

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

**The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) tells us that theological reflection is based on the belief that God acts, always and everywhere, in human life. Experience must always be interpreted in the light of revelation. (GDC, n.74)**

**Theological Reflection provides the framework that helps us to see the connections between the surface experiences of life and the depths of life's meaning. It helps us to connect daily life with the gospels.**

**Theological Reflection integrates the dimensions of formation with practical experience.**

Name:

Date of Incident:

1. Explain what makes this experience a critical incident to me?
2. How did I become involved in the critical incident?
3. Why have I decided to present this critical incident report and what do I hope to learn from it?

## EXPERIENCE

Describe the Experience:

- What happened? Who were the major characters involved?
- Many different kinds of pastoral experiences, even simple conversations with parishioners, can stir up strong passions within the minister. These passions or movements of the sensitive appetite, in themselves, are neither good nor evil, but must be understood and then be guided by reason and the will. (CCC, 1763 and 1767)
- Describe the emotions that went into this experience and, if applicable, those that stayed with you the following days? Overwhelmed, inadequate, angry, grateful, delighted, confused, terrified, energized, serene, sad, confident, powerless, etc.?
- When necessary, provide exact quotations of what was said.

---

<sup>21</sup> Please note that the following sample documents in "Appendix H" will be distributed by the Director of Pastoral Formation or his assistant along with other information that varies from year-to year, e.g., the **Supervised Ministry Timeline** of due dates for the Supervised Ministry Learning Agreement and Self-Evaluation, **Supervised Ministry Mileage Reimbursement Policy**, and **Supervised Ministry Sunday Schedule**.

## COUNSEL

Having described the experience, step back and understand what took place:

- What were the identifiable issues and emotions that were going on in the person with whom I was working, whether stated or unstated? What were their assumptions, beliefs (stated or otherwise)?
- What was I trying to accomplish in this situation? Why?
- Did this experience confirm my own beliefs/assumptions/practices or did it cause me to question them? How? Why?
- What assumptions or biases did I bring into the situation/experience? Was I or am I aware of them? Was I being defensive in any way? Why?
- What other resources do I have available to help me understand this event/experience? To whom can I go for counsel?
- How did they help me understand what was taking place?

You have described what was going on at the surface of this event:

- What was going on behind the experience or underneath the surface?
- Are there stories from the Sacred Scriptures that can offer me guidance, challenge, affirmation or support?
- Is this a story about Redemption, Grace, Death, the Fall from Grace, Resurrection, Discipleship, Reconciliation, Sin, Conversion, Heroic Sacrifice, Healing, Pilgrimage, Abandonment, Exile, Exodus, Betrayal, Surrender, Deliverance “on the Third Day”, etc.?
- What might I not be seeing in this situation, experience or conversation?

In light of this experience:

- What guidance does the content of my intellectual formation offer me?
- What insights does spiritual formation offer me in understanding this experience?
- How can my human formation assist me in understanding what took place?
- What have I learned about God/others/myself as a result of this event?
- What questions about my pastoral practice did this raise in me?
- How do I see things differently now?

## PRUDENCE

- What did this experience/encounter/conversation mean to me?
- **Where was God present and at work?**
- What was God calling me to in this situation/experience?
- Were any of my assumptions/beliefs/presuppositions reinforced, disrupted, or shattered? How?
- How was my self-understanding stretched? Were any of my fundamental convictions undermined or confirmed?

- What have I concluded from this experience about God, myself and the other person with whom I am working?

## **ACTION**

- Am I being called to change? How?
- How will my future pastoral practice be affected?
- How might my approach to priestly formation go in a different direction because of this experience and the accompanying theological reflection?