Distorting tendencies

There are several ways in which the parish can cut across (i.e., sabotage, distort, block, become a barrier to) people's Renewal-Apostolate Cycle? There is not any way for a parish to avoid having some of these tendencies present in its life. They are part of the larger social and religious culture. We absorb them. Our awareness of those that are most strongly present in our own parish allows us to better understand parish dynamics and take constructive action.

Assess your own inclination and your parish's – 3 is high, I is low

Distorting tendency	**My parish**	**Self** – I have some inclination towards it
1. The parish gives the impression, that the world doesn't matter. There may be a protective or sentimental piety involved. It's as though we are stuck on the renewal side of the cycle.		
2. The parish has a fearful spirit. The fears generated by daily life have an emotional upper hand. The irrational reactivity of the world has a grip on people, e.g., feeling safe by getting SUV's that are big but role over, intincting at communion to avoid illness when we know that to be the most dangerous practice, etc. The parish may facilitate a form of unproductive dependency.		
3. The parish seems to imply that our task is to force the society to conform to "Christian" views. The language of the parish may have an over-and-against quality; sermons and newsletter articles attack the "secular" culture and there is an angry undercurrent.		
4. The parish functions as a place to reinforce and support already established and safe religious views. There is little challenge to the culture or conventional religious views.		
5. The parish operates as a reinforcer of secularism; gives the impression that this world is all there is, that there is really no need for renewal beyond oneself. The focus is on achievement in this life, here and now. It may take on an activist stance for many good works of service and justice. It may have a stance that is wrapped around a desire for financial success or social status.		
6. The parish becomes just another demand upon people for their energy, money and time. Parish life seems hectic and overly busy. There is pressure on people to take part in parish activities; e.g., to serve on the vestry, attend the pot luck dinner. There may be a weak sense of the centrality of participation in the Sunday Eucharist, i.e., a productive message might be "It is okay to come to the 7:30 Eucharist, participate in the daily prayer of the church, give financially according to your means, participate in an occasional parish town meeting; and to never serve on a vestry, teach church school, come to social events, or be on a committee.		
7. The parish has a climate that helps people avoid their deeper and broader self.		
8. The parish doesn't challenge people's being captured by the demands and expectations of workplace, family and civic life. It may even encourage them, e.g., a workaholic behavior, or an idolizing of the family, or a restless activism about social justice.		
9. Gives the impression that the apostolate in the parish is of more value than the apostolate in the world, e.g., on the parish web site there is a lot of mention of activities and people that serve the parish's life and there is little or no mention of the apostolate in the daily life of the laity at work, in civic activities, and with family and friends. This may reflect a condition in which people don't fully enter into the renewal end of the cycle.		