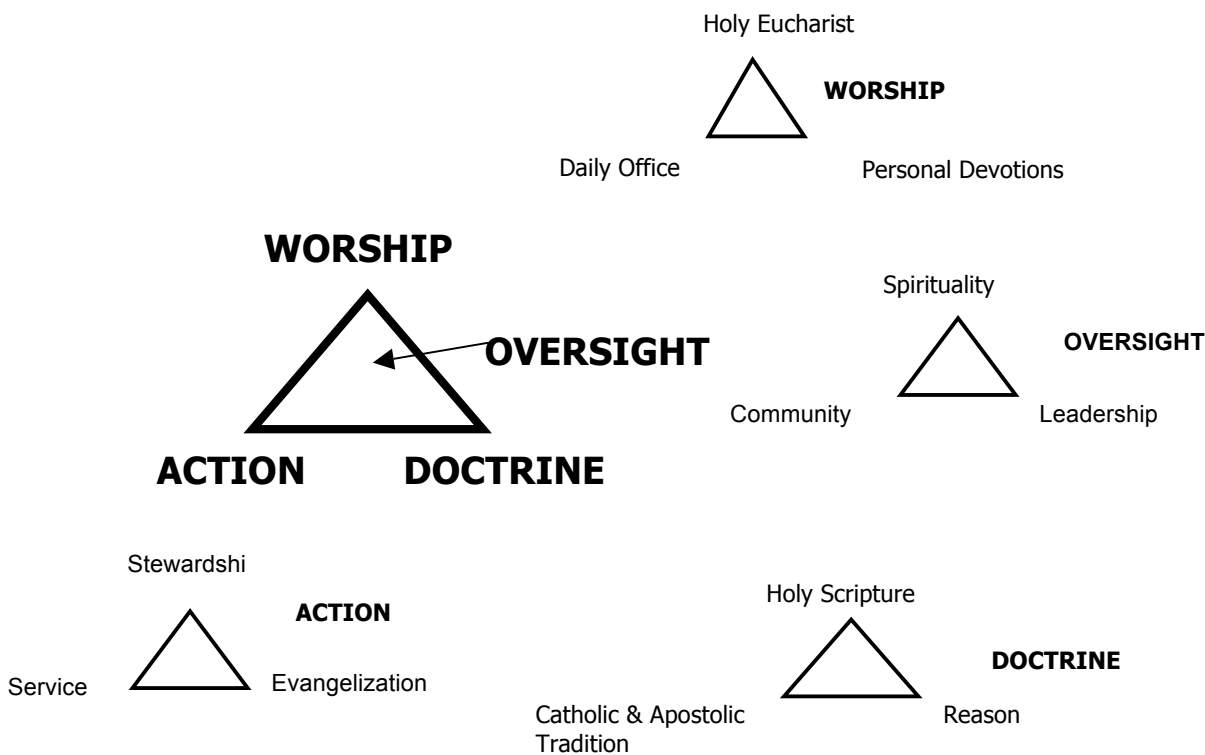


The Christian Life Model

In a world where carpenters get resurrected, everything is possible.
Eleanor in *The Lion in Winter*

For many years Mother Mary Laney was vicar of Saint Gabriel’s Church in the Olney neighborhood of Philadelphia. Olney is a community of African Americans, Asians, Arabs, Africans, Hispanics, and some whites, the remains of a once large German American population. It’s one of the most diverse communities in Philadelphia. It’s also a community struggling with crime, affordable housing, and employment. It was a small parish dependent on the diocese for assistance, serving the Olney community with efforts of community organizing, employment and education, and holding together a diverse membership. Saint Gabriel’s had a motto “With God all things are possible”. What held them together and allowed them to move forward in service? Liturgy and prayer were certainly at the heart of it. Another one of the tools Mary Laney used was this Christian Life Model. It offered a way of thinking about the elements and dynamics of life in a Christian community.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MODEL



- Each element is a way in which Christ comes to us and in which we seek Christ. Each is an entry into, and participation in, the unity to which we are called. In them we are called into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ - the heart of Christ, the mind of Christ, the work of Christ.
- The model can be used by parishes for self assessment, as a framework for planning, as a way to focus the parish on the essentials of the Christian life, and as a resource to individuals in shaping a Rule of Life. Each triangle is a system of mutual influence in which the elements strengthen and impact the other elements.

The starting place for this model is what the Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 1978 spoke of as pattern of life: "This inextricable fusion of worship, of doctrine, and of action constitutes the distinctive contribution the churches of the Anglican Communion desire to make to the Universal Church of God in Jesus Christ." Martin Thornton points to it in *The Rock and the River* and in his description offers a process and systems perspective: "Moral action only flows from doctrinal truth by grace and faith, that is through prayer"

Christian Life is life lived in Christ: "Christ in us and we in him." Christ comes to us and we seek Christ in worship, doctrine and action. Each is a pathway into a transformation of life, directed toward our union with the heart, mind and work of Christ; directed and our becoming a "new creation."

Worship, doctrine and action are the means by which we participate in the life of Christ's Body, the Church, in her unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. They are the means by which we participate in the Church's mission, "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." We are restored to unity, with God, others and ourselves as we are drawn into the prayer of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the work of Christ. In prayer, study, and work we become instruments of his holy mission. Through his baptized people he shares his life and draws all people to himself.

The parish as a corporate body can live these essentials of Christian life and ministry so that it becomes a "holy environment," a setting in which God's people may seek after him and find him.

From *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A. Gallagher, 2006 and *Power from on High: A Model for Parish Life and Development*, 1982