



## SESSION H

### Social Analysis: Engaging the Pastoral Circle

#### RATIONALE/GOAL:

Social Analysis is a way of reflecting critically on our experience in order to gain insight and decide future action. This session will help us reflect on our experiences of working for justice, critically analyze the underlying causes of the problems that require our work in the first place, explore this situation in the light of our faith, and respond to the call to action that emerges from this process.

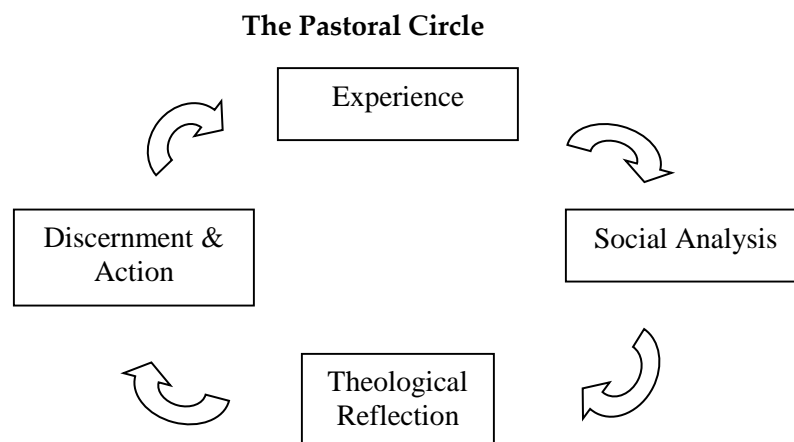
#### OPENING PRAYER:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Open my eyes to see clearly this world of ours.  
Give me the courage to look at the pain and injustice.  
Help me as well to see the hope,  
And grant me the grace to respond in your name.  
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.*

--From A Retreat with Oscar Romero & Dorothy Day

#### PROCESS:

Select a particular marginalized person or group in your city or neighborhood and reflect on that experience of injustice. Allow time for everyone to reflect silently on each step of the pastoral circle, and then discuss your reflections. Discuss how you might get involved as a community and record any agreed upon action steps.



1. *Describe the Experience* (begin to tell the story)
  - ◆ Reflect on an experience of someone in your city / neighborhood who faces oppression. Who is the person? What is her or his story? Be as specific as you can about the details? Notice the language and feelings that emerge as you paint a picture of the encounter.
  - ◆ What was the experience from your point of view? Who was involved? What was the injustice that was being perpetrated in this experience?
  
2. *Begin Social Analysis* (a way to get at the structures / systems)
  - ◆ Why do you think this person is in this situation? What is really going on?
  - ◆ What are the political, economic, or social systems that contribute to the situation?
  - ◆ What people or structures benefit from this situation? Who is hurt by the situation?
  - ◆ What facts do you know about the impact of these systems on the experience / situation? What do you need to know more about?
  - ◆ How does your own power and privilege impact the interaction? For whom was it used?
  - ◆ Are there any community resources/agencies that can help you better understand the social forces at work in this situation?
  - ◆ Stay with the hard questions! Don't be afraid to dig deeply into the "whys".
  
3. *Theological Reflection* (a way to get at the hope)
  - ◆ What does your faith tell you about this experience / situation of injustice?
  - ◆ What does your relationship with God tell you about what God sees when God views the situation? How might God feel about this situation (don't be afraid to speculate about God's feelings—trust your own experience of God's love to shape this response). What might God hope for everyone involved?
  - ◆ Can you think of a story from scripture that reminds you of this situation? How might this point to the hope that God is breaking into the world through this experience?
  - ◆ How is God inviting you to respond to this situation?
  
4. *Discernment & Action* (a way to keep moving and to address the situation)
  - ◆ How is God inviting you to become an even more just and loving person in response to this situation? What do you think you are called to do in light of (a) this particular situation; (b) the systems that create and sustain this situation; (c) what your faith says about the situation?
  - ◆ Think about what you are called to do today, at this time of your life in general, and what you are called to do for the rest of your life.
  - ◆ What are some concrete possibilities for action—short-term and long-term; individual and systematic? Begin to name these for yourself.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all, Loving God,  
in whom is heaven:*

*The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe  
The way of your justice be followed by all the peoples of the world  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth!*

*With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.  
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.*

*-- The Lord's Prayer from The New Zealand Book of Common Prayer*