



2022 Mission Retreat

Fourth Retreat Session. The Gifts Necessary for the Remnant Approach

I. A Gift based approach to mission.

A. All priests cannot do the same things. It is an error to thinking that all priests (and all lay people) can do the same things. The truth is that each priest possesses a different set of gifts, in the same manner that each lay person possesses a different set of gifts.

B. The error of clericalism. This results in the failure to cultivate the gifts of lay people. A genuine mission requires a team of clergy and lay people with a diversity of gifts.

C. Gift assessment. You need to assess your gifts and let them direct you into the particular form of mission that is possible for you with your gifts in your area. This gifts assessment should be part of your program of spiritual formation in your parish or mission. What God is calling your church to do is logically related to the spiritual gifts of your members. The more ministry organically develops from the gifts of your people and not from the top down plan of the Rector or Vestry, the more fruitful your ministry will be.

D. Self-awareness. Part of self-assessment is a larger sense of self-awareness. There are various tools to help in this process: A spiritual gifts inventory can help identify your gifts. We use the “Wagner Modified Houts” Inventory. The enneagram is also a good tool for self-assessment and growth because, unlike many self-assessment tools, it identifies negative or unhealthy tendencies. The enneagram identifies these in term of the deadly sins. To the traditional seven, it adds deceit and fear. It’s nine personality types each reflect a tendency toward one particular sin. We use the assessment that is available through “The Enneagram Institute.” It cost \$12 to take online and it email you a discussion about your results. Some people make too much of the engram or use it in weird ways. But it can be a helpful tool when used in the right way. We also require our third year class participants to take a formal evaluation called the “MMPI.”

This is not an exhaustive list of tools. The point is simply that if we are going to help people grow into the image of Christ, we need to help each person learn what that growth look like in his or her individual case.

E. The error of “one program fits all.” What work in one area with a particular set of gifts will not necessary work in another area where there is a different set of gifts.

F. The Remnant approach avoids the programmatic error. All can pray and fast. All can discover their gifts. The Remnant in each area can do the unique things it is gifted and called to do.

II. Developing a church’s gifts and competence.

A. Developing gifts and ministries. A second point related to giftedness is the need for clergy and churches to develop their gifts and competencies through ongoing training and education. If we want to minister to hurting people, we must learn how.

B. The hidden barrier to mission. A lack of education, training, and formation. Many of our clergy are undertrained for the current mission field. Be honest about it and be willing to address it. My example. I earned an M.A. in theology eight years after I was ordained as a priest. I began a DMin program at age 55. It is not the degrees per se, but the ongoing opportunity to learn and grow. Many of our clergy are well trained for ministry in the 1960’s and 70’s but are ill equipped to minister to people right now.

C. An example of a competency. Trauma and its impact on people. I learned about trauma in my DMin program. I took a seminar from a woman who worked with “Dissociative Identity Disorder” clients. This led me into further study. We incorporate teaching about trauma into our Pastoral Ministry Program. Consequently, our church has become more effective in ministering to people with trauma without causing them harm. This is a necessary competence since it affects almost all people on some level. If you do not get some training in this area, you can end up limiting your mission and causing a lot of harm. If you want to reach out to people in particular ways, you must get trained so that you can do it well and not cause harm.

III. Some final thoughts about mission

A. Church planting vs. Mission Community. In our Remnant approach to mission, we have talked about forming what we call a “Mission Community.” Other approaches to mission talk about “church planting.” The Remnant model pushes back against the church planting approach in this way. If church planting is about generating enthusiasm or “buzz” for a new church, then promoting a big “grand opening,” then sustaining the work by continual excitement and publicity, it is operating in a consumer/marketing model. However, if church planting adopts a Remnant model; if it begins with a Remnant of people who will fast and pray, discuss mission, and focus on their own spiritual formation for an extended season of time, then the church plant can become a real Mission Community or mission church and there is no conflict between the two modalities.

B. The missionary priest as entrepreneur. The forming and developing of a team for mission requires a leader with entrepreneurial skill and gifts. To have a mission means to create something that is not now there. Not all priests have this skill and gift. This does not make them either bad priests or less valuable to the Body of Christ than the missionary. It just means that they probably can’t be missionary priests.

C. A common Rule and a diverse Remnant. As people have shared the stories of their ministries and missions at this retreat, the wonderful diversity of the Remnant has been revealed. There is good work being done by everyone here, but no one’s work looks like anyone else’s. This should encourage each of us. We don’t have to become what we are not to fulfill our calling. We have to become who we truly are.

This highlights the tension between what we hold in common and how we are each different. Martin Thornton says that the Bible manifests the religion of Israel in two complementary ways. One is the stable liturgical system of the Temple; the other is the charismatic ministry of the prophets. We embrace a common a Rule of prayer rooted in the Book of Common Prayer. We have gathered at this retreat for the Daily Offices and daily Mass. However, this common prayer leads each of us out into our unique prophetic ministry, carried out our unique gifts in our unique circumstances. Our common Rule produces a wonderfully diverse array of ministries.

Both parts of this system are essential. We must stay rooted in our common prayer and Rule. This both unites us as the Body of Christ and forms us individually as its members. We must let our common Rule of prayer continue to change us and form us and lead us out into the diverse ministries and missions God is calling us to carry out. The Remnant approach maintains that both parts are essential. If we neglect either our Rule of prayer or our vocation to share our faith with others, we are not following the Remnant approach to mission.