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Before and While you are a Leader..You are a Disciple! A Retreat for Pastoral Ministers in the Diocese of San Diego

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Before and While you are a Leader...You are a Disciple!
A Retreat for Pastoral Ministers in the Diocese of San Diego

by

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A Pastoral Synthesis Project presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Theological Studies
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In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theological Studies

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COMPONENT 1: PASTORAL PROGRAM

Introduction

In this synthesis paper, I propose a design for a retreat that will enable lay pastoral leaders in the Diocese of San Diego to refocus, renew and reaffirm their role and purpose in ministry. The retreat theme will center on discipleship; specifically, I want to promote theological reflection on Jesus' action of foot washing as a theology of ministry rooted in discipleship. The project considers three components: 1) pastoral program-constructive proposal for pastoral action, 2) pastoral theology-theological and theoretical framework and 3) pastoral ministry-reflective understanding for a theology of ministry.

The constructive proposal for a retreat will,

- A) provide details about the audience I plan to address and the need they have,
- B) discuss the content and structure of the retreat program and,
- C) address how the process will take place.

This pastoral plan is more than just a retreat proposal; the theological framework underlying this project appraises the minister into a radical call of self-awareness and mission for the sake of Jesus' kingdom. It is an invitation towards reflective, pastoral and spiritual renewal; an experience of *love*, expressed in the action of foot washing.

It propitiates *knowledge*, a greater awareness of the call to discipleship and mission¹ to make God known as bearers of good news. Finally, it is a call to *action*, the institution of a new commandment; self-less love and humility, "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13)².

Definition of Discipleship: A Precursor to Leadership

The title of the proposed retreat is “Before and While you are a Leader... You are a Disciple!” Why do I use the term discipleship and *what* does it say for pastoral ministers today? Kathleen Cahalan accurately states, “discipleship constitutes the fundamental identity, call, and practice of the baptized Christian.”³ Further, discipleship means ‘to follow’ and references ‘one who learns.’” Hence, in order to lead, it is necessary to learn to follow. The Gospel of John blueprints an interesting theological foundation by using the term “*follower* sixty one times.”⁴ John’s mystical and poetic text provides the believer with an opportunity for interior renewal, one that begins at the surface and ends at the depths of the person’s self. My theological interpretation on what discipleship or follower connotes for leadership in its present context is always an ongoing process. Discipleship is not a static state of being or an adopted lifestyle; it implies an ongoing journey of nurturing discovery, refocus, renewal and re-identifying the self in relation to Christ and love of others. The pastoral disciple must embrace her/his mission with an open and humble heart if she/he wants to become an effective leader.

A Description of the Retreat Participants: Lay Pastoral Ministers

In my 13 years of ministry experience on both a parish and diocesan level, I continue to see how the loss of identity, lack of community, vision for the overall mission of Christ is lost because the real life affirming connection on both a pastoral and spiritual level is lost. My target audiences for this retreat are catechists, Directors of Catechetical Ministry, Directors of Religious Education, RCIA ministers, youth ministers, young adult ministers and sacramental preparation ministers both paid and volunteer.

The underlying situation I have witnessed in ministry is the gradual loss of purpose and in the process, a loss of the self in relation to Christ and love of others. I can describe my assessment of the loss of self in two paradoxical behaviors⁵:

1) the discouraged disciple and 2) the greedy and power ridden disciple. The people I have encountered that fall under the former, I sense genuineness in their desire to serve. Nonetheless, they grow tired and weary because they feel their efforts are nothing more than a drop of water in an ocean. Lack of support and affirmation from peers or those whom they serve have also contributed to the discouragement of these ministers.

The popular cliché ‘you cannot give what you do not have’ holds true. When referring to outcomes, Wilkie Au says, “in order to change their behavior, they must first change their perception of themselves and the world.”⁶ Change challenges a person to step out of comfort in exchange for uncertainty whether that outcome is good or bad. This however, must be a conviction that happens within in order to give way for renewal. Pastoral ministers need to remain vulnerable before the movement of the Holy Spirit. Doing so permits a deeper knowledge and understanding in relation to God’s action in the life of the minister. This in turn, results in authentic and life-giving ministry.

The second description of the greedy and power ridden disciple is a growing concern. These individuals long to serve for the sake of acknowledgment, power and recognition. In the process, they leave behind the true sense of what it means to lead by example, not by their own but by Jesus. By focusing solely on feeding their hungry selves for admiration, they lose themselves to a false god of power. In both cases, the focus on service, discipleship and friendship is absent. For this reason, discipleship and mission are introduced in light of Jesus’ foot washing so that the underlying message of humility,

friendship and love are reaffirmed. A cardinal principle of retreats is that the Holy Spirit is the leader of all retreats. The Spirit can ignite conversion that in turn, leads to an unbreakable communion. Without these elements, ministry becomes stagnant because it is a projection of the ill-formed leader and her/his overall disposition. One way to revitalize and center the leader is a retreat experience that gives roots to the why's, how's and purpose of ministry. This retreat program offers an experience to deepen friendship with Christ, in the most essential aspect of His ministry, at the foot washing. In the Diocese of San Diego, I feel that there is a pastoral need to nourish, form and restore the sense of purpose within our community of lay pastoral ministers.

The Pastoral Need for Lay Leaders in the Diocese of San Diego

'Effective' lay participation within a pastoral context rests upon numerous factors. One, the ability for the pastoral minister to *identify* who she/he is; this is an ongoing quest that calls for a sense of personhood on an ontological, anthropological and psychological level. This quest, calls for a relational dialogue with experience, that is, both spiritual and practical. Kathleen Cahalan makes this key aspect clear as she argues the response to God's call as a threefold expression of personhood, "*How I live* in relationship to post baptism commitments, *What I do* to offer service to God and others, and *Who I am* in relation to myself and others."⁷ These three related aspects of personhood shape a foundation for discipleship that correlates with a framework of leadership requiring more than skills and techniques. Acquired skills no longer suffice in a pastoral context. At the heart of fostering discipleship is mission. There is an understanding and desire to be sent forth on a mission that is believed, celebrated and lived to its fruition. An important point about discipleship is that not all disciples are leaders; but, all leaders are disciples first

and always. What is universal is the journey we understand as the “shared common calling to a life of service for the sake of God’s world.”⁸ Self-awareness, appreciation and a sense of purpose is fundamental for success in our growing pastoral ministries. These urgent tasks require attention but most importantly, action.

A second point I would like to address is the notion of self-awareness. For this, I draw upon Daniel Goleman and his theory on emotional intelligence. In his article *What Makes a Leader?*, he outlines five-skill strategies of emotional intelligence that equip leaders with the necessary abilities to become intuitive vehicles. They are a) “self-awareness”, b) “self-regulation”, c) “motivation”, d) “empathy” and e) “social skill.”⁹ I specifically draw upon the preceding factors because for the scope of this retreat, leaders need to pause from the loudness of life to appreciate the beauty they hold within. As they allow God to minister to themselves, a new covenant or partnership is born at least on a practical and spiritual level. Any change is solely the work of the Holy Spirit. The value behind Goleman’s theory is to facilitate inner reflection based on both intuition and knowledge. For this purpose, pastoral ministers can follow through in wholesome practice with her/his constituents.

Proposed Retreat Program: A Concise Description of the Content and Features

The retreat theme is based on the theological source of foot washing according to the Gospel of John. In this account, the foot washing is “a loving act of abasement that serves as an example for his disciples.”¹⁰ This sets forth the emphasis on humility, selflessness, friendship and love. The question at hand, therefore, correlates with our fundamental nature and essence as relational beings. How well do we relate ontologically

and anthropologically with others and in that exchange, foster healthy and life giving relationships? One might ask, what does this look like? What constitutes a healthy relationship? In the passage of the foot washing, many interpretations have come about; some relate this to a foreshadowing of Jesus' death, others to the Eucharist and others to the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation. Although these hold true, I focus foot washing onto its most basic form; an act of love. Jesus entered into a new relationship with his disciples; he initiated them into an ongoing praxis of mission. It is impossible to comprehend discipleship apart from love, friendship and selflessness. Jesus established a model that should be imitated, personified and followed by disciples in preparation for their mission. The experience in Jesus can be no less than a personal relationship with love itself. The self-donative love calls for a mutual indwelling that can be compared to Jesus as the bridegroom and we as the bride; intimate, passionate and permanent (John 3:29). A life-giving relationship does not hesitate to deny oneself for the sake of the other. "Friendship is also an important source of divine revelation, because intimate knowledge of a friend can reveal the face of God."¹¹

Relationality and discipleship are interwoven; together they inform one another to reach a greater understanding of what the call of fostering discipleship and leadership entails. Fundamentally, it is a call from God and our works are to return to God. So too should our efforts reflect this, as sons and daughters of God we exercise our baptismal munera of Priest, Prophet and King. Fostering discipleship signifies being sent forth in mission by the power of the one sending. The spiritual wholeness of the minister is crucial. For this reason, the retreat will make reflective pauses for the individual. For the

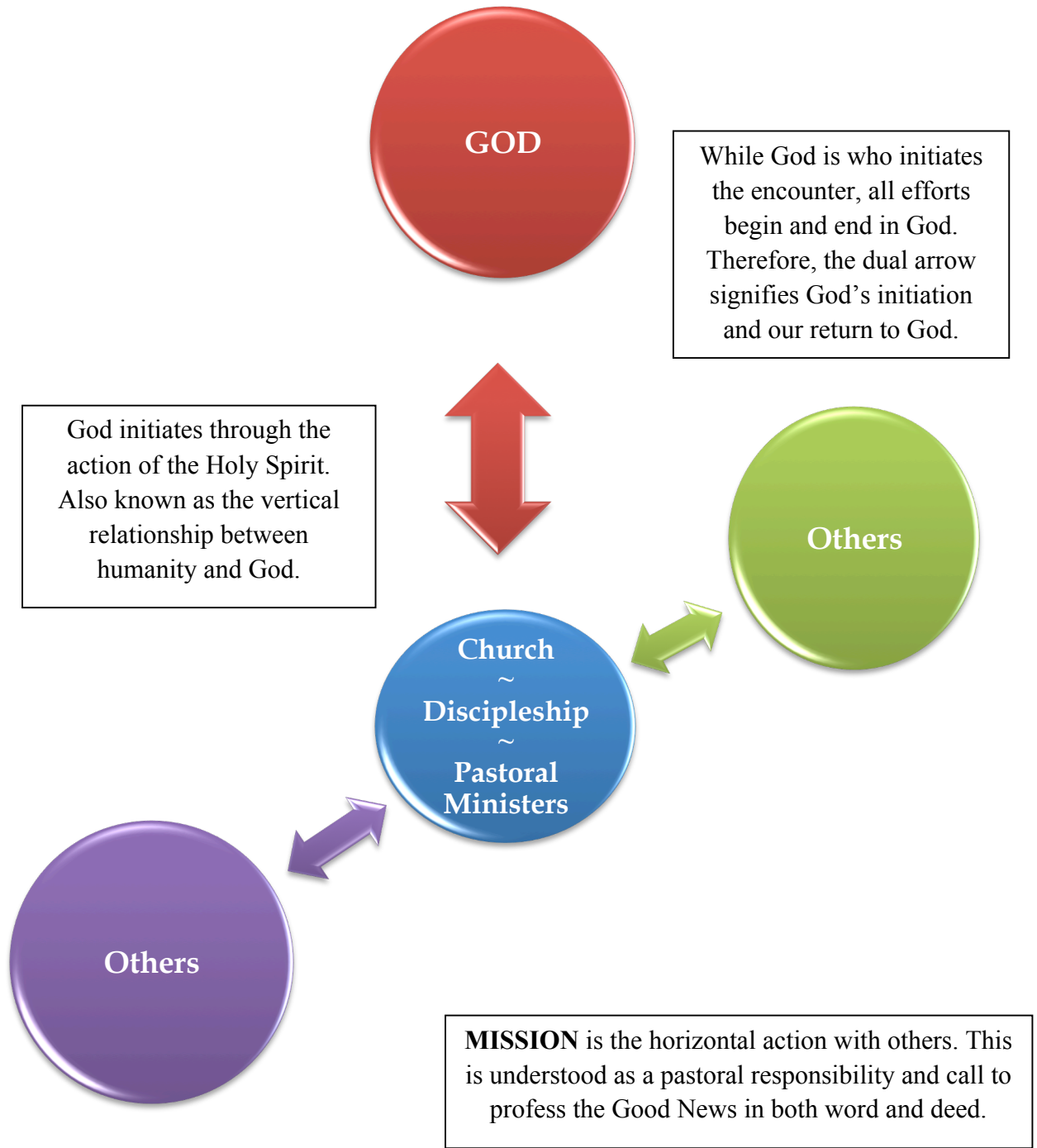
sake of this aspect, I will turn my focus to the previous sentence where I write about “the one sending”, I ask, how many of our current pastoral ministers truly know Jesus? Do they realize who is sending them? Wilkie Au makes the notable difference between “saber” and “conocer.”¹² Through spiritual formation, leaders will gain a renewed sense of self, identity, and purpose not rooted in mundane things although we form part of this materialistic world; but, to understand her/himself as a human instrument of God. Openness of heart is the first step towards an encounter with Jesus. The Jesuit Constitution #813 encompasses very succinctly the meaning and purpose that is at the root of this retreat,

“Such means are, for example, goodness and virtue, and especially charity, and a pure intention of the divine service, and familiarity with God our Lord in spiritual exercises of devotion, and sincere zeal for souls for the sake of the glory of the one who created and redeemed them and not for any other benefit.”¹³

The retreat will take a contemplative, holistic approach to spirituality. Reflection and interpretation of foot washing will assist ministers to reaffirm their commitment to humble, selfless service that builds friendship and community as a way of life and a radical response to a call of mission rooted in discipleship. The purpose will cause the leader to reposition her/himself into a renewed spiritual, practical and relational context. The proposed retreat format will address the spiritual, theological and practical aspects of foot washing. In the following page (and in the Endnotes section), the “disciples in mission” diagram illustrates the relational essence between discipleship and mission.

The work of discipleship rooted in humble service, self-awareness, friendship and love lead to the life-giving mission entrusted to all disciples.

“DISCIPLES IN MISSION”¹⁴



The Structure of the Retreat Program

The day-retreat necessitates of an environment proper to the theme of foot washing and discipleship. The area where the retreat takes place will provide an ambience that welcomes its leaders to enter into inclusivity, friendship, intimacy and hospitality. The venue may be one of the large conference meeting room's available onsite the Diocesan Pastoral Center or it can take place at one of the various retreat centers located in the area. The goal is to have the leaders enter into a 'sacred place', surrounded with symbols, sacramentals and environment pieces that stir reflection, memory and interpretation. As previously mentioned, the title of the retreat **"Before and While you are a Leader...You are a Disciple"** states very eloquently the process of returning to origins. In this particular case, this retreat serves as an opportunity to take a step back to reflect and find where each individual minister is coming from. This powerful statement will preface the locus of the foot washing. An outline of the day can be found in the Appendix. Throughout the day, a retreat manual will be given to each leader. In the manual, the leader will find the schedule of the day, along with Scripture, spiritual passages and songs for private meditation and group reflection rooted in the theme of the retreat. Further, each leader will have an opportunity to conceptualize their current position as a pastoral minister in light of a selfless, communal approach towards fostering discipleship.

This retreat proposal integrates as one part of the process, a ritualization of the foot washing that serves and centers ministers in mystagogia. Below I list the follow up plan to sustain the ministers into an accountable relationship with themselves, others and most importantly with Christ and their ministries. The post retreat process is as follows:

1. Induct the leaders in a foot washing commissioning on Holy Thursday,
2. Hold an annual retreat weekend where the emphasis on gratitude, gifts and purpose are addressed.

After the retreat, the ministers will be sent forth on their mission. The foot washing commissioning will take place on Holy Thursday at the parish where the minister serves. The pastor will introduce the pastoral ministers to the community and proceed to wash their feet. Just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, the pastor now washes the feet of his parish disciples (ministers) and thus sends them forth on their mission.

The annual weekend retreat will take place on the anniversary of their commissioning. Every year, the commissioned ministers are invited to renew their spirit and nourish themselves in community and friendship with others. The annual retreat is an opportunity to recognize their commissioning date; this action tells the minister how important her/his efforts, time, talent and dedication are to the community. The overall annual retreat experience is intended to be formative, spiritual and integral, while fostering a community of disciple-leaders. At the conclusion of the weekend retreat, the bishop will preside a sending forth Mass encouraging the pastoral ministers to spread through action and deed, the Good News of the Lord. Extending unto others the opportunity of encounter; the encounter with Love whom is God himself. Conversion, a renewed consciousness because knowledge of God is no longer static on 'saber' but rather has grown to 'conocer' who God is in everyday living. Lastly, communion or relationships, in and through every action the minister effects as part of her/his mission, the grace and living presence of God is made manifest in and through His disciples.

Conclusion

The journey of disciples in mission is to follow Jesus. Not just by imitating him but rather, embracing his mission with creativity and ingenuity so that the minister is authentic and generative. The mission of pastoral ministers carries an added responsibility; she/he needs to mediate to others the encounter with Christ by becoming Christ like in both word and action. The complexity of human frailty and its adjoining factors relating to ontological, theological and anthropological reflections makes the task of disciples in mission all the more vulnerable to God's loving grace.

COMPONENT 2: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: AN INTERPRETATION OF FOOT WASHING

In the first component of my pastoral project, I described a plan to implement a retreat centered on discipleship and mission for pastoral ministers in the Diocese of San Diego. The retreat will address humility, self-awareness, friendship and love as foundational to understanding a theology of foot washing. In this second component, I will reflect theologically on foot washing as a pastoral motif for mission.

Radical Call: A New Model of Discipleship

On the evening before His death, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and said, "As I have done for you, you should also do" (John 13:15). This "expresses the conviction that all ministry in the Church, is rooted in Christ the Servant."¹⁵ As disciples of Jesus, His command is that this practice continues on. The foot washing passage in the Gospel of John, is filled with symbolic references and literary meanings that call for a radical development.¹⁶ Still, the question at hand is, what can pastoral ministers learn

from John 13? For the purpose of my pastoral retreat program, I will discuss four aspects of model discipleship that I believe are fundamental in understanding a theology of foot washing. The four aspects entail humble service, self-awareness, friendship, and love. Jesus' foot washing is one example of many radical reversals found in the New Testament. Discipleship is turned upside down; the call separates those ministers who are authentically followers and willing to learn from those who find stimulation solely from pure adulation and power. This radical call from Jesus is meant to create tensions; it is an uncomfortable imposition that places reality face to face with expectation. Pondering upon this action is even more necessary for pastoral ministers in order to reach a sense of wholeness, self-awareness and self-realization leading to a deeper theological, ontological and anthropological understanding of the self.

A Call to Humble Service

Exercising humble service is a difficult task to undertake because the purpose is 'other-driven'; the focus on humility is to step away so that the Holy Spirit may act in place. "Unlike Adam, who had tried to grasp divinity for himself, Christ moves in the opposite direction, coming down from his divinity into humanity, taking the form of a servant."¹⁷ The entrusted mission is to be an instrument of life-giving service for the benefit of others in both word and deed. "The Gospel proclaims that our care for others unites us to Christ."¹⁸ Imitating Jesus is a practical and concrete expression of the perfect and ideal model for discipleship. Let us recall a passage from John's Gospel,

“Fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist” (John 13:3-5).

Jesus’ heart was filled with love. It was out of this love that Jesus’ knowledge of what was to come, led to his out-pouring action of humility and service for his beloved disciples. Jesus’ abasement in this action demonstrates that discipleship is service interwoven with humility. This practical example of loving, docile and humble service is the framework that pastoral ministers today should follow. Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday represents the day Jesus instituted a new commandment. Maundy stems from the Latin “*Mandatum*,”¹⁹ which signifies command. Jesus’ action of servitude and discipleship therefore took on a new meaning; the call of selflessness, service and discipleship was an overall call to love unconditionally. “In one symbolic act, he divests himself of his divine splendor; he, as it were, kneels down before us; he washes and dries our soiled feet.”²⁰ The intimate interaction between Jesus and his disciples presupposes Jesus’ true nature fully divine and fully human. The eschatological motif of His coming and return to God can be understood in light of total renewal such that,

“Creation is not a fall, but a positive act of God’s will. It is thus a movement of love, which in the process of descending demonstrates its true nature-motivated by love for the creature, love for the lost sheep- and so in descending it reveals what God is really like. On returning, Jesus does not strip away his humanity again as if it were a source of impurity. The goal of his descent was the adoption and assumption of all mankind, and his homecoming with all men is the homecoming of “all flesh”.²¹

Here, we learn that by Jesus washing feet, a menial task that not even a slave is required to do, is nothing less than honoring our human nature for which is also a reflection of God himself. When placed in light of merging the divine with the finite nature of our beings, we understand service as an act of love and acceptance that acted out in imperfect humility remains an immeasurable demonstration of service, hospitality and gratitude. Jesus, the Son of God, washed feet as a servant-leader, defied Jewish laws and traditions, demonstrated great power with such submissiveness and humility, for the glory of serving God in others. The life-giving aspect of service manifested in and through the action of selflessness, “the server seeks her/his own good by “detouring” through the good of the other.”²² This calls for pastoral ministers to leave aside self-centeredness and to seek life in light of the joy that service brings.

A Restored Self-Awareness: A Washing by Jesus

A washing evidently cleanses the body and purifies that which is tainted; nevertheless, the washing by Jesus, signifies a new beginning, a rebirth to new life that directly alludes to the sacrament of baptism. The symbolic representation signifies a unity of body and spirit, an awakening, an enlightenment waiting to happen. When Peter refused to be washed, Jesus responded, “Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me” (John 13:8). The fundamental concept present here is the fact that in order to draw closer to God in fellowship there needs to be purification. The aspect of belonging is crucial. Humankind needs to belong, relate and share in community. Jesus reiterates this by calling the disciples “his own” (John 13:1). Once this is established on a relational level, a series of more introspective and spiritual questions arise. What do I do? Who am I? What is my purpose? The series of questions Jesus’ disciples’ may have had

are a direct reflection of how much God loves us. We too, cannot be understood apart from the relationality that exists between Jesus and humanity. In the washing, Jesus reveals his intention to restore all things new. An eschatological reference that is present, yet, not fully revealed until after his death and resurrection. The renewed and restored self-awareness given to the disciples is a parallel for pastoral ministers to understand who they are, what they do and for whom they do the service for in relation to the One who sends them. The foot washing is a symbolic reference “that gestures Jesus’ servant love and draws us out of our pride and makes us fit for God.”²³ Self-awareness must begin and end in Christ. With the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the mission takes place. Heeding the call to action demands pastoral responsibility, yet as Kathleen Cahalan states, “a relational ontology best expresses the idea that persons, created for relationship, come into being, in and through the practices embodied in community.”²⁴ This signifies that self-awareness and identity can only come to be in its fullest expression when in communion with others and for others. Mission, cannot be separated from discipleship, they build on one another, they are not mutually exclusive. Through baptism the way to discipleship initiates, “a journey that demands the whole self for one’s whole life. Our fundamental call is to be a disciple by living the way of discipleship.”²⁵ Yet, a true follower enters and accepts the lifelong process of learning from Jesus; to come to know who Jesus is and bring others to that encounter with Christ. Self-awareness entails a willingness to accept the mystery of God. In this sense similar to the disciples, pastoral ministers today will also undergo uncertainties, doubts, continuous learning, growing, changing and converting. But as I expressed earlier in part one, change is necessary if re-centering is to take place. Pastoral ministers need to be challenged and they need to

create relationships outside of their comfort zone. Self-awareness in Christ is an understanding that mission takes place outside personal efforts. It expels the notion of self-sufficiency, pride, power and adulation; and recognizes the self as an instrumental piece of God's greater plan in the ongoing mission to spread the Good News.

I Call You Friends

The third aspect I find fundamental to understanding a theology of foot washing is friendship. The concept of inequality deserves attention here, "You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am" (John 13:13) and "I no longer call you slaves;...I have called you friends" (John 15:15). These two passages depict a transition, an affirmation of status like the one we see in John 13:13, moreover, two chapters later, in John 15:15 there is a transcending that does away with inequality.

According to Sandra Schneiders,

"the principle of relationship between Jesus and his disciples is the love friendship which transforms what would have been a humiliating self-degradation if performed under the formality of superiority and inferiority into an act of service, a revelation of self-giving love."²⁶

The transcendence from inequality and inferiority to a relationship that honors equality like in the case of friendships, results in a mutual indwelling that avoids oppressive and exploitive behaviors.

A clear example of what a fruitful and life-giving relationship would be is most clearly exemplified in John 15:13 "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends". Authentic discipleship is true, sincere and heartfelt. Many times,

pastoral ministers are enveloped in service models that do not reflect a relational equality among persons. To explore this further, Schneiders details three service models in which the person giving and/or receiving help is at a disadvantage because of the lack of relational equality, “1) the server *must do* for another because of right or power the latter possesses, 2) the server *does freely* for the other because of a pressing need the former needs to meet for the latter, 3) operative service, based on necessity.”²⁷ In these three examples, there exists a basic need, however, the need is not centered on the good of the other; the underlying motive is personal, therefore, satisfying a selfish yearning.

Healthy and equal friendships thrive from mutual submission to one another out of reverence for Christ. Communities where relationships grow share experiences and relate with one another. They seek to engage and get to ‘know’ others on different levels. Jesus’ model is completely relational; in fact, he cannot be understood apart from a Trinitarian theology. In washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus models a joyous equality where intimate moments are shared and the transcendental shift from servants to friends is expressed.

The nature of the Trinity is mirrored in Jesus’ action with his disciples, especially during the final days leading to his death. Friendship, in light of a theology of foot washing is the one human relationship that is based on mutual love. Jesus initiates by placing himself as equal to his disciples so that in that equality, he seeks the good in the other, which in turn, signifies self-fulfillment. Nevertheless, discipleship and mission should not be measured against the service that is done for others, but rather, in the “practices that arise from the very ways in which God is in relationship to disciples and

ministers... the practices of discipleship and ministry have their origin in the very practices of God.”²⁸

A New Commandment: The Call to Selfless and Self-Emptying Love

If one word were to encompass the entire symbolic meaning of foot washing, it would be love. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). His essence and being are a self-emptying love that has no limit. Jesus emptied himself completely for those he loved. He did so in the pastoral practice of foot washing. The ideal discipleship that Jesus calls for is the mission of charity. Selfless love like the love Jesus taught His disciples is not easily understood or practiced; hence, the greatest commandment. In John, the love commandment is reconfigured in such a way that it “envisions mutuality, a community-building commandment based on the love Jesus gives.”²⁹ Yet, the challenge rests upon understanding that love is “a bond of commitment to the world that has become alienated from him.”³⁰

The relationship Jesus calls us to engage with Him is very profound, so deep that without the proper commitment to the Commandments and Jesus’ discipleship, a fruitful relationship is unattainable. Craig Koester clarifies in his book *The Word of Life* the “new commandment is not sentimental.”³¹ I agree with his perspective, I do not believe *love* as expressed in the greatest commandment is referring to a feeling but, rather; a willed decision, a conscious and ongoing action and belief that leads to the practice of love. Evil is many times closer than we can possibly imagine, an example of this is Judas Iscariot amongst the rest of the disciples. The solution is not to steep low and

face evil with “an eye for an eye”, “tit-for-tat” mentality, pastoral ministers need not practice this, they can gain so much more by being charitable. The commandment to love others brings the presence of Christ palpable to others. Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI stated in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*,

“The newness can come only from the gift of being-*with* and being- *in* Christ... We must let ourselves be immersed in the Lord’s mercy, then our “hearts”, too, will discover the right path. The “new commandment” is not simply a new and higher demand: it is linked to the newness of Jesus Christ-to growing immersion in him. ”³²

It provides an opportunity to encounter the love and mercy of Christ as the disciples did the night of the foot washing. The foot washing scene is impactful because of the eschatological references to communion where not only the institution of the Eucharist takes place, but also initiates the restoration and salvation of humankind in the person of Jesus Christ. This humble gesture sums up the entire ministry of Jesus’ life and death.

Being in a relationship with others, calls for strength of service and humility, while seeking the greater and most pure good. Jesus’ Passion began with the foot washing, a symbolic beginning that marked the end. Authentic discipleship entails a dying to self in order for the love of Christ to flourish and be engrained.

Conclusion

At the heart of the foot washing passage, we find humility, self-awareness, friendship, service and love of others. Nevertheless, this new and radical call of action foreshadows the new life that is to be fulfilled in Jesus as the new Adam but also in what

constitutes pastoral ministry. Peter's hesitation to allow Jesus to wash his feet is a concrete example of the lack of understanding that as pastoral ministers we often have. The theological question that underlines the proposed pastoral program is rooted in Jesus washing the disciple's feet. What does this model and radical reversal say about what it means to be disciples in mission? The foot washing passage mirrors the actual mission in action. Fostering discipleship is continuous the process is ongoing. John offers layers of symbolism and sacramentalism that bring together a renewed sense of self in relation to Christ as well as a comprehensive understanding of ministry focused on a restored other-oriented model of mission and discipleship.

The manner in which pastoral ministers conduct their ministerial duties should revolve around the greater good for the community. Not undermining that Jesus taught us to love and to do so selflessly, this form of self-donative love is experienced when a true and committed discipleship with Jesus is established. The life of a disciple is interlaced and bound to Jesus himself. Living aware and in light of the one who in love, sends forth; drives the disciple to embark on the journey that leads to making more disciples. Moreover, a theology of foot washing restores and renews discipleship as a relationship modeled after Jesus. It entails reciprocation and indwelling of mutuality, equality, selflessness, fruitful service and love that personifies Christ in the person not only giving but also receiving.

COMPONENT 3: THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY: MY UNDERSTANDING OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

In this third and final component of my pastoral synthesis project, I will share my understanding of pastoral ministry based on my diocesan and parish experience.

Throughout my theological studies graduate program at Loyola Marymount University, I researched many theologians and their pastoral aspects of theology, ministry, leadership and theory. Nevertheless, I found the theological insights of embodied action proposed by Kathleen Cahalan, relational model of ministry illustrated by Edward Hahnenberg, symbolic representation and religious authenticity by Richard Gula and spiritual formation for pastoral ministers by Wilkie Au, particularly insightful and have therefore, helped formulate my vision of a theology of ministry. Below, I will illustrate what influences my theology of ministry, my understanding of pastoral ministry and my self-awareness as a pastoral theologian.

Influences on my Theology of Ministry

If there is one aspect of theology that has very much influenced my understanding of ministry it is God's relational essence. The relational experience of God with humanity through Christ has enabled humankind to restore its imperfect relationship with God. Christ's example of selfless love has shaped the mission of the Church. The vertical relationship of Christ with humanity is restored so that the horizontal action of ministry can take place (see Disciples in Mission Diagram on page 9). Disciples and therefore, pastoral ministers, act as entrusted ambassadors to mediate the grace and carry on the communion and relationship of God with others. From this relational mediation, stems the model of humble service, self-awareness, friendship and love I have described throughout the program proposal. I bring together a few aspects of theology that I believe are fundamental in a practical setting utilizing the foot washing as a powerful invitation to service. As such, I feel that this model reflects a desire to unite ministers in a more intimate relationship with Christ but also with those, they directly encounter and serve.

As a pastoral minister/theologian, I firmly believe that in addition to the point mentioned above, effective ministry also implies organization, formation and ongoing education. Moreover, pastoral ministry needs to remain receptive and flexible as it navigates the church into a constantly changing world. To achieve this, there needs to be a healthy medium where a systematic and relational approach can vacillate with both structure and ingenuity. Communication within community is imperative in order to understand and respect who we are and how we relate anthropologically. The shift begins with the “thought of “we” rather than “I.”³³ Having this focus on ministerial efforts will center on the mission of the church rather than on the minister as an individualistic subject. My theology of ministry entails collaboration, unity, openness to transformation, education and formation. In synthesis, a relational approach to ministry is the ability to recognize the presence of Christ in the other.

My Understanding of Pastoral Ministry

I began with my focus centered on Christ as a relational being. I understand relationality as the beginning and end, the purpose of ministry. The key concept to highlight is the need to mediate while also being fruitful ministers in carrying out the mission of the Holy Spirit. Pastoral ministry is a broad subject with diverse contexts and issues that need to be addressed. What is clear is that we were made to be life-giving vessels of devotion, friendship, community and service. For the scope of this present component, I address only a few aspects that form part of a larger theological and practical task of pastoral ministry. My work experience in a parish and diocesan setting has allowed me to comprehend firsthand what areas our Church needs to improve. These have in some way fashioned my view on pastoral ministry because a) I have spoken with

the people I will be ministering to, b) worked alongside them and c) seen how the community of leadership responds. For this reason, I believe formation, both practical and spiritual formation, are necessary for pastoral ministers to thrive. Offering opportunities for personal and professional development illustrate a typical business practice that can very well benefit ministerial practices. On the other hand, one of the greatest issues our church faces today is cultivating a greater response from the laity. The task of engaging others to encounter Christ is a collaborative mission and a committed responsibility to the ministry acquired.

As referenced above at the beginning of this component, I will relate four theological perspectives that have informed my theology of ministry; these aspects contribute to my overall schema for pastoral ministry. 1) Embodied action as proposed by Kathleen Cahalan, 2) relational model of ministry by Edward Hahnenberg, 3) symbolic representation and religious authenticity, illustrated by Richard Gula and 4) spiritual formation for pastoral ministers by Wilkie Au. These four perspectives build upon one another to foster a pastoral ministry from the inside out. In this section, I will consider Kathleen Cahalan and Edward Hahnenberg as both their perspectives highlight the pastoral action and the importance of mirroring a Trinitarian theology in and through our relationships with one another. Richard Gula and Wilkie Au will be addressed in the section titled *My Self-Awareness as a Pastoral Theologian*.

My perspective of what pastoral ministry signifies directly relates to my program proposal. The reality of our life is the expression of God's activity in our everyday living, even in the most menial tasks such as foot washing. This selfless action is clearly understood in light of Kathleen Cahalan's definition of the embodied action of our body,

“the practice of ministry is an embodied practice in at least two regards...the realization that leading disciples towards discipleship is about taking on a set of embodied practices, and second, ministry is an embodied practice whose expressions are the Spirit’s gifts.”³⁴ Most of our learning is captured through the sense of experience, both through the senses and in relation to community. “Practices require intentional and embodied action and ministers help guide this practice through critical appropriation, not sheer repetition, of communal and tradition-based practices...intentional practice requires discernment by the community.”³⁵ Discernment therefore calls for an exercise of pastoral responsibility while at the same time honoring each person’s gifts and talents. Cahalan’s perspective on embodiment reflects on the self in relationship as a “self-reflexive agent...engaging in action with others and their contexts.”³⁶ God meets us where we are. As ambassadors of Christ, we too are called to meet people where they are at and at that intersection, serve, befriend, and make Christ known.

On Trinitarian relationality, Edward Hahnenberg claims that Trinitarian theology can only function when the entire church and laity share the responsibility to serve. Earlier I mentioned that one of the current pastoral issues at hand is the need to cultivate a culture of service. One way of achieving this is to infuse Hahnenberg’s theory of the empowerment of charisms vacillating with both a Christological and pneumatological relationship with the all-relational Triune God. Like Cahalan, you cannot have ministry apart from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit’s charisms. Viewing the existence of God “as a communion of persons, therefore relational, supports the view of ministry as a relationship of service.”³⁷ In light of formation and education for pastoral ministers, a Trinitarian theology teaches ministers to abide by an equivocal style of relationship

where individualism or personal self-realization would not be entered into. “Ministers come to be “what” they “do” and “who” they “are” within the community.”³⁸

Fundamental to Hahnenberg’s theory is creating relational experiences that equate to ministry, the call to profess and practice our baptismal call of Priest, Prophet and King. We all serve in the power of Christ just in different ontologies. The unique way in which every person/minister serves can be identified when they are shared within a wider community. Creating relational experiences in ministry in conjunction with the practice of being and doing brings forth the relational exercise of uniting the mystical body of Christ the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The inter-relational dialogue that occurs within pastoral ministry proves that the activity of Christ cannot be divorced from the work of his Spirit; a common ground is necessary in order to bring together the mass of diversity that makes our faith community so rich.

My Self-Awareness as a Pastoral Theologian

As a diocesan director/pastoral theologian, my sense of self-awareness is crucial in the exercise of my ministerial role. Richard Gula and Wilkie Au have significantly shaped and informed my understanding of what a healthy, professional and holistic self-awareness should be. First, Richard Gula addresses in his book *Just Ministry*, foundational principles for effective practice that address the importance of appropriating personal power in the context of a pastoral relationship. Gula acknowledges that the inequality of power poses an ethical challenge that without the exercise of responsible leadership and competence, can lead to the misguidance of the one seeking pastoral advice. He goes on to identify two extra-rational sources of power:

1) Symbolic Representation and 2) Religious Authenticity as stronghold projections of the relationship that exists with God and with others. Healthy and life-giving pastoral relationships are a reflection of God's relational essence. Sandra Schneiders affirms, "friendship is the one human relationship based on full equality,"³⁹ an equality of beings as referenced in John 15:15, "...I have called you friends."

I reference Gula's two-extra rational sources of power because symbolic representation gives "added significance to our presumed competence."⁴⁰ The "sacred weight,"⁴¹ gives power of influence to the pastoral minister. This source offers a representation of the holy; a great responsibility along with competence makes the role of symbolic gesture one of authority and power. Relationality is based on encounter; this in turn, necessitates of a genuine symbolic representation. The mutual realization is most effective when the pastoral responsibility is assumed and assimilated as being a reflection of the holy, circumvents from diluting the relationship, and the counterpart is able to encounter Christ through the minister as an instrument of God; therefore, fulfilling a spiritual and/or religious need.

The second extra-rational source of power I want to address is religious authenticity. On this topic, Wilkie Au's perspective on holistic spirituality as a well-being for pastoral ministers is insightful. Both Gula and Au agree that pastoral ministers must be rooted in Christ in order to be effective. Gula categorizes religious authenticity as "1) personal genuineness, 2) non-defensive leadership style and 3) spiritual leadership."⁴² The key aspect to the power of authenticity manifests itself in the person who lives a life out of "personal faith."⁴³ The virtues of sincerity, truthfulness and genuineness are paramount in the character of a pastoral minister. According to Wilkie Au, the rationale

of the holistic model of Christian spirituality is to “provide a way to live out Gospel loves with balance and integration.”⁴⁴ Au delineates a three-fold expression of love in relation to “the self, to others and to God.”⁴⁵

As a pastoral minister, I have learned that I am not the end of all things. Situations in life are not dependent upon me or on my abilities in order to take place. My self-awareness in Christ has allowed me to understand that I am not the messiah; I am just a means to an end that belongs to God and to the work of the Holy Spirit. Letting go and letting God is a way of understanding that as pastoral ministers, we can do the ordinary, while the extraordinary work only God can fulfill. The balance Au refers to are both/and structures that entail “disciplines of engagement and abstinence, structure and spontaneity, grace and effort.”⁴⁶ These structures allow growth, contemplation, action and passivity a Martha-Mary dynamic that permits the minister to affirm yet learn what stirs insides the heart and soul. The spirituality of the minister is a reflection of what she/he does in action. During class one day, Au gave an example that related very well to the pastoral responsibility we as ministers must exercise. I will paraphrase what he said that day, “effective ministry can be understood in this way, when you are on an airplane and there is a loss of pressure in the cabin, you have to put on “your” oxygen mask first before you can go on and help others.”⁴⁷ The same holds true for pastoral ministers. Therefore, we can identify personal genuineness, non-defensive leadership, and spiritual leadership when the minister is spiritually, practically and professionally centered on her/his sense of self in relation to Christ. Pastoral care is responsibility in its fullest expression. A minister is effective in the measure that she/he understands that ministry is

an ongoing process of creating and building bridges of community and friendship that lead to an encounter with love itself.

I recognize that in order to guide and to do so effectively, it is imperative that I learn how to follow; thus resulting in proper discernment, formation and commitment. The power of self-awareness and the influence I may and will have on others must be taken up with the utmost respect and caution. Failure to do so would result in a lack of pastoral responsibility that could in turn, misguide others channeling them away from God. The imagery and example of foot washing, is a reminder that service is not about us, it is not personal and self-centered. It entails abasement, humility, selfless care, relational encounters and overall a self-donative love.

Conclusion

The hermeneutical task of a pastoral theologian requires ontological, anthropological, socio-economic and demographic considerations; however, despite the diversity of church, the unifying bond that characterizes the ecclesial nature of our common calling is rooted in life-giving relationships. We cannot function or be understood apart from the origin of our beings. “Christ is the source of all power behind ministry,”⁴⁸ following our design of mission to love and serve in relation to whom we were made in image and likeness, the relationality of community is where not only God is present but whereas the mystical body of Christ we flourish.

I identified four theologians that have molded and helped my theological insights mature according to my context and the overall position of what mission not only stands for but should be. Kathleen Cahalan, Edward Hahnenberg, Richard Gula and Wilkie Au

have purported ideas that blend professional business practices, pastoral theories and spiritual astuteness. As a result, I would consider my overall perception of ministry as a theological action of ongoing fostering discipleship. The action of fostering disciples is not passive, but rather embodied, practical, spiritual and transformative. When gifts and talents are discerned and the good of the other is the driving force, the call to service is clear. Cahalan affirms “the ministry for which these learners prepare is aimed at discipleship, a necessarily serious and risky commitment that requires nothing less than an astute integration of Christian wisdom with contemporary realities.”⁴⁹

Pastoral ministry therefore is a reflexive process that considers questions such as being, existence and faithful living. Hahnenberg agrees in saying that ministry is “not in individual status or in specific tasks, but in relationships of service, that the minister finds his or her identity and purpose.”⁵⁰ For ministry to be life-giving, it needs to be rooted in Christ. In order for the outcome and effectiveness of service to bear fruit, ministry needs to begin within the pastoral minister’s self. Pastoral ministry needs to be flexible to change, it needs to challenge ministers to do the radical work of Jesus without fear of what society might think or say. It takes courage to do what’s right but it takes commitment and selfless love to deny oneself for the sake of others. Every person has the power of the Spirit to make a difference, if only that potential was taken seriously and for the good of all. Richard Gula emphasized the importance of personal faith as a precursor to religious authenticity. For that to be genuine, the minister must encounter Christ and recognize him in and through others. Our dispositions as pastoral ministers must abound first and foremost in a grateful heart; Wilkie Au would attest to this as we recognize the

presence of God in our lives. I conclude my reflection with a prayer titled

The Long View from Archbishop Oscar Romero;

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent
enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way to say the kingdom
always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about:
We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing
that. This enables us to do something, and do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.

ENDNOTES

¹ Discipleship and Mission: I am referring to discipleship and utilizing the anamnesis of the Foot Washing as a means for reflection. The mission is what follows discipleship after the action of foot washing. It is worth noting that throughout the paper, ‘discipleship’ and ‘fostering discipleship’ will be used, however, not interchangeably. The distinction is that ‘discipleship’ refers to living the Christian life; while ‘fostering discipleship’ refers to what leaders and ministers do.

² The New American Bible will be used throughout this paper.

³ Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), x.

⁴ John F. O’Grady. *Disciples and Leaders: The Origins of Christian Ministry in the New Testament*. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), 67.

⁵ For the purpose of this pastoral project, I refer to two types of behaviors, noting that there are more cases that can be drawn upon for further reflection.

⁶ Wilkie Au. *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers: A Perceptual Approach to Effective Ministry*. Course Reader THST 675. Spring 2012, 9.

⁷ Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹ Daniel Goleman. “What Makes a Leader?,” in *HBR’s 10 Must Reads: On Leadership*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁰ Raymond E. Brown. *An Introduction to the NEW Testament*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 351.

¹¹ Wilkie Au. *By Way of the Heart: Toward a Holistic Christian Spirituality*. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 45

¹² Saber signifies to know intelligibly; Conocer, is to express felt-knowledge. Class Lecture Notes Spring Semester 2012.

¹³ Wilkie Au. “Jesuit Constitutions #813: The Human Instrument United to God.” Course Reader THST 675. Spring 2012, 5.

¹⁴ In this diagram, I reiterate the initial action of God’s grace, love and mercy in and through the Holy Spirit. The Church, made up of both a community of disciples and an organized society (though not specified in the diagram), are sent forth on a mission, a relational and horizontal action that is mutually fulfilled in giving and receiving. In the words of John, “Our mission is to share Jesus with the whole world. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to know him and sent to make him known “that all might have life and life in its fullness” (John 10:10).

¹⁵ Cardinal Roger Mahony and the Priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. *As I Have Done For You: A Pastoral Letter on Ministry Part Two, On the Road Together*. (from: <http://www.archdiocese.la/archbishop/letters/ministry/2.html>), Retrieved on March 13, 2013.

¹⁶ The literary meanings that I refer to are: holy orders, baptism, reconciliation, personal hygiene, foreshadowing of Jesus’ death, servant leadership, servant discipleship, institution of the Eucharist, fellowship, hospitality, humility, friendship, self-oblation and self-donative love. These are all valid arguments to the theological interpretations, symbols and sacramentality that are and can be found in a theology of foot washing. Nevertheless, in the interest of space and focus, I have emphasized on five theological aspects to support my thesis.

¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two~ Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 56.

¹⁸ Father Romanus Cessario, O.P. *The Magnificat Lenten Companion: Lent 2013*. (Yonkers, New York: Magnificat, 2013), 63.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI., 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²² Sandra M. Schneiders. *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 193.

²³ Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI., 57.

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- ²⁴ Kathleen A. Cahalan. *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 158.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 26.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 196.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 192-193.
- ²⁸ Kathleen A. Cahalan., 158.
- ²⁹ Craig R. Koester. *The Word of Life: A Theology of the Gospel of John*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 194.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 190.
- ³¹ Ibid., 195.
- ³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI., 64-65.
- ³³ Peter Drucker. On Leadership: “*What Makes an Effective Executive,*” in Harvard Business Review 10 Must Reads. (Boston, Massachusetts : June 2004), 25
- ³⁴ Kathleen A. Cahalan. *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 109.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 108.
- ³⁷ Edward Hahnenberg. *Ministries: A Relational Approach*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 97.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 95.
- ³⁹ Sandra M. Schneiders. *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 289.
- ⁴⁰ Richard M. Gula. *Just Ministry* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010), 126.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Ibid., 128.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Wilkie Au. “Rationale of the Holistic Model of Christian Spirituality.” Course Reader THST 675. Spring 2012, 97.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Wilkie Au. Class Handout. Course Reader THST 675. Spring 2012.
- ⁴⁷ Wilkie Au. In class discussion/lecture. THST 675. Loyola Marymount University, Spring 2012.
- ⁴⁸ Edward Hahnenberg. *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, 58.
- ⁴⁹ Dorothy C. Bass & Craig Dykstra, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology,” By Kathleen Cahalan, and James Nieman in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 76.
- ⁵⁰ Edward Hahnenberg., 6.

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APPENDIX

Retreat Outline

The pattern illustrated below intends to serve as a starting point. The retreat proposal may in effect take place over the course of one day or in fact, serve as a full weekend retreat. In the event that the scheme for the retreat is extended, the outline will need to be framed accordingly to reflect the desired outcome for the retreatants.

Opening Prayer

Introductions

Lectio Divina

Large Group Gathering Main Theme Reflection

Break

Group Discussion

Large Group Discussion

Prayer

Lunch

Song Meditation

Contemplation of Foot Washing

Journal/Personal Meditation

Break

Mass

Dismissal