

**COMMUNICATING AROUND CONFLICT ISSUES: A MINISTRY PROJECT  
TO ASSIST PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY COORDINATORS  
TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS**

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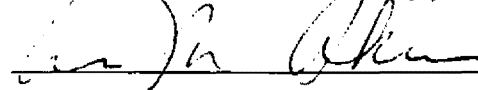
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## **Summary**

### **Communicating Around Conflict Issues: A Ministry Project to Assist Parish Social Ministry Coordinators to Improve Their Skills**

**by**

**Veronica Mary Fellerath**

The ministry need identified was Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinators' difficulties in addressing tensions and disagreements over justice and peace issues with parish staff, especially pastors. The project goal was to provide an opportunity for PSM Coordinators to increase their awareness of theological and psychological factors that contribute to conflict and to improve their skills in communicating around conflict issues. In five group sessions, PSM Coordinators prayed, shared stories, heard presentations on theological and psychological topics, and practiced communication skills; between sessions, they practiced new behavior in communicating. The project found that communication difficulties were not limited to peace and justice issues. Therefore, during the project, PSM Coordinators also addressed other conflict situations. PSM Coordinators' self-reported evaluations, and the facilitator's observations, revealed newly acquired insights and increased readiness and initiative in addressing conflicts. Evaluations from the participants also indicated that other PSM Coordinators might benefit from similar project sessions.

The project was based on the religious principles of love of God and neighbor as contained in the Bible, Catholic Social Teaching, Vatican II documents, the theological writings of Karl Rahner and Michael J. Himes, the ecclesiology of Avery Dulles, S.J., on models of church, and the writings of feminist theologians Dorothee Soelle, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Books by management expert Peter Drucker were helpful in viewing the structure of church as a human organization. The clinical principles for the project were based on the work of Erik Erikson (eight stages of psychosocial development), Sigmund Freud (the id, ego, and superego), Alfred Adler (individual psychology), Heinz Kohut (self psychology), Harry Stack Sullivan (interpersonal psychology), Richard Schwartz (internal family systems) and Carol Gilligan (the "different voice" of women). Psychological topics included defenses, relational theories, theory of change, listening skills, and transference and countertransference.

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## **Chapter I: Ministry Need Addressed by the Project**

### ***Ministry Need and Background***

In the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, 114 of 134 parishes have a Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinator who directs a PSM program. This is a gospel-based ministry that has a threefold vision: (a) providing direct services to the poor and vulnerable; (b) doing advocacy for, and with, the poor; (c) facilitating the involvement of all parishioners in acting for justice. Sometimes PSM Coordinators struggle with (or avoid) the implementation of the third part of the vision because addressing justice issues can generate strong and sometimes conflicting views among parish staff. The project will seek to assist PSM Coordinators to address this ministry need, addressing justice issues within the parish. The goal of the project will be to provide an opportunity for PSM Coordinators to increase their awareness of theological and psychological factors that contribute to conflict and to improve their skills in communicating around conflict issues.

Parish Social Ministry is a way for Catholic parishes to put love into action by serving and advocating for poor and vulnerable people. In its present form, Parish Social Ministry has its roots in the *Cadre Study*, published in 1972, which was commissioned by the National Conference of Catholic Charities (now Catholic Charities USA). The study sought to re-energize and reprioritize Catholic Charities' efforts to serve the needs of the poor and oppressed, and led to a more decentralized model, which envisioned engaging parishes as partners. By 1977, this model was being implemented by Catholic Charities in

our diocese, where it was also seen as a better way to link Catholic Charities' diocesan-wide professional services to local communities. (Mullen, 2002)

Over the past thirty years, Parish Social Ministry has expanded throughout the diocese. In these parishes, there is a PSM Coordinator who is usually a full-time paid staff person. As a Parish Social Ministry Developer for Catholic Charities, I work with PSM Coordinators at individual Catholic churches in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, which encompasses Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, New York. I am a mentor, trainer and resource person to the coordinators, assisting them to implement the broad vision of Parish Social Ministry in their parishes.

PSM Coordinators are aware of the threefold vision of Parish Social Ministry, described above, but most of their initiative and energies are channeled to the first goal. The second goal gets some attention, whereas efforts toward the third goal are often minimal or non-existent. During one-on-one conversations and group meetings with coordinators, they told us that the three most common obstacles to attending to the last two goals are: (a) lack of time; (b) lack of sufficient volunteers; (c) the claim that pastoral staff, especially a pastor, does not support, or even actively opposes, a fuller involvement in these issues. For PSM Coordinators, I see the pastoral need to be acquiring insight and skills to address this real or perceived opposition. When PSM Coordinators' ideas and plans are ignored or rejected, often they do not initiate a conversation with a pastor or other staff members for resolution or, at least, a better understanding of the opposition. At other times PSM Coordinators do not initiate strategies to achieve the second and third goals of the Parish Social Ministry vision because they anticipate rejection of their ideas or a questioning of their theology or good judgment. In fact, because of anticipated

opposition, some PSM Coordinators will not even broach certain topics with a pastor or other staff. The result is PSM Coordinators who are angry, depressed, or underachieving in some areas of their ministry. The pastoral need that the project will address is the coordinators' difficulties in addressing the obstacles to implementing the full Parish Social Ministry vision. In *Parish Social Ministry*, Tom Ulrich says, "The blueprint begins with baptism and the call each of us receives to actively participate in bringing about the reign of God...Simply stated, parish social ministry strives to assist parishioners, through the parish community, to understand and act on Catholic social teaching." (Ulrich, 2001, pp. 13-14)

Who are these PSM Coordinators? The majority of PSM Coordinators are professional women who are full-time paid members of the parish staff. They meet regularly with the Pastor and other staff to plan parish goals and activities. Similar to other parish staff, for example, the Director of Religious Education, they apply for these positions because of a commitment to ministry. Their salaries are almost always below comparable business positions for people with their education and experience. Although this is the most common profile of PSM Coordinators, there is much variation in their backgrounds. Some PSM Coordinators are part-time by choice or because of parish budget limitations. A recent study involving a random sample of 42 of the PSM Coordinators in the Rockville Centre Diocese (Demers, 2005) found that 50 percent (21) had earned advanced degrees, including theology, social work, and law, while 31 percent (13) had completed high school as their highest level of education. Of these forty-two PSM Coordinators, two-thirds were members of the parish in which they serve. The majority of PSM Coordinators were lay women, a substantial number of whom were



women religious (nuns). Finally, about ten percent of the coordinator sample was men; of these, more than half were ordained permanent deacons of the Church. According to the study, "Full time salary or equivalents range from a low of \$16,640 to a high of \$37,000. The median salary is \$28,832. This is equivalent to the negotiated stipend for women religious, which totals \$28,920." (Demers, 2005, pp. 39-40)

### ***Specific Needs to Which I Plan to Minister***

As parishes adopted the Parish Social Ministry vision, usually the first goal that was addressed was serving the economically poor in the community. The main vehicle for doing this was to establish a parish outreach center that provided food and other services. As PSM Coordinators recruited and trained more volunteers for this ministry, they began to do more case management with clients as they accompanied them on their journey to improve their lives. The natural progression of accompanying clients was to expand to the second goal of advocating for clients' individual needs with other agencies, for example government social service agencies. Sometimes this advocacy is not successful because society does not address some needs, for example many of the health needs of undocumented immigrants. This reality highlights the third goal of acting for justice. Many times PSM Coordinators encounter conflict with the Pastor and other parish staff when they attempt to implement the second and third goals of the vision.

PSM Coordinators with whom I work have difficulty dealing with the Pastor and parish staff when issues, especially social justice issues, involve actual or potential conflict. This project will address how the PSM Coordinators can communicate better with a pastor and staff around conflict issues. In a group setting, I envision meeting with

six to ten PSM Coordinators in weekly sessions to examine the theological and psychological dimensions of these conflicts, so as to help the PSM Coordinators to acquire new insights and new skills that will potentially improve communication around these conflict areas. The type of controversial topics envisioned by this project are those that fall within official church dogma and teaching, and affect the PSM Coordinators' ministry, but which are often interpreted differently, such as defending the rights of the poor or making a judgment on whether a modern war can be just. The ministry project focuses on recognizing the core shared beliefs, being able to articulate one's stance toward implementation of them in a psychologically healthy way, and listening to the stance of other pastoral staff in a way that fosters true communication and respect.

The group process will be designed in the larger context of living one's Catholic faith and ministry with integrity in the midst of the theological, psychological, historical and cultural insights and pressures of today's world. One specific conflictual backdrop for ministry in the Catholic Church today in the United States is the continuing debate over the separation of Church and State – when is a particular justice stance a call of the Gospel or a partisan political stance? Another conflict that can not be ignored is the controversy over how to deal with the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. Although dealing with this issue is not directly part of the mission of Parish Social Ministry, every staff person in a parish continues to be directly impacted by the abuse that occurred and the incomplete resolution of this crisis.

Below are some other examples of current and controversial topics, from a PSM Coordinator's perspective (examples are based on conversations that they initiated with their pastors, or in some cases, actual situations they encountered but did not address).

Although these examples could appear to be just complaints, they actually point to deeper issues. The ministry project will address some of the theological and psychological principles underlying the conflicts so that coordinators can bring an increased awareness, authenticity, and effectiveness to their ministry.

- Requesting that a pastor publish in the parish's weekly bulletin a series of Catholic Charities-approved inserts against racism and being told that it was not a good idea because it would "stir up controversy."
- Asking to make letters available for parishioners to sign in favor of affordable housing and being told "no," but letters are available to sign for pro-life issues. The former is considered "a political issue;" the latter is called "a moral issue."
- Asking in the year 2002 that the morality of a pre-emptive war against Iraq be discussed in church and told it was "controversial" or "political" so it should not be discussed.
- Wanting a better salary when the female coordinator realizes that a male staff person with the same or lesser responsibilities is paid more than she is.
- Asking that there be a professionally-run group process for parishioners affected by a sexual abuse accusation against a priest removed from the staff, and being told that the parish would only deal with individuals affected in a one-on-one manner. (The cost of professional services was not the issue.)
- Advocating for more leadership roles for women in the local parish.

Chapter II will explore some of the theological and psychological dimensions that underlie the conflict that PSM Coordinators experience in addressing the above issues.

Conflict depends on the inner state of the individual and the relationships between individuals. However, it is one's own interior feelings and sense of self-worth, or lack of it, that are the key to understanding and handling conflicts outside us. In *Creative Conflict in Religious Education and Church Administration*, author Donald Bossart says, "Conflict can take three forms:

1. Intrapersonal I want to change, but then I'm satisfied with the way I am; the shoulds vs. the wants; self-actualization vs. status quo.
2. Interpersonal – the projection of our intrapersonal ambivalence of values onto others with the resultant dissatisfaction and frustration.
3. Intergroup – the working out of the preceding dynamics in the midst of loose or formal group structures; groups or systems relating to other groups or systems." (Bossart, 1980, p. 59)

Any of these forms of conflict can be dealt with negatively or utilized in a positive manner. There are also different types of conflict. The conflict can be an actual and correctly perceived conflict. False conflict occurs when there has been a misperception and there is no objective basis to the conflict. Misdirected conflict is when the real issue is not addressed. "Below the surface" conflict is conflict that is not occurring but should be.

It appears that many PSM Coordinators feel ambivalent about the conflict they experience. Ambivalence can involve a person in an approach and avoidance pattern. This is a conflict style where one is drawn to a goal to satisfy one's wants but is unwilling to do what is required so one practices avoidance. Being unable to decide, the person is conflicted internally. One may feel the desire to take initiative but be blocked

by feelings of inferiority. Ambivalence can also result when we consider some feelings are acceptable, for example, love, but other feelings, such as hate, are unacceptable. If one feels pressure to express only the acceptable feelings and tries to hide the unacceptable ones, then one experiences internal conflict. This inner conflict is then projected out onto the world. (Bossart, 1980). In Chapter II these feelings will be more fully explored.

### ***The Relevance of this Ministry Project to a Wider Context***

It is my hope that PSM Coordinators will benefit from the group process on communication around conflict issues. If PSM Coordinators sense a positive movement in their own internal or external way of dealing with conflict issues, they may recommend the process to others. Therefore, one outcome could be an invitation to run the group again for a different group of PSM Coordinators.

I see this ministry project as addressing a ministry need that is present in most or all of the Catholic parishes of the diocese. The process could be applicable to any group of church leaders in the 134 Catholic parishes of Long Island. For example, the issues of conflict would vary somewhat for leaders of religious education programs, but the underlying theological and psychological dynamics would be the same. Likewise, a group of permanent deacons in the diocese could find value in the process of this ministry project. All permanent deacons are male so the psychological pieces on women's issues would not apply to their internal experience, but would still be an important consideration for them because they interact with women on the staff and in the parish.

I could imagine that a group process such as this could be of assistance to pastors and associate priests in parishes. Their understanding of the theology of church and ministry is often from the perspective of their own seminary formation. This process could broaden their understanding of priests from various age cohorts and the perspective of lay staff. The psychological issues affect everyone and reflection on these issues could contribute to individual personal growth and better resolution of conflict between clerical and lay staff.

The ministry project's process of examining the theological and psychological dimensions of how staff communicate around conflict issues could be applied to any religious group's setting. The psychological dimensions would remain the same but the religious leader in another religious faith would need to explore the explicit and implicit theological stances within their own denomination. Doing this in a prayerful, reflective and supportive group would give each staff participant the opportunity to internally and externally explore other avenues to communicating around conflict issues.

## **Chapter II: Religious and Clinical Principles**

### ***Religious Principles***

The premise of the ministry project is that what parish staff agree on as Catholics is more fundamental than what they disagree on. However, the faith that is shared is expressed in different theological positions, often held implicitly rather than explicitly, which are often not discussed. The project will address the Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinators' self-understanding of their own belief and an awareness of other religious positions. The ministry project will look at the theological, organizational, pastoral and ethical dimensions of Catholic belief.

### ***Theological Dimension***

As Catholics we believe that God is revealed through scripture and tradition. We also believe that the church teaches with authority in matters of faith and morals. What this means and the everyday implications of these beliefs have developed during the past 2000 years and that understanding continues to develop. The development takes place in dialogue with history and culture. For example, even as biblical scholarship has developed, the church continues to affirm the bible as the word of God but now understands that many biblical passages are literary, not literal, methods of conveying religious truth. The theological basis of the Catholic faith that Pastors, PSM Coordinators, and other parish staff share includes the scriptural references and official church teachings that can shed light on fruitful communication on conflict issues.

Catholics believe in a triune God: Creator, Word (Jesus, the Son and Redeemer), and Sanctifier (Spirit). In the Old Testament, we believe that God calls us to love of God and neighbor. The Ten Commandments are precepts for living out this love. In the New Testament, Jesus, when asked to choose the greatest commandment, does not choose one of the Ten Commandments but quotes Deuteronomy, "You shall love the Lord, our God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." (Dt 6:5) And then Jesus adds, "This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments the whole law is based, and the prophets as well." (Mt 22:37-40 and Lk 10:27) Karl Rahner writes about the relationship between loving the neighbor and loving God, "Love for one's neighbor is not merely a commandment which has to be obeyed if a person wants to exist in a salvific relationship to God. It is rather the actualization of Christian existence in an absolute sense. This presupposes that this love of neighbor has developed into its own full and essential being, and explicitly accepts its ground and its mysterious partner, namely, God himself." (Rahner, 1978, p. 309)

Jesus challenged his followers to reach beyond the Ten Commandments when he exhorted them to "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15:12) and to "Be compassionate as God is compassionate." These teachings refer to the quality of love that Christians are called to. It is a love that refers to the life of Jesus, who died for us, as the measure of how one shows love. Jesus' teaching calls us to strive for a level of compassion modeled on God's love and care for us.

Jesus also challenged his followers with a new vision of leadership and service when he said that he came "not to be served but to serve." (Mt 20:28) PSM Coordinators



are called to exercise leadership and to serve the needy. Sometimes this saying of Jesus can be misunderstood as requiring one to be subservient. Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, in commenting on this text, writes, "The essence of servanthood is that it is possible only for liberated people, not people in servitude. Also, it exercises power and leadership, but in a new way, not to reduce others to dependency, but to empower and liberate others." (Ruether, 1981, p. 54)

The goal of the ministry project is to enable PSM Coordinators to embrace and promote the threefold vision of Parish Social Ministry. The Parish Social Ministry vision rests directly on the Catholic Church's belief in God's call to love our neighbor, especially as Jesus taught us in the Gospels. Realization of the vision, as described more fully in Chapter I, involves loving our "neighbors" by providing direct services to poor and vulnerable people, advocating for them, and acting for justice in the world.

***Parish Social Ministry: direct service.*** Who is this neighbor that we are to love and how do we do this? The answer to "who" is easier than "how." Theologically and philosophically, if we are all children of God then, of course, we are brothers and sisters who are called to love each other. When Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the story, the Samaritan, a foreigner, is the neighbor who helps the man who has been robbed, beaten, and left on the roadside.

How do we help? In today's world, what does it mean to be the Good Samaritan? Parish Social Ministry takes these questions seriously. Everyone in the community is the neighbor, not just members of the Catholic Church. How does one help the neighbor? One "binds up wounds" when one provides food or health care (direct service) but also when one addresses prejudice against the foreigner. At the present moment on Long

Island, PSM Coordinators – and Catholics in the pew -- struggle with seeing immigrants as the neighbors that Jesus called us to love. PSM Coordinators respond with compassion and assistance to immigrants' direct service needs, such as food. Where the need is for justice and changes in public policy, it is harder for PSM Coordinators to bring these issues to the attention of parishioners because the Pastor and staff, including PSM Coordinators, sometimes feel conflicted on these issues.

In Matthew 25, another foundational scripture for Parish Social Ministry, Jesus teaches us, not only to feed the hungry, but also to provide shelter for the homeless, to comfort those who are ill, to welcome the stranger, etc. In this parable of the last judgment, Jesus says, of the just who did these things while living, "I assure you, as often as you did it for the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it for me." (Mt 25:40) PSM Coordinators strive to see Jesus in each person that they serve in their ministry.

*PSM Ministry: advocacy and acting for justice.* To ask, "Why do people need help?" puts us in touch with the advocacy and justice dimensions of the Parish Social Ministry vision. Here the theological stance goes back to the same roots. We are created by God; we are all God's children. The natural corollary of this is not just that we are called to help one another but more basically that we must respect and love each other as God's unique creations, each one with rights. Jesus says to each of us, "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." (Jn 10:10). If this quality of life is not available to some people, then God's plan has been subverted. Part of loving our neighbor is to restore justice in the world so that this "abundant life" is available to all.

As human beings, we are limited creatures who imperfectly respond to God's care, and sometimes we sin, that is act against (or fail to act in accord with) God's law. In

every generation, there are those who call God's people to account and proclaim the vision anew. These prophets are not always welcome even among those who claim to be preachers and teachers of God's message. In the Old Testament the prophet Amos calls those who exploit the poor to account in very direct language,

"Listen to this, you who trample on the needy  
and try to suppress the poor people of the country,  
...I (Yahweh) am going to turn your feasts into funerals." (Am 8:4,10)

The prophet Isaiah describes in positive terms how to treat those in need:

"The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me,  
for Yahweh has anointed me.  
he has sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison;  
to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh" (Is 61:1-2)

Jesus reiterated the same prophetic message when he reads from Isaiah, as recounted in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 4:18-19). When Jesus assumed his prophetic role and proceeded to interpret this scripture as it applied to the widows of Israel, he was rejected and cast out of the synagogue.

In Catholic teaching, the Ten Commandments are often thought of as the minimal moral code when it comes to love of neighbor. However, the commandments contain deeper challenges. For example, the fifth commandment, "Thou shall not kill," is a starting point for a conversation on the implications of war and how a Christian is called

to respond. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaimed the Beatitudes, which challenged us to go beyond any minimal requirement. For example, Jesus declared, "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God." (Mt 5:9)

Another justice issue that deeply touches many PSM Coordinators, who are mostly women, is the growing movement for recognition of women as equal to men. This equality is rooted in creation by God but there have been new insights from feminist theologians who have pointed out the many ways in which Jesus broke cultural taboos in his treatment of women. Just one example is the story of his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. (Jn 4:5-42) Jesus has a respectful and theological conversation with someone whom most of his contemporaries would have shunned -- she was a woman alone, a foreign woman, and a woman considered to be of dubious moral character since she had had several husbands. Later, Paul, in writing his epistles, sums up the belief that Jesus lived: "All baptized in Christ...and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28)

PSM Coordinators are called upon to assume the role of service, but also to prophetically proclaim the good news. The prophetic role calls believers to action on behalf of justice. This requires personal conversion of heart and mind, and often necessitates institutional change. Scripture and Church teachings, especially Catholic Social Teaching of the past century, all support action for justice. However, both the challenge of change and the human limitations of choosing the directions of change have created and continue to create conflict in the Church. The ministry project is intended to assist PSM Coordinators in navigating these conflicts. The goal is not avoidance or a

watering down of God's call to act for justice, but to develop a more understanding and compassionate heart, and to acquire new communication skills, so that they can more courageously proclaim the "good news" and work for its realization.

***Catholic Social Teaching.*** The Church calls upon Catholics to live out these scripture imperatives in today's world. The documents that are referred to as "Catholic Social Teaching (CST)" date back to 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical (a papal letter to the Catholic Church throughout the world) called *Rerum Novarum*, which spoke out for workers' rights and against the human conditions suffered by many laborers. (Encyclicals are authoritative teachings of the Pope. Written in Latin, they get their titles from the first words of the document.) Documents on the Church's social teaching that are usually included under the Catholic Social Teaching heading, as currently understood in the United States, encompass the encyclicals issued by successive popes in the last hundred plus years, documents of the Second Vatican Council (an official meeting of the Catholic bishops of the world in Rome during the period of 1962-65), and the pastoral letters by national conferences of Catholic bishops.

From the 1930s to 1960s, during the great growth in labor unions in this country, the teachings on workers rights were studied in schools, seminaries and special labor schools. As a student in a Catholic high school and a Catholic college during that timeframe, I was introduced to these documents. There was continued interest in justice issues in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II, especially with the issuance in 1965 of a key council document, The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*).

In recent decades, there has been less attention given to Catholic Social Teaching, both in teaching and preaching it. Therefore, many Catholics are unaware of these church

teachings. It is for this reason that authors Peter J. Henriot, Edward P. DeBerri, and Michael J. Schultheis named their book on CST, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (1992). The authors suggest several reasons why these teachings are "secret." One reason is that they are dense and not easy to read (I once assigned myself the task of reading the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on economic justice as part of my "penance" during Lent). A second reason is that the topics deal with social issues that are controversial and many bishops, priests, and laity avoid the potential conflict that might ensue. The third reason, which may have started this withdrawal from engaging challenging issues, was the controversy engendered when the papal encyclical *On Human Life (Humanae Vitae)* was issued in 1968 and the ban on all artificial birth control resulted in widespread dissent. Finally, the fourth reason offered is that in today's world people want to see authentic action, not just authoritative statements.

I will add a fifth reason that I believe contributes to Catholic Social Teaching getting less attention than the bishops desire. Many church members now see themselves as "the church;" in others words, the church is "theirs," as well as the hierarchy's. Church members want to provide the input of their own experience and have that respected as social teachings are developed. When this does not occur, or is greatly minimized, the social teachings do not carry the same weight.

For the PSM Coordinators who will be part of the ministry project group, and the parish staff with whom they work, I believe that the second reason, avoiding potential conflict, is the greatest obstacle. It looms even larger because, in most cases, the PSM Coordinators are familiar with CST and want it to be taught and preached, and for there to be an opportunity for dialogue. It is the PSM Coordinators' struggle, both internal and

external, to address the conflict that may be generated by controversial issues that gives rise to the need for better communication.

In 1999, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published a two-sided card, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" that is a short reflection on seven key themes of CST (see Appendix 1). One of the themes is "solidarity." The following is the bishops' reflection:

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

The above themes are stated as general principles but the bishops have been much more specific in their pastoral letters. Below are several specific stances that the United States Catholic Bishops have taken in different pastoral letters written to all Catholics in the United States: (Henriot, DeBerri, & Schultheis, 1992)

- The world should ban chemical and biological weapons (#210, *The Challenge of Peace*, 1983)
- We need "moral about-face" to say "no" to nuclear war and arms race (#333, *ibid.*)
- Massive defense spending is a "serious distortion" of economic policy (#320, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986)
- The Church and individual Catholics must:
  - a. acknowledge past mistakes and sins;
  - b. prophetically strive for racial justice and human dignity.

(*Brothers and Sisters to Us*, 1979)

### ***Organizational Dimension***

The second facet will focus on how the Catholic Church is understood and given expression through different emphases that are both theological and organizational. The organizational dimension will be examined by looking at one theologian's models of church and then viewing the church organizationally as a non-profit institution.

***Models of church.*** *Models of the Church*, by Avery Dulles, S.J., was written more than thirty years ago, but it continues to give us good insights into the Catholic Church today. The reason that the book is not "old" is because it was written after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which was an "earth-shaking" event in a two thousand year old church. People who are in their forties or younger had their faith formation in the post-Vatican II Church, which is still processing the changes in ritual and thinking that were introduced at that time. Those of us who are in their fifties or older grew up in the pre-Vatican II Church and were initially either delighted or appalled by the changes brought in by Vatican II. Over the intervening years, the church as an institution, and the church in its individual members has both incorporated changes and experienced a backlash to changes. The time of upheaval is not over. Depending on how we were brought up in the faith, how our faith education was imparted or neglected, how church discipline strengthened or damaged our faith, and depending on our own unique personalities and spiritual growth, we all see our present church and the effects of Vatican II through different lenses.

It is important to place this ministry project in a historical setting because part of the conflict church leaders experience is that the congregants to whom they minister are



different ages and come with different types of faith formation. Likewise, the parish staff reflect this diversity. For example, for some staff, congregants are the churchgoers; for others, church members are those who self-identify as Catholics, whether or not they participate in church life. Finally, some staff see their mission as encompassing everyone in their geographical boundaries, not in the sense of proselytizing but in the sense of concern for everyone as a child of God.

Ecclesiology is the theological study of the church. Dulles uses the word "models" to present different ways of thinking about the church. Each model has strengths and weaknesses in attempting to explain the church. Dulles does not see this as a deficiency but rather as a recognition that the church is a mystery so that no model could ever adequately describe the church. When we recognize that each of us consciously, or unconsciously, is emphasizing a particular model, we can learn from the positive aspects of the other models. For this ministry project, the most important insight for PSM Coordinators may be the recognition that different staff are operating from different models. Sometimes the vision of the parish is expressed in the language of one model, but staff incorporate different secondary models into that vision of the parish mission. Dulles offers five models of church but he does not consider this number as exhaustive of possible models or combinations of models. His five models are: (a) Church as Institution (b) Church as Mystical Communion (or Mystical Body) (c) Church as Sacrament (d) Church as Herald (e) Church as Servant. In describing each model, Dulles emphasizes predominant aspects that lead him to label the model in a certain way. He is aware that each model contains aspects of the other models in a more secondary or suppressed form.

Church as Institution. This model predominated from 1550 to 1950. With four centuries of ascendancy, it is easy to see why fifty years after Vatican II this model has not been dislodged as a priority model with the church hierarchy. When Dulles speaks of the church as institution he is referring to its visible structure and how it exercises authority. Just as a civil governing body has a constitution, a set of laws, a governing body, and a membership that recognizes its authority, so the church has a creed, canon law and prescribed forms of public worship, a pope and bishops, and a church membership. These do not necessarily imply institutionalism or legalism unless the institution or law is considered primary. Dulles sees the church as an institution but recognizes that institutionalism is a danger to be avoided.

Over the past 2000 years, the church, as institution, has provided continuity with the message of Jesus and a sense of identity among the followers of Jesus. The strength of the church as institution is in providing a clear and well-functioning structure which enables the church to fulfill what it sees as its mission: to teach, to sanctify, to govern. Although each of these goals implies a giver and a receiver, the Church, as institution, sees itself as the giver and identifies with the governing body or hierarchy. In this model, the members are the beneficiaries. On the positive side, this emphasis on the teaching role of the church facilitates the education of church membership in the teachings of Christ in a doctrinally consistent way. In fact, according to Dulles, "The bishops are considered to possess a special 'charism of truth' ... it is held that the faithful are in conscience bound to believe what the bishops declare." (Dulles, 1974, p. 35) Dulles tells us that the phrase "charism of truth" is from St. Irenaeus, but acknowledges that the

meaning has undergone a change since the time of Irenaeus and refers the reader to the writings of theologian Karl Rahner.

The institutional model is clearly expressed in official church documents, which affirm that its doctrine, sacraments, and structure are rooted in divine revelation. From this standpoint with its emphasis on divine authority, it is difficult to be a Catholic and dissent from any church teaching (although the Documents of Vatican II clearly recognize the freedom and primacy of individual conscience). On the other hand, Dulles explains that the institutional model has little clear scriptural basis, nor is it particularly evident in early Church tradition.

Church as Mystical Communion. In offering this model, Dulles means more than the Church as community in a sociological sense. In addition to horizontal relationships (church member to church member), he sees a vertical dimension (church member to God), "the divine life disclosed in the incarnate Christ and communicated to men (sic) through his Spirit." (Dulles, 1974, p. 46) This model has been very influential among Catholics, beginning with Pope Pius XII's encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ in 1943, and later through the documents of Vatican II. The prevalence of this model is evident in the ordinary expressions of lay Catholics, such as "We are all the Body of Christ." and, after Vatican II, "The Church is the People of God," and "We are the Church." However, Dulles contends that the expression "People of God" has a slightly different nuance than "Body of Christ." The former expression may indicate a greater distance between Christ and the members, allowing members to see themselves as a community but with more individual freedom.

Dulles sees this model as being more deeply rooted in scripture than the institutional model. He also presents the downside of both expressions of this model. He sees "Body of Christ" as in danger of leading "to an unhealthy divinization of the Church." His scriptural critique of "People of God" is that it relies more on the Old Testament than the New Testament, which contains the message of Jesus. Dulles also recognizes that this model can appear exclusionary if misused. However, when "People of God" is used to mean having a relationship or covenant with God, then it can be an opening to an ecumenical dialogue with other religious groups.

Church as Sacrament. For each model, Dulles asks, "What are the bonds of union? Who are the beneficiaries? What is the goal or purpose of the Church?" In the Church as Sacrament model, his answer to the first question is that the shared visible signs of grace are a source of unity. For example, all are baptized (sacrament of baptism) into the same Church. On a day to day basis the most visible sign is the Eucharist ("communion"), as embedded in the Eucharistic celebration, called "the Mass," which is celebrated around the world each day. Those who benefit most are those actively connected to the seven sacraments (Baptism, Penance -- often called "confession" --, Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick). In this model, the emphasis of theologians in the mid-twentieth century was to use the sacramental model to connect the institutional and mystical union models. The goal is for members to grow in their response to Christ and, in Dulles' words, to "become living symbols of divine love and beacons of hope in the world." (Dulles, 1974, p. 67)

Some theologians see the sacramental model as a good way of relating the positive aspects of the institutional model to that of the mystical communion model since

the sacraments of the Church are opportunities of grace that unite the community. A negative critique of the sacramental model is that it can be a narrow sacramentalism that neglects the role of service, which is the heart of the fifth model of church.

Church as Herald. In this fourth model, the word of God is primary and sacraments are secondary. This ecclesiology focuses on Jesus Christ and on the bible as witnessing to his identity and his message. Dulles quotes the theologian Richard McBrien, who summarizes this ecclesiology as: "This mission of the Church is one of proclamation of the Word of God to the whole world. The Church cannot hold itself responsible for the failure of men (sic) to accept it as God's Word; it has only to proclaim it with integrity and persistence. All else is secondary...The community itself happens wherever the Spirit breathes, wherever the Word is proclaimed and accepted in faith. The Church is event, a point of encounter with God." (Dulles, 1974, p. 71) A main advocate of this model of Church is the Protestant theologian Karl Barth, who draws mainly from the biblical writings of Paul and those of Martin Luther. Barth warned against taming the Bible so that it no longer influences our lives.

For the Herald model, the bond of union among church members is faith that is a response to the "Good News" of the Gospel and that proclaims Christ as Savior and Redeemer. This model has a strong evangelizing direction. It can operate in local congregations, and does not depend as much on an institutional structure. This can have a negative dimension because for the Church as a visible institution to continue through history, there needs to be a continuing institution. Another critique of the Herald model is that its emphasis on the word neglects the core Catholic concept that "the Word was made flesh," that is, that Jesus shares his being, as well as his word. Finally, the Herald

model can be seen as not having an active enough service dimension, that is, the message is proclaimed but the believer may be too pessimistic about human effort as a way to build a better world.

Church as Servant. This fifth model is unique among the models in viewing the institutional Church itself as needing to be a servant in the sense of dialoguing with the world, reading "the signs of the times," and responding pastorally in imitation of Christ the Servant. The Vatican II document, "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," called the Church to a new understanding of the relationship between the Church and the contemporary world.

In the Servant model, the union is among those in service to the world, rather than primarily among those sharing the same faith and sacraments. The positive aspects of this model are that not only members of the Church benefit but all people of the world who are treated respectfully, listened to, and who receive the "service" of encouragement, comfort, or alleviation of human need. Dulles claims that the Servant model does not have direct biblical foundation and that while the Bible emphasizes and praises service, it does not make this the task of the Church. Dulles does acknowledge what he calls an "indirect foundation," especially in Isaiah 61 and Luke 4, as quoted above.

In each of the models above, any reference to the church as institution implies a type of authority that claims more than human authority. While Catholics believe that the Spirit of God is with the Church, what this means and how this authority is exercised varies. The role of infallible authority is extremely limited and there is even some theological discussion on the meaning of infallibility. This type of authority does not extend to applied moral principles, such as in areas of justice and peace. However, there

are moral teachings that carry the weight of church authority, even though not the weight of infallibility. Here is where the laity wish to be heard and to engage in dialogue.

Organizationally, a bishop or pastor can act with authority in a top-down manner or exercise authority in a pastoral and collegial manner. The pastoral bishop or pastor uses authority minimally, seeking to listen and include the insights and gifts of church members. When he feels threatened personally or because his model of church is authoritarian (institutional), he may defensively cut off dialogue, by saying "the Church is not a democracy." When this attitude is present, it is a potential source of conflict for PSM Coordinators.

***Church as a human organization.*** The Church, as an organization, is also a human institution, which exists in today's culture. The Church in the United States is a non-profit organization in a democratic society, as well as a spiritual entity. In living out its mission, regardless of which model of church predominates, the Church relates to and acts within today's society. Its members come with the expectations, insights and tools of modern culture. Many church members are informed and literate, whereas in the Middle Ages, priests were the educated class and most members were among the poor and illiterate. In the past, women were almost always considered inferior and had little impact on organizations beyond the family. Now women want to claim their rightful place in society, and in the Church.

Like other organizations, the Church must retain its authentic mission but be willing to change what is not essential. Here the Church can learn from secular organizational management theorists. Peter Drucker, an authority on management, has written many books on management strategies for non-profits as well as businesses.

Drucker has looked at how institutions can and must change in order to preserve their mission. He has examined how to manage for the future and under the pressure of changing times. How the Catholic Church, as a human institution in the United States, addresses organizational issues directly affects the ministry of PSM Coordinators. Below I have chosen six of Drucker's insights and will reflect on how the Church has or has not incorporated these insights into its organizational style.

- Mission. Drucker reminds us that "Non-profit institutions exist for the sake of their mission. They exist to make a difference in society and in the life of the individual." (Drucker, 1990, p. 23) My experience is that the Catholic Church remembers its mission and does put it first. The difference of opinion, and potential conflict, arises over the choice of strategies to accomplish the church's mission.
- Two-way relationship. In speaking of the administration of non-profit organizations, Drucker writes, "An effective non-profit executive starts building this two-way relationship with the staff, with the board, with the community, with donors, with volunteers, and with alumni by asking: 'What do you have to tell me?' Not, 'This is what I'm telling you.' That question brings problems out in the open." (Drucker, 1990, p. 159) Although, I believe that many local pastors think that they do this, in reality the two-way relationship is mostly top-down. This situation reflects the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. Sometimes Pastors overextend theological arguments to perpetuate their authority in temporal affairs. This may reflect defensiveness, protection of the status quo, or a fear of "bringing problems out in the open." Lay church leaders, such as the



PSM Coordinators (most are laity), have seen more effective leadership styles modeled in other areas of their lives. Often they possess these leadership skills and they chafe at feeling unable to make their full contribution. This ministry project will address that feeling of confinement and examine some of the theological and psychological issues underneath any defensiveness that interferes with good two-way communication.

- Change. "Society, community, and family are all conserving institutions. They try to maintain stability and to prevent, or at least to slow, change." (Drucker, 1995, p. 77) The Catholic Church more closely resembles these institutions than modern organizations and culture. This slow pace of change helps the Church protect core values. On the other hand, it can also inhibit the leaders and hierarchy from reading "the signs of the times," which was a call to the Church from the Second Vatican Council. PSM Coordinators who assist poor and needy people on a daily basis are in a good position to read the signs of the times but are often frustrated when they identify issues but their parishes will not take an advocacy stance toward resolving these issues.
- Knowledge workers. Business organizations recognize both the speed of technological change and the growth of a new class of knowledge workers. Drucker writes, "The dynamics of knowledge impose one clear imperative: every organization has to build the management of change into its very structure." (Drucker, 1995, p. 79) He continues, "Because the modern organization consists of knowledge specialists, it has to be an organization of equals, of colleagues and associates." (Drucker, 1995, p. 89) PSM Coordinators understand that the

Church changes slowly and that the Church is not a democracy when it comes to doctrine but they desire to be treated as colleagues and equals in the ministry. At the present time, lay PSM Coordinators are not considered equal to clerical staff and female PSM Coordinators have fewer rights in the Church than male PSM Coordinators who are permanent deacons.

- Knowledges. Knowledge has become more specialized and Drucker refers to the change from knowledge to *knowledges*. This shift introduces new challenges. Knowledge workers need to be able to convey their specialized knowledge to others in an understandable way. Likewise, knowledges from other areas need to be incorporated into one's own specialized knowledge. (Drucker, 1995) The Church hierarchy is lagging behind in the information explosion. Most PSM Coordinators use the Internet, even while recognizing its limitations. If PSM Coordinators are interested in a theological issue, they can easily access information on the Internet or through other media. The hierarchy ignores these facts when they argue that important theological discussion should not happen in parishes but only in scholarly theological journals. The scholarly debate is no longer the sole province of the bishops and their canonical consultants.
- Volunteers. Drucker considers another pivotal change in non-profit organizations, which is the role played by volunteers. The number and expertise of volunteers has increased. Many business employees find greater satisfaction in their volunteer work with an organization that has a clearer (or more valued) mission than their regular employment. Organizations used to demand little of volunteers because they were unpaid. This is no longer true in many non-profits with large

numbers of "volunteers;" some volunteers are actually considered staff. Besides working for an organization with a mission that they subscribe to, these unpaid staff are asking for more and more training and responsibility. (Drucker, 1992)

Catholic churches are always seeking volunteers but often Pastors, and sometimes PSM Coordinators, are only willing to share limited responsibility. In Parish Social Ministry programs, PSM Coordinators recruit volunteers who participate in the ministry. The PSM Coordinators who have the most vibrant ministries are usually those who see that volunteers are trained, delegate responsibility to them, respond to volunteers' organizational suggestions, and are open to the possibility of volunteers initiating and leading new areas of ministry. These are often the PSM Coordinators who come regularly with some of their volunteers to trainings offered by Catholic Charities' Parish Social Ministry Department. Some PSM Coordinators may hesitate to share responsibility with volunteers because the Pastor does not delegate sufficient responsibility to them. Also, PSM Coordinators sometimes operate their ministry without having sufficient input into parish decisions. A Pastor's lack of delegation or adequate listening can be a source of conflict; resolving these issues might lead to a better relationship with volunteers. Since a breakdown in communication on conflict issues is usually two-sided, this ministry project will address the steps that PSM Coordinators can take.

### ***Pastoral Dimension***

***The four decades since Vatican II.*** During the twentieth century, the Catholic Church struggled with new insights from psychology, as they affect the dignity of the human person and the development of a mature faith. In *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America*, Peter Steinfels takes stock of the Catholic Church in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Writing in 2003, Steinfels reviews the four decades following the Second Vatican Council. These forty years correspond to my forty years as an adult. My religious upbringing took place in the pre-Vatican II Church and my adult years in the post-Vatican II Church. I recognized all the major events that Steinfels highlights and, for the most part, I resonated with his interpretation of how these changes happened and how they affected the church.

Most PSM Coordinators have had some experience of both the pre- and post-Vatican II Church. Although there were many changes, the one clear memorable external and symbolic change was when the Catholic Mass began to be celebrated in English, rather than Latin. Although the PSM Coordinators have experienced the changes that Steinfels describes, I am not sure that they always know the history and reasons. Hopefully, in our time together in the five group sessions, I will be able to contribute some of the historical perspective as to why some issues caused such conflict in the Catholic Church. This will be particularly important for PSM Coordinators who are forty-five or younger and grew up in the Vatican II Church, which is still led, for the most part, by pastors who were formed in the pre-Vatican II Church.

In 1996, just months before he died, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the archbishop of Chicago, announced the Common Ground Initiative. It followed three years of discussion with lay people and clergy, and had as charter members well-known leaders who might be labeled “liberal” or “conservative” but who were not extremists. The initiative was built on the premise that polarization was destructive and that the church was not as polarized as some would claim. Rather, there was a large silent middle who were moderate conservatives and moderate liberals. The initiative was meant to open a dialogue. While the dialogue has continued, it got off to a rocky start. Cardinal Bernardin had done the behind the scenes footwork of informing Rome and the head of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops of his project. However, as soon as Cardinal Bernardin announced his initiative, Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston criticized it. Cardinal Law particularly denounced Cardinal Bernardin’s underlying document, “Called to Be Catholic,” as flawed because it called for dialogue.

Cardinal Bernardin had listed more than a dozen items for dialogue in his statement “Called to Be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril.” Ten years later, they are more relevant than ever. Steinfels lists a number of these items, several of which are particularly pertinent for the ministry project group:

- the changing roles of women
- the Eucharistic liturgy as most Catholics experience it
- the meaning of human sexuality, and the gap between church teachings and the convictions of many faithful in this and several other areas of morality

- the succession of laypeople to positions of leadership formerly held by priests and sisters, and the provision of an adequate formation for ministers, both ordained and lay
- the ways in which the church is present in political life, its responsibility to the poor and defenseless, and its support for laypeople in their family life and daily callings
- the manner of decision making and consultation in church governance

Steinfels also described some of the events in the unfolding role of women in today's Church. This was one area where I recognized the events but saw them somewhat differently than the author. For example, Steinfels accurately describes how the United States Catholic Bishops undertook to write a pastoral letter on women and then, after a decade of struggling through several drafts, abandoned the project. What is left out is that initially women cooperated with the bishops on this project and a large part of the first draft was women's experiences within the church, told in their own words. Under Vatican pressure, this part of the document was largely gutted. Women felt betrayed and began to call upon the bishops to drop the project. Another source of contention was that the bishops intended to write a document "on women." Many women wanted the document to be about "sexism," just as the bishops had previously written about "racism," not "on blacks and minorities." In the end, the bishops chose not to confront Vatican pressures and abandoned their earlier draft. At the same time, there was also a sufficient number of bishops who heard the objections of women in the church and were instrumental in having the document discarded in response to these objections.

Another area where Steinfels misses some of the nuance of women's reactions to what is happening in the church is in his description of the Women-Church convention in 1993. He describes it as appearing to have "abandoned anything resembling traditional Roman Catholicism." As evidence, he cites the fact that Sunday morning services offered thirty different ritualistic expressions and none were the traditional Catholic Mass. I was certainly aware of this conference when it took place. I did not attend but my reaction to what Steinfels described was not that these women had totally abandoned Catholicism. I saw women who were searching, stretching boundaries, and creating new ritual expressions – many of which I either did not agree with or withheld judgment about because I did not understand. I was very excited that women with deeply held beliefs were giving expression to them and found it invigorating, not depressing. I also knew that the attendees at this conference were not all extremists but included women across the spectrum, from alienated Catholics to committed Catholic innovators, to undecided observers.

One insight of Steinfels, that I am just beginning to see, is that many younger priests may be "conservative" but not in the same way as some older clergy who are still clinging to a pre-Vatican II mentality. Younger priests, sometimes called John Paul II priests, are drawn to the distinctly priestly or sacramental ministries. While conservative Catholics may see them as "saviors," Steinfels writes, "Currently the John Paul II priests and the laity stand far apart in their views on church authority, sexual morality, women's roles, divorce and remarriage, liturgical obligations, and many other topics." (Steinfels, 2003, p. 322) Older Catholics, who have embraced the changes of Vatican II, may label them conservative and mentally place them with pre-Vatican II priests, but that may be to

miscategorize them. They often have energy and commitment, and are open to collaboration, but they turn off older Catholics with their clerical and otherworldly approach. They appear to be fighting their own generation's challenges of relativism and materialism. Steinfels continues, "Most younger priests want to be both pastorally sensitive and pastorally effective without trimming their doctrinal positions. Whether they have the intellectual resources to make those positions persuasive or perhaps to reconsider them is an open question." (Steinfels, 2003, p. 322)

*Contributions of feminist theologians.* One might ask, why look at the contributions of women theologians in a project on communication around conflict issues? Since half of the world's population are women and, in the United States, women are the clear majority in almost all congregations, this is an important topic for pastoral care of all members of a congregation. Later, in the clinical principles section of this chapter, I will consider some of the psychological components involved in how men and women experience life differently, which also affects their experiences as believers. Here I would like to look at how the most fundamental beliefs and practices of faith require a pastoral approach that incorporates the insights and experience of women.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza is a Catholic feminist theologian and biblical scholar whose work has rediscovered the role and status of the women followers of Jesus. She did this, not by emphasizing the traditional telling of biblical stories about women, but by shifting the paradigm and uncovering the silences. A paradigm is a clear framework that determines what observations or data will be used, what theory is assumed, which problems and questions are to be considered, and what interpretive methods will be used. Fiorenza contends that biblical scholarship, which had been done almost exclusively by



men, used an androcentric and patriarchal paradigm in studying and interpreting the bible. As with any group that holds power, what is considered important enough to include or study is consciously or unconsciously determined by its values and worldview.

In the beginning of her book, *In Memory of Her*, she quotes from the gospel story of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet, "And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (Mk 14:9) She goes on to point out that in the same gospel, the evangelist tells the story of Jesus' betrayer and gives his *name*, Judas, but when speaking of the woman who served Jesus, she remains *nameless*.

One way that the voices of women are reclaimed in the New Testament is to go back to the original text. For example, in Paul's letter to the Romans he mentions Phoebe, an early Christian leader, by name and gives her the title *diakonos* (Rom 16:1ff). When later (male) exegetes translated this title, they translated the word as "minister," "missionary" or "servant" when the title was given to a male leader. However, the same word got translated as "deaconess" when it was a woman's title. Over time exegetes then proceeded to limit the role of a "deaconess" to service of women because they projected back their experience of the work of deaconesses in a later church period. In this way the full leadership role of Phoebe, the only person in Pauline writings to ever receive an official letter of recommendation, was diminished. (Fiorenza, 1983)

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians, he writes, "All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28) Fiorenza points out that "Paul's impact on women's leadership in the Christian

missionary movement is double-edged. On the one hand he affirms Christian equality and freedom. He opens up a new independent lifestyle for women by encouraging them to remain free of the bondage of marriage. On the other hand, he subordinates women's behavior in marriage and in the worship assembly to the interests of Christian mission." (Fiorenza, 1983, p. 236)

Elizabeth Johnson is a Catholic feminist theologian, a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and currently president-elect of the American Theological Society. In her book, *SHE WHO IS*, Johnson asks how we should talk about God. She explains that a name is a symbol that has a function. The symbol gives rise to thoughts. For example, if warlike names, such as "Mighty Fortress," are used, it can provoke aggressive behavior; names that connote benevolence, for example "Good Shepherd," can motivate care for our neighbor. The exclusive use of male names perpetuates a patriarchal view.

Johnson goes on to say, "The presenting issue in debates about inclusive language is ostensibly whether the reality of women can provide suitable metaphor for speech about God." (Johnson, 1992, p. 5) Feminine words such as "mother," "she," or "SHE WHO IS" (Elizabeth Johnson's term for God), give rise to thoughts of mutuality, relationship, reciprocity, love, justice, nurturance, etc. Johnson, by using the name SHE WHO IS and choosing feminine metaphors as symbols for God, also retrieves and honors those aspects of women's reality, the female body and its procreative functions, that have been treated so negatively in Christian anthropology. (Johnson, 1992)

To use feminine names for God is a shift in how one views the world and signals an identity that recognizes the equality of women. Using feminine names does not distort

our view of God because God is mystery and no words are ever adequate. St. Thomas Aquinas wrestled with a historical development of his time (13<sup>th</sup> century). In responding to the question of whether God could be referred to as "person" (this word is not used in the bible to refer to God), Aquinas decided that new words could be used to meet a historical need. Johnson quotes Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* (ST I, q. 29 a. 3.): "Nor is such a kind of novelty to be shunned; since it is by no means profane, for it does not lead us astray from the sense of scripture." (Johnson, 1992, p. 7)

Dorothee Soelle is a German Protestant feminist theologian. She taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York and was also an activist in movements for justice and liberation. She was active in the anti-nuclear movement in Germany and she went to Latin America for first-hand experience of the doing of liberation theology among the poor and oppressed. Soelle asks us to consider who does theology, who decides what theology is, and what is the content. Until universities and seminaries started opening their doors to women, theology was done almost solely by men. This traditionally left out the experience of women.

In *Thinking about God*, Soelle devotes a chapter to "Feminist Liberation Theology." She calls the Magnificat, in which Mary praises God in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1), "a basic text for liberation theology." (Soelle, 1990, p. 69) The speaker is a young woman who is poor, unmarried, and pregnant. When a second-class being sings, "He casts down from their seats those who are on high and exalts the humiliated," it is experienced differently than when the verse is prayed by a privileged white male. From a liberation standpoint this prayer is about the redistribution of material goods and power in the world. Feminist theology is a type of liberation theology because it starts with the

personal and communal experience of living the faith (praxis). The liberation theology model is praxis-reflection-renewed praxis. This is a different way of doing theology than the traditional male method of theology, which adopted the Greek understanding that theory ranks above praxis. The traditional method went unquestioned for centuries. Soelle suggests that this ranking of the work of the head over that of the hands comes from assumptions such as that quiet study (men's work) is more important than doing household tasks (women's work). Starting with lived experience, rather than abstractions, does not allow theologians to be neutral. Soelle states this clearly when she writes, "All contemporary theologies of liberation understand scholarship not be obligated to the ideals of neutrality, detachment and balance, but as partisan support for women, for those at a disadvantage, a science of advocacy which understands itself as the attorney for the poor, for the oppressed, for women." (Soelle, 1990, pp. 72-73)

Taking a look at how women do theology and the model of liberation theology will help PSM Coordinators to better understand why their view on the role of women and their concern for justice issues can be conflictual on a theological level. A number of women theologians, such as those mentioned above, have made significant contributions in the last fifty years. Many of the male hierarchy are either not fully aware of these contributions, or have discounted them. Male members of church congregations are often unaware or resistant to different ways of doing theology; some women also espouse these views. However, a growing number of women in Christian churches, including the majority of PSM Coordinators, have welcomed the contributions of feminist theologians. This is true even if they have not studied theology formally. As they become aware of these theological insights, which resonate powerfully, they may or may not be able to

adequately articulate them to men who resist these ideas. A good example is the desire of many women to have inclusive language used. Many women bristle at a homily that assures them that God loves all *men*.

Denise Lardner Carmody is professor of religion and director of the Warren Center for Catholic Studies at the University of Tulsa. In *Responses to 101 Questions about Feminism*, she considers feminist leadership. She writes, "Feminist models of leadership are sketches of how women either typically tend to run affairs or ideally would do so." (Carmody, 1993, p. 58) Their vision of leadership includes a non-hierarchical style where people are not ranked as superior or inferior. In the male stereotype of leadership, everyone is ranked, and everyone knows who has power and status.

Since women are so often ranked as inferior, they react negatively to the hierarchical model. Women choose ways of eliminating inferior status, for example, in putting chairs in a circle when conducting a meeting. For PSM Coordinators, using a circle format for meetings or groups they run is very common. This allows everyone to be aware of each other's non-verbal expressions of feeling, as well as communicating that each one can have an equal say. Also, everyone can be seen; no one is anonymous as women so often feel. A circular seating arrangement critiques the inadequacy of always using a hierarchical model and offers an alternative that can enrich communication and relatedness. In the Church, feminists point to Jesus who came "not to be served by others, but to serve." (Mt 20:28) This does not mean that all leadership must be non-hierarchical, but that it must include a sense of service in a community where there are no second-class citizens.

The circle is often used as a symbol of the feminist leadership style. In recent years, the Brooklyn Sisters of Mercy have called all their committees "Circles" as a way of communicating their preferred style of relating to one another. An active advocacy circle that has lay members, both male and female, is the Cherish Life Circle that has as its main agenda to oppose the death penalty, especially in New York State.

### ***Ethical Dimension***

"To love your neighbor as yourself," or stated another way, "Do unto others as you want done to yourself," is an ethical principle that is found in some form in all major religions. Theologian Michael Himes thinks that holding truth and love together is "the single most pressing ethical problem in the Christian life." (Himes, 1995, p. 92) In discussing how he believes truth and love must be held together in the service of others, he says, "We must never separate truth and love. Never sacrifice the truth to what you think is love of the neighbor. There is no real love in disguising reality from someone because we fear that it will hurt him or her or because we worry that he or she will be unable to deal with it. Never sacrifice loving your neighbor to what you think is the proclamation of the truth...The great moral achievement is to speak the truth lovingly and to love truthfully. (Himes, 1995, p. 92)

The Second Vatican Council produced a number of authoritative documents that spoke to ethical, as well as religious, issues. One of these documents is the "Declaration on Religious Freedom." John Courtney Murray, S.J., in his introduction to the document, states that a key tenet of this document is "the ethical doctrine of religious freedom as a human right." (Abbot, 1966, pp. 672-673)

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (United Nations, General Assembly, 1948) Over the next fifty years, more than a hundred countries of the world ratified the document. Although the United States was one of the 48 member countries that initially signed the declaration in 1948, the United States Senate has still not ratified it. The United States' choice not to embrace the document has a direct bearing on the work of PSM Coordinators. The United States is quick to acknowledge political rights but sometimes reluctant to acknowledge economic rights. In the United States, the idea of equal rights is often tied to individual freedom and freedom of thought and religion. Therefore, the United States would not have difficulty with Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Likewise, Article 18 might be acceptable, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." However, in the United States, the idea of *economic* rights of individuals is not widely embraced. Therefore, Article 25, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself (sic) and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care" is not universally embraced in the United States. Article 25 is one reason that the United States has never ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In general, PSM Coordinators do recognize the rights of all people to these basic economic rights. They base this belief on the Gospel but they find it very challenging to bring this ethical vision not only to the wider community but also to the individual members of their own parishes. People are sometimes more influenced by a value system of the United States that says, "If you earned it, you can keep it" than the broader ethical values of the world community as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights. PSM Coordinators, as part of their mission, desire to address these ethical concerns.

The United States Constitution begins with the ethical, as well as religious, principle, that "All men are created equal." The word "men" used in this context today usually refers to men *and* women. Although it is often claimed that the word "men" means humankind, and therefore includes women, it took until 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified for women to have the right to vote. For almost a century the women's suffrage movement had worked toward that goal. Since then the women's feminist movement in the United States has taken the lead in ethical justice for women. In many areas both religion and government have lagged behind in promoting the ethical issue of women's rights. PSM Coordinators, the majority of whom are women, could learn from the assertiveness and consciousness-raising of the feminist movement even if they do not agree with all issues espoused by some of these groups.

This concludes the section on religious principles. However, throughout the ministry project, it will be important to continually keep in mind the interrelatedness of the theological and psychological. In many cases, PSM Coordinators appear to have a clear vision of their ministry as well as the faith and values they wish to express through their service and advocacy, but they feel inhibited by authority structures and by personal inhibitions. Catholics, especially female Catholics, are often less prepared to be assertive, address issues directly, and negotiate conflict. Awareness of psychological dynamics could greatly enhance PSM Coordinators' ability to communicate around conflict issues. In the next section, I will present the psychological principles underlying this ministry project.



### *Clinical Principles*

In this section, I will set the ministry project within a psychological context. The PSM Coordinators who will be participating in this project are generally a psychologically healthy set of professional adults. Therefore, the psychological dimensions examined will focus on normal development and the psychological challenges and strengths that a range of healthy adults experience. Since PSM Coordinators range in age from thirty to seventy, the focus will be on adult stages of development. However, since individuals are formed and influenced by the earliest stages of development, there will also be references to these stages as they affect adult reality. In discussing healthy psychological development, I will use Erikson's eight stages of the life cycle to frame this process, with some acknowledgement of other theorists who have extended or challenged some aspects of Erikson's work.

Next, I will lay out the psychological issues that are most relevant for mature adults as they gain an understanding of their feelings and reactions to conflict and possible ways to communicate with others on these topics. This includes both one's personal issues, as well as the interpersonal dynamic. Then I will look at the contributions of a number of theorists who have made specific contributions to our understanding of these issues. Since I anticipate that most or all the participants will be women (more than three-quarters of all PSM Coordinators in the diocese are women) - and because half of the earth's people are women - I will particularly note how various psychological theories did or did not address the female psychological experience, and what we have learned later from the psychological contributions of women in this field. I

will take special note of the contributions of Carol Gilligan. Her contributions regarding the reasons women's voices are not heard are particularly apropos when considering the topic of communicating on conflict issues.

Finally, I will address the topic of change. As adults, the PSM Coordinators are using their current self-understanding and skills that they have acquired over the years for dealing with conflict in their professional work. This project has as its goal to build on these strengths while increasing self-understanding and acquiring new insights or skills which will enable each PSM Coordinator to take a step forward internally and/or in outward behavior when communicating in a conflict situation. Therefore, the theory of change and what motivates people to change is examined. Improving listening skills, with reference to the psychological underpinnings of these skills, is another avenue to change. Transference and countertransference are discussed as they apply to a counselor or group facilitator. The last topic is the group process itself as a vehicle for change.

### ***Healthy Psychological Development***

This project will use Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial ego development, from trust vs. mistrust through integrity vs. despair, to frame the growth process of each individual and then relate this to how people believe and practice their Catholic faith as members of the same church. Themes that will be explored are individual and institutional levels of maturity, freedom, and integrity.

In his book, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, Erik Erikson discusses the concept of a "healthy personality." He attempts to move beyond what was "known" by making use of cultural anthropology, as well as psychology. Although he acknowledges Freud's work,

Erikson's approach is different from Freud's. Erikson feels that while many psychoanalysts focus on the cure of personality disturbances, his intention is to look at how these personality disturbances can be prevented. Erikson set a higher threshold for "healthy" than merely being alive or not sick. Erikson saw the human person going through stages of growth. In stating his approach, Erikson says, "I shall present human growth from the point of view of the conflicts, inner and outer, which the healthy personality weathers, emerging and re-emerging with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity to do well, according to the standards of those who are significant to him (sic)." (Erikson, 1959, p. 52)

### ***Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development***

Erikson considers the growth of a healthy personality as a progression of sequenced steps, which he calls the eight stages of psychosocial development. (Erikson, 1959, pp. 57-105) Although the steps are related, at any one time one stage may be in the ascendancy. However, the other stages are still present before and after the particular stage that is predominant in development. (See Appendix 2 for a chart of these stages. (Erikson, 1959, p. 129))

Erikson proposes the development of *trust* as the first stage of healthy development, framing this stage as the conflict of *trust vs. mistrust*. He describes the need for "good enough" mothering (Winnicott's terminology) in this oral stage of development as getting sufficiently qualitatively good satisfaction of one's need for food, physical care, and love in one's first year of life. Developing a basic trust is the cornerstone of becoming a healthy person.

The second stage of *autonomy vs. shame and doubt* is generally experienced between ages one to two. This developmental stage focuses on withholding and expelling at will. There is a clash of wills with parents as the child develops an autonomous will. Becoming "toilet trained" is a task that reflects these two tasks. Failure to adequately negotiate this stage can result in neurotic tendencies to be overly compulsive, and stingy and retentive. If a child is shamed, that is, made to feel too small and "exposed" before being ready, they may retain a sense of shame. If shamed beyond endurance, the child may react by becoming defiant. If a child develops self-control without a loss of self-esteem, he or she acquires a sense of appropriate autonomy.

*Initiative vs. guilt* is the third stage of development. At ages four and five, children move into an intrusive mode and become aggressive in physical attacks and in their talking style. This is also the time of infantile sexual curiosity. The child needs to negotiate the Oedipus complex. For the male child, this means an awareness of his penis and his competitive feeling toward his father for a sexual relationship with his mother. Erikson follows Freud in emphasizing the girl child's experience of a missing genital organ and her more difficult task of competing with her mother for her father's sexual attention. Later theorists, especially women (Carol Gilligan's theory is described below), have challenged the adequacy of Freud's theory of this stage of development for the female child. When children are appropriately taught about basic sexual differences, when they are not made to feel guilty about sexual curiosity, and are assured that someday they will grow up to be like mother and father, they are able to acquire age appropriate initiative without retaining a burdensome sense of guilt. This is the early stage of conscience formation.

Erikson's fourth stage is *industry vs. inferiority*. This stage corresponds to the latency period of childhood prior to puberty. In this stage the focus is on learning, acquiring skills, and accomplishing tasks. Going to school is usually the prime activity of this stage. To successfully accomplish the work of this stage, the child needs to feel a sense of mastery. This is accomplished through play as well as through studies and other skill development. A child who has not accomplished the tasks of prior stages may find it difficult to be industrious and acquire a sense of mastery. This can lead to leaving this stage with a sense of inferiority.

The fifth stage is *identity vs. identity diffusion*. During puberty and adolescence, youth are focused on their new physical genital maturing and the consolidation of their social roles. To the extent that they have successfully developed through earlier stages, they are now able to achieve a sense of ego identity.

Erikson calls the next stages the three stages of adulthood. It begins with the sixth stage, which is *intimacy and distantiation vs. self-absorption*. Intimacy is possible after a sufficient level of ego identity has been achieved. Although this includes the capacity for sexual intimacy, it also includes the intimacy of friendship, love, leadership, and with one's own inner resources. The capacity for distantiation, or the readiness to repudiate, can be used positively or negatively in aggressive involvement. A failure to achieve some level of intimacy can leave a person self-absorbed.

The seventh stage is *generativity vs. stagnation*. Generativity is concerned with the next generation. Obviously this applies to parents who take on the responsibility of establishing a family and helping their children achieve healthy adulthood. However, it also applies to all others who directly guide, or offer their personal talents and gifts to,

the next generation. A failure to develop generativity can result in a person caring only for one's self, as though one were one's only child.

Erikson's eighth stage is *integrity vs. despair and disgust*. Integrity, the last psychosocial developmental stage, is described as a state of mind that is accepting of one's one and only life, with its gifts and limitations. One also accepts responsibility for one's own life. When one has achieved ego integrity, there is also an emotional integration that allows one to be both a follower and a leader. The lack of ego integration, or loss of it, can lead to an unconscious fear of death, or even despair.

Harry Stack Sullivan also proposed a series of developmental stages. However, unlike Freud's psychosexual theory or Erikson's psychosocial theory, Sullivan's developmental stages are defined by "A series of interpersonal configurations that characterize socialization. He emphasized the development, or lack thereof, of skills pertinent to these new interpersonal situations." (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 1996, p. 202) Sullivan also believed that important development within a person did not cease with the childhood years. We see here that Sullivan and Erikson shared some similar views about development continuing through the life cycle.

### ***The Id, Ego, and Superego***

Sigmund Freud proposed the theory of grouping functionally related mental processes into what he called the id, the ego and the superego. In *An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, Charles Brenner summarizes these three groups of functions: "The id comprises the psychic representatives of the drives, the ego consists of those functions which have to do with the individual's relation to his environment, and

the superego comprises the moral precepts of our minds as well as our ideal aspirations.”  
(Brenner, 1973, p. 35)

In his psychoanalytic theory, Freud explained a person's psychic nature as consisting of three structures, called the id, the ego, and the superego. Each structure has functions and aims, which often oppose each other and cause intrapsychic conflict.

The id is the source and reservoir of all sexual and aggressive impulses. It seeks pleasure and avoids pain (unpleasure). It wants immediate gratification and reacts vehemently if its wishes are delayed or denied. A baby is hungry and it wants food. If food is not forthcoming, the baby cries.

The superego is the inner authority, usually unconscious, which gives the “I should” commands. In the adult, it is a source of moral beliefs and prohibitions. Although sometimes thought of as the conscience, the superego operates in the unconscious; conscience activity is largely conscious. However, conscience may retain the harsh and punitive tendencies from early developmental stages of the superego.

The ego is the structure, which mediates the conflicts between the id and the superego and external reality. If the ego is mature and has good self-esteem, it keeps a person balanced with only normal neurotic tendencies.

Alfred Adler, a proponent of “individual psychology,” says, “The ego drives must be understood, not as something rigidified and separate, but as the tension and attitudes toward the environment, as a striving toward power, toward dominance, toward being above. In accordance with this view, two possibilities must be considered, from the theoretical as well as the practical standpoint: Wanting to be significant may inhibit,

repress, or modify certain drives, and wanting to be significant will affect primarily the enhancement of other drives.” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 64)

Adler believes that we each strive for self-enhancement. When a person has low self-esteem, which could result from childhood experiences of feeling humiliated, one’s feeling of inferiority is exaggerated and can cause one to have an aggressive attitude in order to overcome the feeling of insecurity.

Adler discusses the more extreme feelings of inferiority. When the feeling of inferiority is abnormal, people feel attacked by the difficulties of living and feel alienated in society. As a defense, they can be preoccupied with themselves and lack social interest. This is because their need to protect against defeat is stronger than their desire for success. This can lead to selfishness and a lack of courage. However, Adler also says that “to be human means to feel inferior.” I would imagine that many PSM Coordinators would be encouraged to hear their occasional feelings of inferiority normalized in this way.

Adler use the term “self-boundness” to describe the situation where a person is caught up in the self-striving for perfection as a way of dealing with personal fears. On the other hand, healthy individuals strive for goals beyond themselves; they have an interest in the well being of others and in cooperating with others. This does not mean that healthy people are perfect but rather it is by their efforts to contribute to the whole that they can overcome their own deficiencies. When speaking of children in this regard, Adler says, “If children desire only to rid themselves of difficulties, they will continue backward. They keep up their courage only if they have a purpose in view for their efforts and if the achievement of this purpose is more important to them than the



obstacles, which stand in the way. It is a question of where their interest and attention is directed. If they are striving towards an object external to themselves, they will quite naturally train and equip themselves to achieve it. Difficulties will represent no more than positions which are to be conquered on their way to success.” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p.112)

### ***Defenses***

Freud gave considerable attention to the concept of anxiety and its cause. Early in his career, Freud proposed the theory that repression caused anxiety, a theory that he developed based on scientific physical models. Later, he changed his mind and offered a second theory that has stood the test of time. In his second theory, he proposed that the reverse was true, that is that anxiety causes repression. This leaves the question of the origin of anxiety. Freud’s psychological explanation was that “Anxiety is the response to helplessness in the face of danger.” (Kahn, 2002, p. 108) If danger has already arrived, then the anxiety is immediate. However, it is much more common for there to be anxiety because of the anticipation of helplessness due to danger.

Freud described three types of anxiety: realistic, moral, and neurotic. Anxiety is a function of the ego, which has to deal with the external world, the id, and the superego. A realistic anxiety has to do with the external world (potential loss of one’s job because of a parish budget deficit). A moral anxiety is fear of punishment by one’s superego (“Good” women church leaders never cause friction. If one raises an issue and anyone gets upset, one will no longer be “good.”). When one experiences neurotic anxiety, there is no consciously recognized fear; it goes back to a hidden impulse, one caused by the id.

The way to relieve this kind of anxiety is to discover the hidden impulse, which initially created fear that one would act on it and incur punishment or feel guilty.

In realistic and moral anxiety, we know the cause but in neurotic anxiety, the fear is hidden from us. An example of neurotic fear might be the anticipated fear of asking for a salary raise. A PSM Coordinator might say, "Why am I so anxious? The Pastor can only say, 'No'." Perhaps the hidden impulse is to lash out (verbally or physically) in anger if one is denied what one feels entitled to. Once we recognize such a fear, we also realize that with our present maturity, we do not hit people when we do not get what we want. In fact, we are usually quite able to control any verbal assault especially if we anticipate that our request may be denied. Once we recognize the cause of our anxiety, it relieves some of the severity of that anxiety and allows us to more calmly approach the task at hand. Another hidden fear may be that our psyche will be assaulted and our impulse will be to "disappear." Once we recognize that our anxiety is over damage to our self-esteem, we can remind ourselves of our gifts and innate self-worth, which will diminish the anxiety of making the salary request. The goal when one experiences neurotic anxiety is to recognize the cause of the fear so that it can be addressed.

***Function of defenses.*** Defenses are ways that we protect ourselves from real or perceived danger. Psychologist Michael Kahn offers this definition: "A defense mechanism is a manipulation of perception intended to protect the person from anxiety. The perception may be of internal events, such as one's feelings or impulses, or it may be of external events, such as the feelings of other people or the realities of the world." (Kahn, 2002, p. 123)

Our conscious and unconscious fears and defenses complicate communication in general and are usually magnified when facing conflict. One of the first reactions that many people have in contemplating how to deal with a conflict issue is to react defensively. We tend to use the best defense we have available. The use of defenses does not make us "bad" or "weak;" defenses are our attempts to survive and maintain our psychic integrity. However, the level of one's psychic development may limit one's choices. There are different levels of defenses, some of which can interfere with our life and others that can enhance our living. Although defenses protect us, they can exact a price. As one matures through the developmental life stages, one is able to employ defenses that can protect well enough and even enhance one's functioning.

In using defenses, we are protecting ourselves from four types of danger: 1) internal conflict among the id, ego, and superego; 2) conflict in our interpersonal relationships; 3) conflict with societal or institutional norms; and 4) psychological disorientation caused by trauma. (Berzoff et al., 1996)

*Types of defenses.* There are different levels of defenses. Lower-level defenses, such as denial and projection, hinder overall ego functioning. At the next level are defenses, such as, acting out, reaction formation, displacement, and repression, which interfere less than lower level defenses. At a higher level are the defenses of sublimation and humor, which can improve functioning as well as provide protection.

Denial is when one does not acknowledge, or ignores, the painful event or danger. Even though female PSM Coordinators do not have equal status in the Catholic Church, they may use denial of this situation by saying that the only issue is the question of ordination, and then ignore all the other ways that women lack voice and are absent from

leadership roles. Here they have minimized the problem so that they can continue functioning in their ministry.

Projection is attributing to others one's own thoughts and feelings. It has the positive function of enabling us to empathize and care for others. The process is healthy when our projected feelings and thoughts are consistent with the other person's thoughts and feelings. Projection is unhealthy when it is used as defense against one's own unwanted or unrecognized impulses and anxieties. As a defense, the person attributes his or her own thoughts and feelings to another person. In churches, and often in family upbringing, anger is sometimes considered an unacceptable feeling. Therefore, when PSM Coordinators feel angry at a pastor's decision, or their exclusion from the decision-making process, they may assume that a pastor is angry with them. Projection is important to understand because it can have a very negative effect on the person who is experiencing the projection.

Another defense is "acting out." Here, one gives into one's impulses in order to avoid the tension that would result if they were not expressed. A severe example is the person who drinks excessively to avoid feelings of depression. A PSM Coordinator who feels undervalued or ignored by a pastor but who is unable to directly address the situation may act out by constantly complaining about the pastor.

Dissociation is a defense whereby a person separates out the feelings connected to a painful idea or event so that one can deal with the problem. Soldiers returning from war may speak of a conflict encounter without showing any affect because dissociating their feelings is the only way they can deal with the memory. Victims of sexual abuse often use this defense. It is important for PSM Coordinators to be aware of this defense so that

they do not underestimate the seriousness of a person's painful experience just because the person does not express emotion when speaking of it.

Regression is a defense where one retreats to an earlier level of psychosocial development. This can occur in a situation that creates a high level of anxiety. In early childhood, it might be observed in a toddler who has mastered walking, and then suddenly needs to be carried after a new baby enters the household. The toddler's jealousy of the attention that the new infant receives causes the toddler to regress to an earlier stage. Regression can also help our ego functioning when we need care. An adult who becomes ill may look to others to provide care; this temporary regressive behavior can actually help one get better. Regression can also provide a temporary moratorium when one is under great emotional stress. However, continued regressive behavior hurts good ego functioning. A PSM Coordinator who has been able to be clear and direct when approaching a pastor about new Parish Social Ministry initiatives may suddenly feel intimidated when a new pastor comes onboard. This coordinator may start making carefully worded requests to the Pastor about decisions that are within the PSM Coordinator's jurisdiction and that only need to be properly communicated. Here the coordinator has regressed to an earlier developmental stage out of fear of the new pastor's rejection or disapproval.

Repression is a defense where one pushes aside or forgets anxiety-provoking thoughts, memories or feelings so that they are no longer in the conscious mind. Repression is a way of protecting oneself from what one considers undesirable feelings or difficult fears. For example, a PSM Coordinator may repress her feeling of anger at a pastor's use of sexist language in a homily so that she can continue to work with him.

Reaction formation is a defense one uses to cover an unconscious wish that is the exact opposite of the wish or feeling one really has. A PSM Coordinator might be overly solicitous of a difficult client because she cannot acknowledge her unconscious wish that the person not come to the outreach. One reason that the coordinator might not be able to acknowledge this wish is that then she would feel "unchristian." Another example of reaction formation as a defense could be a PSM Coordinator, or Pastor, who makes derogatory remarks indicating that a person is sexually unattractive as a defense against an unconscious sexual attraction.

When a person experiences sexual or aggressive desires that they feel are unacceptable, sometimes they direct them away from one person and onto another person who feels safer. This defense of placing the feelings on another person is called displacement. A PSM Coordinator may be angry with a pastor because of not having authority to make any financial decisions regarding the PSM budget. However, because she fears addressing the issue with the pastor, the PSM Coordinator may displace the anger onto the Business Manager who writes the checks and distributes funds to the PSM program.

"Undoing" can be a defense used to compensate for prior feelings or behavior that left one feeling guilty or fearing punishment. This defense is used by people who are obsessive-compulsive. Some compulsive redoing, within limits, can be a job asset. An example would be a PSM Coordinator's rechecking of figures before submitting an annual budget for the outreach. However, this can be an unhealthy defense when compulsive behavior is used to try to achieve perfect behavior because one fears criticism. It is a defense against a guilt feeling for not being perfect. This defense can be

very disruptive of healthy ego functioning, as it inappropriately drains energy that is needed for one's own well being and one's ministry.

Higher level defenses include sublimation and humor. Some Catholic women who feel a call to ordination have acknowledged their feelings on this issue, and then sublimated that wish by becoming religious leaders in other types of ministries. Humor can sometimes be a way of expressing a painful feeling in a way that protects oneself and does not offend the listener.

**Awareness of difficult emotions.** Anger is a difficult emotion for us to deal with in ourselves and in others. In church settings where everyone is called upon to "love one another," anger sometimes gets a bad reputation and is not recognized as a legitimate emotion. Women experience an added burden because anger is often considered "unfeminine." Since this ministry project will take place in a church setting with PSM Coordinators, most of whom are women, this is a particularly important emotion to address.

The first challenge is to recognize angry feelings. Often anger is not recognized because it is denied, by stating "I'm not angry." Or anger is repressed because of guilt feelings, and a person thinks or says, "I shouldn't feel angry." Other responses to anger can be to put oneself down, lamenting "It's all my fault." Or a person can too quickly blame someone else, declaring "It's all your fault." (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1994, p.76)

In *Shadows of the Heart*, the Whiteheads ask, "How do we *befriend* our anger?" They recommend that we honor it, then evaluate it, and finally use the energy of anger to act for change. The word "honor" is used to denote a respect, in addition to a recognition,

of this powerful feeling. Evaluating anger means initially to interrogate it by asking oneself, "Why am I angry?" Evaluating is also a way of slowing down our response, and changing our usual response pattern. Sometimes our response is a verbal explosion but it could also be, especially for women, a capitulation because anger is not "ladylike." Both men and women may back off from their anger because they fear the consequences of loss of job or loss of leadership status. However, subverting angry feelings does not make them go away.

Taking time to evaluate our angry feelings can be an opportunity to decide on an appropriate response. What is our goal? Do we want to communicate how we feel? Do we want to change a situation? We do have a choice about how we respond. Sometimes, when a PSM Coordinator has a good working relationship with the pastor, there can be a tendency to avoid communicating about one's anger. Aside from not addressing the problem that fuels the anger, avoidance can also be a missed opportunity for deepening a good working relationship. If this is a safe relationship, letting the other staff person know our distress, and thereby revealing some of our vulnerability, can actually strengthen us and the relationship. (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1994)

Sometimes one needs to act "with anger" but this means holding our anger differently. It means resisting the temptations of apathy to move away from anger when we feel "nothing will ever change" or "it's not my job." Instead, holding anger can mean retaining hope in the possibility of personal conversions and social transformations. It means professing our hope in the power of the Spirit in us and in the Church. Anger can give us the passion to act for change. For personal anger to be a positive force for change, we usually need the support of a community. For example, community-organizing groups



harness the positive energy of anger to strategize and act for social change. Church groups within the context of their mission can do this also.

The emotion of shame can be healthy or unhealthy. Usually it is considered a negative emotion but a healthy sense of shame can give us a sense of discretion that selectively chooses to whom we reveal our vulnerability. Shame is about being exposed. Its negative connotation comes from our fear of being seen, and then judged harshly as being inadequate. A false sense of shame develops when someone is inappropriately led to believe that they have done something improper. Children are especially vulnerable to being shamed by significant adults. For example, children's innocent sexual exploration of themselves may be condemned by parents causing children inordinate shame. In more ordinary parental disapproval of a child's behavior, the child learns what they must do to be accepted and belong. As Erikson explains in his life cycle stages, the toddler must negotiate between belonging and autonomy, and must gain self-control without loss of self-esteem. Shame that overwhelms can foster conformity. Damaging shame can also have the opposite effect of causing one to reject others' demands and to insist on doing things one's own way. In adults, a healthy shame can foster humility and also a sense of dignity as one accepts one's self as an embodied self with one's gifts and limitations. When one has that sense of dignity and personal integrity, one is less vulnerable to social shaming.

In the Catholic Church, the sexual abuse scandal continues to be a source of anger, confusion, and shame. The media exposed evidence that some clergy had sexually abused young boys and others, and that their acts of abuse were sometimes kept hidden while the hierarchy transferred them from one parish to another. There is anger among

church members and staff about the abuse, and what some see, even now, as a lack of sufficient accountability on the part of the hierarchy. While some PSM Coordinators may feel angry, there may be another feeling among some priests of which PSM Coordinators might be less aware. Some priests may feel a sense of shame, as members of the clergy, whether or not they were abusers or involved in the cover-up. In communicating with the Pastor and parish staff on conflict issues, including but not limited to the sexual abuse issue, PSM Coordinators need to be aware of this possibility that some priests, even though they were not abusers, could feel a sense of shame as members of the priesthood. Shame is a feeling of exposure and of public censure that one's behavior was not acceptable. PSM Coordinators who are aware of this current psychodynamic situation will be able to communicate better with the priests on their parish staff.

### ***Relational Theories***

***Internal family systems.*** The internal family systems model (IFS) is described by Richard Schwartz in *Internal Family Systems Therapy* as "a new way of thinking about and changing the human condition." In this model, Schwartz combines elements of systems thinking and "Multiplicity of the mind – the idea that we all contain many different beings...By viewing intrapsychic process as a system, the IFS model allows therapists to relate to every level of the human system – intrapsychic, familial, community, cultural, societal – with the same concepts and methods." (Schwartz, 1995, p. 9) The IFS model could be a helpful way for PSM Coordinators to examine how they experience conflict and why it is difficult to communicate when conflict is present or potentially present.

The insight from family therapy of treating the family as a system, with all members interacting with each other, is now being applied to individuals. A pioneer in *internal* family systems, Schwartz began his career as a structural family therapist. Although other therapists have recognized and worked with an individual's subpersonalities, Schwartz became concerned with the relationship of these subpersonalities, or parts, to one another, especially through his work with clients suffering from bulimia. He looked at how the person's whole intrapsychic system worked, relating this process to family systems theory. In other words, Schwartz treated a person's individual parts as an inner family that were in dialogue (or not in dialogue) with each other.

Some of the questions Schwartz asked were: "What are we to make of what seem to be different personalities within people?...How do they relate to one another and to other people? How are they affected by the person's past, family, or culture? How can they change?" (Schwartz, 1995, p. 8) Certainly these are questions that PSM Coordinators might ask themselves. For example, "How is it that I feel so competent administering a program but experience such fear when I think of asking the Pastor if the parish could invite a speaker from ERASE Racism or a similar organization?" Or, "How is it that a pastor who is so welcoming and pastoral with so many diverse groups in the parish, reacts curtly, as though he is being attacked, at any suggestion that women are being marginalized or to a simple request that prayers use more inclusive language?"

Some of us – I include myself – have grown up with a unitary view of personality. As Schwartz points out, this view can be particularly devastating in how it processes "I hate you" when shouted at us in an angry moment by someone with whom we are

intimate. Sometimes, even after apologies, one can fear that deep down this person still hates us. When one has a sense that each of us has a multiplicity of minds then we can understand better that such a statement came from one part of the person while that person was experiencing an extreme feeling. (Schwartz, 1995)

IFS theory is premised on the belief that human beings have an innate wisdom that pursues what will provide them with internal harmony. Therefore, when people encounter problems, it means that these internal resources are being blocked by one or more of their parts. A person might say, for example, that the child part in them gets afraid and stops them from speaking up. Or, their caretaker (of others) part may prevent them from taking time to do an activity that they would enjoy. Or their culturally-determined female part may prevent them from saying the truth out loud because someone might get upset.

IFS theory recognizes the multiple parts in a person but does not consider a person just a collection of parts. Rather, according to Schwartz, "A major tenet of IFS is that everyone has at the core, at the seat of consciousness, a Self that is different from the parts. It is the place from which a person observes, experiences, and interacts with the parts and with other people. It contains the compassion, perspective, confidence, and vision required to lead both internal and external life harmoniously and sensitively." (Schwartz, 1995, p. 40) The self must listen to the parts, help release these parts from their extreme positions and, sometimes, set boundaries against the polarizing effects of these parts. Throughout the process the self needs to be non-coercive rather than force change.

Schwartz describes the parts as falling into three categories: exiles, firefighters, and managers. Exiles are the parts of a person that one wants to disown or distance oneself from, such as the scared child. The managers try to keep the exiles under control. So, we may have a part that tries to be a perfectionist in order to reduce fear. Or, the managing part may be the part that treats everything intellectually so that one can avoid scared feelings. Again another manager may be the risk avoider so that exiles that feel angry or fearful can not surface. The firefighters are the parts of us that rush in after an exile has surfaced. The firefighter part wants to numb the pain so a firefighter part might advocate addictive behavior like overeating or abuse of alcohol.

Using IFS to explain a person's internal workings has the advantage of applying the principles of interrelatedness to the individual that are also applied to all other systems whether they be families, governments, or cultures. In this study, relevant systems are the Catholic Church as a human organization and the smaller systems of diocese and parish that are embedded in the larger system. All types of human systems, according to Schwartz, need four principles: balance, harmony, leadership, and development. In a balanced system, each person has an area of influence and access to resources. In a harmonious system, there is cooperation and a common vision but also an effort toward allowing a suitable role for each person where they can pursue their unique vision. Leadership mediates polarization, while valuing and caring for members. While resources to achieve all this are available, healthy psychic development needs to be occurring through the development of skills and relationships.

One interfering pressure on the proper functioning of any system that is embedded in a larger system is when the larger system is experiencing difficulty with one

or more of these four fundamental principles. One scenario that comes to mind is a parish that tries to develop a healthy system, while saying that it will ignore what is happening on the diocesan level. This attitude fails to recognize and account for the reality that the parish is embedded in the larger diocesan system, and ultimately within the whole church system. An advantage of IFS theory is that whatever one understands about systems at any level helps one to understand systems at other levels.

***Interpersonal psychology.*** Since the project topic concerns communication among parish staff, especially between the PSM Coordinator and the Pastor, Harry Stack Sullivan's interpersonal psychology, which stresses what happens between persons, can be helpful. Sullivan introduced relational theories to psychology. Instead of intrapsychic or one-person psychology, he emphasized two-person psychology. In this way, he differs from Freud's drive theory. In a chapter of *Inside Out and Outside In*, "The Interpersonal School and Its Influence on Current Relational Theories," Edmund DeLaCour observes that Freud's drive theory parallels the nineteenth century's scientific bent to describe phenomena mechanistically, as in Newtonian physics, whereas, Sullivan's interpersonal theory of what happens in the energy fields between two people reflects the twentieth century post-Einstein world.

In looking at the issue of the PSM Coordinator's self-esteem, Harry Stack Sullivan's interpersonal theory provides insight. DeLaCour describes Sullivan's theory of stages of development as a "series of interpersonal configurations that characterize socialization. He (Sullivan) emphasized the development, or lack thereof, of skills pertinent to these new interpersonal situations." (DeLaCour, 1996, p. 208) Sullivan advocated exploring a client's interpersonal history, and that this is most useful when the

counselor proceeds with a sense of the patient's anxiety. Sullivan does not use the word "resistance" but in this interpersonal theory, DeLaCour says, "The patient resists exploring what will be anxiety-provoking, that is, threatening to his or her self-esteem." (DeLaCour, 1996, p. 208) Conflicts are often anxiety provoking. Avoiding them may be one way that PSM Coordinators protect their self-esteem.

***Self psychology.*** In a chapter of *Inside Out and Outside In*, "The Theory of Self Psychology," Laura Melano Flanagan writes of key concepts in Heinz Kohut's theory of self psychology. One key to psychological development is empathy. Kohut saw empathy not just as a clinical tool but as the arena within which healthy psychological development takes place. Flanagan describes Kohut's use of the word empathy as different than warmth or sympathy but as closer to a dictionary description of intellectually projecting oneself into another to understand the person better. Kohut used the word empathy in this way, "to *understand* from within the experience of another, no matter what the experience." (Berzoff et al., 1996, p. 179) Used this way, empathy is a way of knowing, rather than a feeling. Developing this kind of empathy might enable PSM Coordinators to communicate better with other parish staff. In writing about self psychology, Heinz Kohut speaks of noticing one's inner experience with empathy, "Self psychology is instrumental in ushering in a new phase in the history of psychoanalysis: the move from a preoccupation with the elaboration and refinement of the established theories to one of renewed emphasis on the gathering of primary data, a return to the empathic observation of inner experience." (Kohut, 1985, p. 73)

***The "different voice" of women.*** In preparing for this ministry project, I was aware that the participants in the group would be mostly – or all – women since more

than three-quarters of all PSM Coordinators in the diocese are women. I believe that both men and women bring their own gifts to ministry, and that some of these gifts tend to be gender-specific. However, some "female" gifts, such as being nurturing, derive from cultural expectations. It is also true that females' (and males') physiological differences, such as a woman's ability to bear children, are also factors in how they contribute to society. When women's voices are not heard in leadership and decision-making venues, whether civil or religious, humanity suffers. Although I believe this, I would have difficulty putting into words what this difference is. Carol Gilligan's book, *In a Different Voice*, articulates these differing gifts and explains clearly why women's gifts have been devalued. I became aware of Gilligan's thesis about eighteen years ago and purchased her book. It sat on my shelf for years until I gave it away without reading it at any length. Reading it now, I realize that I am already familiar with some of these ideas, as her seminal work has influenced the women's movement, society, and me.

Carol Gilligan discusses women's development in a way that goes beyond Freud's theory of human development, which focuses on the male child. She does not challenge Freud's theory of psychosexual development of the male child who must resolve the Oedipal complex (an attraction to his mother that puts him in a competition with his father that he can't win) by separating from his mother. Rather she questions Freud's attempt to fit the female child into this theory. Freud contended that girl children envy that which they are missing (a penis), remain attached to their mothers, and that the lack of separation constitutes a developmental failure in female children. Gilligan proposes that the problem is not women's development, but Freud's theory as it applies



to females. Gilligan contends that the female child's development does not depend on separation but on coming to see themselves in relationship to others.

Gilligan references Nancy Chodorow (1978) who replaces Freud's negative description of female psychology with her own positive account: "Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is experiencing another's needs and feelings).... From very early on then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender...girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world, and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well." (Gilligan, 1993, p. 8)

After her book, *In a Different Voice*, had been in print for eleven years, Carol Gilligan prefaced a new edition with a "Letter to Readers, 1993." In the letter, she reflects on how psychological theorists, who developed their theories using only the male experience, were providing an incomplete picture of psychological development. For example, they were requiring that the achievement of autonomy be the hallmark of maturity. In Gilligan's words, "I saw that by maintaining these ways of seeing and speaking about human lives, men were leaving out women, but women were leaving out themselves. In terms of psychological processes, what for men was a process of separation, for women was a process of dissociation that required the creation of an inner division or psychic split." (Gilligan, 1993, p. xiii) Gilligan sees women's connectedness, rather than separation, as an asset in dealing with moral problems because "Moral problems are problems of human relations...Relationship requires connection." (Gilligan, 1993, p. xix)

How does this affect how women, including the large majority of PSM Coordinators, view the world, make choices, and see justice? Issues of war and peace are one topic that is a source of conflict to parish staff. Perhaps part of the conflict are male and female views of what constitutes danger. Gilligan writes, "If aggression is tied, as women perceive, to the fracture of human connection, then the activities of care, as their fantasies suggest, are the activities that make the social world safe, by avoiding isolation and preventing aggression rather than be seeking rules to limit its extent." (Gilligan, 1993, p. 43) Although it is an over-simplification of the issue, one can observe how male-oriented behavior has negatively affected decisions over the past half-century, which tried unsuccessfully to make the world safe from the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The political leaders and decision-makers with rare exceptions have all been men who have focused on rules and treaties with only secondary consideration given to relationships between countries and cultures or to non-military measures to prevent aggression.

There is another psychological dimension to consider regarding how males and females view danger and aggression. Studies have shown that women sense danger when isolated and out of relationship; men sense danger in intimacy. Aggression is theoretically a response to feeling in danger. Women associate aggression with the breakdown of relationships; men often experience intimacy as being entrapped, smothered in a relationship, or rejected. In Gilligan's words, "Thus, it appears that men and women may experience attachment and separation in different ways and that each sex perceives a danger which the other does not see -- men in connection; women in separation." (Gilligan, 1993, p. 42) The problem is not with male response but with

taking male response as the norm for aggression. An absence of aggression in women is then seen as a problem. Historically women's perceptions have been largely excluded in seeking solutions in world conflicts that have led to war and violence. In Catholic parishes, women's voices could contribute more to good communication and the peaceful resolution of potential parish conflicts.

Gilligan also critiques Kohlberg's three views of morality from a feminist perspective. In Gilligan's words, "Kohlberg terms these three views of morality preconventional, conventional, and postconventional, to reflect the expansion in moral understanding from an individual to a societal to a universal point of view. In this scheme, conventional morality, or the equation of the right or good with the maintenance of existing social norms and values, is always the point of departure. Whereas preconventional moral judgment denotes an inability to construct a shared or societal viewpoint, postconventional judgment transcends that vision. Preconventional judgment is egocentric and derives moral constructs from individual needs; conventional judgment is based on shared norms and values that sustain relationships, groups, communities, and societies; and postconventional judgment adopts a reflexive perspective on societal values and constructs moral principles that are universal in application." (Gilligan, 1993, pp. 72-73) Gilligan proposes that women have a different view of what morality is about. She theorizes that women see morality as concerned with care and responsibilities, whereas men tend to see morality as about rights and rules. She writes, "Thus the logic underlying an ethic of care is a psychological logic of relationships, which contrasts with the formal logic of fairness that informs the justice approach." (Gilligan, 1993, p. 73)

Writing in 1982, Carol Gilligan recognized the cultural milieu in which women had been raised but she also issued a challenge that female PSM Coordinators will do well to consider. Gilligan says, "Choices not to speak are often well-intentioned and psychologically protective, motivated by concern for other people's feelings and by an awareness of the realities of one's own and others' lives. And yet by restricting their voices, many women are wittingly or unwittingly perpetuating a male-voiced civilization and an order of living that is founded on disconnection from women." (Gilligan, 1993, pp. x-xi) And again, "The essence of moral decision is the exercise of choice and the willingness to accept responsibility for that choice. To the extent that women perceive themselves as having no choice, they correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails. Childlike in the vulnerability of their dependence and consequent fear of abandonment, they claim to wish only to please, but in return for their goodness they expect to be loved and cared for." (Gilligan, 1993, p. 67)

### ***Processes of Change***

***Theory of change: motivational approach.*** Why do people change? Or, why don't they change? How can we help facilitate change? In *Motivational Interviewing*, William Miller and Stephen Rollnick (1992) address these issues of change. The question of change arises in counseling, in working with people with addictive behavior, and in the ordinary course of life when we interact with others whom we want to behave differently. In looking at the counseling relationship we can gain insights that are applicable in other situations. Counseling involves a type of communication in a process of potential change. Often the client comes to see a counselor because he or she

recognizes a need for change. However, the counselor may need to assist the client to address change in areas that the client is unaware are in need of change.

Carl Rogers advocated for client-centered counseling to facilitate change. He saw three necessary conditions for change to occur: accurate empathy, non-possessive warmth, and genuineness. "As defined by Rogers, accurate empathy involves skillful reflective listening that clarifies and amplifies the person's own experiencing and meaning, without imposing the counselor's own material." (Miller & Rollnick, 1992, p. 7)

In explaining how to recognize a high level of motivation for change, the authors quote a familiar phrase, that is, someone must be "ready, willing, and able." For a person to change, they must be willing to change. If someone does not see a need for change, it will be necessary to develop what the authors call "discrepancy," an awareness of the importance for change. This is easier stated than accomplished because people have many values and needs, and some of them may be in conflict.

A person must be able to change in the sense of having confidence that they can change. Once a person sees the discrepancy and want to change, they search for a way to do this. Usually, after identifying the way, a person will change behavior. However, if a person has a heightened sense of discrepancy and the need to change but sees no way to do it, then they may become defensive. Authors Miller and Rollnick refer to Anna Freud's classical description of these defenses: "Denial ('It's not really so bad'), rationalization ('I didn't want it anyway'), and projection ('It's not my problem, it's theirs')." (Miller & Rollnick, 1992, p. 11)

Besides being willing and able to change, a person must be ready to change. If someone wants to change but not now, then this change is too low a priority. An attitude of "I'll do it tomorrow," can be self-deception, but it can also be that for the will to change to become a priority, it may be necessary to identify the next preliminary step.

The authors ask themselves the question, "What triggers change?" They contend that making a person feel bad about their lack of change might actually be counter-motivational. Instead, they theorize that "Constructive change seems to arise when the person connects it with something of intrinsic value, something important, something cherished. Intrinsic motivation for change arises in an accepting, empowering atmosphere that makes it safe for the person to explore the possibly painful present in relation to what is wanted and valued." (Miller & Rollnick, 1992, p. 12) It is my hope that the ministry project group will provide that type of empowering atmosphere so PSM Coordinators will be able to change internal attitudes and/or behavior in dealing with conflict issues.

***Acquiring listening skills.*** Learning to listen better is the first step in communicating better because everyone wants to be heard. Effective listening requires *attention, appreciation, and affirmation*. (Nichols, 1995, p.109) Listening is not just the passive absence of talking. It requires that we set aside the other things on our mind – what we might rather be doing or what we are going to say in response or rebuttal. We give the other person our full attention and try to understand their spoken and unspoken message. Appreciation of what the other person says does not mean agreement but it does mean being interested in what they have to say and letting them know that they are heard. One strategy that can help the listener to do this is to imagine being in the other person's shoes. Finally, one needs to do more than listen in silence. Silence leaves the speaker

uncertain of the listener's response. What the speaker says needs to be affirmed by the listener. This does not necessarily mean agreeing. Rather, it is a form of acknowledging that the listener heard the speaker's position. It does not mean a simple repetition of what the speaker has said. Sometimes it means asking a question so as to understand more fully what the speaker means.

How often, in the midst of a heated exchange, have we heard or said, "Now, don't get defensive?" Sometimes, before making a suggestion to the Pastor, the PSM Coordinator needs to instruct herself not to get defensive in anticipation that the idea may not be well received. When we feel unheard, we often use an automatic defensive reaction, such as arguing, blaming, ignoring, dominating, or acquiescing to achieve peace at any price. These responses, triggered by our anxiety, often mask the anxiety by causing us to avoid or ignore issues or to defy, control or appease others. Having the courage to resist these impulses and to engage people and situations that evoke conflict can over time reduce our own anxiety. (Nichols, 1995).

It often is more productive to proactively introduce new behavior than to stop reacting in ways that have become habits for us. It helps to anticipate the conflict situation that will cause us anxiety. One strategy is to prepare oneself to ask questions in a tense situation. Another is to ask for more information or detail about the issue.

***Transference and countertransference.*** The psychological principles of transference and countertransference are crucial for every counselor to keep in mind in working with counselees. They are also important for the facilitator of a group, such as the ministry project group, that involves personal reflection and developing insight into the dynamics of interpersonal communication.

In *Basic Freud*, Michael Kahn writes, "Freud came to think that there were three categories of transference:

- The *positive transference*, in which the patient's feelings for the therapist are primarily affection and trust.
- The *negative transference*, consisting primarily of hostility and suspicion.
- The *un-neutralized erotic transference*, in which the patient experiences insistent desire for sexual intimacy with the analyst." (Kahn, 2002, pp. 184-185)

In a skill-building group, such as the proposed ministry project, one would expect there to be some positive or negative transference. For example prior experiences of trust or criticism form templates that individuals bring to new experiences and then tend to replay them. Participant expectations may get "transferred" to the group facilitator. The presence of positive transference toward the facilitator would be an asset. It would help participants be open to gaining new insights and take the risk to practice new behavior. If there were evidence of negative transference, the facilitator would need to address the transference if the participant were going to benefit from the group experience. For example, a PSM Coordinator who has negative feelings toward a pastor who is perceived as exercising authority in a non-communicative top-down manner, may transfer that feeling to the facilitator who is seen as the group's authority figure. In this case, addressing the coordinator's negative transference, that is, the expectation that the facilitator will behave in the same way, could assist the coordinator in communicating better with a pastor in the parish setting.



Countertransference refers to the counselor's reactions. Counselors, or group facilitators, need to be aware of their reactions, which may be positive or negative. Michael Kahn offers a definition of countertransference and gives an example of how countertransference can sometimes be helpful: "We might define countertransference as *all* the feelings, thoughts, and perceptions the therapist has about the client. We can see why it's indispensable; all empathy, for example, begins with countertransference." (Kahn, 2002, p. 198)

*Participating in groups.* As the facilitator of the ministry project group, it will be helpful for me to be aware of the dynamics of group processes. This group will be neither a T-group nor a problem-solving group; it might better be described as a skill-building group. My role will be more that of a facilitator than a teacher, but there will be components of the latter. The teacher role will be introducing theological and psychological concepts, which may be new or known but perhaps not with clarity or depth. While new information will be introduced, it will only be valuable when it is digested and individually internalized. The group process adds another dynamic. The group can be supportive and challenging, perhaps even confrontational, to the degree that the group feels safe.

Groups have a life cycle but not all groups experience all stages of this life cycle. This group will meet for five weekly sessions. Although the group will have a relatively short duration, it may experience some of the group life cycle stages. One reason for this is that most of the group members will already know each other and will enter the group with some shared values and experiences. All of the participants will be Catholics. They will also be Parish Social Ministry Coordinators, which means they are involved in a

similar church ministry dedicated to serving the poor and vulnerable in society, according to the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus. I also anticipate that all, or most, of the participants will be women over thirty years of age. Since these PSM Coordinators are from different towns their association with each other is more professional than social. When the group begins there will be common bonds, but the group will still need to be introduced to the value of the group dynamic and the concept that optimal development will depend on their ongoing participation in the group. Requesting a commitment to attend all five sessions is part of fostering the shared expectation of giving to and receiving from the group.

In Susan Wheelan's book, *Group Processes: A Developmental Perspective* (1993), she proposes, based on the work of Benis and Shepard (1956), that groups go through two major phases. The first phase of *dependence* "focuses on authority issues and structure." The first phase has three subphases: "dependency/flight, counterdependency/fight, and resolution/catharsis." While a five-week group may not experience all three stages, being aware of them can help the leader recognize some types of behavior. It is usual, in the first stage for members to know their task but avoid working on it until they feel psychologically safe. It is also part of the first stage of a group to look to the leader for guidance. In fact some group members may expect the leader to be totally benevolent and have all the answers. When group members feel safer, the group may split between those who disagree with the facilitator's leadership and those who remain loyal and look to the leader for direction. It is important at this point to recognize conflict as growth in the group, rather than viewing the conflict negatively. Finally, in a resolution/catharsis stage, some group members may act as mediators

between the two groups. At this point the facilitator's leadership is seen as useful but not as directive or undermining of the group.

The second phase that groups go through is focused on issues of intimacy and interdependence in member relationships. In the beginning of this phase, differences are ignored and on the surface the group interaction appears harmonious. Members may experience a pressure to conform. Eventually there is conflict between those who wish relationships and sharing to be more intimate and those who express discomfort with that level of intimacy. Finally the efforts of some independent members lead to some group norms that allow better communication. The group work can then proceed in a cooperative manner that enables both learning and self-expression. After group members feel safe, they are more willing to contribute their ideas.

Hopefully, the ministry project group will achieve some level of cooperative functioning within the five-week period. Since group members will self select to commit to the group process toward a goal they mutually desire – better communication around conflict – the process of group cohesion has the potential for happening quickly. The facilitator, by being aware of these group process stages, can assist by not being overly directive or overly concerned as the group stretches its wings.

From a facilitator's point of view, it will be important in the first session to help create a sense of belonging and to give some predictable structure to how interaction will happen. Throughout the sessions, the facilitator will address, rather than avoid, any tension in the group. Unattended, the tension could cause some members to psychologically withdraw. Processing the tension can make a group more stable because shared norms can be established. On this topic, Wheelan quotes Rendle (1983), "It is in

the balancing of polar extremes that conflict may be understood and described as an 'energy source' which is available to drive the system of the small group." (Wheelan, 1993, p. 17)

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

Chapter III describes the methodology of the ministry project. First, it will cover recruiting Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinators as potential participants. Then, it will describe the subdivisions of the group sessions and the process of presenting them. The group sessions will be conducted in a prayerful ministerial atmosphere. They will include prayer, educational components, reflection, supportive sharing and participatory activities. As the group leader I will elicit feedback and be ready to shift emphasis or direction as the group members express their needs and reflections. This might mean incorporating new issues or allowing more or less time for some topics or activities. The outlines for all five group sessions are included. Finally, the chapter looks at what strategies will be used to evaluate the ministry project.

#### ***Recruiting for the Ministry Project***

I anticipated having a group of six to ten PSM Coordinators participate in five group sessions. To recruit participants to the Communications Around Conflict Issues group, I sent an invitation letter to each PSM Coordinator with a response form (see Appendix 3) in March 2006, explaining the ministry project and asking if they were interested in participating. Prior to sending the letter, I had also spoken individually to a few PSM Coordinators whom I thought would be good candidates and might be interested. After receiving a dozen or so responses, I telephoned each respondent. Eight PSM Coordinators decided to be part of the ministry project.

### ***Overview and Components of the Group Sessions***

I plan to lead five group sessions on successive weeks. Each session is planned for two hours. The two-hour block is intended to provide enough time to cover substantial material and interaction, but at the same time be manageable after a full day's work. This also follows the pattern of other Catholic Charities trainings, which Developers (my staff role) offer to PSM Coordinators on a regular basis on a variety of other topics, such as how to do public relations for your PSM program more effectively or how to process an emergency housing grant request. Restricting the time to two hours also means that it is not necessary to plan for any type of meal. However, as part of the hospitality and welcome extended to the PSM Coordinators for the ministry project, I do plan to offer a beverage and cookies during the fifteen minutes preceding each group session. This will allow the group to gather and socialize before starting. During the two-hour session, there will be a brief break after the first seventy minutes or so. The same refreshments will still be available at that time. Following the break, which is basically a bathroom break, the last part of each session will usually include a participatory activity, time for reflection and feedback, and a look at the following week's "homework" and agenda.

The sessions will be similar in structure. Each session will address both psychological and theological issues. Each session will also have the same essential segments, although not always in the same order or with the same emphasis. These group session segments are: prayer, group sharing, input (teaching by the group leader), an exercise or activity, reflection, recommended but self-assigned tasks, feedback, and a wrap-up with coming attractions for the next session.

- **Prayer.** Each session will have prayer. Prayer will include readings from scripture or more contemporary writers. Often the prayer will involve participants as readers, a reader and responders, or two-part prayer where half the group reads alternately. Although the PSM Coordinators are familiar with taking time during the prayer to share their reflections, this aspect of the prayer will be minimized since reflection will be part of the group session. At the last session, prayer will be a major component of the second half of the session as a closing ritual. For this reason, the introductory prayer in the fifth session will be a brief period of silence to focus our attention on being in God's presence.
- **Group sharing.** In the first session, we will take time to set ground rules for group sharing and ask each participant if they are willing to accept these ground rules throughout the group sessions (see session 1). The topics covered will include confidentiality, respect for differing views, the responsibility of each participant to contribute for the benefit of other group members, and acceptance of a participant's choice not to share. I will also present to the group what I perceive to be my role as group leader. I will ask if they have any questions or need clarification about their role or mine in this process. I will be open to some changes if that is what the group wishes.
- **Input.** At each session, as the group leader, I will present theological or psychological information and analysis, drawing from the reading and study done during the Doctor of Ministry program and specifically in preparing Chapter II. In all sessions, we will touch on both theological and psychological resources but some topics will draw more heavily on one area than the other.

- **Activities.** As a way of processing new information, and as a learning tool, I will plan an activity that will reinforce the session's input. For example, after presenting the five models of church, I will ask each PSM Coordinator to quietly consider which model of church best describes their personal ecclesiology.
- **Reflection.** The above example of an activity illustrates how reflection might be used in a session. Here the PSM Coordinator might silently respond to a few simple questions such as, "What is the most important ministry in your parish? What is your personal model of church? Which aspects of your ministry reflect that model?"
- **Sharing.** During each session there will be one or more times for group sharing. In the models of church example, the group sharing would be to invite PSM Coordinators to say which model of church has most significance for them and why. Inviting them to give an example from their own faith life would provide a concrete illustration and keep the concepts from being too theoretical.
- **Assignments.** During or at the end of each session, I will suggest or ask for their ideas of what we might each do between this session and the next one which will reinforce the learning and experience of that session. It could be a reading or reflection questions. However, the more important practice will be any self-assigned task that will enable the PSM Coordinators to stretch themselves in relation to communicating around conflict issues with other parish staff. Some sessions will explicitly elicit this type of assignment.
- **Feedback.** At each session, it will be important to ask the PSM Coordinators how the individual session went and how the group process is going. Questions, such



as, "Was this session helpful? What parts worked best? If we did this again, what would you change?" can provide the group leader with good feedback. Some of the feedback might result in an immediate change for the next session, for example, if the input component was too long, too short, or too obscure. Other feedback suggestions would be more useful for a future group process, for example, the suggestion that a particular topic be addressed in an earlier session.

- **Wrap-up.** At the conclusion of each session, I will thank the group for their participation, summarize the key learning objectives that were covered, and very briefly introduce the next week's topics and how they relate to communicating around conflict issues.

### ***The Five Sessions***

In introducing the overall project, I will reiterate the goals, as described in the invitational recruitment letter. For each session, I will describe the goal of that session and the objectives to reach the goal of the session. For example, the goal of session 4 will be to help female PSM Coordinators (and the male PSM Coordinators) understand how being female underlies some of the difficulties that women experience in communicating around conflict issues. One objective will be to elucidate the fact that psychologically women experience life differently, and speak with "a different voice." Another objective will be to understand that often the role and ministry contributions of women have been omitted or downplayed in scripture and theological developments. To address the latter objective, I will present some of the contributions of Christian feminist theologians. Another objective will be to put the participants in touch with the early sources of feeling

that their perspective is of less value or defective. Telling some of their own stories and listening to each other's will help achieve this objective.

The overall goal for the ministry project is to assist PSM Coordinators to acquire psychological and theological insights that will help them in their ministry to be more ready and skilled in communicating about conflict issues with a pastor or other staff. The goals for the five individual sessions (see the following pages for outlines of the five sessions) are as follows:

- Session 1: To recognize some of the psychological factors that need to be negotiated in order to communicate on conflict issues.
- Session 2: To understand different theologies of Church to enhance communication and provide insight for dealing with conflict over ministry issues.
- Session 3: To understand some of the key developmental stages of the life cycle and to explore some of the psychological defenses people use that interfere with communication and contribute to conflict; to review briefly Catholic Social Teaching.
- Session 4: To understand some of the psychological and theological factors that affect women's status in society and church, and how these factors interfere with effective communication.
- Session 5: To review how psychological and theological issues influence our (and others') ability to communicate around conflict issues; to bring closure to the ministry project.

Session 1 [2 hrs]

Prayer (5 minutes)

Introductions and reason for joining the group (15 minutes)

Confidentiality and creating a supportive environment (5 minutes)

Present group process and confidentiality rules. Ask if any clarifications are needed or if the group wants to add anything. Ask for the group's acceptance of these guidelines.

Share a conflict issue story (25 minutes)

Ask each participant to tell a brief personal story of dealing with conflict or potential conflict that was successful or unsuccessful. For example:

- Took the initiative in resolving a conflict with another staff member.
- Discussed a controversial topic with another staff person who held a different view.
- Asked the Pastor to do something new or different.

In telling the story, include one's feelings in anticipation and one's feelings afterward.

List the anticipatory feelings (5 minutes) Feelings could include one's anxiety or the fear that one's idea will be discounted or ridiculed as bad theology, impractical, etc. Then, refer briefly to the theological and psychological underpinnings of pastoral disagreements. These are the issues to be addressed in these sessions.

Recognizing our internal parts (15 minutes)

Use concepts from Richard Schwartz's *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, such as, exiles, firefighters, managers. Include self-esteem issues; our own feelings about whether we are lovable, what interferes, early childhood, becoming aware and able to change.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Listening skills (15 minutes)

Practice listening skills in dyads (10 minutes)

Give choice of three topics.

Feedback (10 minutes)

Assignment (5 minutes)

Write down a topic (possibly a practice topic) and the person with whom you will speak. Next week, report back even if it didn't happen, tell us about that. If you need to change the topic or person, do so. The purpose is to stretch and address the anticipatory feelings.

Coming attractions for Session 2

Our theology of church and the different models that influence our priorities, decisions, and conflicts.

## Session 2 [2 hrs.]

### Prayer (10 minutes)

### Feedback from Session 1 (20 minutes)

Individual sharing on conversation with another staff member. Include anticipatory feelings, how you listened, the experience, the outcome, feelings afterward.

### Presentation: Models of Church (see Appendix 4) (15 minutes)

"More adequate" and "less adequate" models? (10 minutes – interactive; elicit their examples, scripture.)

Participants' theology of church (5 minutes) Jot down or circle which elements speak to you the most (from handout outlining models.) Choose one of the five as currently predominant for you (or write your own). I will give historical examples of the decline or ascendancy of different models. Each model has value for the Church and for us.

### BREAK (10 minutes)

Group sharing (15 minutes) State preferred model; give one specific example.

Examples could be:

- Sacramental model - going to daily Mass is my top priority. I pray for my legislators but God has to move their hearts.
- Herald model – It's very important that I witness to the truth – write to legislator or be present at protest against the Iraq war, even if I don't see change in the near future. In the long run, this is more important than giving gifts to poor children at Christmas.

### Role play (25 minutes)

Discussion of topic for Lenten mission. Staff member #1 wants talks on the Eucharist (comes from sacramental model of church). Staff member #2 wants talks on addressing local housing and homeless issues (comes from servant model of church).

Step1 – Both staff members give pros and cons of topic.

Step2 - Both staff members say how they try to live the gospel and how the "church" helps.

### Wrap-up and assignment – discuss theology issue. (10 minutes)

Choose one practical theological issue to ask the Pastor (or another staff person who may not agree with you) for their understanding of the issue. Try to listen to hear their theological model. Ask them to help you to understand their stance as it relates to their theology. If possible, share your own view and theology. But give priority to understanding the other person's position and their feelings about the issue.

### Coming attractions for Session 3

Stages of psychological development; defenses we use.

Session 3 [2 hrs]

Prayer (10 minutes)

Feedback or questions from prior sessions (5 minutes)

Presentation on Life Cycle and "Difficult" Feelings (25 minutes)

Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of the Life Cycle –as a frame

Freud – id, ego, superego - earliest stages; Erikson: trust, autonomy.

Adult stages – developing the shadow side, reaching maturity, striving for integrity

Difficult feelings – focus on anger

Sharing on prior week's assignment (20 minutes)

Ask each member to tell their experience of asking another staff about how they see church. Points to cover:

- How was the experience for you? For the other person? If participant thought about asking but didn't, elicit anticipatory feelings such as anxiety or fear.
- What did you learn of the other person's ecclesiology?
- To which model of church would you relate the other person's position?

**BREAK** (10 minutes)

Presentation on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) (10 minutes)

Overview (PSM Coordinators already have basic knowledge of these teachings.)

Provide them with specific teachings on immigrants.

Prepare and perform role play (25 minutes)

Give each participant a copy of a newspaper-type scenario related to a situation involving an undocumented person on Long Island. Half the group represents the "justice for immigrants" position and half are opposed. In twos – one pro and one con – have each couple role play for the group a conversation about the issue. Focus is to hear the other's position.

Feedback (10 minutes)

On role-play; on the session.

Assignment (3 minutes)

Initiate one conversation on undocumented immigrant status or other CST issue during the week.

Read Steinfels' chapter, "Sex and the Female Church," in *A People Adrift* (distribute)

Coming attractions for next session (2 minutes)

Our role as women in the Church and society. *A Different Voice* by Carol Gilligan; contributions of women theologians.

Session 4 [2 hrs]

Prayer (10 minutes)

Feedback or questions from prior sessions (5 minutes)

Sharing on prior week's assignment (20 minutes)

Ask each member to tell their experience of speaking with someone about the issue of undocumented immigrants. Points to cover:

- How was the experience for you? For the other person? Question to be answered even if other person declined. If participant thought about asking but didn't, elicit anticipatory feelings such as anxiety or fear.
- What emotion –yours or theirs – was the hardest for you to handle?
- What went well? What would you do differently in another conversation?

Presentation on "women's voice" (15 minutes)

Based on Carol Gilligan's *A Different Voice*

Sharing memories evoked by the presentation (15 minutes)

Ask especially about early personal memories.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Presentation on contributions of women theologians (10 minutes)

Include Elizabeth Johnson, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and Dorothee Soelle.

Exercise on women in the church (20 minutes)

List on newsprint the group's ideas on what could be different right now for women to have true dignity in the church. Then list who has the ability to make that change. Select all items that could change now through their efforts. In groups brainstorm psychological barriers and strategies for change. Groups convene to share insights and strategies.

Feedback (10 minutes)

On the session

Assignment (3 minutes)

From exercise on women's role in Church now, each participant chooses one item and says what they will do about it in the next week.

Coming attractions for next session (2 minutes)

Topics not covered and/or topics requested by participants. If time, theory of change.

Session 5 [2 hrs]

Prayer (2 minutes)

A quiet moment to place ourselves in God's presence. In the second part of the session there will be a longer prayer ritual.

Feedback from prior session (13 minutes)

Final presentation (25 minutes)

The topic(s) for the final presentation are reserved for suggestions or requests that have grown out of the group sharing and feedback over the past four weeks. It is also possible that a previously scheduled topic was not covered because, as the facilitator, I responded to group feedback in an earlier session and expanded a topic or introduced a new one into the session schedule. In this case, the omitted topic could be covered in the final session. If group feedback has not caused changes in the session agendas, then I will introduce ideas from the theory of change (one needs to be "ready, willing, and able").

PSM Coordinators give written feedback on their experience of the group sessions (15 minutes)

**BREAK** (10 minutes)

Wrap-up (15 minutes)

I will use Erikson's mature life cycle stages to frame the psychological insights we learned and practiced with parish staff during Communicating Around Conflict Issues. I will present scriptures that reflect different models of church as our resources for encouragement and communication when issues are conflictual.

Preparation for closing prayer ritual (10 minutes)

Explain the closing prayer ritual. From a table, PSM Coordinators will be invited to select an object that might symbolize what they take away from these sessions on the psychological and theological dimensions of communicating around conflict issues.

Closing prayer ritual (30 minutes) Everyone will be seated in a circle; in the center, on a table will be a lighted candle, the Scriptures, and a selection of objects.

- Song
- Readings –from Scripture and from writers on theology and psychology.
- Ritual of each person presenting their object (selected from the table before the prayer begins) and their reflection on it. The object is then placed back on the table.
- Reflection song is played
- Closing blessing. All hold candles and say a prayer in unison. Then, as each person steps forward, the others pray together aloud for that person by name that the person may have a compassionate and listening heart, a voice that speaks, and courage to do both. Then all pray again in unison.
- Greeting of peace.

### ***Evaluating the Ministry Project***

A pre-questionnaire (see Appendix 5) will be distributed to PSM Coordinators.

During the first session, the participants will be asked to verbally restate their reasons for joining the Communication Around Conflict Issues group. I will make notes on their sharing during the first session on their initial reasons and their feelings and experiences of conflict in the parish setting. At the fifth session, verbal and written feedback will be requested as a way of evaluating whether the goals of the ministry project were met, that is, an increase in the internal readiness and the ability to communicate with parish staff around conflict issues by acquiring new theological and psychological insights, learning new communication skills, and then putting the new insights and skills into practice.

During the fifth session, I will ask the PSM Coordinators to fill out the final feedback and evaluation forms (see Appendix 6), which consist of a feedback form on the last assignment and a post-survey. This will be done right before the break, which will be followed immediately by the closing prayer ritual.



## Chapter IV: Results of the Project

Eight Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinators participated in the ministry project group. We were able to hold the two-hour sessions on five consecutive weeks, from 4 PM to 6 PM, as planned. Four coordinators attended every session; three had one to three absences; the eighth person dropped out after attending two sessions, saying she was too busy. Everyone present participated in group activities and found the group sharing to be a positive experience. I found that when everyone was present that eight seemed too large for full participation. During the one session when only four coordinators were present the interaction seemed better.

### *Session 1*

Before the session began, the group assembled quietly with the slight awkwardness of a new group. I had expected almost all the PSM Coordinators to know each other but this was not the case. I waited a few minutes beyond the 4 PM starting time since many of the coordinators had not traveled to the host parish previously. With six coordinators present we began with introductions and prayer (see Appendix 7 for prayers for each session). By 4:15 PM eight coordinators were present. One Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinator who had not registered arrived and one registered coordinator failed to arrive, putting our group at the expected number of eight participants – all women. Seven were PSM Coordinators who are directors of their programs. One woman was an assistant coordinator, reporting to another woman in the group.

In their introductions, each PSM Coordinator stated why she had joined the ministry project group. Although this question was on the pre-survey, I made it part of the introduction so that they would know each other's reasons and also so that I could hear their reasons in their own words and observe their effect. Almost all expressed the desire to improve their skills in handling conflict and communicating better. Several PSM Coordinators mentioned steps that they had already taken, such as taking a workshop on conflict resolution. For them, deciding to participate in the group appeared to be part of ongoing personal journeys to respond to these challenges. Another reason, which they had not stated on the pre-survey, was very affirming of my professional relationship with them as a PSM Developer: they had come to support me in doing this ministry project. One PSM Coordinator also offered as a motivation that, as a social worker, she was willing to help.

My initial reaction to the group was to think: What a great group of women! They had already had a great deal of professional and in-service training and experience. Almost all had done "listening skills" at some point. The majority of the group had participated in a 2-3 year diocesan training program for church leaders run by the Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI) of the diocese. One PSM Coordinator mentioned having taught conflict resolution.

The session went pretty much as anticipated but I found that it was not possible to do all that I had planned for the session. A half-hour into the session I realized that I would need to cut something. The coordinators were very willing to participate. This got the group off to a good start. However, it was difficult to limit the time of each individual sharing. Instead, I limited the number of stories – giving the others a "raincheck" – so

that there would be time to have an input presentation and time for an activity. This enabled us to finish the remaining topics.

The coordinators shared their personal experience of a conflict issue concerning their pastor (almost all chose conflict situations with pastors rather than other staff). We listened to three personal conflict stories and then proceeded to look at their feelings about these issues. I indicated that other coordinators would have the opportunity to share their specific experience at a later session. By doing this, we did follow the rest of the session agenda, although not at the more leisurely pace I would have preferred. I resolved to look over the session 2 agenda to see if I had overscheduled. I also needed to keep in mind that the other PSM Coordinators who had not shared a personal story in session 1 would need time to do so.

Prior to inviting them to share their stories of conflict, we discussed confidentiality regarding what was said within the group (see Appendix 8). The agreement and comfort level of the group was clear in their sharing throughout the sessions. The three coordinators conveyed stories of conflict, which were different than I expected. No one referred to a justice issue; instead there was lack of communication on interpersonal issues. One PSM Coordinator posed a moral dilemma about a financial decision, hoping to shed light on a decision that she had tentatively made. Although she did get to air her concern, she may have been frustrated at the lack of resolution. I tried to explore another option with her but did not offer an answer or affirmation of her decision. In a sense, we tabled the dilemma.

A second PSM Coordinator described an internal conflict. Her religious upbringing had always put priests "on a pedestal" in the area of spirituality. Even though

she is now on the parish staff, she still struggles with a feeling of inferiority as a layperson. This inner conflict interferes with her ability to communicate with the Pastor on ministry issues that are her area of expertise.

In the third conflict story, the coordinator felt that her opinion was not asked and that it was difficult to get a hearing. When a staff situation arose that she wanted to give input to the pastor, she described choosing to write a letter to the pastor. She felt frustrated at not receiving a response. I noticed that in telling her story, she was rather general and vague. I used my pastoral counseling skills in asking for more information. Later, after the dyad listening exercise described below, I asked her if she had felt heard by the other person and she said, "Yes."

I presented the Internal Family Systems theory of Richard Schwartz as it applies to our internal understanding of ourselves. I gave examples (see Chapter II) of how our different parts, as opposed to our core self, operate. I then spoke about Schwartz's three categories of internal parts: exiles, managers, and firefighters. I felt that this was understood when one Coordinator commented, after the description of a firefighter part that tries to soothe the hurt part, that complaining about what happens is how she tends to handle the distress of conflict.

After presenting a set of listening skills (see Appendix 8), we practiced in dyads, using the topic of "Justice for Undocumented Immigrants" or a topic of their choice. One person assumed the role of listener and for three minutes elicited and tried to clarify the other person's position and feelings. The roles were then reversed for the next three minutes on the same topic. The group found this exercise worthwhile.

Time was tight at the end but I did ask for feedback on the session. There was general consensus that hearing each other's stories was helpful. My resolution for the next session was to review the session 2 agenda and cutback or postpone topics so that there would be more time for sharing at the next session.

[Session1 handout: Group confidentiality & listening tips.]

### *Session 2*

In preparation for session 2, I reviewed the session outline and decided to omit the 25-minute segment allotted for role-playing the potentially conflictual process of choosing a topic for a Lenten mission. I had already learned in session 1 that group sharing, even when properly facilitated, needs more time than I had planned for in these sessions. I also planned to invite other coordinators to share their initial conflict stories.

Session 2 began promptly with prayer. At each session the PSM Coordinators were very willing to read parts and participate in the prayer service. After prayer I gave them a little feedback on the pre-surveys (a few surveys had been submitted as they arrived for the first session; others I had received by mail), so that they would have a sense of the group's expectations. I also responded to a request made at the end of the prior session asking that I explain the Doctor of Ministry program. At that point I also clarified that individual anonymity would be preserved in the final write-up of the ministry project.

I invited the coordinators to relate what happened with their assignment of the prior week. (Each coordinator was to choose a topic and speak with their pastor or another staff person, eliciting their view by using their listening skills from session 1). This feedback session was, in retrospect, a defining moment of the project. Each coordinator had stretched herself and taken personal risk in doing the assignment. They simply and honestly shared that experience. This 20-minute segment stretched to an hour as I consciously chose to be sure that each person had a turn.

Example 1: One PSM Coordinator related a conversation with an administrative staff person. She had spoken with the staff person who had passed on another program's criticism of her clients without checking the facts. She reported that their conversation had clarified the issue. I asked the coordinator what was different about this experience. She reflected that she acted sooner and that she overcame her usual reaction, which would have been to avoid speaking with the staff person and just clarify the issue with the outside program that initiated the criticism. When I asked, she also related that she had taken time to ask about the other staff person's understanding of what had happened before responding. I left her with a rhetorical question: "Could you have also said, 'When you write me a critical note without asking me what's happening, I feel angry?'"

Example 2: Another PSM Coordinator asked the Pastor for 10 minutes to address a recent situation where she felt that she had been treated unfairly. At the prior session the same coordinator had reported how she hates addressing conflict situations and postpones doing so. As part of the conversation with the pastor, she became more aware that she probably could not depend on using email to communicate with her pastor. She felt a sense of accomplishment that she had spoken to the Pastor since she has been trying

to change a pattern of avoiding conflict. Another coordinator, at an appropriate moment, contributed a gentle observation that the one issue not addressed was how angry the coordinator had felt over the incident that precipitated the conversation. (My internal awareness was that I had not addressed that issue and also that the second coordinator had allowed time for me to do so. The gentleness of the observation was instructive for me as well as for the speaker.)

Example 3: One PSM Coordinator used her listening skills in speaking with another staff person on a social justice issue. She said that she was surprised at how much agreement they had. In the end, she said that it was not that hard to do. I asked how she had felt in anticipation of the conversation. She expressed the anxiety that she had felt in anticipation of doing the assignment when she said, "I thought about it all week."

Example 4: Another PSM Coordinator initiated a conversation with her pastor on a policy issue that they see differently. She acknowledged that she believes her position is correct so before having the conversation, she spent some time praying and acknowledging his good qualities. When they met she focused on hearing and understanding his position first before speaking. She appeared to find the conversation helpful.

As planned, I presented Avery Dulles' five models of church with some examples. I also distributed a chart showing a few basic characteristics of each model. I listed the five models on a newsprint flip chart and invited the coordinators to take time during the break to mark the two models (as #1 and #2) that best express their faith and style of ministry. All the PSM Coordinators participated and when we returned from the break, I also marked my #1 and #2 models before we discussed them. Unsurprisingly, for

a group involved in parish social ministry, the majority chose the Church as Servant model as their first choice and some put it as their second choice. Other first choices were the Church as Mystical Communion and the Church as Sacrament. Their explanations for their choices reflected how ministry is not something they just do but something they live. The basis of their service was clearly their prayer and sacramental life, especially the Mass.

None of the PSM Coordinators chose the prophetic model, the Church as Herald, or the Church as Institution as either their first or second choice. I was the only person who chose Church as Institution as one of my two choices (it was #2). They demanded to know why. I shared with them that the reason was twofold. The first reason was the value that I see in the universality and continuity of the teaching church. The second reason was a recognition that this was the model I grew up in and that I have internalized some of the institutionalism and do not always have the inner freedom to let go of some authority structures even when they may not be helpful. My other reflection, that I did not share with them, was that in my view many of them operate out of an institutional model but made their choice of models out of where they want to be rather than where they are. I hoped that my own sharing might cause them to reflect on how they operate.

The value of doing the models of church became evident when one coordinator remarked that the models could be helpful to parish staff members when thinking about the spiritual needs of different groups in the parish and whether there were a variety of offerings to meet those different needs. Another coordinator later remarked that she really should not be surprised that her (older) pastor has a different view of church and ministry than she has.



The wrap up and assignment at the end of session 2 was rushed (some coordinators needed to leave promptly at 6 PM), so my recommendation to speak with another staff person was not quite an actual assignment. I did suggest that they ask themselves what model they think is most important to their pastor.

[Session 2 handout: Models of Church chart.]

### ***Session 3***

During the week prior to Session 3, I read a recent article that addressed the tension in the Catholic Church between those who hold different ecclesiologies. In the *National Catholic Reporter* a front-page feature article, "Seeking Unity: Overcoming Discord in the Church," Timothy Radcliffe (2006, May 5) described two polarized views of how Catholics regard the changes of the Second Vatican Council. He invited Catholics to go deeper and see how the other side feels. His thesis is that we need the wisdom of both groups: "Communion" Catholics who have felt the loss of spiritual practices that were prevalent prior to Vatican II and who want to rebuild the inner life of the Church; and "Kingdom" Catholics who welcomed Vatican II's awareness of the Spirit alive in the world and who wish to pursue freedom and justice and build the kingdom of God in the world.

I brought copies of this article for the PSM Coordinators. I distributed them as part of our few minutes reviewing the prior week's session. Although the article was long, all I said about it was the synopsis above. In the prior session we had already discussed the fact that the five models are not exhaustive and that no one model captures

the reality of the Catholic Church. Therefore, Radcliffe's framing of present ecclesiology into two models did not need further explanation. The following week someone mentioned that she might bring the Radcliffe article to her staff meeting. One coordinator had evidently thought about what model her pastor holds. She remarked that she really should not be surprised that they disagree on some issues, considering where he is coming from (theologically).

Having just spent ten minutes on prior session feedback, I was just ready to move on to the main presentation when someone who had not spoken said she would like to bring to the group a ministry conflict that she was currently experiencing and asked if there was time. Trying to be responsive to the group, and also recalling, that this coordinator had not yet presented a conflict situation, I readily agreed.

[Session 3 handout: Radcliffe article.]

#### *Session 4*

Prior to session 4, I again shortened the list of topics to cover. I dropped the 20-minute segment on feedback from session 3's homework since it had not been assigned. However, the session 3 assignment seemed important so I chose to use it as a replacement for the assignment I had planned originally for session 4.

The session 4 prayer received affirmative comments. The coordinators liked the litany, which named women of the Old Testament, well-known women saints, and contemporary women known and admired by those present. In the feedback on the prior session one coordinator who had been present said it had been very good. Another

coordinator who had been absent expressed regret that she had missed the part on psychological defenses.

I briefly reviewed the concept of how defenses are used in both healthy and unhealthy ways. I then presented additional psychological material on some issues not covered the prior week, especially on the topic of anger. I wanted them to see anger as a normal feeling and put the focus on what one does with angry feelings. As an example of using anger in a positive way, I told them the story of Bill Ford, the brother of Maryknoll Sister Ita Ford who worked with the poor in El Salvador. The coordinators were aware of the 1980 murder of the Four Churchwomen, including Ita Ford. When his sister was murdered and officials in El Salvador and the United States denied having any information about the crime, Bill Ford, a lawyer, channeled his anger into the pursuit of justice in the courts for twenty-five years until he succeeded in getting commanding officers in El Salvador convicted. He also worked to uncover the United States' knowledge of events that our government had previously denied. One coordinator, who hates conflict, appeared to have a new realization when she said that she had never thought of anger becoming a passion for justice.

The presentation on Carol Gilligan's psychological theory of women's development seemed to resonate with the coordinators. In fact, at the very first session one coordinator had clearly stated that relationships are so primary to her that she avoids conflict. The purpose in covering this material was to make explicit that men and women take different approaches, one not more valuable than the other. Also, I addressed the fact that conflict can strengthen rather than destroy relationships.

After the break, I presented some of the contributions of women theologians. Several in the group were familiar with Elizabeth Johnson and at least one person had read one of her books. Although I did not get much feedback on this presentation, I sensed that this was a topic where there was a wider divergence of opinion. For example, I believe that inclusive language in church and prayer is very important to some coordinators and somewhat inconsequential to others.

Since we had had a late break, I needed to shorten the second half of the session. I dropped the exercise on roles of women in the church so as to allow a relaxed explanation of the assignment for the following week. I asked each coordinator to silently choose a staff person and a topic for a conversation during the week. I encouraged them to stretch themselves on the last assignment. I suggested that they take a risk or have a conversation that they had been avoiding. Perhaps that would mean approaching the pastor. I asked them to make an actual choice right then even if they needed to change the person or topic later. We sat silently for a couple minutes while they made that plan. I did not ask them to share their plan but said that the following week I would like to know how it went. Or, if the conversation did not happen, to take note of what their feelings were about that.

[Session 4 handout: reading from Dorothee Soelle (1990).]

### ***Session 5***

After taking a moment to reflect on God's presence among us, we started the fifth and last session. We took time for any verbal feedback they wished to give but this was

not a group sharing on their last assignment. One coordinator stated that she had learned that she might need to look at herself when there's a conflict. During this time I also answered a question asked in the prior session: How can you communicate that you disapprove of the war in Iraq (when someone introduces the topic) when you do not want to start a potential argument? I suggested that she might just say that she sees the situation differently. The other person can then drop the topic (while noting the difference of opinion) or choose to ask her opinion. I then gave the final presentation on the theory of change, as I had initially planned to do at the last session.

I was very careful not to rush the last session by trying to do too much. I introduced the final evaluation of the ministry project to the group. I asked for their written feedback on their last assignment, given at the end of session 4, and a written post-survey. I told them that it would be helpful if they answered all the questions but that they should feel free to leave anything blank. I started about twenty minutes before break time. I had brought some special pastries for the break and invited them to start their break whenever they finished writing the evaluation. I very much appreciated the seriousness with which they took time to fill out both papers.

After the break, we had our closing prayer ritual, which I first explained and then led. On the prayer table, I had placed a dozen miscellaneous objects – several sea shells, a clock, a ribbon bow, two pottery jars, etc. Before we began the prayer, I invited the coordinators to choose one object that represented an aspect of what the group experience meant to her.

The ritual was conducted as described in the outline to session 5, with the exception of having just one candle, which we passed from one to the other, as the person

was blessed. Since most or all of them would have already participated in a prayer service that called upon their active participation, they appeared comfortable in this prayer setting. In presenting their objects, their reflections included: finding the time together to be a "gift;" being pressed for time but being happy that she took "time" for the group; valuing the feminine dimension; noting how water can make a rough shell beautiful as a metaphor for successfully dealing with conflict. At the end of the prayer we gave a greeting of peace to each other before saying good-bye.

## **Chapter V: Discussion of the Project Results**

Chapter V covers the findings and evaluation of the ministry project, "Communicating Around Conflict Issues," which was conducted with eight Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Coordinators. The results of the project, both expected and unexpected, will be presented, followed by the implications of the results. Then the relationship of the religious and clinical principles to the project will be explored, using the PSM Coordinators' written evaluations and my observations. Included are several specific examples from coordinators' written feedback on their last assignment. The chapter concludes with a reflection on what I learned from the ministry project that will be helpful for future ministry.

### ***Anticipated and Unanticipated Results of the Ministry Project***

PSM Coordinators were very interested in addressing communication issues around conflict. They experience conflict in their ministry with other parish staff, especially pastors, and they wanted to improve their ability to communicate. I anticipated correctly that they would be willing to share their experiences and try new behavior, as recommended in the session assignments. They saw the value of the theological and psychological topics and each in her own way tried to incorporate new information and to stretch in using it. I was impressed by their willingness to move outside their comfort zone and initiate conversations with their pastors or other members of the staff between sessions.

*Anticipated results.* The main anticipated outcome was that if they understood some of the religious and psychological dynamics underlying conflict and then put that new understanding into practice, this would help them in dealing with communication on potentially conflictual issues. In the PSM Coordinators' final evaluations of the project, they reported that this had occurred. Some examples are included later in the chapter.

In their written comments at the last session, the PSM Coordinators were asked how ready they felt now, compared to five weeks ago, to address a conflict issue with another staff person. All seven coordinators noted positive changes in their readiness to address conflict. Five coordinators chose the option "more ready; two coordinators said "slightly more ready." No one chose the lowest or highest change options on the scale, "the same" or "a lot more ready," respectively. Another question focused on feelings about addressing conflict, "How comfortable do you now feel internally?" Responding to the same options, six coordinators gave the same response, "more ready," about internal readiness. However, one coordinator who had said that she felt only "slightly more ready" to address conflict, responded that she felt "a lot more" comfortable internally. The PSM Coordinators' degree of readiness to address conflict is reflected in their evaluations of the components of the project. They wrote that the theological models of church and the study of psychological defenses were two of the most valuable topics studied. The group sharing and the practice of listening skills were the most important active learning components.

Coordinators were asked to elaborate on their responses to changes in their readiness and comfortableness in addressing conflict. The last coordinator mentioned who had experienced a real change internally recognized that she felt only slightly more



ready to address conflict because of her own fear of rejection. However, she said that internally she felt a lot more comfortable because "I have more insight into myself" and she now realizes that she needs to "Consider where the other person is coming from."

Coordinators, who gave the same responses to their readiness and internal comfortableness, gave various reasons for the change they experienced. One said that she had a lot of fear and now "I accept the challenge." One coordinator expressed a new conviction that with some change she could "be heard."

Besides elaborating on why they saw change, a few coordinators reflected on other insights they had experienced during the five weeks. For example, "I have more work to do in this area. The class helped me identify what makes addressing a conflict issue difficult for me...especially...with an authority figure." Another wrote, "You made conflict a human problem" and reflecting on her increased comfortableness, "I've considered feeling more positive about what I could say."

*Unanticipated results.* What I did not expect was for their conflict difficulties to be so focused on interpersonal styles of communication, especially with their pastors. This became clear in the first session when they began telling their conflict stories. Although I had chosen to do the ministry project because of the lack of communication and polarization that I observed on justice issues, I realized immediately that the problem was more basic. They were having difficulty with conflict in general and until that was addressed, there could not be good communication around justice issues. Nevertheless some justice topics were raised, including justice for immigrants, housing the homeless, and opposition to the Iraq war. More frequently the topics were issues such as parish

social ministry finances, attendance or non-attendance at meetings, and difficulties in talking with the pastor.

### ***Implications of the Results***

The project was designed to assist PSM Coordinators in taking a step forward in dealing with communication around conflict issues, specifically with other members of the parish staff, including the pastor. The criteria for determining if this had happened were: (a) their self-report of being more comfortable in dealing with these issues or just in anticipation of dealing with them; (b) their self-report of behavioral change in dealing with issues that they had been avoiding, or dealing with communication and conflict in a more productive way; (c) my observations in the group sessions.

At the end of the ministry project there was positive evidence of all three criteria indicating constructive change. The strongest evidence was in their self-reports of having conversations with pastors and staff persons on issues that they had previously avoided or postponed. They also reported a sense of accomplishment in doing so, and in some cases there were positive results. Four of their accounts follow:

Case 1: One PSM Coordinator reported on a conversation on immigration policies that she had with another staff person. She reported that she came to the conversation feeling that she knew how the situation should be resolved. She said that the sessions had helped her with this conversation in three ways: First, she had paid more attention to the feelings that she brought to the conversation; second, she realized that she needed to be open to hearing the other person; third, she listened for where the other person was coming from. She appeared to feel a

sense of accomplishment as she reported that she had moved the conversation forward sufficiently that they planned another meeting to continue to address the issue.

Case 2: Another PSM Coordinator took the initiative to have a conversation with a staff person whom she finds difficult and often avoids. In the interest of serving her needy clients, she felt that she had to refuse a request of this other staff person for a procedural change in how vouchers were distributed. The coordinator reported that, although she really has difficulty with conflict and confrontation, she was able to address the issue, "speaking quietly but with conviction" as to why the procedure could not be changed. She expressed satisfaction that she had dealt with her longstanding fears of conflict and had addressed the situation directly.

Case 3: A third PSM Coordinator reported an incident that occurred during the five weeks, in which she acted on her own judgment rather than from fear. She had decided not to show up for a staff meeting, which she had good reason to believe had been cancelled but which, despite her best efforts, she had been unable to verify. When she was called abruptly during the staff meeting to question her absence, she simply said that she could not come at that point. Ordinarily, against her better judgment, she would have gone to the meeting late out of fear of disapproval. Also, as a follow up, she had initiated a conversation with the staff person who had called her mid-meeting, regarding what had happened rather than ignoring the situation. She reported that in the past she would not have made the decision to initiate that conversation.

Case 4: A fourth PSM Coordinator had really tried to stretch. She reported that she had initially attempted to meet with the pastor. She called him and tried to set up an appointment to discuss a specific situation. However, the Pastor chose to discuss it on the telephone. As the outcome was ambiguous, she followed up that conversation by submitting a written plan (this was an idea that she had picked up from another coordinator during one of the group sharings). Unsatisfied with the lack of a face-to-face conversation for this last assignment, she had a conversation with another staff person about the difficulties of staff interaction at their parish. She reported that she succeeded in asking the other person how she felt about her role and got suggestions on how to better deal with this situation. The coordinator came away from the conversation confirmed in her new realization that she needs to understand another person's style and point of view. In response to my question as to what from the five sessions had been helpful in having that conversation, she wrote, "In dealing with conflict, the only person I can change is myself."

The one sense in which the project fell short of my expectation is that the conflict issues that I had anticipated would take central stage were not the many peace and justice topics. Although it was true that these topics were often avoided in parish staff conversations, these were not the conflict issues on which most coordinators chose to focus. The PSM Coordinators' ministry need was mostly focused on communicating about interpersonal conflict issues. As the project's goal was to meet the group's ministry need, I focused the religious and psychological material I had prepared on this type of

conflict. The implication of this result may be that unless PSM Coordinators can better understand and address interpersonal conflicts, they may be unable to address the conflicts generated by differences of opinion on peace and justice issues.

Another implication of the project is that sometimes you can correctly recognize a need but you see it through your own countertransference. I personally experience anxiety and a tendency toward avoidance when I have to address conflict issues.

However, my concerns are focused on addressing the potential conflict of peace and justice issues. I still bring anxiety to interpersonal conflict issues but have learned, for the most part, not to avoid them. In doing this project I realized that you can recognize a ministry need but it is important to elicit the input of the group to provide the nuance and focus. This is simply a matter of meeting people where they are.

The implication of addressing a true ministry need, but with a different focus was a recognition of the need for flexibility. The material that I had prepared for the sessions was appropriate but the focus changed, as I left room for them to choose their own topic to address. Most of the PSM Coordinators, in describing situations, appeared to believe that the only two ways to deal with conflict was avoidance, which they preferred, or confrontation. Instead of saying, 'I don't want to deal with the conflict,' they would say, 'I don't want to confront the staff person.' Looking at conflict as an opportunity for understanding became one of the themes of the sessions as we studied the various religious and psychological principles. In one of the later sessions, one of the coordinators actually said that conflict could be an opportunity.

In the post-survey, the coordinators were asked, "Can you describe any new understandings that you take away from these sessions?" (Question #5) The following are some of their responses:

- One coordinator recognized that avoidance of conflict was inadequate when she wrote, "Conflicts need to be dealt with."
- Another coordinator reflected her internal change when she wrote that her new understanding is "My ownership to (sic) creating the conflict."
- A third coordinator realized that expressing her ideas and feelings (instead of avoiding conflict situations) is one way she can serve her clients better.
- A fourth coordinator said that looking at the feminine point of view was a gift and the sessions had given her a better understanding of internal human development.

### ***The Relationship of the Religious and Clinical Principles to the Ministry Project***

***Religious principles.*** Our shared theological principles were more implicitly evident than explicitly voiced. We prayed the scriptures together and the PSM Coordinators spoke of their ministry serving the needy. What they did find helpful was the presentation of the models of church. It helped them understand why they experienced conflict on ministry issues, especially with pastors who operate from a Church as Institution model. Their choice of a Church as Servant or Church as Mystical Communion model reflected the importance they place on service, community and relationships. This dynamic was actively played out in the group as they participated with other group members in a respectful and helpful way - which I told them as part of my

feedback. I grew in respect for them and got a window on coordinators and adult faith journeys. They read books, take workshops, and reflect on the changes they want in their lives. They inspired me and, I would imagine, each other.

Looking at the group experience from a religious point of view, I saw a microcosm of a Christian community. These women are leaders in their church communities. In *The Emerging Laity*, a new vision of Christian leadership is discussed. Instead of seeing a dichotomy of stronger and weaker gifts, it is a view of interdependence and mutuality: "In interdependence, we count on our differences to overcome personal limitations. In mutuality, we count on our differences to release new resources in our midst." (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1986, pp. 86-87) The authors make the connection with Erikson's view of mutuality where people count on each other to help achieve their full power.

Framing the sessions within the context of Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development felt very on target. We each carry our early stages of development into our mature years. At one point I gave the coordinators a personal example of needing to grow through a developmental task I had missed when I was younger. The example was intended to reinforce the concept that we can continue to grow psychologically throughout life. In like manner, some of the session presentations were also an implicit invitation to incorporate the feminine dimension into our spirituality and concept of God. In many cases, as women, we need to increase our self-understanding of the feminine dimension even as we call on the church to recognize women as equals. To reinforce this, all of our prayer services used inclusive language, including the scripture readings. Of all

the prayers and readings used, the one that specifically drew favorable comment was the litany of women (see Appendix 7, Session 4).

As discussed below, the most helpful theological component in the sessions was the models of church. The most ambiguous reaction was the component on the contributions of feminist theologians, perhaps indicating the wide divergence within the group.

**Clinical principles.** All the coordinators rated "group sharing" as a "5" (most helpful). This was not a surprise since throughout the sessions they had at various times stated how helpful it was to hear each other's stories. They would also make reference to another coordinator's idea. This is consistent with the psychological literature on the value of groups in helping individuals achieve psychological insight. Although this was not a therapy group for the members to work through interpersonal relationships, the importance of group cohesiveness was evident. In *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, Irvin Yalom says that sharing one's story in a group does more than just cutting through the sense of being the only person with an issue. Yalom writes, "It is not the sheer process of ventilation that is important; it is not only the discovery of others' problems similar to one's own and the ensuing disconfirmation of one's wretched uniqueness that are important. It is the affective sharing of one's inner world and then the acceptance by others that seem of paramount importance." (Yalom, 1995, p. 49) In some small way, I saw this happen within the group. That it could happen in five weeks was due, I believe, to three main factors. The first factor was the bond that unites the PSM Coordinators who share a similar ministry, even though some of them had not previously met each other. The second factor was a positive transference toward me, as facilitator,



based on their previous experiences and relationship with me as a Catholic Charities PSM Developer. The third factor was the group atmosphere, which I tried to maintain as a learning, non-judgmental environment where we could explore issues without immediately trying to fix things. One coordinator, in responding to what in the sessions was most helpful, wrote about the group context, "I believe as women we gather hidden self esteem when we group and realize our potential."

Group sharing and listening skills were rated as the most important. Other components that more than half the coordinators marked with a "5" on a 1 to 5 scale were: role-playing listening skills in pairs and the presentation on the types of psychological defenses people use. The most helpful theological component was the models of church, which two-thirds rated as a "4." The one component that was viewed very differently by coordinators was the theological section on the contributions of feminist theologians. While two coordinators rated this component most helpful (5), two others rated it less helpful (2).

#### ***What I Learned for any Future Ministry Project***

The most powerful dynamic was the group sharing. I became much more convinced of the value of bringing a group together to explore and/or resolve an issue of common concern. In saying this I do not want to underestimate the prerequisite trust that members must place in each other and the facilitator. I did not spend time in this paper alluding to this requirement because I had the good fortune of starting from that basis. This is also present in many ministry settings where staff and members already share a common spiritual vision and commitment.

The second lesson is one that I am spending a lifetime learning and relearning at different levels: Keep it simple! I imagined the project to encompass more issues than could happen in five weeks. I also planned too much material in the original session outlines. When I conducted the project, I recognized that the planned agenda was overly ambitious after the first session. Rather than trying to cover all topics in shortened form, I omitted some topics and activities, so that those we did do would be allotted the necessary time for absorbing information and acting on it. A key factor driving this decision was the clear recognition in session 1 of the value of the group sharing, which I observed and the group expressed clearly in the feedback at the end of the first session.

I asked for suggestions on how similar sessions could be improved. The suggestions themselves reaffirmed the value of some of the components and of the project itself. One coordinator suggested doing more role-play. Another said that we could have used ten sessions. A third said that it was good material and that several areas that we covered in one session could have been the focus for several sessions.

Dealing with communication around conflict issues is a universal challenge. One implication for ministry that would appear self-evident, but is not, is that explicit recognition of this dynamic is important before trying to address conflict itself. Another implication is that opportunities for groups, in a safe environment, to share their stories, can be very helpful in providing an opportunity for participants to realize that they are not alone and to learn from one another. Third, offering even a small amount of information or a single participatory activity can be an opportunity for new insights or behavior. Finally, if one wants coordinators to increase their involvement in justice and peace issues, giving recognition and assistance in dealing with the psychodynamics of

conflict and the theological tensions appears to be very important, perhaps even a prerequisite.

The ministry need for better communication around conflict issues still exists. Based on the positive evaluation of the ministry project by the PSM Coordinators who participated, the Parish Social Ministry Department at Catholic Charities asked me to offer this group learning experience to another group of PSM Coordinators. I plan to present a revised version, incorporating what I learned during the ministry project; it will again be five group sessions but with fewer components. One of several trainings offered to PSM Coordinators during the first half of 2007, it will be called "Finding Your Voice for Justice."

## **APPENDIXES**

## Appendix 1: Catholic Social Teaching

Excerpts from

# SHARING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Challenges and Directions

REFLECTIONS OF THE U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we wish to highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

### LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and assisted suicide. The value of human life is being threatened by increasing use of the death penalty. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

### CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND PARTICIPATION

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

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## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

## **OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

## **THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS**

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

## **SOLIDARITY**

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

## **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION**

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

This summary should only be a starting point for those interested in Catholic social teaching. A full understanding can only be achieved by reading the papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents that make up this rich tradition.

CALL 800-235-8722 TO ORDER THE FOLLOWING RELATED RESOURCES OR A FREE CATALOG.

*Excerpts from "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching"* — posters (English #5-318, Spanish #5-818) .

*Excerpts from "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching"* — cards (English #5-315, Spanish #5-815)

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* — books (English #5-281, Spanish #5-803)

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# NOTE 13. ERIKSON'S LIFE-CYCLE CHART

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
I. INFANCY	Trust vs. Mistrust				Unipolarity vs. Premature Self-Differentiation			
II. EARLY CHILDHOOD		Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt			Bipolarity vs. Autism			
III. PLAY AGE			Initiative vs. Guilt		Play Identification vs. (oedipal) Fantasy Identities			
IV. SCHOOL AGE				Industry vs. Inferiority	Work Identification vs. Identity Foreclosure			
V. ADOLESCENCE	Time Perspective vs. Time Diffusion	Self-Certainty vs. Identity Consciousness	Role Experimentation vs. Negative Identity	Anticipation of Achievement vs. Work Paralysis	Identity vs. Identity Diffusion	Sexual Identity vs. Bisexual Diffusion	Leadership Polarization vs. Authority Diffusion	Ideologies/ Polarization vs. Diffusion of Ideals
VI. YOUNG ADULT					Solidarity vs. Social Isolation	Intimacy vs. Isolation		
VII. ADULTHOOD							Generativity vs. Self-Absorption	
VIII. MATURE AGE								Integrity vs. Disgust, Despair

Appendix 2: Erikson's Life Cycle Chart

### Appendix 3: Invitation Letter and Response Form

90 Cherry Lane  
Hicksville, NY 11801  
March 10, 2006

Dear Parish Social Ministry/Outreach Coordinators,

Although I know you through my position as Parish Social Ministry Developer at Catholic Charities, I am writing to you today as a student in a Doctor of Ministry program. Many of you know that I have been studying pastoral counseling for the past two years at Postgraduate Center for Mental Health in Manhattan. These studies are part of an interfaith Doctor of Ministry program at Hebrew Union College in Manhattan. The degree program aims to integrate the spiritual and the psychological in a way that will enhance the ministries of religious leaders. Now I want to extend to you an invitation to participate in my final project for the degree, a five-week training on "Communication Skills around Conflict Issues." Actually, it will be more than a training; it will also be a participatory support group. Therefore, one would need to make a commitment to attend all five sessions.

Let me tell you more about this project. Have you ever wished that you could better accomplish the advocacy and action for justice goals of your parish social ministry position? I know that "time" and "volunteers" are part of the picture but there's another refrain I hear all too often (sometimes I say some of it myself).

*I want to do more advocacy or take more initiative on justice and peace issues ...*

BUT I am reluctant to ask the pastor (or staff).

BUT Even if I ask, I'll get a "No."

BUT I asked and was told it would cause "conflict."

BUT The parish has other priorities.

BUT I'm just too discouraged (or angry) right now.

If you want to address that frustration, fear, or anger and move toward hope and action, I am inviting you to participate in a group of about 6-10 coordinators. We would meet for five weeks to explore the psychological and theological underpinnings of our own reactions and beliefs, as they relate to our desire to be better advocates for the poor and for justice. Our focus will be on becoming more self-aware, developing communication skills, and supporting each other's efforts toward change.

I am excited about addressing this important and challenging topic with some of you. If you are interested in being part of the group, the best way to respond is to fax back the attached form by March 22. It is not a registration form but an indication of one's interest in participating in "Communication Skills around Conflict Issues." I will contact you with more information after receiving the form.

Sincerely,

Veronica Fellerath  
(W: 516-733-7052; H: 631665-7444)



Communication Skills around Conflict Issues

Thursdays, 4-6 PM

*(Tentatively)* April 27, and May 4, 11, 18, 25

Location: Christ the King Parish, Commack

If you feel that you might be interested in participating, fill out the form and return it to me at Catholic Charities. Thank you.

Check one:

☐ Yes, I'm very interested. Contact me.

☐ Perhaps, but I need more information.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parish \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_

Best telephone to call: \_\_\_\_\_ Best time: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please return by March 22, 2006. Fax to 516-733-7037 or mail to Veronica Fellerath, 90 Cherry Lane, Hicksville, NY 11801.)

## Models of the Church

Model	Who belongs?	Goal?	Strengths?	Limitations?
<b>Church as Mystical Communion</b>	Those with internal faith, hope, love	Unity through the Spirit and help people respond to the Spirit	Interior living in the Spirit	Identification of the Church with the Spirit (too subjective)
<b>Church as Sacrament</b>	Those united to Jesus through the sacraments	Celebrate in ritual the reality of God's presence in the world	Power of Ritual; Eucharistic presence of Jesus	Sacraments tend to be "automatic" or "magical"
<b>Church as Herald</b>	Those who announce the good news	Spread the good news of Jesus	Based on scripture; clear goal	Church may be viewed as only for members
<b>Church as Servant</b>	Those who serve peoples needs/change systems	To effectively be Christ (healer & teacher)	Fulfills Mt 25 to serve "the least;" makes Incarnation visible	Too "earthly" at the expense of eternity; service involvement at expense of other models
<b>Church as Institution</b>	Those who believe creeds and obey laws	To attract more members to institution church	Continuity; identity promotes loyalty; laws provide clarity & "lift" responsibility.	Can be authoritarian; legalistic. Hierarchy powerful; role of laity minimal.

Appendix 4: Models of the Church Chart

Note: Chart based on "Models of the Church" by Avery Dulles, S.J.

## Appendix 5: Cover Letter and Pre-questionnaire

90 Cherry Lane  
Hicksville, NY 11801  
April 21, 2006

Dear Parish Social Ministry Coordinators,

This letter is addressed to the eight of you who will be participating in "Communication Skills around Conflict Issues." Thank you for agreeing to be a member of the group and a participant in the training. Since this is part of my ministry project for a Doctor of Ministry degree, I appreciate your support and trust. We will learn together and hopefully enjoy the time together. I'm looking forward to seeing you when we begin this Thursday, April 27 at 4 PM. (See below for directions). You are welcome to come at 3:45 PM and enjoy a cup of coffee before we begin.

**Could I ask you to complete the attached questionnaire before Thursday? Because the time is short, please either fax it to me at 516-733-7037 or bring it with you to the first meeting on April 27. Thank you.**

Sincerely,

Veronica Fellerath  
516-733-7052

Directions to Christ the King Parish, 2 Indian Head Rd., Commack, NY 11725:

**From east or west:** Take LIE (or Northern State Pkwy) to Sagtikos Parkway North (toward Sunken Meadow State Park). Exit at Indian Head Road (this exit follows *immediately* after the exit for Route 25 West). After exiting, make a left turn onto Indian Head Road. Go a very short distance and Christ the King parish complex is on the left. Pass the church and school, then turn left into the parking area near the building that houses Parish Social Ministry. We will meet in that building in the Good Samaritan Room. (FYI: Tom Burns is the PSM Coordinator, 631-864-2007)

**From the south:** Take Southern State Parkway to Sagtikos Pkwy North. Proceed as above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-survey for "Communication Skills Around Conflict Issues"** Please complete the following questions and fax to Veronica Fellerath at 516-733-7037 or bring to first meeting on April 27. Thank you.

Your reason for joining this group \_\_\_\_\_

What do you hope to learn or to gain from participation? \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes the Pastor, the PSM Coordinator, and other staff shy away from controversial issues. In trying to keep everyone in harmony and to prevent conflict, important issues may be avoided. Potentially, addressing these issues appropriately can lead to better understanding and renewed vitality in the parish. For each issue, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, please check the appropriate column:

I did this	I tried but didn't succeed	Not a priority issue for me	I haven't tried but I think it's important
------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------	--

Spoke about Parish Social

Ministry at Sunday Masses \_\_\_\_\_

Put notices in the bulletin on

from PPEN(Public Policy

Education Network) \_\_\_\_\_

Advocated for parish forum

on sexual abuse issue \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested having speaker on

justice issue \_\_\_\_\_

Made letters to legislators

available for signing \_\_\_\_\_

Asked for homilies on justice issues \_\_\_\_\_

Asked that Iraq war be discussed \_\_\_\_\_

Asked to have a PSM budget \_\_\_\_\_

Asked for a salary increase \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever had a conversation with the Pastor on any of the following issues?

Issue

Yes

No

Placing Sacrament of Penance before Eucharist \_\_\_\_\_

Church position toward gays and lesbians \_\_\_\_\_

Divorced Catholics and the reception of sacraments \_\_\_\_\_

Voices of the Faithful \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual abuse scandal \_\_\_\_\_

Diminishing number of priests \_\_\_\_\_

Lay leadership \_\_\_\_\_

Inclusion of women in parish leadership \_\_\_\_\_

War in Iraq \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, which issues and what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 6: Evaluation Forms – Post-survey and Feedback on Last Assignment**

### **Communication Skills around Conflict Issues**

**Post-survey:** Please try to answer all the questions, even if very briefly. However, do omit questions that you do not wish to answer. I appreciate whatever feedback you are able to provide. Thanks.

1. Compared to how you felt five weeks ago, how ready are you to address a conflict issue with another member of the parish staff (includes the pastor)?  
a) the same   b) slightly more ready   c) more ready   d) a lot more ready
2. Elaborate on your answer to the prior question.
3. Compared to how you felt five weeks ago, how comfortable do you feel internally for addressing a conflict issue with another member of the parish staff (includes the pastor)?  
a) the same   b) slightly more comfortable   c) more comfortable   d) a lot more comfortable
4. Elaborate on your answer to the prior question.
5. Can you describe any new understandings that you take away from these sessions?
6. How would you rate each of these topics covered, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is least helpful and 5 is most helpful), as to how helpful they were in making you more aware of causes of conflict or more ready to address conflict? Omit topics you missed.  
☐ Listening skills  
☐ Role-playing listening in pairs  
☐ Internal family systems – our different internal “parts”  
☐ Theological models of church  
☐ Erik Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development  
☐ Types of psychological defenses people use  
☐ Carol Gilligan’s “In a Different Voice”  
☐ Contributions of feminist theologians  
☐ Group sharing among the coordinators
7. Overall, in these sessions on Communication around Conflict issues, what did you find most valuable?
8. If similar sessions were run again, how could they be improved? What could be omitted?
9. Any other comments or suggestions? [Use the back if you need more space.]

*Feedback on last assignment*

Last week (at the end of session 4), you chose a potentially conflictual issue (of concern to you) and a parish staff person to speak with during the week.

**PART I:**     If you had a conversation, answer these questions. If not, answer the questions in Part II below.

What was the topic? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you speak with the pastor or another staff person? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened? (Try to focus on your feelings and how the communication went.)

\_\_\_\_\_

In what ways, if any, was this experience different for you than it would have been five weeks ago?

\_\_\_\_\_

What, if anything, in these group sessions was helpful in having that conversation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**PART II:**     If you did not have a conversation, can you describe any internal dynamic in you that interfered with initiating a conversation.

\_\_\_\_\_

What else do you need from sessions like these in order to initiate such a conversation in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_

5/25/06

## Appendix 7: Prayers for the Five Sessions

Easter to Pentecost

(Session 1)

***Good News...Fear...Courage***

Song: "Be here Now" from *Women with Wings*

First reading: Acts 5:27-33 The Apostles before the Sanhedrin

*Psalm 139:1-18*

O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;  
you know when I sit and when I stand;  
you understand my thoughts from afar.

My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,  
with all my ways you are familiar.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know the whole of it.

Behind me and before, you hem me in  
and rest your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your spirit?  
from your presence where can I flee?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I sink to the nether world, you are present there.

If I take the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
Even there your hand shall guide me,  
and your right hand hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,  
and night shall be my light" --  
For you darkness itself is not dark,  
and night shines as the day.  
(Darkness and light are the same.)

Truly you have formed my inmost being;  
you knit me in my mother's womb.  
I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made;  
wonderful are your works.

My soul also you knew full well;  
nor was my frame unknown to you  
When I was made in secret,  
when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes have seen my actions;  
in your book they are all written;  
my days were limited before one of them existed.

How weighty are your designs, O God;  
how vast the sum of them!  
Were I to recount them, they would outnumber the sands;  
did I reach the end of them, I should still be with you.

The New American Bible

Leader: God, we do not know the day when the spark in us will burst into greater fire.  
We cannot force the flame before its time.

Response: Help us to do our part and entrust the kindling to you and the people you bring  
into our lives.

Leader: We believe that Your spark of fire and life lies within each of us.

Response: Help this spark to grow so that it will more and more influence our vision of  
life and our participation in the human family.

All: Help us to have a passion for life that radiates into the lives of others.  
Help us to accept people as they are and become more compassionate.  
As the fire of God dances in us, help us to become ever more generous with our  
forgiveness and more daring in our action for justice that will heal our world.

(Paraphrased from *May I Have this Dance?* By Joyce Rupp)

**ALLELUIA**



**Easter to Pentecost**                      *(Session 2)*

Song: "Hosanna" from *Wherever You Go* – Monks of Weston Priory

First reading Acts 1:3-8. Jesus promises that the Spirit will come upon the apostles.

*Response*

Leader: This is the day that God has made; I have reason to rejoice.

All:        (repeat)

Second reading Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11-13. One Savior, one faith, one baptism.

Prayer for the Church

Dear God,  
we are all too conscious  
of in-fighting, bickering, power plays, jealousies  
that keep the church from being about Your  
business.  
More often than not,  
even when grateful for a faithful, functioning  
church,  
we call it peaceful or harmonious  
and miss the dynamism, the life-force,  
the productive tension that keeps the church  
alive, quickened and perhaps open to Your  
transforming spirit.  
May we continue to confront and affirm one  
another,  
to live for each in Christ's name.  
Keep us mindful, O God,  
that we need to be concerned  
with human structures and ideas,  
plans and programs,  
visions and dreams – but do You,  
most gracious God, center us on the source of  
life,  
the essence of the church,  
the place we have in the plan which You have  
shown us in Jesus Christ,  
called us to live in,  
and empowered us to share. Amen.

- Doris Donnelly (from *The Fire of Peace: A Prayer Book*,  
Compiled and edited by Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB)

## Easter to Pentecost

### (Session 3)

...discipleship...

#### Song

Leader: We reverence God who calls and blesses us each day.

#### Reflection 1: (based on Luke 19:1-10)

*I am Zacchaeus in the tree, hoping to see you, Jesus. I, too, need to leave behind my concerns of what others will think of me. Jesus, when you approach my tree of life, when you ask to come to the home of my heart, may I be ready. Help me to respond to your call and to live the message of the Gospel, even though I may experience criticism and rejection.*

*Pause...*

#### Reflection 2: (based on Luke 1:26-38)

*I am Mary of Nazareth at the annunciation. I must also leave some security behind. The challenge of the unknown is therefor me. Jesus, you know the questions in my heart. When you send your messengers to me, I want to be open to receive them. May I say with deep trust in you, "Let what you have said be done in me."*

*Pause*

#### Reflection 3: (based on John 21:15-23)

*I am Peter. I am asked to let go of my desire to be perfect and to live with my own unfinished condition. Jesus, you loved Peter as he was. You love me as I am. May I not only respond yes to your question, "Do you love me?" but also say yes when you take me "where I would rather not go."*

*Pause*

#### Reflection 4: (based on Luke 5:27-28)

*I am Levi, the tax collector. I must leave behind my strong ambitions for success and power. Jesus, help me to be more concerned about my life and ministry than about the results and success involved. Teach me what it means to leave everything and follow you.*

*Pause*

#### Closing Prayer (All)

Jesus, you call to my heart once more: "Leave anything that holds you back from deeper love. Come follow me, again and again." Grant me the courage to leave behind whatever keeps me from you and to trust you with my life. May my heart's connection with you be so strong and true that I will daily risk the road of following in your footsteps. Keep me open to the adventure of life where I meet you day by day. Remind me often of my inner goodness. Help me to believe that you look upon me with love. Thank you for the call to be your disciple. Amen.

**Reading** Gospel of John 20:11-18

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen and sends her to tell the sisters and brothers.

*Pause for silent reflection*

**Litany of Women**

(from *The Fire of Peace: A Prayer Book*, compiled and edited by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB)

**All:** Creator God, you who have given great women throughout the ages, help us to draw strength and courage from their lives.

**Reader:** Blessed be Eve, mother of the earth,

**Response:** Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Sara, founder of the faith,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Rebecca, woman of courage,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Ruth, model of friendship,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Naomi, faithful woman,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Priscilla, early believer,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Joanna and Susanna, friends of Jesus,  
Blessed be their name.

Blessed be Clare of Assisi, friend of the poor,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Hildegard of Bingen, artist and mystic,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Kateri Tekakwitha, first native American saint,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Theresa of Calcutta, protector of the dying,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Julian of Norwich, visionary,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Dorothy Day, patron of peacemakers,  
Blessed be her name.

Blessed be Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clark, and Jean Donovan, North American  
martyrs,  
Blessed be their name.

Blessed be wives and mothers,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be daughters, sisters, and aunts,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be single women,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be women religious,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be old women,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be young women,  
Blessed be their lives.

Blessed be poor women,  
Blessed be their lives.

All: Blessed be all women:  
    those who have gone before us,  
    those present with us now,  
    and those yet to come.

**Easter to Pentecost (Session 5)**

...the Spirit sends us forth...

**Song**

**Leader:** Come Spirit of God, give us understanding and compassion to hear each other and to live life fully.

**Response:** Come Spirit of God, give us listening hearts and the courage to speak with truth and love.

**Reading 1:** from *Shadows of the Heart: A Spirituality of the Painful Emotions*, by James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, p. 131.

Passions abound in the capacious heart of God. In the story of the great flood, God's heart is awash in disappointment: "And the Lord regretted having made humankind on the earth, and it grieved God to the heart" (Gen. 6:6). Jesus, the Son of God, suffered the full range of human emotions. He became incensed at his friend Peter; he wept at the tomb of Lazarus; he cried out with something like despair in his final moments on the cross. The Jewish and Christian Scriptures show us a God immersed in all the passions that accompany commitment. The revelation seems to be that passions are the price of love. To be entwined in others' lives is to court sorrow as well as delight, to taste loneliness as well as communion, to come to grief as well as to gratitude.

*Pause for reflection.*

**Reading 2:** Gospel of John 16:12-16 The Spirit of truth will guide you.

**Leader:** (Directions for the ritual and blessing.)

*Three minutes of silence to prepare for the ritual.*

**Ritual and Blessing:**

After each person presents their symbol and says what it means to her, the person with the candle says:

\_\_\_\_\_ (name), may you continue to grow in compassion and to speak your truth.

**The Magnificat – Cantic of Mary** (Luke 1:46-55)

*Verses recited by alternate sides.*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O my God,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in you, my Savior,

For your regard has blessed me,  
poor, and a serving woman.

From this day all generations  
Will call me blessed,

For you who are mighty, have made me great.  
Most holy be your Name.

Your mercy is on those who fear you  
Throughout all generations.

You have shown strength with your arm,  
You have scattered the proud in their hearts' fantasy.

You have put down the mighty from their seat,  
And have lifted up the powerless.

You have filled the hungry with good things,  
and have sent the rich away empty.

You, remembering your mercy,  
Have helped your people Israel,

As you promised Abraham and Sarah.  
Mercy to their children, forever.

All: Glory to you, Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

Greeting of peace!

***Thank you & blessings!***

***Ronnie***

## **Appendix 8: Group Rules and Listening Skills**

### *Session 1*

**Group agreement:** As a member of the group, I agree to

- Keep confidentiality.
- Respect others thoughts and feelings.
- Remember that I have unique valuable life experiences and so do others.
- Listen to each other.
- Allow time for others to be heard.
- Share my own experience and feelings (but with the freedom not to).
- Speak in the first person (I feel, I think).
- Give suggestions or advice only if the other person wants it.
- Keep confidentiality.

**Listening:**

- Attention – listen to spoken and unspoken message.
- Appreciation – listen from “the other’s shoes.” Let them know they were heard; don’t be silent.
- Affirmation –not agreement, but acknowledging that you heard the other’s position. (Could you state their position?)

(Source: *Lost Art of Listening* by Michael P. Nichols)

**Tips on learning to listen and communicate better:**

- What is the other person’s communication style? Face-to-face; email, writing, etc.
- Listen for feelings and unexamined beliefs.
- Be an attentive listener, rather than “waiting your turn.”
- Be curious. Ask “How” rather than “Why.”
- Elicit more detail or examples.
- When you speak, say clearly what you mean. People remember those statements!
- Chance a mistake rather than avoid speaking.
- Say what you are for, rather than what you are against.
- Afterwards: Ask yourself what you heard (and understood) and how you replied. If you would say something different now, privately try out new responses.
- After a difficult conversation, ask yourself how you felt. Do you know why? How do you think the other person felt? Do you know why?
- Remember people change when they are really listened to.

**Assignment for next week:**

Have a conversation about a controversial topic with another staff person that you assume has different views than yours or you do not know their views.

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