. They talk about -- how the ritual is always there providing roots and wings; being with people they love and who love them; old and new friendships within the parish; a breakfast group after the early Mass and how the Sunday gathering of the Eucharistic community brings them in contact with people of different views, ages, orientations, expressions of intelligence, economic well-being, and on occasion people of other races.

When asked, some see a relationship between their emotional and physical renewal and the renewal of their baptismal identity and purpose. Some make no distinction seeing them as one thing, others see physical/emotional renewal as a base for the other, still others express it as a kind of fabric into which baptismal renewal and physical/emotional renewal are woven together in the fabric of their life.

In working out an approach to our own renewal we will want to take into account the realities of our personality, the options available in the tradition, and consultation with other Christians. We may find some way of thinking about it that seems especially useful. Graham Greene saw three ways for people to be open to spirituality: we need moments of solitude, the ability to suffer with another, and the ability to pay attention to the restlessness of our soul. The Benedictine tradition sees a dynamic engagement among obedience, conversion of life and stability. Henri Nouwen, in *Reaching Out*, offers a dynamic between -- loneliness and solitude; hostility and hospitality; illusion and prayer.

In Apostolate

In our apostolate we join Christ in the transformation of the world. The starting point is the place we are with family and friends, in our workplace, in civic life, and as we participate in the church's oversight and collective apostolate.

Most of us, most of the time, have a primary vocation in the arenas of our daily life. In our workplace, family and civic involvement we are instruments of compassion and justice.

We are caught up in a process that is largely organic and subconscious. We are light and salt to the extent we have become light and salt. We are invited to love and serve in the places we

find ourselves. The process isn't at its core strategic, a matter of our planning and awareness; rather it is dependent on our status as people incorporated by baptism into the Body of Christ. It is living as an extension of the sacrament that is the Church in which God's compassion and justice is offered through us in the routine and ordinary places of life.

In addition to this primary, organic apostolic vocation, some of us may have a vocation that involves participation in the church's collective work. So, we may serve on the vestry, become a catechist, assist in the Eucharist, clean the bathrooms, and participate in the parish's service ministries or its evangelistic program.

Using the Cycle in Congregational Development

The model is used in two ways:

1. By individuals in reflecting on, and shaping, a pattern of spirituality.

Many of us have had the experience of drawing and sharing a spiritual lifeline. We draw a line that represents our relationship with God and the church from birth to the present. Then each person is invited to share their line, and in doing that, to tell the group of our experience with God and the church. On occasion we are asked to reflect on the exercise and say what we have learned or taken away from it. As people debrief a common theme is often about how God has worked with each person in such different ways.

It's not an insight that is new to most people at the intellectual level but is often new at the operational level. We know in our head that the journey is different for different people. At the same time we often hold onto a formula about how it happens, or should happen, or we vaguely assume that our own way into faith is that of others.

God's various ways of being in our lives will show itself in how people live the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle. Each person will have a unique way of living in the cycle. Some have an inclination toward renewal, others to apostolic action; some are nurtured more by contemplation, others in the Eucharist; many are called to an apostolate in the family, others in civic life.

In every congregation there are people with a vocation to serve the church as a community of faith. They serve on the vestry and parish committees; they organize service projects and the incorporation of new members. Most members have another calling. They understand themselves, and their ministry, more in terms of their family and friendships, the work they do, or their participation in civic life.

Members have their own way of living this rhythm. How God works with me on the journey may be very different from how God works with my friend. The practices and disciplines of the Christian life that feed one may not feed another. Some are more enriched in contemplative prayer, some in ethical reflection, and others by giving and receiving support in approaching the demands of daily life. People also have levels of competence in managing the rhythm of the Cycle. Some easily accept adult responsibility for their spiritual life; others are inclined to an immature dependency. Some carry images of the church and its mission that are distorted. The distortion may arise because they transfer the ways of businesses or social service agencies or political movements onto the parish church. It also comes from having taken some true but narrow expression on the mission and made it the whole thing. So, some speak of the Great Commission and quote Matthew, others look to the command to love, and still others to the call to proclaim release to captives and liberty to the oppressed.

2. The cycle can also be used by parish leaders in exploring and improving the parish's ministry of formation.

The parish offers a common life. The quality of that life, and its capacity to transform lives, varies widely among parishes. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was struck by how even the most miserable of parish churches could produce faithful Christians. I've often taken comfort in his insight as I've consulted

with some parishes. The Episcopal Church has parishes that are marked by how competently they nurture people both, as they are, with whatever spiritual maturity they currently possess, while inviting them into a deeper and richer life.

In all parishes members participate in the parish's pattern of worship, education, and social life. The parish has its way of being and doing. Each has a parish culture that has the primary formative impact in people. The parish's collective behavior, its stated values and its deeper assumptions about human beings, God, and the church all create an environment that influences people over time. The parish's culture may be one of deep prayer and compassionate action or it may be anxious and turf focused, or it may be driven and obsessed by some standard of success. This culture becomes the soil that feeds us, the air we breathe. Because parish culture is so close to us it is something that most leaders have no awareness of. We live in it but aren't aware of it or engaged in thoughtfully shaping it. Making use of an external consultant with training in organizational culture is one-way parishes begin to develop "eyes to see" what is usually hidden. There are also experiential training programs available that can help leaders develop their ability to work with organizational culture. A related issue is that in too many places leaders find themselves so caught up in program development and implementation, or in responding to the most difficult members, or in administrative matters around property and finances, that they have little time for truly developmental and formative work. The ability of leaders to get their heads above water is central to a parish's development into a community of formation.

Here are a few ideas (an A, B, C) about what a parish might do as it moves forward.

A. Five broad organizational activities that can help:

1. Engage in regular reflection, assessment and discernment about its way of being and doing
2. Occasionally use a trained external consultant to assist with that assessment/discernment process
3. Shape the parish so it offers the environment and activities that will best contribute to the formation of its members.
4. Provide a climate that *accepts* people where they are now in their living of the cycle and *invites* them to go deeper
5. Clear away the barriers and distortions present in its common life that interfere with the cycle

B. In working with people as to assist them in the stewardship of their Cycle the parish can provide opportunities to increase their ability to:

1. Understand the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle.
Many people need a way of articulating the broad pattern in which they participate. The Cycle offers such a model.
2. Take responsibility for how they live in that pattern.
The parish can provide programs in which people can reflect on how they live it now and explore ways they might experiment with and more faithfully, effectively and efficiently live the cycle.
3. Increase their appreciation for the diversity of ways in which God and people work together in shaping a human life. Members may learn that the way they live in the cycle is but one way. That may serve them in their own experimentation and make them wiser as they support others.

C. Be clear about what the end result is that we seek in formation. A parish, and each member, needs a couple of ways of talking about what the new person in Christ looks like. Discussing the Prayer Book's baptismal covenant has become a popular way of doing that. I tend to find a prayer that follows the covenant even more useful - "...Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works." Having two or three ways of describing the kind of person being formed can help a parish offer language that may touch different people while avoiding a tendency to literalism.

Apostolate – Being instruments of his love with family and friends, in the workplace, in civic life, and in the church

At the end of the Eucharist we are dismissed from the assembled gathering to once again engage the stuff of our daily life. We have fed on Christ so we may be food for others. We return to work, civic life, family and friends as instruments of God's love. These relationships are both the place of our apostolate and active ministry while also playing a role in our renewal as people and Christians.

Much of the discussion about lay ministry, or the ministry of the baptized, in recent years has focused on the lay Christian's role in the ministries and governance of the church. That's certainly been a significant development that has both strengthened the church and enhanced human dignity. But all too often this movement and discussion has eclipsed the more central ministry of the baptized in the places in which they live out daily life. A useful correction in language that some are using is to use the word "ministry" to refer to activities with or through the church, and to use "apostolate" when referring to our engagement as Christians and people in our daily life.

With Family

In *Hunting for Hope: A Father's Journeys* Scott Russell Sanders writes: "The family values that I embrace are the habits of the heart and mind essential for creating and maintaining such a community, and among these are generosity and fidelity and mercy, a sympathetic imagination, a deep and abiding concern for others, a passion for justice, a sense of restraint and a sense of humor, a relish for skillful work, a wiliness to negotiate differences, a readiness for cooperation and affection While the family is not the only place where we might acquire such habits, it is the primary one. And above all it is the place where we are most likely to learn the meaning of love."

Here's another way of describing what is involved in the stewardship of our families.

- Break the destructive patterns; the ways of living and being that seem to get passed down from "generation to generation."
- Nurture the relationships – Work at connecting to each individual as well as the family as a group.
- Give thanks – Again and again bring your mind and heart to a place of thankfulness for your life, one another, the home you have, the food you have.
- Make space to acknowledge and resolve wounds and unfinished business
- Express what you are able to express, as a family and as individuals about your spiritual life

With Friends

We are called to be friends with God. "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you." *John 15:15* But it's not just being friends with God that is part of a full spiritual life. Friendship with other people is, as with our families, work life and citizenship, both an occasion of apostolate and of our renewal.

Particular friendships are part of what helps us mature in Christ. Saint Anselm wrote a "Prayer for Friends" that expresses the importance of friendship.

I love all men, in and for your sake,
though not as much as I ought or as I desire.
I pray your mercy upon all men,
yet there are many whom I hold more dear
Since your love has impressed them upon my heart
with a closer and more intimate love,
so that I desire their love more eagerly –

I would pray more ardently for these.

-In *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm*, Penguin Classics

In *The Four Loves* C.S Lewis sees our friendships as being part of how God shapes our lives. Lewis notes how the development of friendships can appear to be a matter of chance - "a few years difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses ...the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting - any of these chances might have kept us apart." He continues "But for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,' can truly say to every group of Christian friends 'You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.' The friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others." Here Lewis touches on how friendship can be a place in which we see something of God's glory in another.

In the Workplace

As I was writing this section I was in Jersey City staying at a hotel that provides copies of the *Wall Street Journal*. That morning's front page had an article by Ellen E. Schultz and Theo Francis on "How Cuts in Retiree Benefits Fatten Companies' Bottom Lines." (3/16/04) The report makes the case that the argument made by many companies that blames surging health care costs for the practice of cutting retiree health care benefits or having them cover more of the cost is at best a half truth. The article says "In fact, no matter how high health care costs go, well over half of large American corporations face only a limited impact from the increases...." They go on to explain the system of caps on how much will be spent regardless of what happens to health care costs. The reporters suggest that a possible factor in play is that when companies cut benefits they create income and/or accounting gains. "In some case it flows straight to the bottom line", i.e., it helps the company meet goals for its earnings. So, we have another story of corporate greed. Nothing very shocking in that year which was filled with stories of corporate executives being sentenced to prison. This was just legal greed as opposed to illegal greed.

On the following day I'm having coffee in a Starbucks down the street from my hotel. There is a nice view across the river to Manhattan. That morning's *New York Times* has an article in the Metro Section on how some people are approaching faith-at-work issues. There is a picture of a Bible sitting on top of business files on someone's desk. The article is entitled "Thou Shalt Not Call in Sick?: Movement Brings Religious Ethic to the Workplace." The piece offers some insight to a very limited version of the apostolate in the workplace. Possibly so limited and partial that the thinking behind it would qualify for a heresy award. The focus is on personal piety (i.e., making the workplace more like a church by prayer groups and bible study); personal ethics (e.g., controlling your competitiveness); and personal forms of evangelism and church growth. This reflects a particular form of American evangelical religious practice. It's not my own tradition; so, maybe it's partly a matter of taste. However, this approach also tends to neatly fit into the desires of conservative organizational leaders. Angie Tracey who works at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention saw a benefit of her Christian Fellowship at the Center in these terms - "It's a tremendous benefit to management. We teach biblical principles like rendering yourself as a servant." Usually missing in approaches like this are understandings of corporate stewardship with room for the place of organized labor as a counter balancing force; or companies with values directed towards employee well being and broader social responsibility, alongside economic gain; or the role of employees as having responsibility for promoting changes in organizational life that enhance human dignity. Probably the biggest problem with many of these activities is the confusion about apostolic activity. It seems that some Christians think its desirable to turn all sectors of their life into places of renewal. It's as though they aren't quite comfortable unless everything feels like "church."

Here are some of the possible connections between the laity's experience in the workplace and their apostolate. These are ways in which people participate in Christ's service, evangelization and stewardship of the world.

1. "Being" - By being people that have become more and more "in Christ"; light, salt, leaven. Christians serve, evangelize and act as stewards just by being people who are in the process of falling and rising, living in the journey of stability, conversion and obedience.
2. Participating Responsibly in the Life of the World - To participate in the human drama of creating, serving, and producing simply by working in an organization; to be part of the economy of God's world. Also, to earn our own living; for some, to contribute to the well being of a family.
3. Building Community - The joy of being in relationship with other workers, being part of a community; opportunities for compassion, fun, and shared experience.
4. Finding Value in the Intrinsic Meaning in the Work - The particular work may be of value to the world. It matters to the well being of people that this service or product is available.
5. Bringing Change - Acting from within the job to humanize the work place for employees and clients/customers and to facilitate the organization in taking a socially responsible stance. This involves us in a "ministry to structures."

In Civic Life

A way of thinking about our apostolate in civic life is to place it on a spectrum. At one end are the basics, e.g., be a good neighbor, vote, attend the town meeting, serve on juries, pay our taxes, in times of crisis give our time and money to those in need. Further along on the spectrum might be joining a civic association, serving on the local school board, and contributing to conversation about the issues of the common good. Even further along would be that place where civic life and vocation meet, e.g., becoming a political leader, a judge, a union or community organizer.

In the Church

Ministry in and through the institutional structures of the parish is a significant vocation for some people through much of their lives. The vestry needs members, children need a formation program, the liturgy calls for lay leadership in partnership with clergy, and many congregations have service ministries that need volunteers.

Most baptized people are not however called to this intensive investment of time and energy. For them it is something they take on for a period and then set down, a role in the stewardship of the institution to be played for a time. Most members have at least a minimal role to play as they pledge, occasionally give time to a project, and participate in parish meetings.

The church has the same temptation we see in all institutions. Those who are most invested in the organizational life of the parish may begin to see ministry primarily in terms of church based activities. It exposes itself in complaining about the "same few people that do everything"; it appears on web sites when there is no mention of the primary ministries of the baptized; it's reinforced when dioceses offer programs in lay ministry that are almost totally about lay leadership roles in the church.

What does the parish do to nurture such people?

1. Provide the structures, processes, climate and culture that supports formation

- Nurture and coach people in their own renewal. Help people make use of the resources of the church. Once people grasp and are grasped by the Eucharist, the liturgy and the whole pattern of Eucharist living, then the Sunday Eucharist may become the most important contribution the parish makes to a person's apostolate.

- Shaping congregational competence for Eucharistic worship, e.g., most people being able focus on the liturgical action and the people involved; being able to set aside having printed material in front of them all the time; some level of having memorized parts of the rite; and a sense of the rhythm and flow of the worship.
- Offers ways for members to shape their own spiritual life. Provide opportunities for reflection on spiritual life and discipline; to develop a rule of life, and to participate in schools of prayer.
- Provide opportunities for members to explore aspects of their apostolate in family, workplace and civic life. A workplace exploration might include having people reflect on and share their experience of common workplace graces such as: How being in the workplace made a difference in that it showed, or helped others show, compassion and justice. How someone acted to improved listening to one another in meetings and in doing so showed respect for human dignity. The value of our experience of participating with others in shared work. The joy many experience that comes from being in relationship with others at work. The worth of helping create and offer a service or product of value for others. Acting in the organization to humanize the workplace by increasing the workers voice, improving safety, getting the organization to be more socially responsible (do no harm, do some good), and enhancing understanding between management and labor. These themes might be used in sermons, an adult forum, as a faith sharing exercise, and in a quiet day.

People frequently find this whole area confusing. Sometimes they have picked up the idea that the process of being a servant, evangelist and steward in daily life must be openly religious, that others need to understand that you are a Christian; for many people it has a tone that is aggressive and intrusive. For most Episcopalians such behavior is off-putting. It raises concerns may be sensitive about the impact on our relationship with others or how we respect the dignity of others.

- Frequent and regular acknowledgement of the daily life apostolate, e.g., examples in sermons, the parish web site section on ministry beginning with and emphasizing the apostolate in the world (e.g., civic life, work.) before mentioning the apostolate within the parish (e.g., vestry member, Christian educator.); inclusion in the Prayers of the People; priest making a point of informally commenting on and praising the apostolate of members in their daily life. Facilitate connecting exercises in which members get to know something about the life and apostolate of one another, e.g., a brief exercise at coffee hour in which you pose a relatively light question such as “In a group of two or three share something about your work life such what you do, what kind of work you prepared for in school, and/or what you have fantasized about doing.”
- Establish support groups around workplace, civic responsibility and family life issues. For example: a large parish or several parishes working together can bring together people in business, or medicine, law, social work, teaching, etc. Smaller congregations will need to have cross-vocational groups. Such groups might range from a focus on contemplation and intercession to problem solving and strategizing.
- Offer quiet days and retreats with a theme of “Family Life” or “The Spirituality of Friendship”, or “faith & Work”. Keep the focus on the spiritual life of the participants in relation to the theme.
- Give people a way to think about it, e.g. Renewal-Apostolate Cycle.
- Describe the parish as a resource instead of a competitor
The parish is a resource for living with compassion and integrity rather than just another competitor for people’s time, money, and energy. Some hints – fewer meetings in general, cut the number of vestry meetings in half, don’t jam everything onto Sunday making it an occasion of business and rush; affirm the centrality of the daily life apostolate of the baptized.
- Equip people with skills for a more balanced life. In hundreds of interviews of parishioners conducted by CDI participants we heard again and again about the issue of balance in life. They talked about spouses and partners, children, friends, work, volunteer activities; they spoke of stress due to illness, the care of aging parents, alienation from family members, and the pressures they place on themselves about how to be and live.

A Washington Post article by Brooke A. Masters explored the difficulty in getting people to serve on juries. "There are probably a lot of very good people who are very reluctant to serve on juries, to take that kind of time out of their lives, and then there are some that want their 15 minutes of fame," said Linda A. Foley, a psychology professor at the University of North Florida who studies juries. "You're getting a jury that isn't representative of the population." (4/2/04) The article suggested that the reasons for the reluctance had to do with concerns about privacy and time commitment.

In the CDI interviews mentioned above people shared the many and diverse skills and methods they had developed to cope with all the expectations and demands. Here are some examples- being organized, maintaining and developing friendships, learning to say no, routines about rest and meals, gardening, exercise, people to talk with about the pressures, prayer, growing in a capacity for engaged-detachment, reading mysteries, taking time for enjoyment, going out to dinner with a spouse once a week, calling friends each week, learning to let go and release things into Gods hands, meditation, being regular in my participation in the Sunday Eucharist. A desire commonly mentioned that is related to the balance issue, and is addressed by the coping practices, was for a sense of perspective.

There isn't anything new or exceptional about all this. The parish might assist by providing occasions in which people can share their own struggles with, and approaches to, achieving an adequate balance. Just sharing their own struggle and hearing about that of others often helps. It may be important to limit the size and duration of such groups so they don't just add to the problem. Two other perspectives that caught my attention – one woman said "I'm not very good at balancing things. I simply try to live each day, and pray." Another woman reflected on how the very struggle about balancing life was source of pleasure; that it spoke to her of the value of her life and how she was needed.

- The parish 's children are engaged in the same thing the adults are. They have there own way of living the Cycle and of participating in the Eucharistic community. They are also in a process of spiritual development. One way of thinking about the formation of children is to use the same core elements identified on the first page of this section. The life and growth of children and adults involves accepting our: dependence on God, responsibility for shaping our spiritual life, and interdependence with others in the Body of Christ. That acceptance is nurtured by and expressed in our openness to spiritual guidance, having a spiritual discipline, and living in Christian community.

I like the way Gretchen Pritchard approaches the formation of children in our *Offering the Gospel to Children*. Here's some of what I take away from her writing..

- Children need to be with adults in the Eucharist

Pritchard notes both the promise of participation and the damage done by not having children participating. "Children learn by watching and imitating adults, and by projecting themselves into imaginary worlds. Our liturgy, with its rich admixture of verbal and non-verbal, of colors and sounds and smells and gestures, is the primary source of nourishment for our adults, and should also nourish our children." "Children who are kept from the liturgy are learning that the parish is not an inclusive community but an adult club: that its sacred space is fro grown-ups only; that its normative rituals need to be mediated through adult patterns of understanding before they can be experienced, or else must be watered down into kiddie versions." She goes to propose a change in the common adult stance and behaviors toward children in the Eucharist. She calls for "educating parents and other parishioners to see children as fellow-worshippers, not as intruders who have to be hushed or distracted so that adults are free to pray."

Part of the preparation for Eucharistic participation that she suggests is to have in the places used for child care and education “a child-size chalice and paten, a small font and Paschal candle.” By the climate, methods and things used with children an experience happens that in many ways mirrors what we seek in our participation in the Eucharist. What Pritchard proposes aligns with the Godly Play and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd programs that many parishes have finally begun to adopt. My own experience is that these parishes seem to do a better job of incorporating children into the Eucharist. See below for a bit more on this.

- Imagination needs to be stimulated and affirmed.

She quotes Robert Farrar Capon “Christian education is not the communication of correct views about what the various works and words of Jesus mean; rather it is the stocking of the imagination with the icons of those works and words themselves. It is most successfully accomplished, therefore, not by catechisms that purport to produce understanding, but by stories that hang the icons, understood or not, on the walls of the mind.” For Pritchard this included engaging the child’s fears. She notes how some parents have an impulse to shield the cross from their children. Her claim is that children not only should not be protected from the drama of the cross but that children don’t really want (need?) that protection. She writes “It is not the cross that terrifies children, but the false gospel that bypasses the cross and leaves us forever alone with our pain and guilt.”

- Attention needs to be paid to the climate created, the physical space, and the process.

“Instead, a series of baskets filled with wooden or clay figures depicting the stories ... “Imagine that the children enter this space and sit in a circle. After a greeting and some singing, the teacher brings out one of the boxes or baskets and using the clay figures ... tells in quiet and spare language today’s selection from the story of God’s people, and invites the children to wonder about the story’s impact and meaning ... Then the children choose how they wish to respond.” “When the time is almost over, they are called back together for conversation, prayer and a blessing, and they enter the adult liturgy at the peace, joining their families for the gifts of Christ’s Body and Blood.”

Marti Rickel is the coordinator of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Saint James Church in Austin. Here’s how she describes the program “The children experience a Holy place to be, encountering God and “coming closer to God, all by myself.” This is done through careful preparation of the environment, the leaders (called “Catechists”), and the children. The children engage in praying, singing, and working while in this prepared environment. They are able to choose what they enjoy doing and find fulfilling, all while using their senses and cognitive abilities. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is more accurately called Christian formation, forming one’s inner and spiritual life and one’s relationship with God.”

Notice how in what both Pritchard and Rickel are doing there a two fold process of working with children as children while also helping them stretch and be able to participate in the “adult liturgy.” You can see imbedded in what is happening the three core elements needed in everyone’s Renewal – Apostolate Cycle - dependence on God, responsibility for shaping our spiritual life, and interdependence with others in the Body of Christ

2. Address distorting tendencies

There are several ways in which the parish can cut across (i.e., sabotage, distort, block) people’s Renewal-Apostolate Cycle. There is not any way for a parish to avoid having some of these

tendencies present in its life. They are part of the larger social and religious culture. We absorb them. Our awareness of those that are most strongly present in our own parish allows us to better understand parish dynamics and take constructive action.

- a. The parish gives the impression that the world doesn't matter. There may be a protective or sentimental piety involved. It's as though we are stuck on the renewal side of the cycle.
- b. The parish has a fearful spirit. The fears generated by daily life have an emotional upper hand. The irrational reactivity of the world has a grip on people, e.g., feeling safe by getting SUV's that are big but roll over, intincting at communion to avoid illness when we know that to be the most dangerous practice. If a parish is absorbed by this fearfulness it is likely to nurture a form of unproductive dependency in people.
- c. The parish seems to imply that our task is to force the society to conform to "Christian" views. The language of the parish may have an over-and-against quality; sermons and newsletter articles attack the "secular" culture with an angry undercurrent.
- d. The parish functions as a place to reinforce and support already established and safe religious views. There is little challenge to the culture or conventional religious views.
- e. The parish operates as a reinforcer of secularism; gives the impression that this world is all there is, that there is really no need for renewal beyond oneself. The focus is on achievement in this life, here and now. It may take on an activist stance for many good works of service and justice. It may have a stance that is wrapped around a desire for financial success or social status.
- f. The parish becomes just another demand upon people for their energy, money and time. Parish life seems hectic and overly busy. There is pressure on people to take part in parish activities; e.g., to serve on the vestry, attend the potluck dinner. There may be a weak sense of the centrality of participation in the Sunday Eucharist. A productive message might be "It is okay to come to the 7:30 Eucharist, participate in the daily prayer of the church, give financially according to your means, participate in an occasional parish town meeting; and to never serve on a vestry, teach church school, come to social events, or be on a committee."
- g. The parish has a climate that helps people avoid their deeper and broader self.
- h. The parish doesn't challenge people's being captured by the demands and expectations of workplace, family and civic life. It may even encourage them, e.g., a workaholic behavior, or an idolizing of the family, or a restless activism about social justice.
- i. The parish gives the impression that the apostolate in the parish is of more value than the apostolate in the world, e.g., on the parish web site there is a lot of mention of activities and people that serve the parish's life and there is little or no mention of the apostolate in the daily life of the laity at work, in civic activities, and with family and friends. This may reflect a condition in which people don't fully enter into the renewal end of the cycle.

Often these distortions are supported by images of the church that are drawn from other institutions, e.g., businesses, clubs, social action groups, historical societies.

What to do?

- Become aware of the mix of tendencies present in the parish. This might be done in a discernment process that offers a climate allowing people to open their hearts and minds and to see uncomfortable realities. Parishes that engage in such a process are already likely to be emotionally and spiritually mature. But this is likely to be a difficult piece of work for even a mature parish. Most parishes will benefit from using a consultant to facilitate this process. In the

discernment process people will name the distortions most alive in the parish and explore ways to address them.

- Offer an alternative lens for understanding the parish's life and ministry, e.g., the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle and other models.
- Seek the paradox within the situation. For example, the American tendency toward forms of individualism that cut us off from ourselves, and others, might be addressed by accepting it as a starting point. If many are inclined to an inward spirituality that seems cut off from civic responsibility, instead of fighting it we could seek ways to transform it. Parker Palmer suggested a way to approach it in *Company of Strangers: Christian's and the Renewal of American Public Life*, "Perhaps the most important ministry the church can have in the renewal of public life is a 'ministry of paradox': not to resist the inward turn of American spirituality on behalf of effective public action, but to deepen and direct that inwardness in the light of faith until God leads us back to a vision of the public and to faithful action on the public's behalf."

What if the parish isn't ready for this kind of work? The community can back up a few steps and make it ready. All change efforts work with that mix of where people really are at the moment and where they could be in the near future. Leadership and stewardship are about moving us toward the deeper life and the enlarged heart. There's a need for work that is appreciative of the people and gifts already present in the parish; provides a good bit of training in core Christian competencies; and is very patient.

3. Stay focused on the parish's primary task

The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer describes the mission of the church as "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." We have that mission because we understand it to be God's mission. That's what God is up to; restoring unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, bringing all things into harmony.

The mission is for the whole church throughout the world and for each of us as baptized members of that Body. It belongs to every parish church. I think that the best mission statements coming from parishes are those that explicitly incorporate the words of this larger mission. The mission of St. Mary's Church is "to restore all ..." in relation to the particular needs and opportunities of this parish community, this time, and the context the parish finds itself. It is a universal mission made particular.

The idea of primary task is related to mission. The primary task of any organization is the activity the organization primarily uses in addressing its mission.

The two most common ways in which parishes have difficulty in focusing on the primary task are: 1). There is confusion about the primary task. Parish leaders may have never had the opportunity to look at the issue. It may have never occurred to the leaders that among all the things a parish does there are some that are more central and important than others. Or it may be something that has been explored but only in a rather abstract manner. 2). There is an engrained pattern of collective behavior that disproportionately focuses parish energy and resources on activities other than the primary task.

Activities that draw the attention of parish leaders away from the primary task include:

- Conflict that is beyond the ability of parish leaders to easily manage
- Major institutional efforts, e.g., construction of a new building, significant membership growth, a capital campaign, etc.

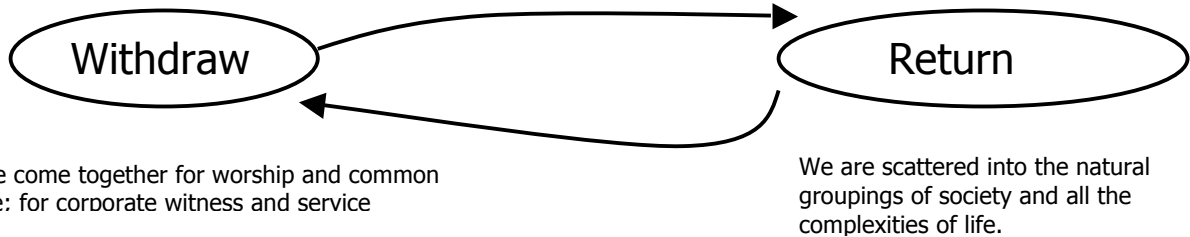
These activities may be necessary for the parish's institutional well-being. Leaders do need to attend to them. But there is only so much time, money and energy. While we are engaging these things the work of formation may suffer. It can help if during these periods we do two things:

- Create a firewall between the activity that is necessarily consuming our attention and at least some core formation processes. So, we maintain the parish's pattern of Eucharist and Office, we continue with the adult foundations course, etc.
- Engage the activity in a manner that weaves formation opportunities into what is happening, e.g., having a brief Office before or after meetings; making use of silence during meetings, having faith sharing that is related to the activity. This assumes that the parish is already accustomed to these resources. It is usually a mistake to attempt to introduce them during a time when parish life has been disrupted by a special need.

Other Models

The Renewal - Apostolate Cycle is a model that focuses on our baptismal identity and purpose. There are a number of other models that highlight the oscillation or cycle dimension of the Christian life. Each can be used to explore congregational development concerns. Other models include:

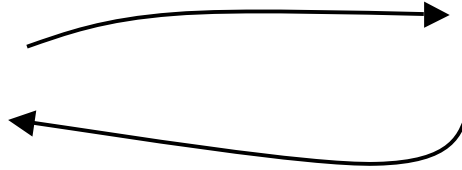
Salty Christians -- A model developed by Hans-Ruedi Weber and presented in a small booklet, *Salty Christians*, Seabury Press, New York, 1964. Weber offers a pattern of being gathered together and scattered, a rhythm of withdrawal from and return to the world --



The Grubb Theory of Oscillation -- Developed by Bruce Reed of the Grubb Institute. Written up in the *Dynamics of Religion*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978. Reed suggests a movement between --

Extra-dependence

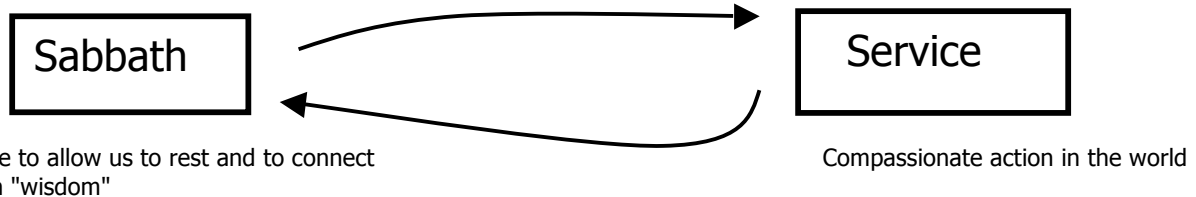
A state in which I am dependent on a source outside myself. A source that is trustworthy and allows me to experience Grace.



Intra-dependence

A state in which I am self-sufficient; having all that I need to make decisions and act responsibly in the world. I am dependent on what is inside me.

The Eternal Rhythm -- Offered by Tilden Edwards in *Spiritual Friend*, Paulist Press, New York, 1980 --



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Renewal -- What kind of person is being formed?

One diocese I worked with saw congregational development about creating communities of Christian formation. It was an approach that helped focus energy and resources around something people cared about. What did we hope would happen to people as a result of being part of our parish church? It does help when we are clear about what the end result is that we seek in the process of formation. What does it mean to grow into the fullness of your baptism, to be an apostolic Christian, to "be renewed in the spirit of your minds .. put on the new nature .." .

The parish is in the business of formation. The task is to form Christians living an apostolic faith and practice within the tradition of the Episcopal Church. Formation is directed at helping people accept responsibility for how they manage the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle.

It ends up being most effective when a parish regularly holds up two or three ways of describing the kind of person being formed. Here are a few possibilities.

One baptized into the Body of Christ

A new person in Christ; becoming salt, light and leaven; growing up in Christ. "buried with Christ in his death...share in his resurrection . . .reborn by the Holy Spirit." .. "an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works" A believer in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; called to "persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return ... proclaim by word and example the Good News ... seek and serve Christ in all persons.... strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being"

Paul

There is, of course, Paul's understanding of what God is doing in our lives, e.g. in Ephesians that we are to grow into the full stature of Christ; that the graces and practices necessary for that growth are humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance born of love, eagerness to maintain unity in the bond of peace, truthfulness mediated in love, mutual kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness; and in Galatians that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Seven Deadly Sins

A definition of sin offered by Richard Holloway (one time presiding bishop of Scotland) "a wrongly directed effort; a good drive that fails to find the right object; a good thing in itself that is done to excess" (In *Seven to Flee, Seven to Follow*, 1986). Martin Smith (in his book on reconciliation) urges "Fix your mind on the positive virtues, of which sins are the shadow." In a related understanding, Martin Thornton viewed the purpose of self-examination as aiming "at tranquillitas; not the suppression of desire, not apatheia, but harmony between the elements of personality". So, in all this we are dealing with health and wholeness rather than simply avoidance and self-protection.

In some of the material below I'm drawing on Holloway's work.

- Pride -- self esteem raised to an inordinate level, so that all sense of proportion is lost
- Envy (jealousy) -- 'sorrow for another's good", " Satisfaction at the misfortunes of our friends". A characteristic -- offers no real pleasure, is without fun; other sins offer some gratification. Symptoms -- malice, good at noticing the defects in others, hypocrisy, dejection. Envy may lead into the third sin.
- Covetousness (avarice) -- "itching hunger for the good things of life'(success, possessions, popularity). Shows itself in conspicuous consumption of things or people, fear of aging, [Note:

pride and envy -- rooted in sense of inadequacy, "deep longing to be accepted and appreciated; the need is to know that we are loved as we are]

- Anger -- a disproportionate response to danger; phases that are destructive -- impatience, retaliation, lack of control, resentment. Antidote -systematic willing of another person's good; act quickly as anger breaks out to minimize the damage
- Lust - a distorted instinct that is good in itself; rooted in a pursuit of pleasure that gives permission for exploitation (even mutually agreed on); danger of leading into an addictive cycle and diminishing ones capacity for committed, joyful relationship. (C.S. Lewis saw this as the least significant of the sins)
- Gluttony - much the same as above in its dynamics -- person who is drive by pursuit of satisfying appetites -- too much drink, food, smoking, talk; compulsive behavior. Natural instincts that are allowed to play a disproportionate role, can end up dominating the personality [Approach to lust and gluttony -- learning self discipline, redirect instincts toward "the good"]
- Sloth -- "the instinct for rest and creative idling taken and distorted into an unattractive passivity", "everything is too much trouble"; a disease of the will, numbs the will; instead of taking our life in own hand we drift along; not really bad people (they do not have the energy for it), but does create the conditions under which evil takes hold in society. Related to why people seem to resist "giving themselves" to another, work, civic life, etc.

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- Fear (awe) --; I'd understand it as fear that you will not have the life you could have (the life God wants for you); that your life was not for "the good" or that is was trivial; "fear that establishes proportions and recognizes consequences", leads to a realistic, rueful. almost humorous awareness of our true state .."
- Piety (affection) -- "a kind of fondness or love, a recognition of what you own the land that bred you"; gratitude for the love, forgiveness and understanding one receives
- Knowledge -- a capacity to accept paradox, to hold things in balance, to see more completely -- God, the dynamics of awe and affection.
- Courage (fortitude) -- closing the gap between belief and action "by reaching beyond themselves to Christ" rather than "by pulling Christ towards them and adapting him to their own uses"; standing fast even though you want to run; especially needed in moral life, the world of ideas, and in personal relations
- Counsel (guidance)-- an openness to the Holy Spirit; openness to an energy for good that comes from beyond ourselves, related to developing a capacity for listening and an inner silence
- Understanding -- the gift of balance, an awareness of the situation; "knowing when to celebrate and when to lament"; self knowledge; seeing the world rightly -- that the creation is good, that God is encountered through it.
- Wisdom -- the coming together of the other six gifts; wholeness; most contemporary books on the spiritual life speak of spiritual maturity

Four Cardinal Virtues

The four are interdependent; if you don't adequately possess one of them, the others are distorted in some fashion.

- Prudence- In the most down-to-earth meaning we are speaking of having good sense; the capacity for practical judgment. The virtue of it is in being grounded in reality and directed toward what is good. It assumes an openness to reality. This is not the same thing as excess caution and a withholding spirit.
- Justice – The virtue is rooted in the assumption that we live with one another. That then presents us with several issues to address, e.g., what we as individuals owe society; what we own other individuals; what society owns individuals.
- Fortitude – This is about remove barriers to justice. A central element is perseverance. Justice is only possible when we stay with the work before us. It is not the same as stubbornness.

- Temperance – Self-awareness and self-control are needed if we are to enjoy life and at the same time be good people. The work that has been done in recent decades on emotional and social intelligence is a resource.

Episcopal Church Spirituality

The parish is forming a baptized person for living the Christian life as expressed in the Anglican tradition.

The Christian life is a life lived within a particular tradition. We all live someplace; in some tradition of the church. So, the parish is not just concerned with the formation of “a Christian” but of a Christian in the Episcopal tradition of spirituality. This is a certain way of being “Christian.” We need to avoid the artificial logic that says “I am a Christian first, and a particular religious denomination, second. God does not call us to be Episcopalians, he calls us to be Christians.” I’d suggest that God does call us to live as Christians within particular traditions, communions and families. The different ways of being a Christian are not some mistake, or secondary concern, but are ways of addressing the diversity of spiritual temperament found among people.

The Episcopal Church has developed a form of Christian spirituality that has emerged from its roots in Anglicanism and in the American experience. That spirit can be found in most parishes and dioceses of the church (but not all). A way of expressing the elements of that spirituality is to say that it is: Christian, balanced-holistic, world embracing, adult, organic, open-minded, and a spirituality of beauty. See below for a fuller description.

Other frameworks for thinking about the formation of Christians in the Episcopal Church’s tradition include:

- Jim Fenhagen in *The Anglican Way* -- holy worldliness, personal holiness, and comprehensiveness
- John Westerhoff in *A People Called Episcopalians* exploring characteristics such as liturgical/biblical, communal, sacramental, and pastoral
- The Christian Life Model – developing a strong life of worship, doctrine and action
- Benedictine Spirituality – living in the dynamics of the Promise: Obedience, Stability and Conversion of Life