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MODELS OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: THEORY AND PRAXIS

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This paper explores the theory and practice of using theological reflection in teaching theology. Specific models of theological reflection, teaching methodologies, and learning outcomes are analyzed and discussed.

Human life is characterized by paradigmatic change in all facets: social, psychological, systemic, economic, sexual, as well as theological. Exploring these changes in light of the Judeo-Christian tradition is a significant and worthy goal for theology courses. As faith seeks understanding, students implicitly ask: Who am I? Does my experience mean anything? Are my life experiences normal? What is the meaning of life? How do I change when I feel myself “stuck” in a relationship that is less than life giving? Where is God in all the ordinary everydayness of human existence? To examine the reality of these life questions is to examine the context and culture of a living theology.

The nature and purpose of Christian theological education is to promote personal wisdom. As students pursue answers to their life questions they surface the core foundational issues of personal identity, right relationship, and human agency. Theological reflection is an excellent tool to enable students systematically to explore life’s experiences, to reflect critically upon their meaning, and to theologize explicitly about the God event in their lives in light of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Tapping students’ life and relational experiences can be a treasure chest of rich theological insight and growth.

THEORY OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological reflection describes the process of learning directly from our experience. As an intentional and systematic activity in the classroom as well as through personal assignments, it attempts to enable individuals to discover God's presence in their experience, the difference God's presence makes in their lives, and what God expects as a result (Kinast, 1990). As a learning intervention in the classroom, it implicitly models spiritual discernment for the student: disciplining oneself to look at experience with the third eye of faith; unceasingly asking the God question; and examining values and core beliefs for their explicit relationship to theology.

Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions, and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living. (Kinast, 1990, p. 3)

Three assumptions underline the use of theological reflection in the classroom. The first is that the human person is a hidden unity who discovers his or her identity in relationship. The Judeo-Christian message is that we are generational people who discover ourselves and God in the people who have gone before us, in those with whom we share life, and in the people who come after us. We are who we are because of the people who have loved us and those who have failed to love us. Attending to our relationship dynamics and impact experiences reveals our foundational faith convictions as well as God's ongoing revelation in our lives. Explicitly uncovering these religious beliefs is an essential step in our understanding of them. This is the classical definition of theology as faith seeking understanding.

A second pedagogical assumption which flows from the first is that a living theology holds theory and praxis together. Pedagogically this is the essence of an action-reflection model. The best way to teach a theology of Christ, Church, or salvation is to invite students to "do" theology. Every ordinary Christian believer who authentically tries to appropriate his or her faith is participating in the theologizing process. Whenever we examine what is creative or destructive about life and relationships, we are theologizing. Whenever we struggle with sin and human limitation, we are theologizing. Whenever we hunger and thirst to care and be cared for, we theologize. Whenever we attempt to bridge separation and cutoff, we do theology. Although this theology may be embryonic, unconscious, or dormant, our task as theological educators is to midwife this theological truth into existence

and to connect it to the fuller Christian story. Enabling students to name their operative theology helps them develop the skill of theologizing.

A third assumption is that theology is an activity of people. The biblical experience of Exodus and Resurrection provide witness to the essential truth that we are a covenant people who experience God within our history (action) and together in time recognize, retell, and celebrate (reflection) this presence together. These stories function as paradigms of faith, as well as models of theological education. It is in the corporate/communal remembering and retelling of our experience that God is recognized. The theology and mystery of the incarnation live at the center of this rhythm. In essence, the classroom is a theologizing community, not just the inheritor or receptor of theology. The gift of God's spirit is present and active within the life of the entire community.

MODELS OR METHODS

Theological reflection, as an intentional activity in the classroom, is a creative and energizing tool for learning. Currently, a plethora of models of reflection is available for teacher use. Table 1 lists the movements or steps of several of these models. Each varies in its pedagogical complexity, usability, and adaptability depending upon the content goals and learning outcomes planned for a given course.

A common denominator of these models is that each describes a working map of contextual theology. "Contextual theology can be defined as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture" (Bevans, 1992, p. 1). Each model presents a different way of theologizing which takes a particular context seriously, and so each represents a distinct theological starting point and presuppositions.

The origin of most of these models can be traced to Lonergan's *Method in Theology*, wherein he addresses the human capacity for self-transcendence and the operations that constitute efforts at authentic cognition: attending, understanding, judging, deciding, and loving. Transforming theological education would be intentionally engaging students in all five of these operations (Groome, 1991).

Lonergan's starting point is transcendental, concerned with one's own religious experience and one's own experience of the self. Theology is conceived as a process of bringing to speech who I am as a person of faith and as a product of my historical, geographical, social, and cultural environment (Bevans, 1992).

The strength of the transcendental model is that it affirms that any Christian who authentically tries to appropriate her or his faith is participat-

Table 1
MODELS OR METHODS OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

<p style="text-align: center;">Lonergan Transcendental Method</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attending 2. Understanding 3. Judging 4. Deciding 5. Being in love 	<p style="text-align: center;">Browning Method of Correlation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretation of Common Human Experience 2. Interpretation of Christian Symbols 3. Correlation of Two Interpretations 4. Metaphysical Analysis 5. Cultural & Societal Analysis in Light of Theological Vision 6. Programs & Actions
<p style="text-align: center;">Whitehead & Whitehead Method in Ministry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attending 2. Assertion 3. Decision on tripolar sources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Scripture/tradition b. Cultural information c. Personal experience 	<p style="text-align: center;">Delve, Mintz, & Stewart Service Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploration 2. Clarification 3. Realization 4. Activation 5. Internalization
<p style="text-align: center;">Groome Shared Praxis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name Present Action 2. Critical Reflection Upon Present Action 3. Making Accessible Christian Story/Vision 4. Dialectical Hermeneutic 5. Decision Response for Lived Faith 	<p style="text-align: center;">Holland & Henroit Pastoral Circle</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insertion 2. Social Analysis 3. Theological Reflection 4. Pastoral Planning
<p style="text-align: center;">Shea Narrative Storytelling</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presence 2. Discernment 3. Empowerment 4. Transformation 	<p style="text-align: center;">Killen & deBeer Movement Toward Insight</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experience 2. Feelings 3. Images 4. Insight 5. Action

ing in the theologizing process and doing genuine theology. The steps of the model are clear and lead to personal and theological insight.

The difficulty in facilitating this method with individuals and groups is the accessibility of theological and philosophical language. Lonergan presupposes familiarity with Aquinas, scholastic philosophy, theology, and epistemology. This presupposition often leaves only the professional theologian with the background and tools to comfortably theologize with this method.

Shea's (1987) starting point is theological anthropology. He attends to the goodness of human persons and their life situations in an effort to uncover God's hidden presence in their experience. The genius of Shea's methodology is the use of story to engage participants in examining the primordial truth of God in their experience and seeing that experience in light of Christianity. There is truth in story. In remembering and retelling our story we engage in the essential characteristic of all good theology, which is dialogue.

The weight of success in facilitating this model is the skill of the facilitator in being able to attend to and name the religious agenda present within the individual's experience. This presupposes the cultivation of two gifts: interpathy (the ability to enter into the other person's story from her or his vantage point) and theopathy (the ability to view that experience with the lens of the God mystery).

Holland and Henroit (1984) in the Pastoral Circle model and Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) in the Service Learning model point to God's manifestation of self in history, practice, and action. The use of these models tends to zero in on the importance of or need for social change in one's articulation of faith and values. The great strength of these models is their ability to focus on a particular issue or problem and to impact the social, moral, and ethical implications. These models are of particular value in a group context.

The difficulty with implementing these methods in the classroom is that few social problems today are simple. The analysis of a problem can be so complex and overwhelming that the process can paralyze participants. Some theologians have also experienced that it is the specifically theological dimension of these models that often is poorly attended due to the complexity of the social and cultural analysis.

Groome's (1980) Shared Christian Praxis, Browning's (1983) Method of Correlation, Whitehead and Whitehead's (1980) Method in Ministry, and Killen and deBeer's (1994) Movement Toward Insight represent synthetic models of theological reflection. Each of these approaches attempts the extremely difficult task of balancing the insights and sources of scripture, tradition, cultural information, and personal experience in a dialogical way. The strength of these models is that they attempt an integrative theological reflection. They are also effectively implemented in a group context. Killen and deBeer's movements are particularly useful in uncovering the imaginative

and affective dimension of human experience, inviting students to utilize this dimension in their theologizing.

The problem in the praxis of these synthetic models is that so much is being attempted that their implementation can be exhausting. These approaches require a high level of group facilitation skills, individual research of multiple theological sources, and a large amount of time for group processing.

Although each model presented in Table 1 is distinct, it is apparent that parallel steps or movements co-exist in models and appear to be interchangeable. Experience teaches that flexibility and creativity are keys to applying these models effectively. Exclusive use or dependence upon one approach can distract the theological enterprise, for there is no one completely adequate way of doing theology. Subject matter, group composition, and the type of learning outcomes intended will dictate the method that is appropriate. Often I find myself adapting a model of theological reflection for use in teaching theology courses. Essentially, I use Whitehead and Whitehead's Method in Ministry as the organizing framework for theological method. I incorporate Shea's Narrative Storytelling approach as the vehicle for theological reflection in the classroom, and I adapt Killen and deBeer's Movement Toward Insight for course assignments which are designed to enable students personally to develop the discipline of theological reflection which has been modeled in the group setting of the classroom.

PRAXIS OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Through trial and error I have come to employ a five-step model of theological reflection for teaching theology. I have used it successfully in teaching a variety of courses such as Introduction to Christian Scriptures; Christian Marriage; Life Through Death; Ecclesiology; and Pastoral Theology. It consists of:

1. retrieving a significant experience
2. retelling the experience in story form in small groups
3. reframing experiences in the large group
4. reconnecting the experience to the Christian story
5. revisioning

The process of theological reflection not only allows for the transmission of theological knowledge, but models a critical theory of knowing and invites students to learn a discipline which can serve as a lifetime tool for ongoing conversion and transformation. Paulo Freire describes this as the gnosiological cycle.

One movement is the production of new knowledge and the second is the one in which you know the existing knowledge. What happens generally is that we dichotomize these two moments; we make them separate. Knowledge is produced in a place far from the students, who are asked to only memorize what the teacher says. Consequently, we reduce the art of knowing into a mere transference of existing knowledge. (Freire, 1987, pp. 7-8)

This dichotomy is pejoratively referred to as the banking theory of education. The teacher is viewed as the possessor of the wealth of theological knowledge, entrusted to deposit this knowledge on the bankrupt minds of students. Theological reflection breaks through these pedagogical and theological dichotomies by encouraging critical reflection and curiosity, and demanding inquiry, informed action, uneasiness, and uncertainty. These virtues are indispensable to the adult religious person, and to dynamic theological education. I will use a theological reflection from a Christian marriage course to illustrate how the method functions in a classroom setting.

MOVEMENT 1: RETRIEVE A SIGNIFICANT MARITAL/FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Retrieval of our marital/family experiences is the beginning movement. I initiate the reflection with a prompt to guide the student to an impact experience. For example, retrieve a marital/family experience which was significant for you. Retrieve a family experience where you felt changed or affirmed. Retrieve a family event where you felt God's presence. When did it happen? Where? With whom? Relive the dialogue and interaction of the event. Reexperience your feelings when it happened. Why is the event significant for you? These guiding questions lead students through the experience. Students can choose to relive the experience in their imagination or to journal upon their retrieval. Regardless, students are instructed to freely engage their imaginations into an experience without setting limits or judgments upon it. Experiences may be from one's childhood family of origin or one's current family of choice. They may be family rituals of fulfillment, an impact experience of a crisis or hardship, or whatever comes to mind. Regardless of the nature of the experience, the goal of this movement is to enable the student to re-inhabit the experience.

Whitehead and Whitehead (1980) remind us that using personal experience as a source for theology has always been viewed with suspicion. Although we possess a rich theological tradition which celebrates the *sensus fidelium* and reading the signs of the times, personal experience often plays a subservient role in the theological enterprise. Reflecting upon marital and family experiences doubles the risk. What do we do with apparently dysfunctional or what we might judge to be inane experiences? How do we han-

dle them so that the classroom does not deteriorate into a television talk show?

Three other dangers complicate this initial movement: certitude, self-assurance, and fusion. First, students may retrieve an experience which contradicts their own guiding values and beliefs. Finding themselves on unfamiliar and unaccustomed ground, students may view the experience with the lens of certitude, viewing the unfamiliar only in terms of what they already believe and unable to test the experience against a new view of life. Interpretation of the experience with certitude tends to be absolute and unchanging or denied.

Second, students may be so overwhelmed by the complex world they live in that the social, religious, and familiar traditions appear unreliable, irrelevant, or even oppressive. Fed up with the failures and confusion of external contexts, students may choose the lens of self-assurance, preferring their own compass, map, and guide and rejecting the need for any other. The lens of self-assurance can blind students to engaging the experience seriously and being open to its religious meaning. Overconfidence and control block the theological vision (Killen & deBeer, 1994).

Third, many students confuse or fuse religion, faith, and theology. At times students may retrieve experiences which their religious tradition or upbringing has judged to be sinful (e.g., divorce or adultery). As a result they may not even consider the experience seriously and prematurely collapse the interpretation as morally wrong. Consequently, an experience pregnant with religious meaning, faith development, and theological insight and wisdom is aborted.

These dangers invite us to take seriously the incarnational nature of the theological enterprise. Understanding our personal family context is essential to understanding a contemporary Christian theology of marriage. By revisiting our significant family experiences and interpreting their meaning, we assist students in seeing their guiding theological values and faith perspectives. This movement provides a tremendous opportunity and challenge for the facilitator. This praxis is an art.

Reliving these family impact experiences enables students to stand in their primary covenant communities: family of origin and family of choice. It is here that they first witnessed the good news and bad news of caretaking and caregiving, partnering and parenting. As Fowler's and Cole's research on faith development has shown, these experiences are stories of "faithing" which are foundational and formational in our adult images of God, our level of faith development, and our religious self-understanding (Fowler, 1990).

Another significant dimension of retrieving the experience is that it inaugurates the process of relational value clarification for the student. Values are the driving force which motivates human beings and provides criteria for shaping our lives and choosing action or inaction. Clarifying our values

enables us to unravel our core beliefs and basic world view.

Each thought, feeling, and action is preceded by internal image. That image is transformed into action through language. Value words act as bridges between the inner world of thoughts, feelings, sensations, and intuitions and the outer world of concrete reality. (Hall, 1990, p.22)

Our values are the windows to faith and theology. Theological reflection enables students to name their values explicitly. This genesis effect or conation is the transforming integration of learning in our heads, hearts, and lifestyles. Retrieving an impact experience is the first step in this transforming integration.

MOVEMENT 2: RETELLING THE STORY

After the retrieval of the experience in private reflection, students are asked to form small learning clusters of two to three people to retell their story. This is an important movement in the model from what is *my* story to *our* story. The individual story of family becomes a shared story in the small clusters, where students can experience theology as an activity of people which is communal, conversational, and ongoing.

There are two dimensions to this movement. The first is storytelling. Here students are instructed to retell the event in as much detail as they can, without interpretation or judgment. Then, after narrating the experience, students are invited to share why it is significant, and what it means to them.

The second dimension is story listening.

To give our undivided attention to another person is to do two things: it is to give of our very life, and it is to begin to enter that person's world. In this attentiveness we put aside our preconceptions, preferences, and preformed judgments, as Christ put aside his divinity. And we enter into the other person's world to experience that world as he or she does. To pay such attention is to follow the path of Jesus and to serve as he did to connect people more deeply with the presence of God. (Gallagher, 1984, pp. 14-15)

The sharing of our family story with an empathic other opens us to layers of meaning which we may have never seen before. As the New Testament attests, the disciples of Jesus were instructed to "remember" him and to proclaim his good news. It was in this communal remembering and retelling that the Spirit was unleashed within them. In the same way, to retell our family stories continues to stir the spirit and calls us to deal with aspects of sin and grace in our lives. This shared story opens up hidden dimensions of life for us. "If an experience has religious significance, it is because of its inner impact. It is the inner impact of an event which is gradually sorted out and claimed in the retelling process" (Shea, 1982, p. 27). At the time of the event

the religious significance may be unrecognized. It is in the remembering and retelling that the student may first recognize its religious dimensions.

MOVEMENT 3: REFRAMING

In this movement of the model, reframing refers to the attempt to reconstruct the personal experience of the student from a theological perspective. Here we ask the explicit questions: What does it mean? What do the remembering and retelling do to me inside? Why is the experience significant to me? What values are stirred within me as I recall the experience? What do I believe in light of the experience? Where do I see God in all this? What images of God, Jesus, and Church surface from this reflection?

As we carefully and creatively craft these questions into the large group conversation, we take on a midwifing role as theological educators. We assist in birthing the truth and wisdom of the students' experience, preparing them to revisit the Christian story with new lenses. What is critical in this movement is to enable the student to describe his or her perception of the circumstance, no matter how ordinary.

As we filter the interpretation of the experience, the meaning, and the learnings in the group context, we teach a fundamental theological truth: to stand in one another's marital/family experiences is to walk on holy ground. This is sacred space for the individual as well as for the community that recognizes this is God's space, where God continues to walk and operate.

Each of these stories is significant, for it reveals how God continues to contact us. The theological task is to tease out the underlying foundational convictions and permanent attitudes which have been implicitly learned from the experience and to make them explicit.

This task often involves supplying language and translating human events into religious concepts, which the students are still developing. In a recent theological reflection, I asked students to retrieve a family experience where they felt changed or affirmed. A rich continuum of experiences surfaced: childbirth, falling in love, family feud, a parent's cancer, infertility, anniversaries, miscarriage, a spouse's death, divorce, abortion, and rape. Very few students could talk about these experiences as revelation, creation, redemption, or conversion. But as they reflected upon the image of God/Jesus which surfaced from the experience in their reflection, the imagery of God/Jesus as builder, comforter, Christmas present, companion, and faithful lover unleashed a rich treasure of material for explicit theological language and concepts.

In addition to the translation of ordinary experience into theological language, what also is reframed in this movement are attitudes and perceptions of family life experiences. Often traumatic family events or crises (e.g., divorce, remarriage, adoption, suicide, relocation, death, miscarriage, domestic abuse/violence, sexual abuse) freeze students at a particular developmen-

tal or faith stage. Unresolved emotional tasks or the inability to interpret meaning within the experience can block or arrest growth for the individual. Reframing these experiences within the classroom permits students to see how others have interpreted their family experiences and prevailed through trauma or crisis.

In the reframing movement, the instructor as well as peer students function as mentors of meaning. Through the shared stories students can see how their peers have been able to view events through eyes of faith and integrate those experiences into the process of ongoing conversion.

Those experiences, whether traumatic or pleasurable, may be constructive or destructive, depending upon how they are integrated. Integration depends upon the inherent pattern of the stage at which the experience is received, the perspective of the community, and the information level of the person. Christian conversion is an integration process or event that sets the whole in a perspective that allows faith and God's grace to function as the center and ground of meaning, purpose, hope and relationships. (Ellens, 1988, p. 117)

What is born in the reframing are new life-shaping ways to view marriage and family, as well as one's personal experiences.

MOVEMENT 4: RECONNECT THE CHRISTIAN STORY

Sharing the narrative of our stories and reframing the experiences together are the prolegomenon for reconnecting students' experiences with the Christian story. What do the Judeo-Christian scriptures have to say to us about family experience? What insights and collective truths does the Christian tradition offer my experience? Having journeyed through the holy ground of their own experience, students' sensitivities are often heightened for their reconnection to the Christian story.

The scriptures and tradition are an attic of wisdom for the learning community. Several issues need to be addressed herein for critical analysis to take place. The first is alienation. Often students, and in particular young adult students, whose searching faith is permeated with cultural meaning, are alienated from their own religious tradition as well as the scriptures. Biblical illiteracy is a reality for many students today. Knowledge bankruptcy exists, and this movement challenges instructors to supply information and input to expand the knowledge base. The required course readings also address this knowledge gap directly.

A second issue is accessibility. Students can often feel overwhelmed and intimidated by the wealth of knowledge that 3,000 years of Judeo-Christian tradition has amassed. Where do we start? What is really significant? How do I get a handle on all this knowledge? What is relevant to my life? Our task in

this movement is to enable the students to befriend the tradition. The intent is not so much mastery or even absorption, but a more than intellectual grasp of and intimacy with the Christian tradition. As theological educators our goal is to foster and nurture both critical awareness of and comfort with the diverse testimony of scripture and tradition on marriage and family issues. Evidence of growth in these abilities is assessed in class discussion and in student papers (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1980).

This movement also prepares students for broader theological reflection. Exploring the dynamics of attraction, bonding, and the attachment of human sexuality and love can easily lead into the category of ecclesiology and the questions of what it means for us to be a community and to be church. Explicitly examining the God event in a family experience can directly lead into a Christological reflection upon Jesus, who he is, and our personal relationship to him. Unpacking the anatomy of crisis or dysfunction is a profound entry into the theme of salvation and the concrete historical situations where we feel ourselves saved, liberated, and rescued.

MOVEMENT 5: REVISION

This last movement is typically described as the decision, action, or response stage. For each method it represents the integration of head, heart, and lifestyle. The basic hope in the revision stage is that students see life with new eyes of faith, that is, conversion.

...conversion best signifies a turning about, a definite change of front, a passing from one state of being to an altogether different one as a definite and specific act. From the Christian perspective religious conversion is an alteration, a turning around. From the convert's perspective, conversion is not self-generated; rather, some forces beyond the control of the subject seem to effect the transformation. The change itself involves what might be called a recentering of personal identity that marks for the convert a shift from being in some form of bondage to being in a state of liberation. (Gillespie, 1991, p. 19)

Tillich describes conversion as an experience of being grasped by the mystery, the ultimate concern which grounds our entire being. Conversion is a depth response to change at the core of the human person.

However we choose to name it, revisioning is seeing that life is more than our limited perception of it, and that our very existence is indebted to a source of life and love that is beyond our construction of reality. Revisioning is also the process of seeing eschatology in a personal and realized way. Realized eschatology, or end times, is not only the hunger for final fulfillment by the first-century Jewish Christians, it is seeing our lives in God's time. In particular, it is seeing in all the events of our lives, ordinary and

extraordinary, the event of God and the presence of spirit walking with us.

Theological reflection upon family impact experiences which explicitly names the operative values and faith convictions leads to ethical and moral sensitivity. Recognizing the presence of mystery/God in their experience, students realize that this presence demands a response. The individual is invited to live out the meaning which these reflections revealed. (Shea, 1982, p. 29)

Revisioning may evidence itself in a class experience of insight; an assigned theological tapestry reflection; a hushed gaze; a change in the patterns of alcohol abuse, apathy, enmeshment, or physical abuse. On the other hand, it might remain in gestation for 20 years. Regardless, the process of theological reflection has planted the seeds for transformative revisioning to take place.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The family is never a fixed sum. It is always in the process of becoming something new. Adaptability is therefore an essential characteristic of a family's capacity to move toward a future in which God is always making something new. To believe in a living God is to recognize change at the center of faith and life and family. (Anderson, 1988, p. 149)

Theological reflection as a process is a powerful and growth-filled tool for theological educators. The reasons are several. Theological reflection:

- stands in the personal experience of the student and reverences that experience as religious
- examines Christian scripture to uncover its truth for contemporary experience
- befriends the Christian tradition to filter out its history and wisdom for contemporary culture
- critically examines the person, family, and cultural contexts which have been formational in students' values, beliefs, and theology
- develops the discipline of an action-reflection process of theologizing and discernment for the student
- enables the students to experience the process of theology as a communal/corporate enterprise which models various faith responses to marital and family events

Structured carefully and facilitated successfully, theological reflection can assist in the process of ongoing conation and conversion which invites students to view their experiences from the perspective of God's time and grace and to transform their learning cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.

Facilitating theological reflection enables instructors to shift their role from being the resident expert to one of the visiting midwife in the classroom. By its very nature, theological reflection is conversational, cumulative, and incomplete. To facilitate learning with students is to humbly acknowledge the eclectic if not messy nature of teaching and to trust the process of collaborative learning. From experience, the following tips for facilitating theological reflection are noteworthy.

- A positive and cooperative learning environment based upon trust, mutual respect, and openness is essential. Establishing group ground rules and modeling appropriate self-sharing strongly enhance the learning environment.
- Develop small groups as learning communities. Wisdom is most often exchanged in personal conversation where experience is valued, listened to, and empathized with. Build upon the insights and learning from these small learning communities.
- Develop learning contracts to preserve confidentiality, enhance listening skills, and integrate homework reflection with class activities.
- Utilize group theological analysis as a springboard to address the questions of Christology, ecclesiology, and salvation.
- Model appropriate self-sharing which focuses on the personal interpretation of the experiences reflected upon.
- Focus the reflection and processing of the experiences in the class setting on the specifically theological dimensions of the event, so as not to deteriorate into the therapeutic classroom.

As the ancient Chinese saying reads: "Give persons a fish and they eat for a day. Teach them to fish and they eat for a lifetime." In utilizing theological reflection we invite students to feast at a banquet table of rich theological and spiritual insights. Furthermore, use of the approach enables us to appropriate theology as an activity of a community engaged in doing, not just digesting, theology. Thus we better prepare students with an understanding of the Christian tradition and the ability to connect its wisdom to their life experience.

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