

SHARED VISIONS

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— A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers — presented by the people who bring you **Connections** —

Season's Greetings

Advent greetings from the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center! Welcome to part two of this year's four-part *Shared Visions* series on the Pastoral Circle. In our last issue, we introduced the Pastoral Circle as a tool for reflection and discernment regarding your volunteer experience. Then, we spent the issue exploring the first part of the circle: experience. Through a variety of articles and activities, we invited you to examine closely one or more of your experiences as a volunteer.

In part two, we move to the second part of the circle: social analysis. In social analysis, we take an even closer look at our experience, seeking to uncover the various values and social elements which are part of that experience.

As your time as a volunteer progresses, you might already be asking questions related to social analysis:

What is the relationship between your volunteer placement and the community where you are located? How



do you see gender, race, social class, and age impacting your work and the people you serve? Where does the Church fit into the social situations you are witnessing?

As you reflect on your work as a volunteer and your experience of this Advent season, we invite you to exam-

ine these experiences through the lens of social analysis.

In this issue, we offer a reflection on the consumerism that has become so much a part of the Christmas season, as well as ideas for simplifying your own holiday celebrations. We also offer ideas for applying social analysis to your worship and prayer lives: thoughts on the coming changes to the Mass and ideas about how to deepen your reading of the Advent Gospels by examining social issues in the texts. Our activity will give you the chance to assess your priorities this holiday season.

In the final two issues, we will move through the remaining portions of the Pastoral Circle: Theological Reflection and Pastoral Action. We hope these small offerings are a blessing in your Advent season. All of us at the Pallotti Center are thankful for your gift of service, at Christmas and always!

Analysis of Upcoming Liturgical Changes

In chapter 2 of their book *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. present three interpretative models of social change.

They name them the traditional, liberal and radical models. Each has an underlying governing principle and highest value. In the **traditional** model, the authoritarian principle is paramount, holding order and static resistance to change in high esteem.

The **liberal** model is more managerial in its approach, emphasizing balance and evolutionary change. The **radical** model, meanwhile, is highly participative and values community. The authors do not shy away from articulating their own personal bias for the liberal model.

Holland and Henriot state that these models of change are operative within the Church just as they are within the socioeco-

nomical and political arenas. The Church thrived while employing the traditional model in the 400 years between the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

For the past fifty years, the liberal model has been the prevailing principle surrounding the reception of the changes of Vatican II, especially here in the United States. The radical model has found its widest acceptance to date in the Latin

American Church of the late 20th century.

Holland and Henriot wrote their book in the early 1980s, but their analysis can easily be extended to consider the current liturgical changes coming to English-speaking Catholic parishes around the world on November 27, 2011 – the First Sunday of Advent.

One major change that is coming with the start of the new liturgical year is an

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Analysis and the Advent Narrative

In Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice (Center of Concern, 1992), authors Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. describe social analysis as the exploration of a society's elements, including "(1) the historical dimensions of a situation; (2) its structural elements; (3) the various divisions of society; and (4) the multiple levels of the issues involved."

Exploring these four elements as part of the Pastoral Circle is a helpful way to think about your volunteer experience. It can also be an enlightening way of looking at Scripture. To some, the idea of applying social analysis to Scripture may seem a bit cold, or even inappropriate. Holland and Henriot argue that, on the contrary, "Social analysis is simply an extension of the principle of discernment, moving from the personal to the social realm."

In personal discernment, we seek to understand more about our own lives so that we may better direct them toward God's will. In social analysis, we seek to understand more about a society so that we can work toward God's vision of peace and justice for that society.

Applying social analysis to Scripture can help us delve into Scripture more deeply, while also



building our social analysis skills. The lectionary readings for Advent are excellent choices for practicing social analysis, as they are familiar and rich with characters and social/community situations.

Take, for example, this year's reading for the fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18th: Luke 1: 26-38, the coming of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. Alone or in community, take some time to read this text and consider the four elements described above.

To aid in your analysis, look for a Bible that includes resources like maps, a dictionary, and historical information. Or, do some research in a local parish library or online. If you are part of a community, you might consider dividing up the four elements, with different people focusing on each one.

1) What is the historical situation in which Gabriel and Mary have their meeting? What was happening in Nazareth at this time?

How might these historical events have affected Mary before and after learning of her pregnancy? Why might God have chosen this particular time to send Jesus into the world?

2) What are the structural elements of Mary's society? How were Galilee and Nazareth governed? What other countries were important in the region? Who were the religious authorities? How did families live? How did the economic system work? Where did Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fit into those structures?

3) What are the divisions of Mary's society? How does our view of the story change when we consider elements like age, sex, race, religion, social class, or geography? How does the experience of Mary (a young, engaged woman) compare to the experience of Joseph (an older, engaged man) or Elizabeth (an old, married woman)?

4) Finally, consider the multiple levels of issues involved in the story. How does the angel's message affect local people, like Mary and her family? How will it affect people in Mary's region of Nazareth? How will it affect people across Mary's country? Around the world?



Simply

Christmas



Follow these 12 suggestions and make the holidays happy for one and all!

1. Make Christmas presents by hand – you can knit a scarf, paint a picture, create a collage of pictures, or write a poem.
2. Take an “advertising fast” – try to avoid commercials during the holidays by turning down the sound on your radio or television.
3. Avoid shopping at chain stores. Shop locally!
4. Instead of gifts, donate to the agency where you are serving or to the volunteer program you are a part of. You could also donate to charities serving those most in need (a few suggestions: Catholic Relief Services – www.crs.org, Amnesty International – www.amnesty.org; Catholic Charities USA – www.catholiccharitiesusa.org).
5. Ask your friends and family to donate to causes you are passionate about in place of giving you gifts.
6. Purchase gifts from justice-conscious organizations (a few suggestions: Fair Trade USA – www.fairtradeusa.org, HandCrafting Justice – www.handcraftingjustice.org, Ten Thousand Villages – www.tenthousandvillages.com).
7. Volunteer at a local soup kitchen on Christmas morning.
8. Witness the beauty of Christ’s birth by attending Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Mass. For a special experience, attend your local parish’s children’s liturgy and watch the joy of those children in attendance.
9. If you are going home for the holidays, share your experience so far with friends and family. Be aware that they may not understand what you are doing and why you are doing it, so be patient and open with them.
10. If you are staying in your volunteer city, take part in the local Christmas and New Year traditions.
11. If you are going home, bring back a recipe from your volunteer city to share with friends and family.
12. If you are staying in your volunteer city, incorporate your family traditions with those you are celebrating with to have a melting pot of experiences.

Resources for further reading...



Throughout this series of *Shared Visions* you’ll find themes regarding many spiritual topics including simple living.

Here is a list of works intended to help you grow as you delve deeper into the Pastoral Circle during your term of service.

Creating True Peace by Thich Nhat Hanh. 2003, Simon and Schuster

Diversity of Vocations by Marie Dennis. 2008, Orbis Books

How Much is Enough? By Arthur Simon. 2003, Baker Books

Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich by Robert Frank. 2008, Crown Publishing Group.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree by James Cone. 2011, Orbis Books.

The Irresistible Revolution by Shane Claiborne. 2006, Zondervan Publishing.

The Reverend Billy Project by Savitri D. and Bill Talen. 2011, University of Michigan Press

Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks by Jean Zaru. 2008, Fortress Press

Unwrapping Your Priorities

As you continue to reflect upon the elements of the Pastoral Circle while preparing for the coming of Christ, please take a few moments to complete the following activity as a way to better understand your blessings and challenges during this holiday season. Use the following questionnaire as a way to identify your priorities and clarify your attitudes toward family, friends, giving, receiving and praying during Advent and Christmas.

Directions: Assign a number from the following scale to each statement, based on how you feel. 5 – perfectly describes me; 4 – usually describes me; 3 – occasionally describes me; 2 – rarely describes me; 1 – never describes me.

- ___ 1. During the holidays, I feel overwhelmed by the number of things I have to do and the number of gifts I have to buy.
- ___ 2. I mostly look forward to eating all the holiday cooking – cookies, treats, and meals.
- ___ 3. During the Advent season I participate in traditional Advent prayers and reflect on how God plays a role in my life.
- ___ 4. I like to spend the holidays volunteering my time and I focus on helping the poor, homeless, and needy of our society.
- ___ 5. This time of year allows me to see the bigger picture and focus on the meaning of my life.
- ___ 6. During the holidays, I most enjoy spending quality time with my family.
- ___ 7. I have a difficult time focusing during the Advent season because of all the other things that surround me – Christmas shopping, sending out Christmas cards, decorating, attending holiday parties, etc.
- ___ 8. I feel stressed out and unbalanced during this time of year. I am short on patience and gain weight from all the eating. I struggle to really find time to relax.
- ___ 9. At Christmas I focus on being more peaceful and bringing the true Light of Christ to those around me.
- ___ 10. I buy cards and gifts in which the money is going strictly towards a charity or a socially responsible organization or corporation.
- ___ 11. While I enjoy all the music, social events, and gift exchanges, overall I feel a tremendous amount of hope, peace, and gratitude.
- ___ 12. As Christmas approaches, I can hardly wait to get together with old friends.

Identify your current focus. Take a look at your answers to the survey above and add up the scores you gave yourself for these pairs:

- Sum of 1 & 7: ___ Gift giver (focused on the materialistic side of the holidays)
Sum of 2 & 8: ___ Food lover (focused on the treats, meals, cookies, weight gain, etc.)
Sum of 3 & 9: ___ Spiritual seeker (focused on prayer and the role of God)
Sum of 4 & 10: ___ Policy maker (focused on social justice issues and making a difference)
Sum of 5 & 11: ___ Big-picture person (focused on feeling hope, peace, and gratitude)
Sum of 6 & 12: ___ People person (focused on family and friends during the holidays)

- Compare your scores for the six pairs of survey items. Which of the above phrases (food lover, gift giver, etc.) best describes your priorities right now?
- To what extent are you content with your current priorities?
- Would you like to shift your focus in any way during this holiday season? How so? (If you would like to shift, proceed to the next question...)
- Take action! What do you need to do to change your focus and get on track?

Called to Conversion

He wears a white suit with a black clerical shirt, has blonde hair and big crazy eyes. Backed by a gospel choir decked out in green robes, Reverend Billy and his Church of Stop Shopping, recently renamed the Church of Earthalujah, are on a mission from God to save us from our credit card debt and can be found fighting corporate greed and climate change anywhere two or three are gathered in those names.

The subject of the documentary “What Would Jesus Buy,” the self-proclaimed preacher is one part Jimmy Swaggart and one part political satire.

“I was living in Times Square and couldn’t figure out where I was. My neighborhood had turned into a mall,” the play-acting minister, whose real name is Bill Talen, said. “Small shops were being closed down, but here’s Mickey Mouse, here’s The Lion King and all these Disney industries. Nobody really goes there anymore except consumers.”

After being inspired by street preachers who seemed to relish roles as lone voices crying out in the urban jungle, “Reverend Billy” was born. He and a group of committed followers spend the Christmas season touring the United States driving demons out of Starbucks cash registers, encouraging patrons of the Mall of America to “put those Nike’s down,” attempting to



convince potential customers to leave Target parking lots in order to ward off the “Shopocalypse.”

Talen and his group are adamant that they don’t have the answer, but do have the question. They are also convinced that if people could reduce their consumption at Christmas, they could change the way they shop the rest of the year.

“We have to start our own church that isn’t about the retail moment,” Talen said. “There’s a quiet revolution happening everywhere, of people just rolling up their sleeves. They’re meeting their neighbors, they’re starting new businesses out of their garages

and station wagons.”

In the words of the Rev, Change-alujah!

For more information on Reverend Billy and the Church of Earthalujah, visit: <http://www.revilly.com/about-us>

Consider these questions as you explore the social analysis and theological reflection portions of the pastoral circle:

1. Reflect on your consumption habits before and after becoming a volunteer. Have those habits changed? How? If they have changed, how do you feel about those changes?

2. Has becoming a volunteer changed your ability to buy presents for friends and family? If so, how do you feel about that change? How do you think your family might react?

3. How has the economy changed in the last few years? What economic concerns (if any) do you have? What do the Gospels have to say about charity, justice, wealth, and salvation?

4. When was the happiest you have ever been? Why did you feel this way? What conditions does it take to “make you happy” now?

5. What is the best Christmas gift you have ever received? What is the most meaningful present you have ever given?

Web Exclusive : What is your Favorite Christmas Memory ?

My favorite Christmas memory came when I was seven years old. Being an avid Notre Dame fan and a believer in Santa Claus despite my classmate’s insistence on Santa not being real, I was sure that Santa would bring me a gold helmet for Christmas. I was told by my parents that this was a hard request for “Santa” to fulfill. As a child I was never able to sleep on Christmas Eve and I spent the night tossing and turning, wondering if the helmet would be under the tree. Finally, at about 5:30 a.m. I

woke the family up and my sister and I ran into the living room together.

The helmet, a new football and a toy gun were among the items under the tree. My parents still have pictures of me in a red robe, gold Notre Dame helmet and a replica of a bolt-action World War I rifle. Looking back I think I would take those items over an I-Pad any day.

—Adam Brown,
Program Director

In December 1990, my parents retired and moved from Boston to St. Petersburg, Florida – a city that they had never even visited

before then. I was a junior at Georgetown at that time, so I did not get to see them in their new home until Christmas Eve. That was my first tropical Christmas – Tampa Bay had temperatures in the high 90s and low 100s the entire three weeks I was home.

They broke all kinds of weather records. My parents seemed happy in their new rented apartment and I also found Tampa Bay to be a pretty comfortable place to visit. It was a Christmas filled with sand and surf rather than snow and ice, and that made it pretty special.

—Mike Goggin
National Director

**Merry
Christmas
from the
Pallotti
Center**



CHANGES (from pg. 1) emphasis on a more literal translation of the words of the liturgy from the original Latin. You will notice that the language is more formal and much less colloquial as the shift is made from dynamic equivalence (where the aim is to express the general thought pattern of the original in clear English) to formal correspondence (which attempts to make more of a word for word translation from the Latin.) Which of Holland and Henriot's three models do you see most at work in such a change?

In considering the coming changes, much emphasis has been placed on the fact that Pope John Paul II called for the publication of a new Roman Missal and that the changes in the English Mass will put us more in line with our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters – among others – who have, for example, been saying “And With Your Spirit” rather

than “And Also With You” in response to the priest's greeting “The Lord Be With You” for generations.

Using this evidence as data, do you think the Church is in the midst of a transition from one model of social change to another? If so, where do you see that change headed – from liberal to traditional? Traditional to radical? Radical to liberal? Beyond the liturgy, what other evidence would you offer for such a change taking place in the Church?

Some of you serving this year in Latin America are experiencing the vibrancy of *comunidades de base*. Back in the early 1980s, the authors viewed these base communities as a shining example of the re-creation of Church envisioned there. Thirty years on, the proponents of these base communities have weathered some sharply worded rebukes for the political and economic policies they sometimes ad-

vocated along with their views on Church.

Today, do you feel that these *comunidades de base* are on the margins of Church life or at the center of the Latin American Church? How does your answer compliment or contradict some of the evidence of a shift in models presented above?

The Pastoral Circle reminds us that our experience of these liturgical changes and the preceding analysis of them will not be complete without deep theological reflection and careful pastoral planning. The process reminds us that change is a constant of life. Why should our spiritual life be any less dynamic than that? Too fast for some and too long delayed for others, expect that this will not be the final word on changes in our liturgy. As Church leaders have proclaimed for generations, *lex orandi, lex credendi* – as the Church prays, so She believes.

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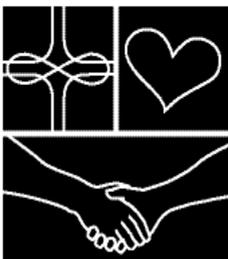
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The Mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers before, during, and after their term of service. The Center takes its inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850), who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary.

Shared Visions' goal is to explore five building blocks of spiritual development: intellectual growth, emotional and physical health, leadership and prayer.



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