

Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program – Diocese of Las Vegas Reading and Writing Assignments – Spring 2010

All readings should be done *before* coming to each month's session, if possible. Reading selections are taken from our textbooks, online sources, or other books available for purchase through the Office of Faith Formation. For updates and direct links to online readings, see <http://www.catholic-resources.org/LasVegas/LEMP.html>.

Monthly written reflections should be done *as soon as possible* after each session (so it's still fresh in your mind), *but then printed out and turned in at our next monthly session* (or email a copy to Fr. Felix Just, S.J., fjust2000@yahoo.com, if you will be absent). Please write *two or three* good paragraphs in response to *each* question listed below, for a total of about one full *single-spaced* page. All papers should be typed and include a *brief heading* (name, date, and topic).

Jan. 16-17, 2010 – Pastoral Skills & Competencies (with Lisa Nollette, B.A.)

Learning Objectives:

- To know yourself better; to be more aware of what you know, and what you don't know; to recognize which skills and competencies you have, and which ones you need to develop further to be a better pastoral minister.
- To come to know Jesus better, and to use him as a model for your own pastoral ministry; to develop habits of asking yourself, "What would Jesus do? How would Jesus treat the people I encounter in my ministry?"
- To develop better practical skills for pastoral ministry, including leadership, collaboration, communication, conflict resolution, self-care, planning & evaluation (see, judge, act), etc.

Reading Assignments:

- *Required:* Wilkie Au. *The Enduring Heart: Spirituality for the Long Haul*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.
- *Reread:* "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord" (USCCB, 2005) and "Encuentro and Mission" (USCCB, 2002), which were already on our reading list for Sept. 2008.

Written Reflections:

- 1) How am I already like Jesus, and in what ways am I *not yet* like Jesus? How can I become more Christ-like in my own life (in ministry, relationships, prayer, self-care, etc.)?
- 2) What pastoral skills do I need to develop more or better in order to be a better minister? How will I do this in the coming months and years? Please be concrete and specific.
- 3) [*Work with your group on the plans for your Final Project. Submit one proposal per group, not individually.*]

Feb. 20-21, 2010 – Church History (with Timothy Matovina, Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To have a clearer picture of the most important stages and periods of the 2000-year history of Christianity.
- To gain insight into the social, cultural, and political dynamics that affected the growth and development of the Catholic Church, and how the Church itself affected those dynamics as well throughout its history.
- To recognize and appreciate the interplay between the two contrasting dynamics affecting the Church at all times: the desire to maintain and conserve its Tradition, and the need to innovate and adapt to changing circumstances.

Reading Assignments:

- *Required:* Kevin L. Hughes. *Church History: Faith Handed On*. Catholic Basics. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.
- *Recommended:* Anthony P. Gilles, *People of God: The History of Catholic Christianity*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000.

Written Reflections:

- 1) What do I think were the two or three most important periods in the history of Christianity? Why these?
- 2) How do I react to learning about Church history? (with excitement, discomfort, boredom, resistance, fascination, etc.?) Why do I react in this way? When I reflect upon my reaction honestly, what do I come to know about myself?
- 3) How will learning more about Church history affect my own ministry? Please be concrete and specific.

March 13-14, 2010 – Catholicism & World Religions (with Fr. James Fredericks, Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the differences between Ecumenism (relations with other *Christian* churches and denominations) and Inter-religious dialogue (relations with *non-Christian* religions).
- To know the main beliefs and practices of the major world religions, their histories and geographical extent today.
- To grow in understanding of the complex relationships of Christianity with other world religions, and the especially close relationships with Judaism and Islam (the Western or monotheistic religions).
- To develop respect for insights that other religions can offer to Catholics, drawing upon both our similarities and our differences, in areas of theology, spirituality, ritual practices, etc.,

Reading Assignments:

- James Fredericks. *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions*. New York: Paulist, 1999.
- Documents of Vatican II: *Nostra Aetate / Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.
- *Catechism*: Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9, Paragr. 3: "The Church is Catholic" (par. 830-856).

Written Reflections:

- 1) Why and how are the relationships that the Catholic Church has developed with the Jews different from our relationships with most other world religions?
- 2) How would a better understanding of other world religions deepen my own Catholic faith and spirituality?
- 3) Which world religion intrigues me the most? (choose just one for this paper). What appeals to me or confuses me about this religion, and why? What more do I need to learn, both as a person and as a minister?

April 17-18, 2010 – Spirituality (incl. Mary, Saints, Eschatology; with Fr. Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To grow in knowledge of the breadth and depth of the many different traditions of spiritual life within Catholicism.
- To develop a deeper appreciation for the theology of Mary and the Communion of Saints, and the diversity of its pastoral practice in global cultures and traditions.
- To explore the wide variety of eschatological beliefs and images (resurrection, afterlife, heaven, hell, purgatory, limbo, parousia, etc.), from the perspectives both of Catholicism and of other religious traditions.

Reading Assignments:

- James P. Campbell. *Mary and the Saints: Companions on the Journey*. Catholic Basics. Chicago: Loyola, 2002.
- George A. Lane, S.J. *Christian Spirituality: A Historical Sketch*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – SKIM Part Four: "Christian Prayer" (par. 2558–2865).

Written Reflections:

- 1) What forms of prayer are most meaningful to me? What spiritual practices help me to grow in my relationship with God? What might I need to change in order to deepen that relationship?
- 2) To what extent does the idea of the "communion of saints" impact my spirituality, and how? What imagery of Mary do I find most meaningful in my life and in my ministry?
- 3) How do I think about and imagine the "end-times"? How do my eschatological understandings affect my spiritual life and my pastoral ministry right now?

May 15, 2010 – Course Synthesis: Project/Presentations (with Fr. Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To utilize the process of "theological reflection," applying theological principles to pastoral practice.
- To develop greater skills of public presentation necessary for pastoral ministry in the contemporary Church.
- To value and apply processes of collaboration, teamwork, and communication in parish ministry.

Reading Assignments:

- Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano. *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 2000.
- *Reread*: Joye Gros, O.P. *Theological Reflection: Connecting Faith and Life*. Catholic Basics. Loyola Press, 2002.

Written Reflections: NONE – Finish Project & Presentations