

Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program – Diocese of Las Vegas Reading and Writing Assignments – Spring 2009

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 *within one week* after each session, and *emailed* to Fr. Felix at fjust2000@yahoo.com. Please write *one or two* 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). Use any word-processing program, but please send your paper as a *file attachment*, rather than in the text of your email.

Jan. 17-18, 2009 – Christology (with Fr. Thomas Rausch, S.J., Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To know about the variety and development of early Christian beliefs about Jesus, as expressed in calling him the "Christ," the "Son of God," and many other Christological titles from biblical and post-biblical sources.
- To understand and be able to explain the Christological statements of the canonical Gospels and the early Christian Creeds, and how they present Jesus as "fully human and fully divine."
- To appreciate the wide variety of Christologies today, how contemporary Christians answer the question about the identity and significance of Jesus Christ.

Reading Assignments:

- Matthias Neuman, O.S.B. *Christology: True God, True Man*. Catholic Basics Series. Loyola Press, 2002.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd edition, 2003. – Part One, Section Two, Chapter Two: "I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God" (paragraphs 422-682).

Written Reflections:

- 1) How would I explain to my non-Christian neighbor or co-worker why we Christians still claim to be *monotheists* (we believe in only *one* God), even though we also say that Jesus Christ is the "Son of God" and "fully divine"?
- 2) Which of the four portraits of Jesus in the canonical Gospels (Mt, Mk, Lk, or Jn) speaks to me the most? Why?
- 3) Who is Jesus *for me*? What images or aspects of Jesus affect my life and my faith most deeply?

Feb. 21-22, 2009 – Liturgy (with Sr. Jeremy Gallet, S.P., Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To know the main stages of the development of early Christian liturgy, especially the Eucharist (from the New Testament to the Tridentine Mass of Pope Pius V to the contemporary Mass since the Second Vatican Council).
- To be able to explain the Catholic Church's teaching about the "four-fold presence of Christ in the Eucharist".
- To be thoroughly familiar with the structure of the Mass and the basic principles of good liturgy.

Reading Assignments:

- Documents of Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* ("Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy"; 1963).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd edition, 2003. – Part Two, Section One: "The Sacramental Economy" (par. 1066-1209) and Part Two, Section Two, Article 3: "The Sacrament of the Eucharist" (par. 1322-1419).
- Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B. *What Happens at Mass*. Chicago: LTP, 2008.

Written Reflections:

- 1) How would I explain to a non-Catholic friend: What is the Mass and why is it so important for Catholics?
- 2) What are some of the best aspects of the way Sunday Eucharist is celebrated at my own parish?
How could the Sunday Masses at my own parish be improved?
- 3) How does my weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist affect my own spirituality? In what ways is the Eucharist the "source" and "summit" of my family's Christian life (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 1324)?

March 21-22, 2009 – Ecclesiology & Ecumenism (with Fr. Felix Just, S.J. , Ph.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To know the many definitions and meanings of “church” (local & world-wide, community & institution, etc.).
- To be able to explain in what sense we believe in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” (Nicene Creed).
- To know the main theological “models” of the Church and some advantages and disadvantages of each model.

Reading Assignments:

- Morris Pelzel. *Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission*. Catholic Basics. Loyola Press, 2002.
- Documents of Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium* (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”; 1964).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd edition, 2003. – Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9: “I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church” (par. 748-975).

Written Reflections:

- 1) If explaining “What is the Church?” to an RCIA group, what points would I cover? What aspects would I stress?
- 2) How do I usually think about “the Church”? Which theological “model” of the Church speaks to me most deeply?
- 3) How could the many Christian Churches and denominations move toward greater ecumenical unity?

April 18-19, 2009 – Sacramental Theology (with Fr. Paul Fitzgerald, S.J., S.T.D.)

Learning Objectives:

- To understand Christ as the primordial sacrament, the Church as the sacrament of the presence of God, and their relationship with the Church’s ritual sacraments
- To know the main stages in the history and development of the sacraments, and why Catholics have seven sacraments (in contrast to the two sacraments accepted by most Protestants).
- To be able to explain what is the core essence of each of the sacraments, in their three main groups.
- To understand the principles for good celebration of the sacraments according to the current liturgical rites.

Reading Assignments:

- Kurt Stasiak. *Sacramental Theology: Means of Grace, Ways of Life*. Catholic Basics. Loyola Press, 2002.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd edition, 2003. – Part Two, Section Two: “The Seven Sacraments of the Church” (par. 1210-1690).

Written Reflections:

- 1) What difference does it make that Catholics have seven sacraments, while most Protestants have only two?
- 2) How would I explain to a young couple: How and why is their marriage considered a sacrament?
- 3) If helping to prepare young children for their First Communion, what would I want to stress the most?

May 16-17, 2009 – Pastoral Theology (with Marc Gonzalez, D.Min.)

Learning Objectives:

- To know the main principles of pastoral theology and ministerial practice within the Christian Church.
- To realize the importance of seeing the Church as the Body of Christ, with all its members gifted by God and called to live in relationship with Christ and to participate in Christ’s pastoral mission.
- To know how to engage in “theological reflection,” applying theological principles to pastoral practice.

Reading Assignments:

- Joye Gros, O.P. *Theological Reflection: Connecting Faith and Life*. Catholic Basics. Loyola Press, 2002.
- Documents of Vatican II: *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (“Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity”; 1965).
- Documents of Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes* (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”; 1965).

Written Reflections:

- 1) As I think about some of the best “pastoral ministers” I have ever known, what stands out to me? What aspects of their pastoral service made them good pastors?
- 2) How do I see God working in those with whom I minister?
- 3) Identify three “signs of the times” for our own diocese today. Why did you identify these three?