

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course serves as both an introduction for newer students and a synthesis for completing students. Through presentation and small group process that joins more advanced students with those just beginning their studies, participants will explore feelings, images and insights from particular experiences, then connect these with the resources of Christian tradition. This model of correlation will be explored as the axis for theological reflection and for theological method itself.

Using this model, students will explore the correlation of their gifts for and experience in service with the variety of Church traditions about charism and office in ministry. This reflection process will work toward different images of oneself as minister. On the tradition side, theological understandings of the trinity and the role of the Spirit will ground this inquiry.

TEXTBOOKS: [*The first two provide grounding for the first two days of class.*]

Parker Palmer. *Let Your Life Speak*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000. Subtitled "Listening for the Voice of Vocation" this short text introduces the reader to that "inner teacher" who knows how to find meaning and purpose for the journey. Keep track of feelings, images and insights that resonate with your experience.

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994. A primer on the human "movement to insight" (echoes of Bernard Lonergan) with the related structure for doing theological reflection. The first 75 pages are basic material for the first days, but finish the book if you can. Writing up an actual theological reflection according to their instructions will be weekend homework.

Recommended/optional

Robert Kinast. *What are they saying about Theological Reflection?* NY: Paulist, 2000. Kinast distinguishes the use of theological reflection in ministry reflection, wisdom work, feminist understanding and inculturation studies. Under each heading, he assesses what different authors mean by experience, how they correlate experience with the theological tradition and what praxis results.

[*The following titles ground the discussion of the final three days.*]

Susan K. Wood, ed. *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: theologies of lay and ordained ministry*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003. This collection of essays by Roman Catholic authors reports a symposium studying the increasing presence of lay ministry in the church against the background of what had been largely a clerical, ordained ministry. The authors explore a new structure rooted in baptism and work out implications. Find and read the essays most central to your own experience of questions about ministry.

Recommended/Optional:

Miroslav Volf. *Exclusion and Embrace*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. This book is a rich resource of material from a more evangelical theological tradition around foundational issues of ministry such as identity, otherness and reconciliation. Volf's insight will challenge and develop your own beginning work from this course.

L. William Countryman. *Living on the Border of the Holy*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999. The subtitle, "Renewing the Priesthood of All," announces the author's effort to reduce clergy vs. lay tensions in ministry by rooting all in the fundamental priestly nature of human life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To articulate and practice the authentically human movement to insight.
- To claim the received wisdom of tradition/Tradition.
- To study the historical correlations of tradition and experience.
- To correlate one's own tradition with one's particular experiences.
- To explore Christian doctrines with implications for ministry.
- To develop a working image of oneself in ministry.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Attendance, even better presence, especially to one another.
- Evidence of familiarity with the assigned reading.
- Participation—both in small group and large group discussion.
- Assignment over the weekend—see description below.
- Synthesis paper—see description below.

ASSIGNMENT OVER THE WEEKEND

Use the model from Chapter 4 in Killen and de Beer—"Beginning with personal positions" [pp.104-106]. On one side of a page, write up your steps in following this exercise so as to participate in the Monday morning discussion.

Start with statements as suggested, but instead of "church" as the focal topic, let your statements be about "ministry." So, for instance, the 3 "convictions for which you are willing to argue" will be your convictions about ministry. [Cf. above, write them down.]

FINAL SYNTHESIS PAPER—guidelines, pointers, suggestions

Within the limits of 8 or 9 double-spaced, typed pages, the student needs to present a personal synthesis of learning from this course. This synthesis could be developed in various ways.

- A. Theological foundations for ministry could be selected, summarized and developed to show how one's own ministerial situation finds grounding, direction and challenge on this basis.
- B. Students may wish to present an initial summary of their personal theology of ministry, particularly any defining image or metaphor, referring to elements of this course as appropriate.
- C. In a variation on the previous suggestion, a student could use a model of theological reflection to examine a personal ministerial experience in light of wisdom from the theological tradition to develop some actions steps for a more effective, fulfilling ministry.

Within any of these suggested frameworks (or one of your own), the personal tone and evidence of synthesis should shine through. The integration need not produce polished conclusions; critical questions expressed clearly are often a better index of new learning. The synthesis paper is **due Monday, June 29, 2009**, at the latest. Earlier results would be appreciated. For return mail, please enclose a stamped envelope.

Thank you in advance for your good work and energy.