

The first temptation



Take Counsel – Stop Grumbling

The first temptation for the priest who is the “victim” of grumbling is to obsess about the grumblers. Fr. Lowell Grisham, OA

We see it in many priests who are recently ordained. Though some never seem to out-grow it.

They find someone in the parish community annoying. That may be because they are uncomfortable around a person with a certain kind of temperament. Or they may have formed judgments about the person's behavior or spiritual practices, or lack of such. Or they may know the person grumbles at coffee hour. Or they may know that the person doesn't grumble aloud but they suspect that the person grumbles internally.

For whatever reason the priest is obsessing about that person.

The priest is grumbling about that person.

There is an organization development model, [Developing Critical Mass](#), in which the effective strategy is for a leader to focus attention on those at the center. The people of high commitment and competence; those with a significant degree of emotional maturity. If they are strengthened that helps set a climate of health.

Leaders in all sorts of organizations can find themselves obsessing about those on the outermost rings – the cynical, the passive, those just “going along,” the Christmas and Easter people, and especially those suspected of grumbling.

What you can do:

- Intercede for the person you find yourself focused on
- Notice your obsession and place it on the shelf. Or perhaps on the altar.
- Pay attention to a pastoral or organizational model that helps you see more broadly; to see the whole system – for example, [Shape of the Parish](#) or Developing Critical Mass
- Listen to the grumbling – find ways to “take counsel.” Maybe the grumbling has merit.
- Consider getting help – spiritual guidance, therapy.

Father Lowell says that he found this insight from Parker Palmer helpful.

Community is that place where the person you least want to live with always lives. ...And when that person moves away, someone else arrives immediately to take his or her place.