

CHAPTER 2

THE PASTORAL CIRCLE (PC)

1. THE PROCESS: THE PASTORAL CIRCLE (PC)

1.1. *The Pastoral Circle or Pastoral Spiral*

We propose to follow the Pastoral Circle which is a more detailed version of the well-known Cardijn's Method of "See, Judge, Act." The Pastoral Circle is not simply a "methodology" with six easy steps, but a PROCESS, a way of being Christian and missionary and of living the commitment for the transformation of the world. It demands being in touch with the poor and working with them to improve their situation. The Pastoral Circle helps people discover the roots of social injustice and to plan and take action. It is "theology in practice."

We need to look carefully at unjust situations before trying to solve them. The Pastoral Circle is a tool to discover the mechanisms, ideologies, rules, laws and structures that create and maintain unjust situations. It fosters transformation of the individual, the community and its milieu.

It is a community faith exercise that helps us to:

- o draw close to situations where there is suffering and learn about them.
- o choose the problem we want to tackle.
- o analyse the situation and reflect on it in the light of faith.
- o decide on the most effective way of working towards a solution.
- o plan a realistic and appropriate strategy for action.
- o implement the action.
- o and evaluate the changes and the learning experience.

1.1.1. Steps of the Pastoral Circle

The Pastoral Cycle approach moves us through different steps of understanding to respond to a particular situation. It helps us to be effective and competent in our Justice and Peace work.

During the process, we experience the situation in different ways at different 'times:'

Contact: There is the time when we get in touch with the reality of suffering, through objective observations and subjective feelings; the time to ask questions and to read up about what is going on in the world and in this particular situation.

Analysis: The time for reflection, for asking questions about the history of the problem, such as: Who are the winners and losers? What are the unjust structures? What values come into play? How are these all interconnected?

Faith Reflection: The time for examining the situation in the light of our faith and shared values; for discovering what the Bible, Catholic Social Teaching (CST), our charism, our spirituality and cultural traditions, the norms of our communities and the wisdom of our ancestors (e.g. proverbs) tell us about how to act in the world; for seeing what the facts tell us about moral values.

Planning: The time to decide on our response to the situation and to plan a realistic and effective strategy for ACTION, step by step. Who does what, when, with whom, where and with what resources?

Implementing the action to bring about the desired change.

Evaluation: Time for assessing progress and how the situation has changed; to learn from the successes and failures - in order to know what to do next, and even, if necessary, restart the process.

The community changes because of events and because of the Pastoral Circle process. Therefore the Pastoral Circle is a continual beginning, a process that brings us ever closer to the vision, the "ideal situation" and to the Kingdom. So, in reality, it is not a 'circle' but a 'spiral.'

1.2. Living the Moments of the Pastoral Circle (Spiral)

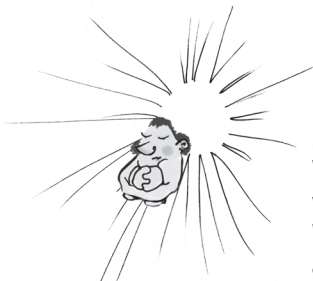
2. SOCIAL ANALYSIS

WHY is this happening?

Who benefits from the situation?

Who are the losers?

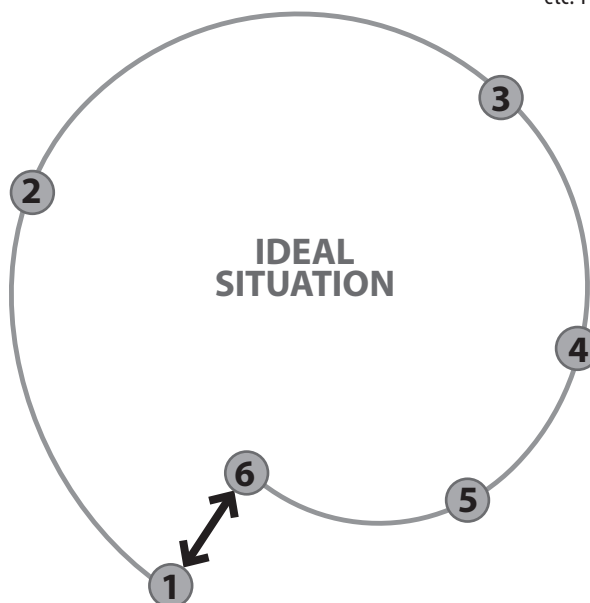
Describe the problem, its history and when it started. Look at the structures causing the problem e.g. political, economic, social, religious, psychosocial and cultural. Make LINKS between the different issues. Search for the causes, consequences and structures that sustain this injustice.



3. CHRISTIAN REFLECTION

What does GOD want in this situation?

What light do the Bible, Church documents, charism and values shed? What part do the community norms, etc? Play?



4. PLAN OF ACTION

What shall we do?

When? Who is doing what? With whom? How? Move through the steps of planning.



1. THE SITUATION

What is happening?

Look, ask, listen, read, meet people, gather data, stories, maps to find out exactly what is going on this situation.



5. IMPLEMENT THE ACTION

to effect the desired change. Adapt to the changing situation.

6. EVALUATION

What has changed because of our action?

What could be improved? What have we learnt in the process? What is the next step? Look at how the process of the PC was lived by the group and the learning that has taken place. What needs to be done differently in future?

2. SHARED LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the art of helping people, with a common purpose, to work together. It is essential for effective group work and for advancing group/community transformation. Group leadership can be shared by a number of people. Each person, according to his/her capacity, can exercise a type of leadership. It is important that the leaders meet to agree on certain issues.

The team will have responsibility for gathering people from different parts of the community to participate in the process. Team members animate the process and motivate the members and leaders of the group/community to become involved so as to create a spirit of unity and common purpose among diverse people.

2.1. Leadership Roles

The role of the leader(s) is to build the group and community capacity over time and to encourage commitment and openness to change. The leader has to empower each member of the group and the community, without seeking to control it.

Openness is a key ingredient for leadership. Leaders must be visible and accessible to group members.

A leadership team needs to care for the people of the larger group/community by:

3. MOTIVATING INDIVIDUALS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON PURPOSE

- o Keeping community members motivated and connected.
- o Identifying and building on community capacity.
- o Ensuring that community ownership remains strong.
- o Communicating and celebrating results. Acknowledging successes and discussing what may not have worked so well and why.
- o Providing constructive feedback to those carrying out the tasks.
- o Remaining positive and not getting discouraged by the unexpected or disappointments.
- o Working through issues of concern and conflict.
- o Developing on-going leadership capacity in the group or community.
- o Integration and coordination of tasks and activities.
- o Good stewardship of resources.
- o Readiness to make hard decisions when resources are limited.
- o Focussing energy on results and inclusion.
- o Encouraging a group spirit rather than competition by careful timing of actions.

It will greatly help the functioning of the group if not only the core group but all members develop some of these leadership attitudes.

3.1. Keeping the Task in Focus

It is vital that leaders communicate the vision of the group effectively and help individuals keep this big picture in view when clarifying individual goals and objectives.

3.2. Roles of the Members of the Core Group

With shared leadership, members of the core team complement each other by playing different roles according to their capacity. It is important, from the beginning, to clarify the different leadership roles each person will play. Ensure that those in leadership roles have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what can be delegated to others.

As you move to implement the plan, the level and the nature of the activities may demand a certain structure or organization of the group in order to be more efficient. A lack of this can lead to burnout of leaders, wasted effort, confusion of the members, conflict and/or loss of credibility and legitimacy.

There may be a need to enlarge the core group so that responsibilities can be shared to make tasks more manageable. Identify the leadership skills required for the project. Seek out individuals who have these different skills and abilities. In this way, the leadership group can adapt well to the needs.

Different roles of leadership:

- A facilitator or coordinator who brings together, animates and coordinates the group.
- A resource manager to administer the resources that are needed to implement the project.
- Prime implementers responsible for the design and implementation of the different tasks.
- An organizer responsible for the planning, monitoring and evaluation to be done with the larger group.
- Some partners, organizations to collaborate with for certain activities.
- Congregations, JPIC groups, Church groups and organizations that support our projects and activities.

3.3. Leaders Must Care for Themselves

The implementation of the project can be an intense process and much is expected of the leaders. To be effective, ensure that:

- o Expectations are realistic.
- o You have the support and resources needed.
- o You do not take personal ownership for the process, but build community ownership.
- o You develop potential leaders for the future.

3.4. Some Characteristics of Leaders

The group/community leaders have a dream or vision for their group/community which they are able to express effectively to others. As JPIC animators they believe that action must be taken with the people and by the people. They have the ability to develop leadership skills among a variety of group/community members. Leaders need support. Transformation needs strong leadership, but leadership alone is not enough. The commitment of all members is necessary.

3.5. Personal Reflection on Leadership

- o Are you and/or your Congregation able to take on the transformation project leadership role in a sustained fashion?
- o Are there some leadership skills that need to be developed further? What are these skills?
- o What strategies can be put in place to ensure there are leaders in the future?

4. WAYS OF PARTICIPATING

To prepare people to take on transforming action, there must be a belief that change is possible and a willingness to take the necessary steps to create interest and support. There needs to be a vision of what is possible.

4.1. Forming a Core Team

Initially, there needs to be a small group of interested people who reflect on the situation at a deeper level and communicate their thoughts to others. Form a team of people convinced that the situation needs transforming and ready to devote their time and energy to it. This core group will play a very important role in living and leading the transformation process. In the team there should be some key people from the community who are natural leaders and who will attract others into the process.

This team participates in a double cycle of reflection:

- o with all the other participants, and
- o individually.

It can become the “leader” team. Shared leadership is advantageous if there is good understanding in the team and with the whole community. Make sure that the core group has people of different ages and backgrounds as these factors will shape the vision and approaches.

However, as the process progresses, the team will have to draw on as many people as possible. To create interest and support, the team will need to communicate the vision to the larger group or community and so become a catalyst to unite the community for action. The best way of doing this will be by asking questions and promoting discussion among community members.

4.2. Involving the Group or Community in the Pastoral Circle Process

Working with the community is an awakening process. Help them to understand, analyse, plan and carry out action. But do not do the work for them. “Work with the people, not for them.” They must decide on the issues and how to tackle them. They have a right to make mistakes and to learn from them. Changes will come from within a people’s own understanding of their needs and rights.

The process of the Pastoral Circle helps the community to see itself in a new way, to wake up to its right to play a full part in society and to participate in the decisions that affect its life. This awakening is an important condition for the community’s commitment to the work of Justice and Peace. It is important to listen and to draw from the experience and the strength of the people.

4.3. Letting the People Grow

Going through the Pastoral Cycle process with the community is a way of boosting its capacity to make life-improving decisions. The Pastoral Circle opens up a certain freedom as people learn more about situations and choose how to deal with them. The work for greater justice starts with the people’s potential and aims at community development. To empower the community for the future, it is important to help them reflect on the possibilities they have in themselves as a group. The following questions could help empower the community:

- o Can you think of examples when community members have acted together to achieve a common purpose?
- o Are community members aware of their power to act together for the benefit of the community?
- o Do you believe there is willingness in your community to identify common ground rather than focus on differences?
- o Is there potential for a community process to be inclusive?
- o Is community transformation understood as a process that will bring about change?
- o Is there a common issue or challenge facing our community/group?

4.4. Starting Small and Taking Easy Steps

When you first work with a group or community, start with an easy problem. In the early stages, e.g. for the first year or so, community development and learning are as important as the issue itself. At this stage, small achievements are important because they build confidence and make the next steps possible; those involved in the process will benefit most as they are learning by reflecting and carrying out tasks. One of the main skills to learn will be taking decisions as a community.

4.5. Building up Solidarity

It is important to develop the sense of community, to help its members work together and be in solidarity with each other. As we move towards freedom, it is important to tread carefully so that we move into relations of solidarity, sharing and caring and advancing together towards a new society where our full humanity is recognised.

4.6. Building up the People’s Organisation

To keep their local community free from exploitation, people must carry out liberating activities. Special attention needs to be given to building up organisation, strengthening the capacity of those serving the community and introducing structures that will help good governance within the organization.

4.7. Involving Young People

Today’s youth will be tomorrow’s leaders. This is why it is important to involve young people in the process. It will be a way of forming leaders and of giving them the chance to grow into leadership through reflection and action.

4.8. Networking with Others

Today, working with others leads to achieving the desired results more efficiently. If possible, establish links with other groups at local, national and international level. This unity increases bargaining power and gives energy to the struggle for a new society.

“Cross the river in a crowd and the crocodile won’t eat you.” (African Proverb)

