

“Theological Reflection and Integration” (by Joe Colletti, PhD)

Theological reflection is a spiritual practice that allows faith to touch the daily activities of our everyday life and our daily activities to touch our faith. Reflection is an activity that is natural. We often fix our thoughts about some daily experience after it happens. Reflection may have occurred at home, work, or in public and involved a positive or negative exchange or event between ourselves and other person(s) that we live, work, or socialize with or may not even know. As part of this process we often form some on-going or concluding thought or opinion about the exchange or event. Also, as a result, we may take some course of action to deal with the past exchange or event and ready ourselves for a similar exchange in the future.

Theological reflection is a process during which we form an on-going or concluding thought or opinion about an exchange or event between ourselves and other person(s) that is based upon a Christian heritage that believes that God is incarnational, providential, and revelational. Incarnational means that God is present in the world today, providential means that God cares about the world today, and revelational means that God communicates with the world today. As a result, we may take some course of action to deal with the past exchange or event and/or ready ourselves for a similar exchange in the future based upon God’s guidance.

I. Introduction

A. Sources of Experience

The process of theological reflection taps into three primary sources of experiences: 1) personal experience; 2) religious experience; and 3) cultural experience.

1. Personal Experience

Theological reflection should engage our personal experiences. By personal experience I mean more than our ideas. Theological reflection should engage our ideas which potentially or actually exist in our minds as a product of our mental activity. They are shaped by opinions, convictions, or principles that we developed over time and are often shaped by the actions of others. Theological reflection also needs to engage the feelings that come out of our personal experiences. Such experiences may be painful or pleasurable such as anger, compassion, fear, friendship, grief, love, or sympathy. Other feelings may not be so clear to us such as biases, favoritism, intolerance, pity, and prejudice. The idea behind the engagement of theological reflection

and our ideas and feelings is to further the experiences. Furthering the experiences involves looking deeper at them with the understanding that God is incarnational, providential, and revelational.

2. Religious Experience

Our religious experiences are largely shaped by scripture, the history of our religious tradition, and the teachings of our tenets of faith. One common thread that is interwoven in most, if not all, Christian religious experiences is that God is engaged in the world today. We have heard or read scripture, historical stories, and sermons that describe why and how active God is in the world today. We often take what we heard or read and use the information to inform the opinions, convictions, or principles that shape our ideas, lead us to and through our experiences, and stimulate our feelings. Theological reflection invites us to further use our religious experiences of scripture, tradition, and tenets of faith to shed light upon our daily life experiences and to be mindful that God is incarnational, providential, and revelational.

3. Cultural Experience

Theological reflection should also engage our cultural experiences. Our cultural experiences are mainly shaped by the behaviors and beliefs of various social groups that we are part of during our life time that are based on age, class, ethnicity, income, religion, etc. Each of the cultures that we belong to, or belonged to, influence us. They influence how we view such things as employment, friendship, government, marriage, and money. Everyone does not share the same cultural experiences. Some may overlap but not all. As a result, others that we live work, worship, serve, and socialize with may have different beliefs, mores, standards, and values. They may seemingly clash or overtly clash with our own cultural experiences. Theological reflection encourages us to come to understand these seemingly or overtly differences within the communities that we live, the businesses that we work, and the places that we socialize where God is incarnational, providential, and revelational.

B. Action Steps

What is inherent in theological reflection is transformation. Transformation is the result of looking deeper at life experiences with the understanding that God is incarnational, providential, and revelational. There are three primary action steps within the process of theological reflection that lead to transformation. They are: 1) attending; 2) asserting; and 3) decision making.

1. Attending

Attending is an action step that brings the three primary sources of experiences noted above—personal experience; religious experience; and cultural experience—into an inner dialogue with ourselves or an outer dialogue with others. The idea is to note the congruencies and the incongruencies between and among the sources of experiences. Congruencies are not likely to be as challenging as incongruencies. When we look deeper into experiences we may be challenged by the values, mores, convictions, and struggles of others. We need to be able to hear something new or unexpected if we are to engage in meaningful theological reflection.

2. Asserting

Asserting follows attending because it is an action step that helps us embrace the congruencies and incongruencies of our daily life experiences. We may state with assurance and confidence opinions, convictions, or principles that seemingly align with God's guidance. Assertion is also needed, however, in order to tolerate ambiguity during theological reflection. When engaging in theological reflection we may gain new insights. Something that we held to be true for a long time may no longer hold true. This may result in asserting the new truth which may be a liberating process but also a painful one as well as a result of God's incarnational, providential, and revelational activities. The New Testament notes that

. . . the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

(Hebrews 4.12-13)

3. Decision Making

The action steps of attending and asserting within the context of theological reflection slows down our usual processes of interpreting the exchanges or events between ourselves and some other person(s) that we live, work, or socialize with or may not even know such as a stranger on the street. It takes courage to slow down our usual processes of interpretation because it makes us vulnerable in a couple ways. We may re-experience such feelings of anger, fear, or grief and we may open ourselves to re-interpret our most dearly held opinions, convictions, or principles.

The goal, however, of theological reflection is decision making. As already stated, transformation is inherent in theological reflection. Decision making is the moment in the process when we choose to respond to the call of transformation. It is the moment in time when we move faith into action convinced of God's incarnational, providential, and revelational involvement in our world.

C. Moving Experiences to Action

We begin theological reflection by engaging our three sources of experience—personal, religious, and cultural. This process of engagement brings these sources of experience together so that we can reflect upon a past exchange or event and/or ready ourselves for a similar exchange in the future based upon our belief in God's three-fold involvement in our daily life. In actuality, we are putting these three sources of experience into dialogue with one another. Rather than considering each source independently of one another, we are overlaying them in order to prepare us for a course of action to deal with that past exchange or event.

We further our theological reflection by engaging in three action steps—attending, asserting, and decision making. Attending helps ensure that the inner dialogue between our three sources of experience continue to the point that we note any congruencies and incongruencies that may challenge our values and convictions. Asserting follows attending in order to embrace any congruencies and incongruencies that help us gain any new insights. Decision making is the moment in the process in which we choose to respond to the call of transformation by integrating a new insight convinced of God's incarnational, providential, and revelational involvement in our world and as a result begin moving our experience to action.

D. An Inner and Outer Journey

Responding to an insight invites transformation. As a matter of fact we should view it as invitation from God. As such, the invitational insight will continue to emerge and reemerge until we fully respond. We may choose to initially respond to the call of transformation through the action step of decision making but it takes more than a moment of time to fully respond. It often takes time to come to terms with a given insight, perhaps weeks, months, or years.

Insight is not just a matter of increased knowledge or understanding. It is incarnating the truth that we received from God's three-fold involvement in our daily life. Once we embody the loving activity of God in the world, we

are able to take an incarnational course of action that deals with a past exchange or event which changes our life.

The movement toward, and commencing from, insight is a two-fold journey. It takes place within us and outside of us. What takes place in us is part of our inner journey which takes place in the depths of our own soul. I liken the very depths of our soul to a monastic cell. The word "cell" has a long monastic tradition referring originally to the monk's cave or room. Monastic writings are filled with sayings that note that the monk who lives in a cell lives in a sacred place.

Over the centuries, the cell not only became a very private space for Christian monks but a very private experience as well. The physical space was experienced as a spiritual affair with God. Early monastic writings are filled with metaphors that emphasize the monastic cell as a place to withdraw from the world and as a place for the monk to cultivate a spiritual life in solitude and silence.

One saying that often appears in writings concerning monasticism is

"Go Sit in Your Cell, and Your Cell will Teach You Everything"

Another narrates the following

Said the teacher, "Go sit within your cell
and your cell will teach you wisdom."

The disciple said "But I have no cell. I am no monk."

The teacher said "Of course you have a cell. Look within."

To "look within" references the soul for many monastics. The soul has been a place where one can find solitude and silence amidst everyday life. It is a place where all of us can connect with God at any moment of our choosing which allows us to cultivate an on-going interior relationship with God. Theological reflection is part of the on-going interior relationship with God and thus part of our inner journey that takes place in the depths of our own soul.

Our outer journey takes place outside of us and consists of the people, places, problems, and plans that make up our everyday world. People include those individuals that we live, work, worship, serve, and socialize with on a continuous basis. They also include those persons that we pass by on sidewalks, streets, and places of business and entertainment who we may or may not know. Places include the streets, sidewalks, parks, and

other public areas that make up our neighborhoods and cities. Places also include private places like our homes, cars, and personal places of business.

Problems may consist of personal troubles such as sickness, loss of life, and financial hardships among our family members and friends or drug use, homelessness, mental illness, or violence among co-workers, acquaintances, or strangers. Plans include those of our own as well as those of others. Plans of our own may express ways in which we are going to address the activities of our own personal lives such as education, employment, health care, housing, and transportation. We often share these plans with family and friends. Plans of others may also address activities that touch our own personal lives in relationship with others such as education, employment, etc. Plans of others may also include community strategies, policies, ordinances, and regulations that address activities collectively for our neighborhoods, cities, counties, states, and country that include education, employment, health care, housing, and transportation.

Theological reflection, if we allow it, helps us to further see the connection between the activities of the people, places, problems, and plans that make up our everyday outer life and the need to integrate them into our personal inner life and vice versa. Our inner and outer journeys are two sides of the same coin. What insights we gain within our inner world can have a transforming effect upon our outer world and the insights we gain within our outer world can have a transforming effect upon our inner world over time. Thus, transformation consists of both inward and outward experiences that become mutually reliant upon one another when we become convinced of God's incarnational, providential, and revelational involvement in our daily personal activities.

E. A Personal Spiritual Journey

My personal inner and outer spiritual journey has been largely shaped by the issues related to the homelessness of others and my own interactions with these issues. The outcomes that happened in my life as a result of the accumulation of these issues and my theological reflection have evolved, and are still evolving, over the years. It is not unusual for varying degrees of transformation to take weeks, months, or years to develop especially involving a complex issue such as homelessness.

Issues related to the homelessness of others impacted me about twenty years ago. During December and January of 1986 – 1987, there were several homeless persons who died sleeping overnight at various outside locations in Los Angeles County. As a result, several temporary winter shelters were established that provided overnight shelter and meals. One of

the winter shelters was set up in Pasadena on February 2, 1987 and lasted through the month.

Not only did I help establish the winter shelter in Pasadena but I was hired as the one staff to supervise it during its first year of operation. My duties included arriving during the early evening in order to let a line of people in. We would set up cots, pass out blankets, and make a meal out of the foods that were donated. Afterwards, people would line up to shower. By midnight, we turned the lights off and everyone would go to sleep.

1. The Inner Spiritual Journey

During the night I would stay up and observe how more than 100 people would eventually fall asleep. There were always a few people moving about. Some of them would use the bathroom, others would step outside the front door and have a cigarette, and others would sit in the dining area having another cup of coffee or eating leftovers. By the middle of the night, nearly everyone, if not everyone, was finally asleep.

During this time I would reflect on these experiences. One of the things that became evident was the intensity of the wounds and pains of so many people in one place. During the previous two years, I worked part-time as a case manager for a growing number of homeless persons during the day. Their wounds and pains were evident to me during the day; however, they were much more evident at night at the winter shelter. I realized that during the day I was working on ways to alleviate their wounds and pains. In the middle of the night, I could only wait and observe.

During the evening I could see the wounds and pains within the shelter intensify and culminate in this mass of deeply hurt individuals before everyone went to sleep. Many of these persons were using alcohol or some other drug to deal with their homeless experience. They were the ones who first lined up to get in. Their drug consumption barely masked the pain they were trying to relieve. I concluded that they were about one-third of the 100 plus persons who would come each night to use the shelter. The policy was "if you weren't rowdy you stayed" and if you were rowdy, you needed to leave and come back when you were not.

About one-third of the other shelter users were mentally ill. Very few of them would get in line. They would wait until the line went down before coming into the shelter. Some were paranoid and others deeply depressed. Others demonstrated psychotic behaviors by flailing their arms, muttering to themselves, or pacing the floor repeatedly while flailing their arms and/or

muttering to themselves. A few self-medicated themselves by consuming alcohol or some other drug.

The other one-third of shelter users were not substance abusers nor mentally ill. Many of them demonstrated other sources of wounds and pains. Some were victims of domestic violence who often brought the few children into the shelter. Because of the children they were separated into a designated sleeping area. I often feared that the batterer would show up. Other shelter users were recently discharged into homelessness by correctional institutions or a hospital and had no other place to sleep. Also, a few prostitutes would stay the night.

There was one incident that is forever etched into my mind. I can remember a taxi cab pulling up in front of the shelter. I watched the driver get out of the taxi and open the trunk of the vehicle and pull out a wheelchair and unfold it. He then went to the side door and opened it. He carried out an individual clothed in a bath robe who had no legs. He placed him in the wheelchair and rolled him into the shelter where we helped him with something to eat and a place to sleep.

I remained the supervisor of the winter shelter in Pasadena for the following eight (8) years. During this period of time, however, I was not the only staff person. Others were hired because the shelter season was extended from December through March. A growing number of volunteers would set up the cots, pass out blankets, and prepare and serve meals. Evening staff would conduct an intake with every shelter resident and other staff would stay overnight.

I stayed overnight fewer and fewer nights. My duties were carried out during the evenings and each evening my goal was to ensure that all activities were completed. I was the common denominator. I was the one who shaped the program and the one most commonly known by staff, volunteers, and shelter residents. So, by the time I was ready to leave the shelter each evening between 11:00 and 11:30 pm I felt it was my duty to ensure that everything was in order and to communicate that assurance to everyone before I left.

I went home each evening after I left. I was living alone in a small one bedroom apartment. As soon as I arrived home I would sit on my living room couch staring at a blank television allowing my inner spiritual journey to progress. I could not help but reflect on the evening's activities. As I noted above, the wounds and pains within the shelter intensified each evening and culminated in this mass of deeply hurt individuals. I could not

help but reflect upon these wounds and pains as I sat night after night on my couch. The more I reflected the more wounds and pains I felt.

In order to cope with this nightly experience, I began to turn to some of the books that I had accumulated over the years. One of the books was Christian Mysticism Today, by William Johnston which deeply impacted me. The words of his conclusion in chapter six changed my life forever. The words were

"The inward journey can be described as a journey into the depths of one's being, a journey to the true self and through the true self to God, who is at the center. Down, down, I go through alternate layers of light and darkness, meeting all the slimy monsters and frightening demons that inhabit the subliminal world. And if I progress far enough, I meet the monsters of the human race. I meet the root causes of war, oppression, torture, hunger, terrorism. I meet hatred, despair, injustice, atheism, darkness, I meet archetypal evil. And, horror of horrors, I meet it in myself. In myself you say, how can that be? How can I be responsible for massacres of innocent people, for torture, for oppression of the poor?" Alas, we are all responsible. For we all share in the collective acts of the human family. We are not isolated individuals but members of a living and conscious body."

Johnston's chapter ending words also included "Most of us are not in touch with this collective unconscious. We are far too superficial for that." He noted that instead of pointing an accusing finger at others we should "enter the world of politics or economics or law or whatever" and that our influence is crucial. He also stated "Others help the destitute poor or the underprivileged or the handicapped" which resonated with me.

In order to further cope with my nightly experiences, I began to turn to an increasing number of spiritual exercises that were introduced to me through various books, monasteries, and retreat centers. I began to practice these spiritual exercises on a regular basis in order to further my inner spiritual journey. These practices included:

- **Compline** which is one of the divine offices of prayer that developed over the centuries and practiced at the close of day as a means of completing our awareness of God in our daily life;

- **Examination of Consciousness** which can expand our awareness of God in our daily life by asking ourselves how God was present throughout the day;
- **Vigils** which is a night, or part of a night spent in prayer and reflection in anticipation of the coming day's events;
- **Lectio Divina** which is a means of prayer which creates a dialogue with God through the use of scripture or some other sacred text.

These spiritual practices and others helped me integrate my winter shelter experiences into my inner spiritual life. I soon learned that spiritual integration is a daily act and life-long process that involves integrating our own actions and responses towards others and allowing the actions and responses of others to impact us. What was particularly challenging was to allow the actions and responses of shelter residents to influence my own life because such actions were steeped in domestic violence, lack of health care, mental illness, poverty, substance abuse, and other causes of homelessness.

The challenge heightened when I began to get in touch with my own wounds and pains as a result of getting close to the wounds and pains of the shelter residents. My observances of Compline increasingly included forgiving others and asking God and others to forgive me. I also became more and more aware of my collective responsibility towards war, oppression, hunger, hatred, despair, and injustice (as reminded by William Johnston) and asked for God's forgiveness.

2. The Outer Spiritual Journey

I met the challenge of spiritual integration by integrating my inner spiritual journey with my outer spiritual journey. Integrating these two journeys provided the means for me to not only manage my own wounds and pains and those of others, but to provide various means to heal the emotional and physical hurts of others as well as my own.

My outer spiritual journey developed over the years and consists of a number of activities that helped alleviate, and continue to alleviate, the many issues related to the homelessness of others. These activities include: a) developing residential programs to serve homeless persons; b) developing nonresidential programs to serve homeless persons; c) writing grants to fund homeless programs; d) organizing community coalitions; e) changing zoning codes to allow for homeless services; f) designing and implementing homeless counts; g) designing and implementing homeless surveys; and h) completing homeless and affordable housing assessments.

a. Developing Residential Programs to Serve Homeless Persons

During the past 20 years, a continuum of care system for homeless persons was developed in several states, counties, and cities at the urging of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The primary residential components of this system of care include emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Emergency shelter generally consists of beds, meals, showers, and case management services such as domestic violence counseling, mental health care, and substance abuse counseling and treatment. Other services often include health care, life skills training, money management, and tutoring for various educational purposes. Residents usually stay for 90 days or less and/or until they are transitioned to other appropriate housing.

Transitional housing generally consists of apartment units or bedrooms per household, though more than one person may share a unit or bedroom. Basic needs such as meals are also provided as well as the case management services and other services noted above. Residents usually stay for a year or more and/or until they are transitioned to permanent housing. Permanent supportive housing generally consists of a private apartment unit or bedroom for each household. Residents receive appropriate on-site and/or off-site social services including case management. They sign a lease agreement which allows them to stay on a permanent basis.

During the past 20 years I have helped establish approximately 15 residential programs including winter shelters in Pasadena, Glendale, and East San Gabriel Valley. Other residential programs include emergency shelters for individuals and families, transitional housing for victims of domestic violence and substance abusers, and permanent supportive housing for the mentally ill and persons with HIV/AIDS. These programs are located throughout Southern California within the cities of El Monte, Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Pomona, Riverside, West Covina, and Whittier.

b. Developing Non-Residential Programs to Serve Homeless Persons

The continuum of care system that has developed over the past 20 years also consists of non-residential components. The primary components are street outreach teams and multi-service one-stop centers. Street outreach teams are generally made up of two or more members who visit outdoor places where homeless people congregate and social service sites used by

homeless persons. Outreach workers build relationships with homeless persons with the intent of connecting them eventually to service sites such as multi-service one-stop centers in order to end their homeless experience. Multi-service one-stop centers may or may not share a building with a residential component. Such centers have a wide-range of social services “under one roof” in order to more effectively serve homeless persons. Services often include employment counseling, health care, housing placement services, mental health care, and substance abuse counseling and/or treatment.

During the past 20 years I have helped establish approximately 10 such non-residential programs. I have helped implement street outreach teams in the cities of El Monte, Glendale, Pasadena, and Riverside. I have also helped establish multi-service one-stop centers in the cities of El Monte, Glendale, Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Whittier.

One other non-residential program that I have helped implement is the Pasadena Homeless Prevention Program. The program is sponsored by Fuller Theological Seminary and supervised by the Office for Urban Initiatives. The purpose of the program is to prevent households who are at risk of losing their housing from becoming homeless.

c. Writing Grants to Fund Homeless Programs

Throughout the years I have also written many grant applications to public and private agencies for funding for specific programs within each continuum of care component. In 1995, HUD introduced the Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance grant application which has been the largest source of funding for continuum of care programs for the past dozen years or so. Initially, applications for all continuum of care components were encouraged except for emergency shelter which was not an eligible activity within the grant application. During the past few years, permanent supportive housing has been encouraged by HUD over the other continuum of care components.

I have primary written continuum of care applications for the counties of Riverside and Ventura and the cities of Glendale and Pasadena. I also co-wrote the first continuum of care application for the County of Los Angeles. Funding from these applications has totaled more than \$250 million dollars. In addition, I have written several grant applications that have been awarded funding from the State of California and various counties and cities. Also, I have written several grants to private foundations that were funded for various social service programs and activities such as domestic violence prevention services, health care services, mental health care services, and substance abuse counseling and treatment.

d. Organizing Community Coalitions

Community coalitions are very important in order for a local community to provide the necessary services to help people end their homeless experience. Homeless residential programs and non-residential services will not be implemented well and thus become less effective if they do not receive input from a wide-range of community stakeholders including representatives from public agencies such as various local government departments and private agencies such as community service organizations, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and non-profit organizations. In addition, many of these representatives will provide access to, or direct, funding for programs and services.

I have been the co-founder of two homeless coalitions. They are the East San Gabriel Valley Consortium on Homelessness and the Pasadena Housing and Homeless Network. In addition, I served as a consultant to reconfigure the Glendale Homeless Coalition. In addition, I have been a member of several other coalitions, committees, and task forces or have been a hired consultant to work with coalitions, committees, and task forces throughout Southern California to address homeless and affordable housing issues through community planning, assessments, and program and services implementation.

e. Changing Zoning Codes to Allow for Homeless Services

Perhaps the most complex issues that I experienced concerning my involvement with issues related to other people's homeless experiences were related to zoning issues. During the past 15 years, I have completed several "Impediments to Fair Housing Choice" reports which are required by HUD from local jurisdictions that receive HUD funding. The purpose of the reports are to review the local jurisdiction's laws, regulations, and administrative policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that residents are not denied access to housing based upon such factors as race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. Since many homeless people have disabilities, I was able to get several jurisdictions to change their laws, regulations, and administrative policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that homeless persons were not discriminated against when obtaining appropriate housing.

f. Designing and Implementing Homeless Counts

HUD started to require jurisdictions to complete homeless counts within its boundaries as a means to see if the homeless population within the jurisdiction was increasing or decreasing. By conducting homeless counts

over time, jurisdictions would be able to evaluate whether its continuum of care system was working, and if so, to what degree. As a result, I have been contracted by the counties of Riverside and Ventura and the cities of Glendale, Long Beach, and Pasadena to implement their homeless counts with the assistance of community volunteers.

g. Designing and Implementing Homeless Surveys

HUD also started to require jurisdictions to document the number of homeless people according to certain sub-populations. The sub-populations include persons with HIV/AIDS, persons with mental illness, substance abusers, veterans, victims of domestic violence, and youth between the ages of 18 through 24. Documentation include the total number of persons within each sub-population and how many were living on the streets and how many in shelters and transitional housing programs. As part of my homeless count contracts with the jurisdictions noted above, homeless surveys were conducted among 20% of the adults who made up each jurisdiction's homeless population.

h. Completing Homeless and Affordable Housing Assessments

Over the past 15 years, I have completed more than 20 homeless and affordable housing assessments. Some of these studies have included Consolidated Plans which are required by HUD from all jurisdictions that receive HUD funding. Consolidated planning consists of setting future goals for affordable housing and homeless services through extensive community participation including residents and business operators.

Recent assessments have included "10-Year Strategies to End Homelessness." These strategies are a direct result of the President's initial challenge to the 100 largest cities in the country to end chronic homelessness. The U. S. Conference of Mayors extended the Bush Administration's challenge to all cities with homeless residents. The idea behind the strategy is to increase efforts that are working to end people's homeless experience. As a result, I have written 10-year strategies for the City of Pasadena and the counties of Riverside and Ventura.

II. Conclusion

Theological reflection is a spiritual practice that allows our faith to touch the daily activities of our everyday life and vice versa. It is rooted in a conviction that God is incarnational, providential, and revelational. As God takes action so do we, and as a result transformation takes place. Transformation begins

with our efforts to understand more broadly and deeply our daily life experiences that include the people, places, problems, and plans that make up our world. We may begin to understand more broadly and deeply through our personal, religious, and cultural experiences. Our transformational experience is furthered by the action steps of attending, asserting, and decision making. In the midst of this process, new questions are raised, new insights are suggested, and the opportunities for new responses become evident that often change our lives forever when we respond.

It is important to stress that transformation begins with our efforts to understand more broadly and deeply our daily life experiences. Thus, it is not just a matter of increased knowledge or understanding. It is incarnating the truth that we received from God's three-fold involvement in our daily world. This takes time—perhaps even years—to develop fully.

Incarnating the truth is at the core of the two-fold spiritual journey that needs to take place within us and outside of us if we truly want to answer the new questions that are formed for us, explore the new insights that develop for us, and respond to the new responses that are presented to us. Our inner journey helps us to connect with God at a moment of our choosing and to address our new questions, insights, and responses in the midst of a private interior relationship that is shaped by the daily activities of our outer world. Our outer journey also helps us to connect with God through the persons, places, problems, and plans that make up our daily world at a moment of our choosing that shapes our inner world activities. Thus, transformation is the result of both inward and outward experiences that become mutually reliant upon one another as we become convinced increasingly of God's incarnational, providential, and revelational involvement in our world.

My own personal inner and outer spiritual journey concerning issues related to the homelessness of others has evolved over years. The transformation that I initially experienced came through providing basic emergency assistance that included shelter and food. The more and more that I reflected on the issues the more and more I integrated the experiences into my life. However, I soon realized that to help alleviate the wounds and pains of persons experiencing homelessness took much more than basic emergency assistance.

It took responding to things that were new to me such as program development, grant writing, and community organizing. The more I integrated, the more challenging the experiences. More and more questions were raised, insights provided, and new opportunities for response. I was soon designing and implementing homeless counts and surveys, changing

zoning codes, and completing city and county wide homeless and affordable housing assessments. As a result, greater healing took place among others and me. Today, I am able to write, as a hired consultant, strategies to end homelessness with county and city wide support from hundreds of public and private agency representatives that address the complexity of homelessness. This is in stark contrast to the journey that I began twenty years ago while sitting bewildered in a dark winter shelter surrounded by a large room filled with wounds and pains that I struggled to cope with during the early hours of the morning.

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