

Ascetical reflection: individualism and community/commitment

There are three elements to this reflection. Please complete the questions in each. Bring these materials with you to the Parish Development Clinic.

Individualism and Community/Commitment

The end, we have seen reason to believe, would be a commonwealth of free, responsible beings united in love. John Macquarrie

What do we mean by the resurrection of the body?

We mean that God will raise us from death in the fullness of our being, that we may live with Christ in the communion of the saints.

The Catechism

What is the mission of the Church?

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

The Catechism

In terms of helping your parish manage the polarity of individualism – Community/Commitment

1. Does one of the above draw you more than the others?
2. How might you use it? – in preaching, coaching spiritual practices?

Privatization of spirituality

Today meditation and 'spirituality' are being offered as commodities, as products of the social order, but as leisure-time activities which have no effect upon society. Spirituality has become 'privatised', banished to the private sector of life. Yet the future of our society is inextricably bound up with the future of the human spirit. The beginnings of our modern society were marked by the subversive contemplative spirit of St Thomas More. More's Utopia (1516) is still extraordinarily topical, and, already in the sixteenth century, he is critical of the new order for its monopolies, its rising prices, and its increased unemployment. The new economic order which emerged involved the dissolution of the monasteries and the rejection of monasticism as a perversion of human nature.

True spirituality is not a leisure-time activity, a diversion from life. It is essentially subversive, and the test of its genuineness is practical. Discipleship involves a real transformation of character. What are the fruits? The prophets saw the closest link between spirituality and ethics. So Ezekiel describes 'the man who is righteous and does what is just and right'.

He oppresses no man, he returns the debtor's pledge, he never robs. He gives bread to the hungry, and clothes to those who have none. He never lends either at discount or at interest. He shuns injustice and deals fairly between man and man. (Ezek. 18.16-17)

True Prayer, Kenneth Leech

1. How do you see the privatization of spirituality in your parish?
2. Our assumption is that while individualism & community are a polarity to manage, the privatization of spirituality is a distortion of true religion. What are a few corrective actions you could take in the parish to address that? Especially practices to train and coach people in so they experience Christian spiritual life as central to life (if only for the moment).

Action, Doctrine, Prayer

Thornton writes, “Moral action only flows from doctrinal truth by grace and faith, that is through prayer.”

In relation to individualism and community/commitment:

1. What is the “doctrinal truth”?

What are we to preach and teach as the truth?

2. What does “moral action” look like?

In daily life? To be practiced in the parish community?

3. What forms of prayer/spiritual practice facilitate the flow from doctrine to moral action?

What are we to train and coach people to do? What practices are at the center, most important, to be encouraged for all? What are practices that may be helpful, are not central, and may vary by temperament and circumstances?