

PASTORAL CIRCLE

January 2019

SOCIAL
ANALYSIS



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JANUARY AS A JV

The Basics:

Jesuit Volunteers are encouraged to sit in reflection about the encounters they have had thus far and to examine why situations occur as they do, why are people experiencing what they do? Jesuit Volunteers are asked to explore racial identity and racial justice as a lens to do social analysis and theological reflection.

What does it mean to take on an Ignatian approach of a “faith that does justice” and explore the ways the Catholic, Jesuit tradition supports the work of justice -- e.g. Catholic Social Teaching, Scripture and other elements of the tradition.





PASTORAL CIRCLE

A refresher:

Reflect back to Orientation where the pastoral circle is offered up as a resource and framework for moving about your JV experience.

Continue to seek new insights and reflections on the pastoral circle, with an emphasis on the discernment element of “judge.” And think through what the “action” draws out within you. For “action” emphasizes that the fruit of reflection and discernment is “right action,” and that JVs have a responsibility to put their faith into action.

In previous years, the emphasis has been on legislative advocacy. JVs are invited to consider this, as well as other ways that they can take action.

BABIES IN A RIVER PARABLE

One way to consider how the Pastoral Circle is actualized is to recall the story of babies in the river...

Once upon a time, there was a small village on the edge of a river. Life in the village was busy. There were people growing food and people teaching the children to make blankets and people making meals.

One day a villager took a break from harvesting food and noticed a baby floating down the river toward the village. She couldn't believe her eyes! She heard crying in the distance and looked downstream to see that two babies had already floated by the village. She looked around at the other villagers working nearby. "Does anyone else see that baby?" she asked.

One villager heard the woman, but continued working. "Yes!" yelled a man who had been making soup.

"Oh, this is terrible!" A woman who had been building a campfire shouted, "Look, there are even more upstream!" Indeed, there were three more babies coming around the bend.

"How long have these babies been floating by?" asked another villager. No one knew for sure, but some people thought they might have seen something in the river earlier. They were busy at the time and did not have time to investigate. They quickly organized themselves to rescue the babies. Watchtowers were built on both sides of the shore and swimmers were coordinated to maintain shifts of rescue teams that maintained 24-hour surveillance of the river. Ziplines with baskets attached were stretched across the river to get even more babies to safety quickly.

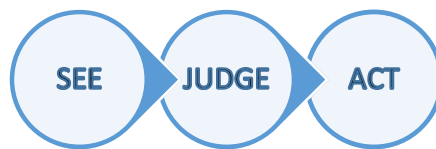
The number of babies floating down the river only seemed to increase. The villagers built orphanages and they taught even more children to make blankets and they increased the amount of food they grew to keep the babies housed, warm and fed. Life in the village carried on.

Then one day at a meeting of the Village Council, a villager asked, "But where are all these babies coming from?"

"No one knows," said another villager. "But I say we organize a team to go upstream and find how who's throwing these babies in the river."

Not everyone was in agreement. "But we need people to help us pull the babies out of the river," said one villager. "That's right!" said another villager. "And who will be here to cook for them and look after them if a bunch of people go upstream?"

FROM CATHOLIC ACTION TO THE PASTORAL CIRCLE



As a leader in addressing social injustice in the early twentieth century, Catholic Action's methodology of **See-Judge-Act** had its modern roots in Belgium. There Father (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn founded the Young Trade Unionists in 1919 (which became the Young Christian Workers in 1924). Cardijn taught this methodology of responding to social realities to members of these movements and emphasized its importance. Catholic Action movements—The Young Christian Workers, the Young Christian Students (college level), the Young Christian Students (high-school level), and the Christian Family Movement—all used the method developed by Cardinal Cardijn: **observe, judge, act**. The method was common in much of the Catholic social justice world.

Official papal affirmation came in 1961, when Pope John XXIII, in *Mater et Magistra*, no. 236, wrote:

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: **observe, judge, act** [emphasis added].

Pope Pius XII had used the formula earlier in 1957 in an address to the International Young Christian Workers (YCW) Pilgrimage to Rome.

The method and its name have survived the collapse of much of the Catholic Action movement. It is principally employed now by Basic Ecclesial Communities or Base Christian Communities (*comunidades de base*), who use this method today, usually in group processes. The methodology survives in much of the rest of the Church in Latin America and in documents of the Latin American bishops. Catholics in some other parts of the world also use the method. In addition, **see-judge-act** also underlies several of Pope Francis' encyclicals.

What may have inspired Catholic Action leaders to promote this approach? One prominent YCW leader looked to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas about the three acts which comprise *prudence*:

As early as 1946, the French Msgr. Emile Guerry, who had founded the YCW and specialized Catholic Action in the diocese of Grenoble before becoming archbishop of Cambrai, had praised the See Judge Act method as follows, relating it to the virtue of prudence:

All chaplains and leaders of Catholic Action should make a profound study of the marvelous tract of St. Thomas on Prudence. Prudence is essentially the virtue of action. With his keen psychology, St. Thomas analyzes the three acts which make up the exercise of prudence: to deliberate (the small inquiry, the interior counsel which one holds within himself); to judge; to act. Here we easily recognize practically the same three acts of the method of specialized Catholic Action: observe, judge, act.

Reference: <http://testimonies.josephcardijn.com/1946---la-prudence>

[Gigacz at: <http://cardijnresearch.blogspot.com/2014/10/see-judge-act-or-harvard-business-school.html>]

The Pastoral Circle

In the 1980 original booklet edition of *SOCIAL ANALYSIS: LINKING FAITH AND JUSTICE*, Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., of the Jesuit-founded Center of Concern posited four stages of what they called "the pastoral circle" and sometimes "the circle of praxis": **experience, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning**. They presented it as shown in the figure on this page.

Holland and Henriot specifically referenced the see-judge-act approach of Canon Cardijn as a comparable predecessor to their work. However, they emphasized the call in Church documents and meetings of concerned Catholics for social analysis that would respond to complex social realities in a more systematic fashion, one that recognizes the reality and power of social systems and structures. Their model also reflected the growth of the social sciences over the preceding decades, although the authors distinguished more academic, detached studies from a pastoral approach that “looks at reality from an involved, historically committed stance, discerning the situation for the purpose of action” [p.3]. Jesuit General Congregation 32 had explained earlier:



We cannot be excused from making the most rigorous possible political and social analysis of our situation. This will require the utilization of the various sciences, sacred and profane, and of the various disciplines, speculative and practical, and all of this demands intense and specialized studies. Nothing should excuse us, either, from undertaking a searching discernment into our situation from the pastoral and apostolic point of view. From analysis and discernment will come committed action; from the experience of action will come insight into how to proceed further.” [Our Mission Today, 1975, no. 44]

Cardijn had urged his followers to do more than just “look at” facts and figures. *The Pastoral Circle* does this in emphasizing personal experience of poverty and marginalization and social analysis. In judging, it engages in both social analysis and theological reflection; and Cardijn’s “action” becomes pastoral planning. The circle, however, adds the important point that the methodology is meant to be ongoing as each course of action brings new experience—an interplay of reflection and action over time.



Then, in the revised and enlarged 1984 book version of SOCIAL ANALYSIS: LINKING FAITH AND JUSTICE, *The Pastoral Circle* [opposite] was modified to replace “experience” with “insertion” and to put “experience” at the center of the circle in place of “praxis” with the four outer elements or “moments” in the pastoral circle described as “mediations of experience.”

Over the years the term “pastoral planning” morphed into the simple word “action” so that the four “moments” of *The Pastoral Circle* became **insertion or “immersion”** among those who are poor and marginalized, **social analysis** of their situation, **theological reflection** on what is understood, and **action** for social change. Widely used by many Catholic and other social activists, the circle continues to be promoted by Center of Concern and others.

Recently, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps adapted *The Pastoral Circle* further [below] by returning to use “experience” (arising from immersion) for the first “moment” and adding “discernment” between theological reflection and action, reflecting JVC’s encouragement of the practice of Ignatian discernment among volunteers. Henriot and Holland had considered social analysis to be integral to discernment: “Social analysis is simply an extension of the principle of discernment, moving from the personal realm to the social realm.” They likened it to the ways in which insights of psychology had been incorporated into the process of personal discernment over the years.



JVC's explicit naming of discernment as a separate moment in *The Pastoral Circle* might suggest the continuing importance of personal and communal spiritual discernment, accompanied by prayerful reflection, in conjunction with the larger discernment of social reality by individuals and organizations that explicitly use social analysis in reflection upon experience and action planning.

In the future, what other ways might *The Pastoral Circle* evolve and be adapted yet retain its crucial insights into the importance of immersion, social analysis, theological reflection, and action in a reiterative process to promote greater effectiveness for individuals and groups working for justice?

Fred Kammer, SJ, Jesuit Social Research Institute, June 20, 2018, Pastoral Circle-evolved-0618-cst