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# Young Adult Ministry: Challenge to Faith Formation and Leadership

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Young Adult Ministry: Challenge to Faith Formation and Leadership

A Pastoral Synthesis Project by

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Presented to

The Faculty of

Loyola Marymount University

Department of Theological Studies

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Director Signature:

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Michael Horan

## **Part I: Social and Faith Formation to Young Adults**

Young Adults have gifts to offer the Church. Along with their youth, they bring enthusiasm, hope, and the desire to serve the Church. Many young adults have a hunger to search for meaning in their lives. They commit themselves to service as they value the need to respond to the care of the poor and vulnerable. Others are seeking opportunities to grow in their faith as young adults to be connected in a community among peers, who share their joys, as well as struggles, of living a Christian in a society that is captivated by consumerism. Kathryn, who is the Director of Outreach, connects young adults with the Catholic vision of justice. Katie is the assistant to the associate director for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and her job is to serve the catechetical needs of young adults. Claire has a day series of a social night throughout the year.

Young adults such as the latter are looking for ways to share their gifts and talents with the greater community. My PSP project will respond to three avenues that young adults might take today in order to develop their faith- three avenues correspond to the stories of three women that I have shared above. They will also offer three responses by developing and creating a program that will call forth the participation of the young adult community.

The program that I am first suggesting can be implemented on either a diocesan or parish level. Kathryn's goal is to promote justice and service in the lives of young adults. To achieve this goal, there are three objectives that will be achieved after each planned event. The first objective is to work for justice. Along with Kathryn's core team, she will provide service opportunities for young adults to practice the gospel values of justice, by reaching out to the vulnerable in her community. The programs have been created so that the leader can make it simple or as elaborate as the leader chooses. The suggested activities focus on inviting young adults into service, while engaging them in better understanding Catholic social teaching.

Through the experiences offered by Kathryn and her ministry, the goal is to challenge them to be a voice for the voiceless. Second objective: Kathryn's ministry will provide resources that will invite young adults to embrace a spirituality of justice. After each service project, a brief follow-up gathering will be offered so that ideas for lifestyle changes can help young adults show solidarity for the poor.

When young adults are well guided, they have the creativity and enthusiasm to transform society. Dean Hoge and his colleagues pointed out in their recent sociological study that the one thing that most Catholics find fundamental to the faith is a belief that we must serve the needs of the poor and needy.<sup>1</sup> In this context, young adults find a way to express their spirituality. The church can use their commitment to social justice to engage people who are outside the doors of the church. Often, young adults are drawn back to the church through service. I have found that many who are not regular churchgoers started their engagement with the Catholic Church through a social justice ministry. It is usually when young adults experience justice based ministries in action that they gain a respect for the parishioners and clergy who are also taking part, and seek to inquire further into the parish.<sup>2</sup>

The third objective requires a follow-up from Kathryn's ministry. Parishes often make intentional efforts during or after the services provided to the needy that help to merge Catholic Social teaching with these programs.

Kathryn presented her goals and objectives so that her core team can proceed with a purpose and plan. It is now time to proceed with a plan of action. A plan of action is necessary so that ideas can be initiated from her core team of young adults. Her core team consists of ten individuals, consisting of five males and five females who come from diverse backgrounds. The

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Hayes, *Googling God*: (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 145

<sup>2</sup> Mike Hayes, *Googling God*: (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 146

first step is to invite and identify young adults personally. The most effective approach is personal invitation by a peer. Now that Kathryn has an audience of young adults, the next step is to provide them a meaningful service experience. Kathryn's ministry decided that rather than coming up with a social justice activity, her group decided to partner up with St. Vincent de Paul Society. Every first Saturday morning, St. Vincent de Paul provides a lunch for the homeless in downtown Los Angeles. The volunteers provide the food and prepare it before they are personally distributed to the homeless community. I had the opportunity to interview Michael and Chindia, who participate in Kathryn's ministry. Michael and Chindia started volunteering three years ago. Michael's experience has been, "enriching and rewarding, since it reminds me of how blessed I am and that it is my responsibility to share my blessings with others." Chindia expressed that her experience of feeding the homeless every month for three years, nourishes her personally. "I am filled with gratitude to have established life-long friends that I met through this organization. I feel blessed to know people who share my same values."

For advocacy efforts in particular, Kathryn will have three meetings per year on the topic of social justice. Every other quarter, Kathryn will invite a speaker from a specific organization, such as Catholic Relief Services, to provide young adults with information needed to become more informed. This exercise is beneficial, since it is a platform for them to listen to one another, as they learn and gain different insights from others. When conversation is exchanged in a safe and healthy context, young adults will not feel discouraged and overwhelmed by the enormous problems that exist among the poor.

Young adults want to develop their spiritual life. They speak of this as being the foundation of their lives. It is through this spiritual life that young adults grow in appreciation for the way God works in our lives. Ministries that are responsive to young adults' desires for a

more just world invite young adults into active participation in justice ministry. Like Kathryn's ministry, it provides opportunities for faith filled reflection, leadership formation, and concrete action within the context of their community.

Katie is in charge of providing a Catechetical evening once a month to a group of local young adults in her diocese. The opportunities illustrated below address the needs of young adults, allowing them to deepen their relationship with God and to broaden their knowledge of their Catholic faith. Young adults hunger for meaning in their faith lives, and the Church owes them the Catholic faith as well as the why behind the Catholic beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, all catechetical efforts with young adults must build from this foundation and work toward this goal. Katie's ministry seeks to develop conversations, programs, and other religious education endeavors that will help young adults to seek and to find a relationship with God in the context of a faith community among their peers. When the Church offers quality catechetical efforts to young adults, the Church itself benefits. Catholics are called to experience a deeper conversion to realize that we can all learn from young adults, and to invite them to expand their leadership role of witnessing.<sup>4</sup>

Her core team recognized that before they select the twelve topics for the year, they needed to reflect upon who their target audience would be. They recognized that young adults come from such a diverse background of not only culture, demographic, as well as where they are in the stage of their life. Thus, they looked at the demographic of young adults in her diocese. As a result, her core team decided that they would address the needs of young adult professionals who are working, have families, and individuals who are single. For two months in the summer,

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<sup>3</sup> John Cusick & Katherine Devries, *Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2001), 37

<sup>4</sup> John Cusick & Katherine Devries, *Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2001), 37

her core team expanded their leadership team and developed a second tier of leadership. Katie's core team is a paid staff group. They developed a core team of volunteers from the diocese as their leadership team who will help them in selecting their topics and will develop an action plan of marketing their catechetical nights to the young adult community in their diocese. Each core team member nominated a young adult whom they previously worked with. They all discerned upon the gifts and talents of each potential leader. Once the leadership team was established, they met with Katie's core team to first identify what the needs for young adult professionals were. The twelve needs that were identified became the topics for the year. A dynamic guest speaker would then be invited by Katie's office. Their speakers selected range from the clergy and religious, as well as prominent professionals and media personalities in the country. The topics that concerned young adults: everything from making ethical choices at work to how to live their faith in their families, joys and challenges of intimacy, to stewardship.

The Church acknowledges the power of occasional catechesis that seeks to interpret determined circumstances of personal, family, ecclesial, or social life and to help them live in the prospect of faith.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when Catechesis is effective, young adults will begin to see the connection between their faith and their everyday lives.

The monthly catechetical gatherings allowed the members who attended to establish relationships with one another. In addition, the evenings expanded the opportunities for them to be more involved in other areas of ministry. When the evening concluded, an announcement of a service opportunity was announced.

Claire's ministry addresses the social component of building a relationship among young adults. Along with her core team, her ministry will host three series of social events for the year

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<sup>5</sup> John Cusick & Katherine Devries, *Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2001), 37

to draw young adults from her parish community. At her social night, a speaker is not invited. The needs of the young adult community from Claire's parish are mostly young adults who have just graduated from college and moved back to their hometown.

The gathering is an opportunity for fellowship and community among young adults who face this new transition. Claire and her core team met and created an outline for the evening. Her team envisioned that the social would meet at a local pub in their community. This local pub has a section in the restaurant those seats up to one hundred people. The environment is warm and welcoming and the set-up of the room sets the stage of community. All young adults will be seated in a round table so that the opportunity for conversation can occur. The event will be marketed through Facebook and twitter as well as a personal E-vite invitation. Secondly, her core team assessed all of the ministries in her Parish. Her Parish has forty active ministries. From each ministry, they will weed out who the young adults are, and ask the leader in each respective ministry to give them a personal invitation from the young adult office of the Parish. Additionally, each young adult who is coming will be asked to bring at least a friend.

The evening will consist of a set menu that has a set price, which each adult will pay at the door. Once they arrive at the door, a member from the hospitality committee will greet each individual. They are also asked to sign in their name and if they will, leave their email addresses with the hospitality greeters. This gives our core-team the opportunity to follow-up and sends them invitations of the ministry's events. Then, a post-it of a name of a popular person from sports, a world leader, a pop singer, and actor or actress will be placed each person's back. The persona cannot see the name before you put it there. All individuals will have to roam around the room asking questions so they can figure out the name of the person on their back. This is an excellent icebreaker that will help people to get to know one another. Once the icebreaker



concludes, everyone will sit and enjoy their drinks and appetizers. The plan of the first evening is to enjoy one another's company by keeping it light, welcoming, and comfortable. After the first pub night social, a small post card of activities that are hosted by young adult ministry will be distributed. Since the social night only occurs three times a year, the young adults who enjoyed the evening and want to continue the relationships they made, have the opportunity to gather again at the scheduled activities that's offered through the ministry.

At the second social night will begin with an icebreaker as well. The social gathering will instead meet at the rectory garden of the Pastor. The evening will consist of a dinner with the Pastor. The purpose of the night is to discuss with one another through a structured plan, what their joys and fears are as they transition from college into the world as new professionals. This dinner is an opportunity for them to establish a relationship with their peers, pastor and the leadership team of the young adult ministry.

Since the last social night will take place in the summer, the gathering will conclude with a Mass on the beach and a bonfire. The purpose of the Mass is to give thanks for the opportunity of building relationships with one another. Moreover, celebrating Mass on the beach is also a public witness for the young adults to see the church consists of the people and goes beyond the church walls. In conclusion, all three social nights served a different function, purpose, and met in different environments. After each social event there were two handouts that were distributed: one was a postcard that listed their events. The second handout was an evaluation form of the gathering.

After the three social nights are completed, the core team will gather and assess how effective each gathering was. They will discuss if each event truly reached the needs of young adults that participated at the gatherings by analyzing the evaluation forms. The key is to not

assume that the programs are effective. The only way to know if the events provided are truly effective, if critical analysis is engaged.

The common threads in all three ministries that are addressed in my paper are all interconnected. The ministries tap in the social, educational, and service component that are all interwoven together. The Catechetical events help enrich relationships as resources are provided to help families and develop skills for communal living, deepen the marriage relationship, and encourage them to participate in common activities that build the family's strength. For singles, all three components provide the opportunity for them to establish new relationships with their peers. This faith community strengthens their faith as they become a source of support for them personally as they strive to live a Christian life in society. The service component helps individuals to discover and to deepen their call to serve those in need. It also becomes an opportunity for personal growth, as the experience of service, challenges one to develop a new lifestyle that is based on the gospel values. The social component allows young adults to enjoy and be present to one another without the context of an activity for a specific purpose. This component allows young adults to get to know one another in a more relaxed and entertaining setting. Ultimately this goal is to build community.

Moreover, all of these components strive to build a community that is centered on the trinity. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in communion with one another, so too are we in relationship with each other. Thus, whatever ministry one is called to serve, all are interwoven together as the Church is called to be one. Lastly, when each ministry addresses a specific audience of young adults, the needs become more specific. Young adults span from such a wide age group. They come from varying experiences and stages in life. Each person in my PSP project aimed directly at young adults of certain ages. Getting specific makes the programs more

appealing for those who are looking to either be more involved in the parish, serve those in need, as well as to network with a peer community through structured activities.

## **Part II: Practical approach to Young Adults**

This section is directed toward parish members who might be implementing a young adult program. Specifically, it is addressed to the following: the pastor and his associates, members of the parish council, all ministry leaders, and staff members.

The scope is general as the intention is to provide a departure point for planning and implementation. This includes ecclesial sources for program rationale, educational sources of theory, direction for planning efforts, and a sampling of current successful adult programs.

For several young adults today, Catholicism is experienced as an innocuous activity that has little to do with the deeper meaning of life. With a multitude of reasons and conditions contributed, and still contributing to that circumstance, religion, religious practice, and the irrelevance to their work and family is often perceived as archaic, ambiguous, contradictory, and uncompassionate.

Conversely, in interacting with my peers, I find that young adults are disconnected from the church, while others are active participants in their parish communities.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the division between young people's perception and experience of the Church, and their desire for something more meaningful and personal, has created a chasm between the everyday life of young people and the life of the faith community.

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<sup>6</sup> Dean Hoge & Marti Jewell: *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: What the Church needs to know*, (Chicago, IL: Jesuit Press, 2010), 12

In pursuit of more spiritual meaning in their lives, young adults have a hunger for being connected to a faith community.<sup>7</sup>

In response to the issue that surround the current relationship between young adults and the church, this thesis will focus on the pastoral experiences of three ecclesial ministers who are young adult women.

Specifically, this thesis will analyze and respond to the issues mentioned earlier concerning the involvement of young adults in our Church. First, I will guide the reader on a journey through the young adult outreach that will be presented in my thesis. Second, successful program design depends on the careful mapping out of parish needs and responses to them that have been deliberately crafted upon vision and solid theory of practice. This requires dedication, direction, and support. The failure of many parish programs may be attributed to the lack of intentional planning along the lines mentioned above. Lastly, I will draw upon Nordenbrock, Drucker, and Goleman's theories as a resource for helping the young adult leaders accomplishes their goals and tasks for the next year.

The purpose of my project is to direct planning so as to improve its chances for success. The Bishops of the USA are becoming increasingly aware of the need for increased ministry with young adults. In 1997, "Sons and daughters of the light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults" was published by the United States Catholic Conference.<sup>8</sup> This document outlines a plan for ministry to and with young adults in the Church. It describes four main goals of this ministry: Connecting Young Adults with Jesus Christ, Connecting Young Adults with the

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<sup>7</sup> John Cusick & Katherine Devries, *Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2001), 5

<sup>8</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 11

Church, Connecting Young Adults with the Mission of the Church in the World, and Connecting Young Adults with a Peer Community. These four ideas have been identified as essential in the development of ministerial or pastoral programs working with young adults. This current project, therefore, brings together the three ideas developed there thus far: It has become evident recently that this coming together of ideas is a definite need within the Church. It is also clear that such training and formation process should be done authentically and with tremendous respect for the young adults.

The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops has identified four goals for ministry with young adults. The goals and objectives have helped guide the activities and events planned by the three ecclesial ministers who serve young adults in the capacity of service, the social dimension, and building relationships through Catechesis.

## **Goal One: Connecting Young Adults with Jesus Christ**

To foster the personal and communal growth and education of young adults toward a relationship with Jesus Christ leading to a Christian community.

### **Objectives**

**Spiritual Formation and Direction:** To help young adults develop their spiritual life rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and Savior. <sup>9</sup>

**Religious Education/ Formation:** To help young adults appreciate the teachings and traditions of the Church through catechesis, religious education, and pastoral care. <sup>10</sup>

**Vocation Discernment:** To help young adults understand vocation as primarily a call to holiness and Christian maturity lived through single or married life, the priesthood, the diaconate, or religious life. <sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the necessary activities that are being offered involve sharing oneself and developing the skills necessary for community life. The expected consequence is a maturing ability to analyze and incorporate the Christian faith and life into the person's beliefs and behavior. In that way, the purposeful weekly gathering serves as the context through which relational development begins. Ministry is rooted in relationships. Pastoral ministry is about personal relationships. We cannot truly serve those we do not know. "Ministry is a relational reality, and theology must recognize and respond to this fact." <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 27

<sup>10</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 27

<sup>11</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 27

<sup>12</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 127

## **Goal Two: Connecting Young Adults with the Church**

To make contact with young adults and to invite and welcome them to participate in the life and mission of the Christian community, which proclaims Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel.

### **Objectives**

**Evangelizing Outreach:** To identify places where young adults gather and to connect the personally with the Church by listening to their concerns, hopes, and dreams and by welcoming them in a community of faith. <sup>13</sup>

**Forming the Faith Community:** To invite, empower, and enable young adults to participate in the life of the Church through worship, community life, small faith communities, and evangelizing efforts, and in Catholic movements and organizations. <sup>14</sup>

**Pastoral Care:** To provide activities, visitations, and counseling opportunities that respond to the spiritual and developmental needs of young adults. <sup>15</sup>

Through the ministry of service, the opportunity for evangelization and conversion takes place in the very act of outreach. The invitation to participate in others must also include an invitation to participate in the larger context of the faith community. Through the faith community, greater opportunities exist through well-established outreach, peace and justice, service, and charity ministries. As young adults invest in those ministries, they also invest in relationships within the larger faith community. In that way, the relationship between the church and young adults are placed in a wider relational context that includes both the lives of the young adults and the life of the faith community.

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<sup>13</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 34

<sup>14</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 34

<sup>15</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 34



As young adults continually discover and participate in a fuller sense of self, community and God, the life and language of the faith community are in some way transformed. Encouraged and supported by the Church members and leaders, young adults are challenged to pull together the different aspects and charisms of the people in the community. Thus, they feel a sense of belonging to lead and create a community that will flourish in both unity and diversity. “All Ministries comes from Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> It is necessary that parishes adapt to the new face of ministry through service while validating the call of servant leadership of the young adult community.

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 79.

### **Goal Three: Connecting Young Adults with the Mission of the Church in the World**

To invite young adults, through healthy relationships, work, and studies, to embrace the mission of Christ to promote the building of the kingdom of God in the world today, thereby bringing about the transformation of society.

#### **Objectives**

**Forming a Christian Conscience:** To help young adults form their conscience based on the Gospel and on the Church's moral and social teachings.<sup>17</sup>

**Education and Working for Justice:** To provide educational and service opportunities for young adults to practice the gospel values of justice and peace and to care for the less fortunate in the workplace, at home, and in the local community.<sup>18</sup>

**Developing Leaders for the Present and the Future:** To invite, train, and support, and mentor young adults to be leaders in society and church life.<sup>19</sup>

It is necessary for the Church to foster and provide the spiritual formation since it implies and leads one to conversion. Conversion is proven in a person's life through their lifestyle that flows from their beliefs and values. As young adults mature, the goal of connecting young adults to the Church, challenges their spiritual maturity. When young adults enter a period of creative discord, the beliefs and values they want to adopt should be moderately different from the ones with which they presently operate.

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<sup>17</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 37

<sup>18</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 37

<sup>19</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 37

#### **Goal Four: Connecting Young Adults with a Peer Community.**

To help young adults develop relationships with peers who share similar values and beliefs which nurture and strengthen their faith, thereby creating community communities of support.

#### **Objective**

**Forming Faith Communities of Peers:** To provide opportunities for young adults to find among their peers the necessary support and encouragement as they journey through life and fulfill their mission to the world.<sup>20</sup>

**Developing Peer Leadership:** To help young adults become leaders, not only among their peers but also within the larger community.<sup>21</sup>

**Identifying a Young Adult Team:** To urge each parish, movement, organization, and campus to identify a team to advocate and respond to the needs of young adults.<sup>22</sup>

When the Parish provides occasions that assist young adults in building relationships with others of similar beliefs, the experiences upon one's faith is strengthened through the community setting. As the communal lives of young adults grow, young adults express the presence of God for others. Conversely, as young adults grow in relationship with others, young adults receive the presence of God from others who are no longer unfamiliar. In the midst of the relational unity, young adults share in the true meaning of community life.

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<sup>20</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 40

<sup>21</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 40

<sup>22</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, (Washington D.C., 2010), 40

## **Pastoral Role and Effects of Young Adult Ministry in the Context of Service in a Parish.**

This section first will discuss the elements of a parish and the need for renewal. The search for spirituality and the reaction against the church requires us to respond to parishioners in new ways. One of these ways is through the practice of hospitality, by inviting others in to participation into the life and mission of the church. This invitation is not only the source of faith formation, but also of community formation. Jesus set an example for us by combining teaching with hospitality on many occasions. Inviting others to participate cannot only transform a parish; it also forms a community of disciples. Before looking at how activities can benefit a parish and the young adult community, it is important to identify the role, which a parish should fulfill. A parish should encourage participation among the community, encouraging everyone to take part in not only the service projects. The effectiveness of ministry hinges on the ability to connect with and be part of the whole life. Placed in that relational context, young adult ministry is designed to be in the lives of young adults.

## **Methodology and Theory Praxis**

William Norderbrock in his book *Beyond Accompaniment, Guiding a Fractured Community to Wholeness*, provides a framework that will help parish communities establish a pastoral plan towards its goals. He provides a paradigm called the Appreciative Inquiry. In the AI, presents a clear step-by step methodology, which empowers pastoral settings to see the connectedness between a problem and a solution.

In this section of my thesis, I will explain three significant strengths that Appreciative Inquiry has to offer in a pastoral setting. First, I will discuss the dream phase, which an organization. Second, Nordenbrock presents the design phase, which allows the vision to become a reality. Lastly, I will explain the discovery phase, which allows the organization to better know its history.

In the dream phase, it engages its participants to dream of ideas, to share them with one another, and to use it as an action plan. In a parish setting, to accomplish a goal, the core leaders would first need to create a vision statement. The vision will direct its leaders and members to its purpose for existing. Once the vision has been established, identifying the dream of what a successful parish looks like can begin. In this theme, continued dialogue among the members needs to be consistent. Therefore, quarterly meetings for its parish leaders necessitate time, planning, and an action plan. The purpose for meeting allows for communication and collaboration within its members. Lastly, “the dialogue of the dream is not to identify the ideal dream for the future, but to continue the process of mutual discovery of the life-giving forces that contribute to the organization’s success.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, in this phase, themes are identified which can lead to the action plan for its members. The action plan will set the organizational layout for the

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<sup>23</sup> William Nordenbrock, *Beyond Accompaniment: Guiding a Fractured Community to Wholeness*: (Liturgical Press), 50

vision of the parish to become a reality. The vision is created when the leaders of the Church are open to dreaming of ideas.

The destiny phase allows groups to “discuss what they can and will do to contribute to the realization of the organizational dreams.” This is an important phase since it orients its members towards collaborations. In a Parish setting, this phase will teach its core leaders to continually work together and to appreciate one another’s gifts and talents. They will learn in the destiny phase the importance of recognizing, affirming, and appreciating the contributions of the community. This atmosphere creates a sense of trust and safety among its members. When trust has been established, people are motivated to work harder and promote a positive presence within the community.

In the discovery phase, its primary task is to “identify and appreciate the best of what is.”<sup>24</sup> This phase helps the members of the parish to better understand its history. For instance, in focusing on the organizational history of Corpus Christi Church, the members today examine what stands today as a foundation for the future. We recognize that we have a strong foundation that has been established already. The leaders celebrate its past successes and begin the discussion of creating more ideas for a heightened plan. In applying this phase to a parish, the dialogue among the members can stir enthusiasm for what they envision for the future. Because of this phase, the members at Corpus Christi agreed that their shared experience of truly being part of a close-knit community is what the adult members want to maintain. This goal can continue to be a reality when its lay leaders can continue providing lay-run ministries, which will continue to grow and invite new members.

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<sup>24</sup> William Nordenbrock, *Beyond Accompaniment: Guiding a Fractured Community to Wholeness*: (Liturgical Press), 53

In the importance of Appreciation, the AI is a foundation that provides positive images that will lead to a positive action. The importance of Appreciation specifically applies to young adult ministry because when we are critical of the choices young adults make about how they spend their lives, we dismiss parishioners themselves, specifically young people. When we begin to appreciate, accept, encourage, and celebrate the amazing ways in which our parishioners live the kingdom of God in the world, we might find that young adults will be drawn to form community, and ultimately seek their vocations as faithful disciples, within the church.

Furthermore, there is medical research that shows how positive images project a positive belief and can have a healing power.<sup>25</sup> In Goleman's article, it describes how emotional intelligence enhances a leader. The five skills that Goleman presents are: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. In the destiny phase, Goleman's view on emotional intelligence is employed in this area. For instance, members experience a positive environment because they feel affirmed and appreciated. In one of Goleman's suggested skills, the ability for a leader to express empathy towards their staff creates less tension in a work setting. Secondly, empathy can be achieved when the leader has a keen sense of self-awareness. Therefore, when a leader is able to be understanding and empathetic to its members, it usually produces a positive result within a given community.

In Drucker's article, he presents eight simple practices: decision making, communicating, opportunity, focus, productive meetings, and tea, thinking as a way to help leaders enhance efficiency in both a secular and pastoral setting. It is important for a leader to be effective by focusing on jobs that they can perform well. The tasks that Drucker suggests should be delegated

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<sup>25</sup> William Nordenbrock, *Beyond Accompaniment: Guiding a Fractured Community to Wholeness*: (Liturgical Press), 48

to individuals who possess the specific strengths. In both the design and dream phase, Drucker's eight practices are necessary in these two phases.

This first community that Catholics connect with is the parish. In response to the pastoral care for young adults, parishes are required to be a welcoming and inclusive community where young adults are touched in their faith journey. The pastoral care of young adults demands for parish leaders to be aware, properly formed, and receive the necessary training and resources to reach the young adults in a parish community.



### **Part III: Pastoral Ministry Component**

I decided to commit to three years of graduate studies in Pastoral Theology when I started my full time career as a Youth Director in 2006. Like many lay ecclesial ministers, I came to ministry by accident. While I was in college, I approached a neighboring Parish for a part-time position as a receptionist. I never envisioned seeing myself as a lay ecclesial minister or end up pursuing a masters' degree in the field. When I was offered to work as a Youth Minister without any parish experience in 2003, I was overwhelmed. When I graduated from my undergraduate studies, I felt called to work full-time as a lay ecclesial minister with the youth. While my experience in working with the youth was rewarding, I felt that my service to the Parish, the youth and the community deserved a director who was more knowledgeable in their field. My current supervisor encouraged me to pursue my masters' degree in Pastoral Studies so that I would receive the necessary formation that will help the Parish and the greater church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The central doctrine of the shape of God has had amazingly great influence on the Catholic tradition. It is in the teaching of the triune God that has influenced my theological lens. Edward Hahnenberg has shaped my pastoral practice and view on ministry. This doctrine on the triune God is endlessly fruitful for family, community, sexuality, and lastly for ministry.

- 1. The Holy Spirit is working within the Church to empower the gifts of the laity.**
- 2. All ecclesial ministers are called to nourish their spirituality daily.**
- 3. The laity must engage the church in service through the lens of liberation theology.**
- 4. The Holy Spirit and the rise of the laity**

The growth of ministry is rooted in Parish Life. "For several decades and in growing numbers lay men and women have been undertaking a wide variety of role in Church

Ministries.”<sup>26</sup> As they take their places in ministry, the rise of Catholic lay people have received formal catechetical formation and recognized as “Co-Worker in the Vineyard of the Lord.” Their numbers are impressive:

Today 30, 632 lay ecclesial ministers work at least twenty hours per week in paid positions in parishes. An additional 2, 163 volunteers work at least twenty hours per week in parishes. The number of paid lay parish ministers has increased by 53% since 1990 while the percentage of parishes with salaried lay ecclesial ministers has increased from 54% to 66%. In 2005, the percentage of laywomen is 64%; laymen, 20% religious women, 16%. Religious educators (41.5%) and general pastoral ministers (25%) account for two thirds of all parish members.<sup>27</sup>

As a result, lay people have been actively living out their baptismal call as expressed in Vatican II. Vatican Council II showed openness to laity in leading ministerial roles that once were reserved for the ordained. It was at the level of the parish that lay ecclesial ministry was born.<sup>28</sup> The church needs the laity in order to fulfill the mission of the church. The growth of the church is not a result of the institution or the hierarchy. The source of growth is rooted in the people, the parish community. The church continues to grow upon the relationships that are formed in parish life. Their community based on recognized chrisms, to take new public ministries in the Church, calls Lay Ecclesial ministers.<sup>29</sup> The faithful believed that the triune God is the source of any ministry, for all ministries is rooted ultimately in the missions of the

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<sup>26</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 9

<sup>27</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 9

<sup>28</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 100

<sup>29</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 130

Word and the Spirit. The Church, too, is a source of ministry.<sup>30</sup>

The laity, in collaboration with the clergy, increases in numbers as the Holy Spirit calls them forth. In the “Holy Spirit’s Call: The Vocation to Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” a paper presented at the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry in 2007, Hahnenberg compared the development of new lay ministries to the rise of the different forms of monasticism in the past, calling it “one of the top three or four most important ministerial shifts of the past two-thousand years.”<sup>31</sup>

In the life of the Church, the Holy Spirit is calling lay people into deeper participation in the life of the Church. What that participation might entail is as varied as the people who will be embarking upon these new roles. The Church believes that in every age, “the Holy Spirit works within the Church and for the church, not only in the leaders, but in every baptized person, and in the world more generally.”<sup>32</sup> As parishioners hear and heed their vocation, their call to discipleship, ministries have expanded far beyond previous levels. It is our responsibility to cooperate with the mission and work of the Holy Spirit in finding ways to rebuild and reorganize the church. We must create a partnership with God a new and ever-more inclusive order. Therefore, “one of the most important tasks of the church, in its search for truth and perfection, is to discern the working of the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> The transition that the Church is undergoing as the laity assumes a greater role is possibly too new and different to allow adequate examination of its fruits from a global perspective. The laity in its work is the continuing presence of the Holy

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 99

<sup>31</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 50

<sup>32</sup> Healy, 51

<sup>33</sup> Healy, 52

Spirit in the church. Institutions themselves are meant to be the organs through which the Spirit-  
animated community expresses its life, and whatever charisms are granted to individuals are given  
for the sake of the unity and vitality of the institutionalized church.<sup>34</sup> Thus, when we are in  
relationship with God, the Holy Spirit illustrates our approach and desire to serve.

### **Triune Model**

In the triune model, God incarnated himself through flesh as Jesus so that all can  
experience first hand his love, generosity, and forgiveness. The Trinitarian model reflects the  
relationship among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As John wrote when  
Jesus said to his disciples, “My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.” (John  
13:31), emphasizes our call to bring Christ to the world. In allowing and being open to be used  
by the Holy Spirit in fulfilling his work and mission, a relational approach is necessary. Ministry  
must be understood within the context of the church community.<sup>35</sup> As a result, ministry exists  
within the network of human relationships that support one another.

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad  
Publishing Company, 2003), 60

<sup>35</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad  
Publishing Company, 2003), 76

## **The Significance of Daily Prayer and Spiritual Formation**

While Ministry is rewarding, it can be extremely demanding. The demand that comes with ministry can be draining and discouraging. The role of a healthy support group and a daily prayer life is necessary in ministry. When ministers are stressed, people's experiences of ministry are affected in a negative way. Indeed, while the call to serve is a response to God's mission, we are also called to responsibly improve ourselves not only professionally, but spiritually as well. The National Directory for Catechesis addresses that adult catechesis is of primary importance in a parish setting. "The catechetical formation of adults is essential for the Church to carry out the commission given the apostles by Christ."<sup>36</sup>

Regardless of the various challenges we face culturally and socially it is vital for ecclesial leaders to find creative ways to be nourished spiritually on a daily basis. Unlike the religious and the clergy, the laity in addition to their job, have a families that demand their time and attention. This is the time when the spirituality is not prioritized in one's schedule.

## **The Positive Outcome of Engaging With God Daily**

In ministry, we can be succumbed to focusing more on tasks rather than on the spiritual aspect of why we even responded to serve as ecclesial ministers. For myself, letting God be God is truly one of my most difficult struggles. When I try to control my fate, and the fate of those in my sphere of activity, I see just how that is not possible, or moreover, how that is not peaceful or beneficial. As I sit in quiet 'praxis', reflecting on the idea in Silf's book of allowing your self to simply *be*, in stillness of heart and mind before God, I recognize that I have been trying so hard to press forward with 'my will' instead of God's will- allowing God to be God.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret Silf, *Inner Compass*, (Chicago, IL: Jesuit Press, 1999), 53

<sup>37</sup> Margaret Silf, *Inner Compass*, (Chicago, IL: Jesuit Press, 1999), 67

## Using Discernment to Make a Decision in Ministry

I do believe Margaret Silf's philosophy, that our desires are ultimately rooted in love and in the desire for union with the God who is love. <sup>38</sup>Corresponding to this is the idea that our deepest fears have to do with the awareness of the possibility of alienation from that source of love. I believe in the scientific theory that we humans are 'hard-wired' to seek God, to desire a union with our Creator. Our deepest desires involve the search for that union, whether it is sought through loving a fellow human being, communion with all of creation, or a specific devotion to service of our Creator.

I agree with the concept of consolation and desolation. Indeed, these moods and states are something every human experience, but the Ignatian description of relating these experiences to what is of God, and what is not has helped me immensely in my discernment process. I recently experienced a period of deep desolation, which is perfectly described by Margaret Silf in her points on how to recognize desolation. <sup>39</sup>

I did turn in on myself, cut myself off from community, fill my consciousness with thoughts of nothing else, and was drained of energy. At this low period, I did finally look up out of the pit and recognize that the only way out was to turn the situation over to God. It was then I began to experience periods of consolation as I became aware of the grace available to me if I chose to be ready to accept the offering.

Part of this process involves directing focus outside and beyond us. As I have been making time to reflect, which I was dreading, I realized that making time in my daily activities to nourish my spirituality would make me a better lay leader. I ran into the mother of one of my students', who became the face of God, the moment of grace I needed for that one day. Recently

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<sup>38</sup> Margaret Silf, *Inner Compass*, (Chicago, IL: Jesuit Press, 1999), 74

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Silf, *Inner Compass*, (Chicago, IL: Jesuit Press, 1999), 84

recovering from cancer, this mom was beginning to put together a life on her own, quietly coming out of the pain she suffered in her illness. In the process of “evening prayer” as outlined by Silf, I realized I was drawn to God by a Parent of a student, and that our open sharing of the consolations and desolations we were experiencing became the moment of incarnation I often used to overlook.

I look to find God more and more in my life now. I sit with these experiences asking the discerning questions of consolation and desolation, truly hoping to know what is “of God” and what is not. Though my prayer is still very informal, and somewhat distracted, I find that I am far more aware of the presence of God in my life, and that if I look around, I will see the face of God in a parent and find enough grace to lead me through another day.

### **Pathways to Detachment: Challenging Ourselves to Let Go**

In life and especially in ministry, we plan accordingly as well advance as we want. We can even try our very best to control situations we are choose to be in. Consequently, the more we as minister are not capable of being flexible and learning to trust in God and others, ministry will become not only challenging, but negative. *“The unequivocal message of Jesus can be reduced to this: the Creator of the universe and the Lord of history is forever and unambiguously for us, on our side.”*<sup>40</sup> We have heard this proclaimed all our lives, yet generally we prefer to attach ourselves, our desires, our energy to concrete worldly pursuits. But if we look at the words above, we truly realize that no earthly pursuit will satisfy the longing in our hearts for God.

I look to follow these words on the pathway to detachment. In my discernment, I see unhealthy attachments in my life. I also have been led to see that it is the attachment itself that is

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<sup>40</sup> Wilkie Au & Noreen Cannon, *Urgings of the Heart: A Spirituality of Integration*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press), 118

unhealthy, and not the object of my fierce grip. Identifying my deepest desire and aligning that with God's will was the first big step for me. Letting go of the hook of unhealthy attachment is a hard thing to do, and one that I only acquiesced to when it truly became too painful to distort myself in the hook-hanging position. My free-fall after letting go resulted in eventually hitting the bottom of the pit, and beginning the crawl up and out.

As an ecclesial leader, it is imperative for me to always be in communication with God. My job is more than a business transaction; it's a calling that involves many people. Therefore, when I am not spiritually taking care of myself, I feel that out of my desire to serve, the best version of me should be present. I don't want to feel tired, sapped, anxious, and out-of-control anymore. If Jesus is forever on my side, then all I need do is trust that and know that Jesus, as a friend, will not let me down. By keeping this image, as opposed to Jesus as Lord God Almighty Creator, I am more able to see the possibility of 'letting go, and letting God' take over. As St. Paul wrote, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

My prayer, as Silf suggests, is not really mine, but movements in my deepest self, springing from God. My prayer is the response to God's action in my life and God's presence in my heart and my life. Recognizing that God is the source and summit of my prayer and desire brings me into a closer union with what I know of God's will. They must be coming closer and closer together all the time.

So, if Jesus stops by the roadside and asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" I realize God already knows the answer, and is working to make the path clear that will lead to the fulfillment of my deepest desire, which is to see God more clearly, love God more dearly, and that this is all ultimately rooted in the desire to love and be loved.



## **Understanding Liberation Theology**

Our experience of prayer must be connected and expressed in our daily lives. While prayer life is an imperative component to all ministerial leaders, prayer also challenges us to be aware of the world in which we live in and to present it with all the needs and pains to God. Through deep reflection, our prayer life calls us to be disciples of Jesus, who also responded to people with an action of compassion. Thus, prayer and action are not contradictory. Our faith calls us to theologically reflect upon the gospel and to challenge our actions and ourselves. The teachings of Liberation theology can take different forms for people within different communities. Liberation theology is a reflection that is rooted in the gospel message of Jesus in relation to justice for the people who are hurt and marginalized socially and economically.

My conceptions of God, scripture, of Jesus, and of salvation have all been influenced by my study of Liberation Theologies, but differ from them because of my unique upbringing and experiences. However, I would classify my belief set as a Liberation Theology, given the following definition of liberation: I believe liberation is found when we affirm completely the humanity of all people. In order for our humanity to be affirmed, all groups must be freed from physical and social oppression, everyone must have equal rights, and we must respect all people equally. Though we might condemn someone's actions, we affirm them by recognizing that their mistakes and flaws are as result of a humanity that is equal to our own. As a Catholic leader in the church, we are all responsible in participating towards the injustice in the church, in relation to the leadership and authority. In the Catholic hierarchy, there exists a deep crisis in the leadership of the church. Through the lens of liberation theology, the laity must be liberated from the being silenced in the church. The laity has a passive role that our baptismal calling to serve God and his people has been limited. In the Catholic tradition, of course, laypeople have neither

active nor passive voice. They cannot be elected to office in the church, and they are not allowed to participate in the election of others.<sup>41</sup> The Vatican II Council expressed that lay people are living out their baptismal calling. The Church believes that in every age, “The Holy Spirit works within the Church and for the Church, not only in the leaders, but in every baptized person and in the world generally.”<sup>42</sup> With that participation might entail is as varied as the people who are embarking upon these new roles. As a lay leader, I’ve seen ministries expand far beyond previous levels. The Church of today is characterized by an abundant variety of ministries as lay people live out their call to discipleship. Therefore, the agenda of a lay theology of liberation must then be to achieve voice in the church, that is, to be taken seriously on a par with clerical voices, priestly or Episcopal, according to the degree of expertise one can claim or according to the measure of good in what we have to say.<sup>43</sup> Their role as the laity is not necessarily to serve as academic theologians. The laity brings forth a wealth of wisdom from their personal experiences of balancing a healthy work and family life. Consequently, there is an enormous reservoir of lay practical wisdom on the challenges of living life according to the gospel, both theologically and ethically, that remains untapped because the clerical teachers in the church draw upon it little if at all, and because those whose experience it is are hobbled.<sup>44</sup> The crisis and concerns of the church are in the arena of leadership, a platform where the wisdom and knowledge of the laity can be used for the benefit of the greater church. The Church can draw upon the experience and contribution of the laity in matters of homosexuality, church leadership, the sexual abuse

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 193

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas Healy, “By Working of the Holy Spirit: The Crisis of Authority in the Christian Churches,” *Anglican Theological Review* 88 (2006): 22.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 197

<sup>44</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 198

scandal, and birth control if they chose to include the laity. Moreover, in relation to church leadership, there is the attempt to stifle debate by invoking authority over the exclusion of most married men and all women from ordination to the priesthood.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the hierarchical model of the church is consistent with an overly spiritualized ecclesiology. Through liberation theology, the hope is to allow ecclesial minister to use their faith formation and catechetical education as a resource that would result in unifying the clergy and the laity in ministry.

In liberation theology, God's primary role is as a loving creator; God gifted us with the humanity that we are called to affirm. All are structures through which humans try to understand a God whose workings are far beyond our imagination. None of the stories represent the literal truth of an historical event, but none are untrue; we must treat them not as truth itself but rather as tools that help us approach it. The experience of the laity has an impact on injustice towards the role of lay people in the Church. The laity can either shed light on the problem, by rejecting the notion that there is a problem at all, or perhaps by cutting down to size some of the issues that seem blown out of all proportion by the seemingly unhealthy level of interest the teaching church appears to display in social sin.<sup>46</sup>

The God of my liberation theology is a creator and a supporter; God works through people, encouraging and giving us responsibility, present in our actions and in our acceptance of one another. Unlike the God of some Christian churches and Liberation Theologies, mine is not an interventionist. Like Womanist theologian Dolores Williams, I see no evidence that God has intervened in the past to end oppression, and no evidence that God will do so in the future. Many Liberation Theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, teach that Jesus' resurrection is proof that

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 199

<sup>46</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 202

God intervenes to end oppression, but I believe that God gave that responsibility to humans. This liberation is the work of God, but it is our job to create it.

No human theology can represent the actual truth about God, so all beliefs are approximations structured from a person's own experiences. Liberation Theologies should lead people to actions that support one another, but they must differ among various cultures in order to remain relevant. We must understand God through the lens of our own society and culture; our beliefs must liberate us within our own context.

This represents exactly the trouble with the normative, traditional model of Christian Theology: the theology is not inherently flawed, but it is far removed from the people whose experience it was created. Just as Jocelyn Grant, speaking from her experience as a Black woman, feels that if a theology "has no word for Black women, its conception of liberation is inauthentic," traditional Christian theology is simply inauthentic for most people today.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the Womanist Theology that is authentic for Grant cannot be so for a gay white man. His own theology of liberation ought to lead him to the same attitudes and behaviors, but it must be structured and practiced differently; he cannot relate to the tri-dimensional" oppression at the core of Womanist Theology because he does not experience it.<sup>48</sup> I personally find many of the themes and practices of Womanist Theology very appealing; it is perhaps the Political/Liberation Theology most similar to my own. Like many Womanists, I believe that religion must be holistic, that it must be loyal, that it is inextricable from life, and that we must appreciate the natural counterparts of tears and laughter.

The most significant change that a study of Political and Liberation Theologies has wrought on my own theology is an emphasis on praxis, or practice. Most liberation Theologies

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<sup>47</sup> Jacqueline Grant, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, (New York: 2008), (331)

<sup>48</sup> Jacqueline Grant, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, (New York: 2008), (277)

assert that the way to truly follow God is not simply to attend church or to profess belief or to be of right intention, but actually to practice liberation in all parts of life. I find meaning in the idea that action is the entire purpose of my theology, that scripture and tradition and emulation of Jesus may reveal the importance of liberation, but that we allow God to work through us when we create that liberation ourselves.