

The Sanctification of All

Parish Educational Design



We are to be transformed, consecrated, made sacred to his creative purpose; and so fulfill the meaning of our life.

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Introduction

This design describes a process in which people engage three activities:

1. Being interviewed about their spiritual life
2. Exploring their spiritual life as they reflect on the interview and learn a way to think about the dynamics of their spiritual life (using the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle)
3. Considering ways to improve their spiritual practice (spiritual discipline, rule of life)

This process has two primary goals:

1. Help individuals accept responsibility for their spiritual life. Deepen understanding of what nurtures them and support the development of a full, disciplined, and mature spiritual life. This is not a “should,” as in “everyone in this parish should develop a mature spiritual life.” In any healthy parish it will be the most apostolic, along with the most compulsive (in a façade form), that will do this. We don’t want to create a climate of blame around maturity; we do want to acknowledge the fact that some are more disciplined and mature in their practice.
2. Strengthen the core of the parish. Through a slow building process, tilt the climate and tone of the parish toward increased health and faithfulness. This includes building awareness in a critical mass of parishioners that the parish’s primary task is the formation of Christians in the Anglican tradition.

Interview Process

This process has been used as a major intervention in parishes to:

- Help leaders better understand the congregation
- Strengthen the relationship of spiritual guidance and support among members
- Get spiritual life and its development onto the parish’s agenda and into the minds of many members

- Provide a starting point for further work in assisting people to establish a rule of life, or spiritual discipline
- Focus a critical mass of people on the primary task of a parish church

Interviews are not only a data-gathering process, but are also system interventions. They are not neutral; they affect the people being interviewed and those doing the interviewing. Interviewers need to have an adequate degree of emotional maturity to be able to listen without judgment, without turning the interview into an opportunity to teach, and without making it about themselves.

The method described may also be used in an expanded process that includes a significant portion of a congregation's members. This is a relatively easy way to engage a number of people in an exploration of their spiritual life while in the same action to begin to establish a parish culture more oriented toward the primary task.

In any approach used there are three broad things to accomplish:

1. ***Stimulate*** – Provide activities that will capture people's energy and interest. For most people the interview process does that. It allows people to tell their own story in a safe, yet challenging, way.
2. ***Use for learning*** – The purpose is for people to learn something. This includes providing structure and a means of reflecting around a desired learning objective, as opposed to simply having members participate in an experience. In the context of spiritual life, we are looking for an increased sense of personal responsibility, greater knowledge about the traditions of and purpose of the parish church, and a deeper sense of competence and ownership, and of the array of options available, in making decisions about one's own spiritual development. There are at least two elements to this. The first is providing an opportunity for people to share with others, and in so doing to explore, their responses in the interview process. For most people this is likely to be a reflective and energizing experience. The second is to provide people with the model that was used as the foundation for creating the questions. The model we are using here is the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle.ⁱ
3. ***Move toward increased internal commitment*** - Internal commitment comes out of genuine choice. Genuine choice requires understanding what options are available and then having the opportunity to experiment with them and build some skill.

A few things to pay attention to that will likely support these objectives include:

- Allowing those participating to have their own experience and feelings. Avoid telling people what they “should” do, think, or feel. At the same time, people need opportunities to stretch a bit beyond what they already know.
- Provide information on the tradition and about the nature of spiritual discipline. Avoid telling people they should “do whatever feels comfortable.” Let people explore the options available to them and the responses those options generate in them.
- Give people an opportunity to do something (e.g., reflect on their own spiritual life and times when they have been instruments of God’s love in the world; say the Office for a period of time, after learning some options for how to do that; have them actually cross themselves or actually genuflect, etc., etc.).
- Now provide structured opportunities for reflection on the experience. What was that like for you? How could you incorporate this into your own spiritual practice? What do you feel drawn to in this experience? What feels like more of a stretch? How would stretching a bit improve your spiritual life? What would you like to try next? It is in the disciplined reflection on experience that we actually tend to learn something.

Preparation for the interviews

A good preparation for interviewing is to have someone else interview you with the same questions you will ask others.

Interview Questions

1. What are the major pressures, demands and expectations in your life?
2. How do they impact you?
3. How do you work at maintaining adequate equilibrium in the face of these expectations, demands and pressures?
4. How are you an instrument of God’s love in daily life?
5. How do you renew yourself emotionally and physically?
6. How do you renew yourself spiritually?
7. How does your practice of Christian faith help or hinder you in the areas noted below?

- a. Maintaining equilibrium in the face of the expectations, demands, and pressures
 - b. Emotional/physical renewal
 - c. Spiritual renewal
8. How does your practice of Christian faith relate to the arenas of your daily life?

Steps in Conducting the Interviews

#1 Workshop Approach

Bring together a group specifically for this purpose. In a daylong workshop complete interviews, the exploration of the Renewal—Apostolate Model, and work on a spiritual discipline.

#2 Visit in Home Approach

1. Recruit nine people willing to do the project.
2. That initial group does the interviews with its members—possibly do in groups of three; move around the circle with each participant having an opportunity to interview, be interviewed and observe.
3. Debrief the interviews first in the groups of three and then in the larger group. What went well? What needs work?
4. More interviewing: Have each of the nine interview three new people outside of the initial session. You will now have a total of 36 people involved.
5. Invite everyone who has been interviewed to a 2 1/2 - 3 hour session to explore the interviews

Improving Understanding: Exploration Session & Follow-Up

1. Explore the interviews, perhaps by sharing in small groups
2. Present the Renewal—Apostolate Cycle. This is to provide a theoretical undergirding for what participants talked about in the interviews.
3. Q&A and/or have the participants complete a brief worksheet using the Renewal—Apostolate

Examining & shaping your spiritual life

1. Provide a process with worksheets making it easy for participants to assess their current spiritual practice and shape a rule of life to experiment with.
2. Provide a follow up session on improving spiritual practice. Serves as a check-in on experiences with rule of life, continues the momentum, and

- provides an opportunity to reflect carefully on what has happened so far and to make changes, as needed.
3. Offer a Lenten check-in session every Lent. Use a similar process of assessment and identifying what rule of life they would like for the coming period of time.

Related Resources & Considerations

Variations

1. Do slowly over several years.
2. Begin only with the priest. For example, the priest visits a parishioner and asks permission to have a conversation in which the priest asks the person about his or her spiritual life.
3. Include a unit within the parish's core foundations program.

Supplemental Material

These processes can all be enriched or amended by the use of additional material or exercises.

Here are two possible examples.

Use of MBTI

The addition of the Meyers Briggs (MBTI) lens can provide another layer through which to consider spiritual life and practice. If the parish has had an opportunity to use Type and learn a bit about it, a number of helpful explorations emerge. What spiritual expressions are certain Types most drawn to and nurtured by? What expressions may provide an opportunity to stretch and grown? How are those expressions found in the spiritual life of the individual? Of the parish as a whole?

Use of Spiritual Lifeline

Similarly, the creation of a spiritual lifeline can provide a rich opportunity for reflection and easily supplements the basic process laid out above. One way to approach this is to give participants paper and ask them to place it sideways (landscape orientation). Then ask them to "draw a line that represents your relationship with Christ and the church from your birth up until the present."ⁱⁱ[ii] Have participants discuss in small groups and ask them to share what they'd like to share.

Now ask a second-level question such as: “Who are the people that most influenced you in regard to being a Christian,” “What was the most significant event or period in your formation as a Christian?” “Looking at the spiritual lifeline you’ve drawn, where are the points that shaped your heart and mind, that made you salt and light?” Give people a chance to answer for themselves and then ask them to share what they’d like in the small groups. This is now a terrific time to transition into presenting the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle.

Adjunct and Complementary Actions

The interview process described in this design is based on two core assumptions: (1) that organizations must focus substantial energy on the strategic implementation of their primary task; and (2) that the primary task of the parish church is nurturance of the Renewal—Apostolate Cycle. Another way of describing this is that the parish’s primary task is to form Christians in the Episcopal tradition.

Parishes do well to pay significant attention to creating a healthy oscillation between conscious reliance on God and renewal of baptismal identity in parish worship, education, and community life, and sub-conscious reliance on God in the matters of daily life. The latter is where we are salt and light in the world to the extent our minds and hearts have been shaped by the former.

If that understanding of the parish’s basic work is shared, it will affect the development of formation activities and the way the church approaches resource allocation. We think there is great value in stacking your resources where they will do the most good. This means putting energy into doing a few important things very well. It also means leveraging the impact of your efforts by working from within an integrated framework—how do your formation efforts complement and build on one another?

Following are some ways to build on the work begun with the interview process.

- Improve Sunday morning generally and the Sunday Eucharist in particular. Build competence for worship in the congregation and create worship that is full, rich, graceful and beautiful.
- Offer a foundations course in Anglican spirituality. Provide experiential and participative ways to engage the core spiritual practices, including Eucharist, Office, Reflection, Community and Service. See *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life* for more information. Course designs are available to accompany the book.
- Develop ways to welcome and incorporate newcomers such that they make a few social connections right away and that their entry point is connected to deeper understanding of the church’s spiritual life.

See <http://www.congregationaldevelopment.com/improving-the-sunday-eucharist/> for additional information on all of the above.

- Yearly Lenten check in. Annual opportunity to reflect generally on spiritual discipline and rule of life, as well as to enter more fully into a “holy Lent.”
- Series of sermons or teachings related to: Renewal—Apostolate Cycle and the fact that the primary ministry of the baptized is in daily life, with family and friends, in the workplace, and in civic life.
- Session focused on the workplace and how our baptismal identity influences and supports our work, comes into conflict with it, and presents opportunities and challenges.

Begin with What’s Easy to Do

Start in places that are both strategic and “easy.” That could include working with groups of people of apostolic faith in mutual spiritual guidance and exploring their vocation in the family, workplace and civic life. Other ideas are to train the congregation for participation in the Eucharist, and to begin using the Daily Office during the week. A bit more involved is to build and maintain an adult foundations course. The central idea is to work with promising areas and to begin in the places of health, strength and success.

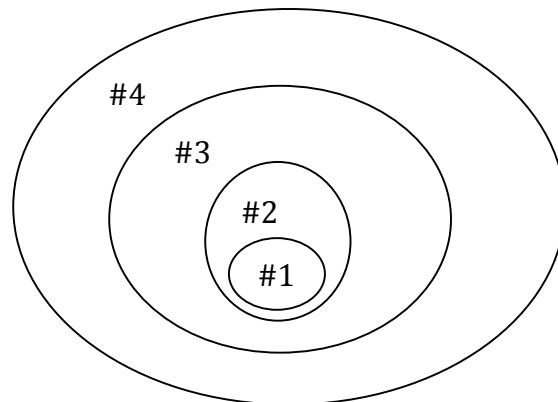
Develop initiatives or interventions unlikely to cause much resistanceⁱⁱⁱ. Consider:

- An activity people don’t *have* to participate in. Change the Liturgy on Sunday and it impacts everyone and is likely to produce more resistance. Offer Evening Prayer every weeknight and it overtly affects only those who want to attend. Over time, the saying of the Office will influence the Sunday Eucharist.
- Activities that don’t require a critical mass of support or high levels of internal commitment to get started. These include things that are within the priest’s assumed scope of initiation—adult education, mid-week worship, spiritual development. Clergy who have given lay committees the impression that they control such areas have made a serious mistake. It’s fine to include people in these areas as long as that doesn’t create a bottleneck.

The Shape of the Parish: An Exercise

I want to begin by asking you to complete an exercise. My experience is that it provides the base you will need to understand and use the model. This is an assessment of your parish. Please follow the steps below:

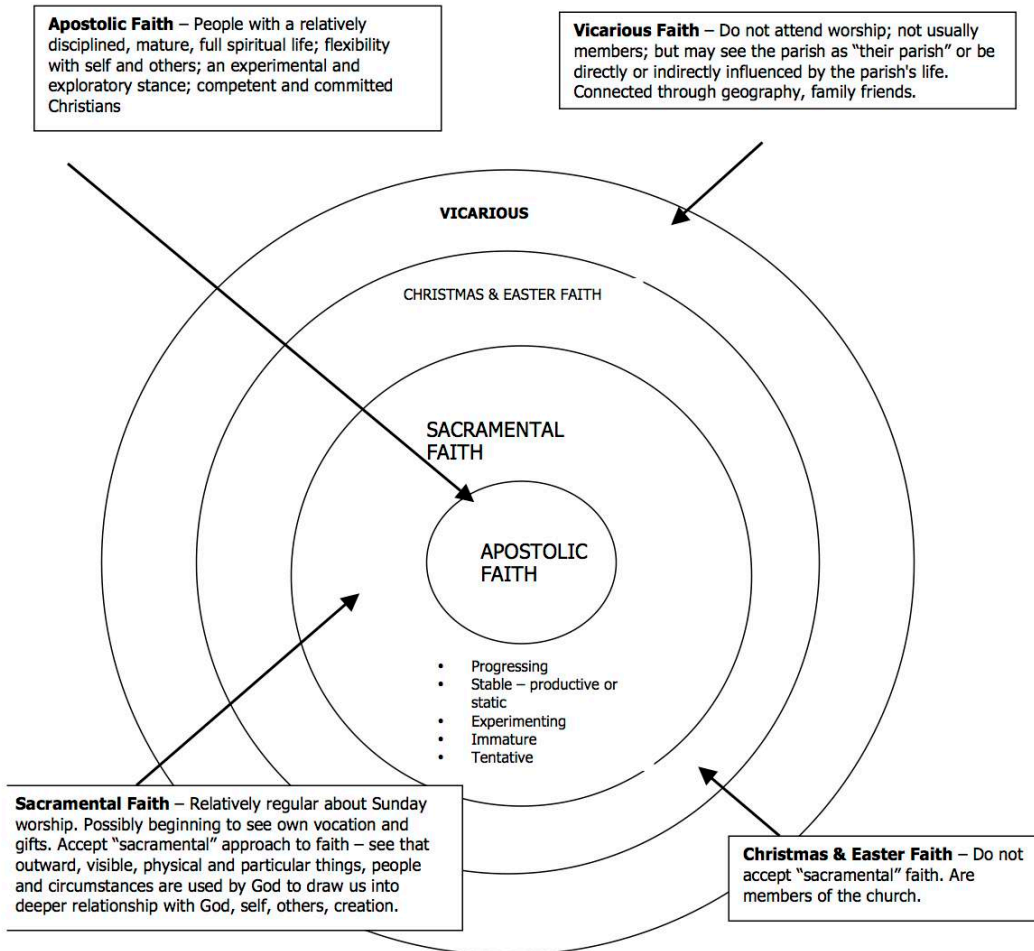
1. Using the circles below—in circle #2 put your parish's average adult Sunday attendance. Be sure to include all acts of corporate worship from Saturday evening through Sunday evening. For the most part these are the people you see frequently and regularly. They may range from weekly to every few weeks in their participation in the Eucharist.
2. In circle #3 first put the parish's adult attendance at Christmas or Easter.
 - Then subtract the number you have placed in circle #2. Put the result in circle #3
 - This makes up those people who related to the church primarily through the major holidays; also possibly through family occasions such as baptisms, weddings and burials.
3. In circle #4—you will not place a number here. Instead, make a few specific notes of ways in which people relate to the parish but don't ever attend the regular corporate worship of the church (may come to worship related to the occasional family obligation). It may be people who are connected through family who are members or because they are part of a group that makes use of the property or are in some way served by the parish, etc. You may be able to name some of these people.
4. In circle #1—write the number of those that you see as having a deep, mature faith & practice.
5. Then subtract that number from what you have in circle #2. Place that number in circle #2 in place of the earlier number.



The numbers now in the various circles represent "the shape of the parish". Explore ways to relate what you've done in the exercise with the one page handout on the model.

Copyright Robert A. Gallagher, 2008 For more on the model see Robert Gallagher's *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Ascension Press, late 2008

The Shape of the Parish: A Diagram Overview



The model can be used:

- To assess the health of a parish, and
- In developing a strategy that deepens the parish’s spiritual life, while staying open the various places people are in their faith journey.

Copyright “Shape of the Parish” Diagram -- Robert A. Gallagher/Mary Anne Mann, 1983; Revised RAG 1999, 2003 For more on the model see Robert Gallagher’s *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Ascension Press, 2008

More on Shaping the Parish

“The ‘Shape of the Parish’ is a critical mass theory. Critical mass theories are used by many Organization Development practitioners. The model suggests building the level of commitment, competence and emotional maturity at the center of the organization so that it grounds the system in a mission orientation and an organizational culture that supports the mission. The grounding then is enlivened; made real in the lives of men and women. It’s in the habits of people rather than statements of leaders.

Critical mass models draw the attention of leaders away from obsessing about “fixing” the problems and dysfunction at the edges and toward building the center. We can all too easily find our attention drawn toward the “difficult people” or those who constantly demand personal attention. A critical mass model suggests that we give much more of our time and energy to developing the center by equipping those already of Apostolic Faith and those ready to move in that direction. (*Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008, p. 125)

“When a parish has a healthy and productive Shape you see a definite movement. People are drawn into a deeper relationship with God and the church. There is a sense of spiritual movement in the parish.” (*Fill All Things*, p. 142) Leaders are establishing two dynamics at the center in shaping the parish. They are the deep underlying assumptions that provide the base for a healthy parish culture. The parish church is about forming people for “real life;” for maturity in Christ. It is developing in women and men a taste for life in what John Macquarrie saw as “a commonwealth of free, responsible beings united in love.” Secondly, the parish is about engaging “an energy not its own.” Formation isn’t about creating perfect, sinless people. It is about connecting us to the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Fill All Things*, p. 156)

General Comments on Nurturing Growth

1. The core pastoral strategy is to **accept** people where they are *and* to **invite** them to move beyond where they are.
2. Individual growth often comes in leaps (e.g., a person may move quickly from Experimenting to Progressing to Apostolic Faith).
3. Foundations are important. At times there is a desire to grow, or there may be deep feeling about God and/or the church. Such feelings can be the pastor's opening to invite the person into a setting where the needed base is offered. That foundation in spiritual life or knowledge may serve the person ten years later when they are prepared to move more deeply into the relationship with God and the church.
4. Address the gaps that people live in. The gap may be between the person’s intentions and the impact of their behavior on others. There may be gaps of understanding more common to some forms of faith than others. The “Believing-Belonging” gaps may be especially strong in people of Vicarious and C&E Faith. The

gap between faith and daily life may be common in the phases of Vicarious, C&E and early Sacramental faith.

5. New members need special attention. They may be people transferring from other parishes who already live an Apostolic or Stable Sacramental Faith. They might be C&E or people who for some reason have decided to begin attending. Or they could be people with almost no religious background, without any connection to the parish, who have just decided to "try it." Often these people may come with a good bit of emotional intelligence, a strong longing, and good intentions but lack foundational practices. There is the potential that they might move quickly into a progressing expression of Sacramental faith."

(Fill All Things, page 135)

Shape of the Parish and "The Sanctification of All"

In seeking opportunities to accept people where they are *and* invite them to go deeper, we support a climate in the parish that is tilted toward those of Apostolic faith. We hope to set loose an energy that draws others toward the center while nurturing those who are there. This energy is attractive, not compulsive or coercive.

The process laid out here is well-suited to members in many different places on the Shape of the Parish model. Those of a more tentative or immature Sacramental faith—especially those in an experimenting place—may find opportunities to move to greater stability. Those seeking *some* connection, *any* connection, may find themselves considering anew the role of the parish in their life and the importance of their own decision to belong. This is a critical first step in faith formation. Those already in the Apostolic core may find their faith deepened and renewed and may also gain new insight into their own capacity to serve as a kind of anchoring presence in the parish, as well as in daily life.

A key element of any parish strategy is to offer enough opportunities to support those ready to go deeper. Many people know they are seeking "something," but they may have little or no idea what that is. The parish, as the only organization that exists specifically to nurture baptismal identity and purpose, does best when it focuses not on elaborate programming or the volume of activities offered. Rather, the parish fulfills its mission when it provides ample opportunities for worship that is beautiful, dignified, graceful; when it helps its members understand the role of Rule in creating structure and supporting a balance between nurture and challenge, between rest and growth; when it expands the understanding of community as the Body of Christ and helps each of us see our own membership in that Body.

A healthy parish shape includes a whole parish shape. It is a distortion of the model to expect everyone to be Apostolic. Similarly, it is a distortion of the model to say that there is no shape—that we're all the same. A parish where the priorities and inclinations of the Apostolic are foundational is a parish that both builds on and supports the development of the Apostolic, and it is one that contains many rooms—including rooms for the Christmas & Easter people, the Vicarious, the tentative, the stable, and the immature.

An Intervention Theory

The following is largely based on the work of Chris Argyris in *Intervention Theory and Method*. It can be seen as the underlying “process outcomes” the consultant is seeking in an intervention, i.e., valid and useful information, free choice, and internal commitment.

The base of the model is at the bottom of the chart.

Internal Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target is for as many people as possible to have a high level of commitment to the option that was chosen. • A high ownership and feeling of responsibility. That people are acting under the influence of internal decision rather than external forces. • More likely to hold over time and under stress • Open to re-examination (our commitment to “valid and useful information” may bring new information and new choices)
Free Choice	<p>The task is for the client to select the option with the highest probability of succeeding (within cost limits). The process needs to enable that choice to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on an exploration of options • Voluntary, not from habit or coercion • Proactive, not reactive
Valid & Useful Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information that can be publicly verified; that can be tested with a broad range of people; that can be openly gathered and discussed. • Is useful in the sense that something can be done with it to effect change

The theory assumes that one element builds on the other. The more the information is valid and useful, the more likely the free choice, the more there is truly free choice, the more likely there will be internal commitment.

The theory also assumes that the consultant is not just trying to help the client solve a particular problem or engage a specific opportunity; but is also concerned with two other matters:

- That people end up with high internal commitment to the direction, and
- That the organizational culture is enabled to increasingly value and have the ability to generate valid and useful information, encourage free choice, and seek internal commitment.

There is a tension in an intervention between addressing the opportunity or problem at hand and pursuing the values in this intervention theory. Organizational leaders may decide to give more attention to one need over the other because of time limits, financial costs or due to holding different values.

Intervention Theory and “The Sanctification of All”

The process we’ve described contains all the elements of sound intervention theory. It begins with several forms of “valid and useful information.” This includes the actual experience and feelings of those participating and the wealth of data that proceed from the interview process and the subsequent explorations.

The process also provides valid information about practices and traditions that go beyond the experiences and preferences of the individual, and which may also go beyond the practices of a given parish. In describing the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle, we give many members new insight into why the parish church exists and the role it plays in our lives.

We also expand the awareness of leaders who may naturally tend to focus on the bureaucratic needs of the institution (a worthy, necessary and unavoidable endeavor) while sometimes losing sight of the primary task. This process can provide a helpful way to access both/and approaches—we need to pay the bills, maintain the building, deal with resource constraints, *and* we need to remember that we exist to form people in Christ.

Out of the information that surfaces, participants have an opportunity to make informed choices. We share with participants what a mature spiritual discipline looks like and ask them to reflect on that information in light of their own spiritual practice. The focus is not on what anyone “should” do, but on the possibilities available and the paths taken by many others over many, many years. This is useful information.

Kids playing little league have coaches; so do professional baseball teams. The coaching is geared toward where the players are and where they hope to go. The coach helps focus the player on the task at hand. What skills are needed? Which do you have and which do you need to develop to be effective? How do the different players bring their gifts together? What compensations are needed after realistically assessing individual and team weaknesses?

We’ve also all seen bad coaching. The dad working with fifth grade baseball players who acts as if a major league scout is in the stands and the kids’ careers are in jeopardy every time they miss a pop fly. Or the coach who keeps affirming failure (“Good job, Bobby! You almost hit it!”) without also providing information about proper stance, timing, visual attention, and the arc of the swing.

The coaching analogy holds true as we apply it to helping people reflect on and develop their own spiritual lives. We’re not all in the same place, we don’t all know the same things, and it’s no kindness to pretend there aren’t traditions, practices, and methods known to be effective in developing spiritual maturity. All of these are forms of valid and useful information.

It's also important that the process keep its experimental tone. In developing a Rule of Life, we hope to support flexibility, openness, and a willingness to pay attention to what works and what doesn't, what builds and feeds us now versus what will build and feed us in the future.

A capacity to make informed choices and build our competence also increases our commitment to our choices. This commitment makes it more likely that we will persist when things become difficult, or we feel pressured by both the usual and unusual stresses of our lives. Similarly, a capacity to take responsibility for regular reflection on how things are working and knowing that we have the freedom and the skill to innovate as needed and to adjust as serves us, helps reinforce our commitments. The parish serves its members by providing these opportunities for regular reflection and consciously attending to the cycle between Renewal and Apostolate.

The Three-Interview Process © Robert A. Gallagher, 1996, 2011. This document draws on Robert A. Gallagher's *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, 2008, and Michelle Heyne's *Teaching Spiritual Practice: An Experiential Approach to Christian Formation and Parish Development*, 2012.

ⁱ See Chapter 1 of *Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*, Robert A. Gallagher, OA, Ascension Press, 2008.

ⁱⁱ If people ask questions about the how or what, encourage them to turn the paper sideways so they have enough room and also repeat the instructions—a line that represents their relationship. There's not a "right" way to do this.

ⁱⁱⁱ A word of warning: these are *supposed* to be easy. If you find that your introduction of any of these elements is generating unexpected or serious resistance (and we don't mean the perennially indignant person who objects that the parish should instead be solely focused on her own pet service project or that it's wrong to do it on a night she can't attend), that's a sign that something else is going on. Pay attention! Resistance to these kinds of formation initiatives can signal deeper conflicts in the congregation or something off in the relationship between the rector and the members. Consider getting some feedback from a knowledgeable third-party who understands congregational dynamics and conflict management. If that is what's going on, it's likely to get worse without thoughtful, skilled intervention.