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Building solidarity through a spirituality of action

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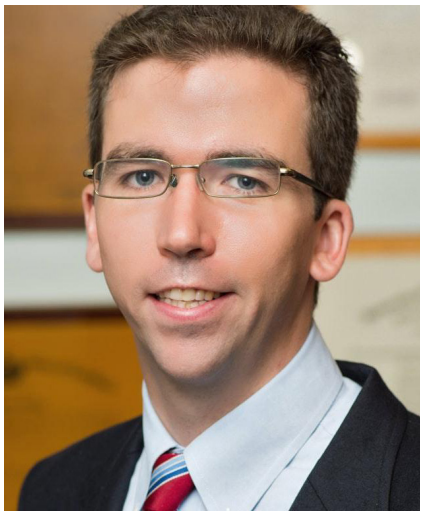

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11. BUILDING SOLIDARITY THROUGH A SPIRITUALITY OF ACTION

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Abstract

Many involved with service learning, especially in Catholic higher educational institutions, will be familiar with the approach to Christian praxis known as the see-judge-act method. For more than sixty years, this method has guided official Catholic social teaching and its implementation in ecclesial movements, organizations and in academic settings. Despite its influence, two elements often get overlooked in considering this method: the nature of this methodology as a spiritual practice known as the Review of Life; and the role of young adults and youth-led movements in the articulation and development of this approach.

The Review of Life methodology is the cornerstone of what a number of international Catholic youth movements describe as the Spirituality of Action. This spirituality complements the move towards a more critical, community-centered approach to service learning by bringing students to a deeper experience and understanding of both solidarity and agency.

This paper explores the Spirituality of Action in three steps. It begins with an overview of the development of this spirituality in the youth movements of specialized Catholic action, with a specific focus on the Young Christian Workers and International Movement of Catholic Students. It then identifies four ways in which this approach can enrich service-learning today. In the final part, the paper offers some more practical suggestions for how this method might be more intentionally incorporated into SL courses and programs.

Introduction: The Need for a Spirituality in Service Learning

The development of community-engaged or service-learning (SL) in higher education is an important element in the formation of holistic and ethical leaders for society and for the church. At its best, SL enhances understanding, engenders genuine solidarity among students and community partners, forms ethical leaders and strengthens the common good.

Service by university students can create a cheap solidarity, an approach that gives the appearance of doing good while reinforcing the status quo. One way to help students avoid the dangers of a cheap or performative solidarity is the Spirituality of Action. At the heart of this spirituality is the methodology and approach to Christian praxis known as the see-judge-act.

Service by university students, as Ivan Illich warned in a provocative 1968 address, is not without risks (Illich, 1990). It can create a cheap solidarity, an approach that gives the appearance of doing good while reinforcing the status quo. In some cases, done incorrectly, it may even cause harm or reinforce unjust distributions of power (Eby, 1998; Santiago-Ortiz, 2019).

One way to help students avoid the dangers of a cheap or performative solidarity is the Spirituality of Action[36]. At the heart of this spirituality is the methodology and approach to Christian praxis known as the see-judge-act. Many involved with service learning, especially in Catholic higher educational institutions, will be somewhat familiar with this approach, which has long been associated with Catholic social teaching and social organizing (Brigham, 2019). Despite its influence, two elements often get overlooked in considering this method: the nature of this methodology as a spiritual practice known as the Review of Life; and the role of young adults in the articulation and development of this methodology and spirituality.

This spirituality and the related practice of the Review of Life (RoL[37]) has the potential to bring students to a deeper experience and understanding of both solidarity and agency. This approach complements the move towards a more critical and community-centered approach to SL (Mitchell, 2008; Santiago-Ortiz, 2019). This paper explores the historical development of this spirituality, the ways in which it enriches SL today, and concludes with a practical guide for integrating the RoL in service-related courses and programs.

A Spirituality of, for, and by Young Adults

One of the unique features of the Spirituality of Action is the way it was developed, refined, and disseminated by young adults themselves in the youth and student movements of specialized Catholic action. Not to be confused with the more top-down model

36 Hereinafter Spirituality of Action can be identified by the acronym: SoA
37 Hereinafter Review of Life can be identified by the acronym: RoL

of general Catholic action championed in many Catholic circles before the Second Vatican Council, the "specialized" approach originates in two sources.

The Young Christian Workers: The first source can be traced to a study circle created in 1912 by a group of young women workers from the industrial city of Laaken, Belgium. There, young women were assisted by Joseph Cardijn, a young priest who had earlier pledged his priesthood to serve the working class (Cardijn, 1955).

With these young workers, Cardijn proposed a unique model and spiritual response to the inequities and injustice of the industrial era. Unlike other pastoral approaches, the women, many illiterate and without formal education, were given space to be "*completely responsible for the finances, accounts and secretarial work of their organization*" (De La Bédoyère, 1959, p. 44). This was a major step forward from the paternalistic styles that often marked the church's efforts for the young and for the working class. Soon, other study circles were created, and a more refined approach emerged.

Following the First World War, there was a renewed effort to transform these worker study circles into an organized movement. A growing number of young workers felt drawn to join. While imprisoned during the war, Caridjn communicated with some of the workers and began to develop a more robust vision of a spirituality, methodology and organization.

This, however, faced a significant obstacle with the top-down model of "general Catholic action" promoted by the church hierarchy, including Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier of Brussels. According to Mercier and the general model, all lay organizing should fall under the centralized official organs of Catholic action set up by the hierarchy. Pius XI famously defined this official approach in 1928 as the "*participation and co-operation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate*" (Pius XI, 1978, p. 31).

Cardijn, by contrast, sought to establish a "specialized movement" autonomous from the general model, where the direction was in the hands of the young people themselves (Cardijn, 2017, pp. 4-5). For Cardijn, the empowerment of young people to be leaders in their own movements offered an important pedagogical function. The model he envisioned would be one where young people *"form each other, support each other, help each other, help each other, love each other, and together prepare themselves for their future*" (Cardijn, 1955, pp. 64-65)

In 1925, after failing to convince Cardinal Mercier, the young priest made his first trip to Rome to make an appeal to Pope Pius XI directly. In an unscheduled private audience, Cardijn

secured permission for this specialized, autonomous movement. In the following months, the first national congress of the *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* or JOC (YCW in English) was organized with Fernand Tonnet, a young worker, as president (De La Bédoyère, 1959).

Soon, thousands of cell groups were created in Belgium under four different national movements organized by gender and language. By 1939, YCW groups existed in fifty countries and following World War II, they formed the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) (Hari, 2000). In the 1980s, some YCW national groups disaffiliated from the IYCW and formed a parallel structure, the International Coordination of the Young Christian Workers (ICYCW).

According to the IYCW *Declaration of Principles*, the YCW is fundamentally a "*movement of, among, by and for young workers... a movement of education through action. It takes action right where the young workers are, and considers its task of education a priority*" (IX. International Council of the IYCW, 1995, no. 6). This task of education is chiefly done through small groups using the Review of Life or see-judge-act method.

As the YCW models spread globally, young people in other milieus, including students, young farmers, and middle-class youth formed their own autonomous movements and each one, in turn, gave rise to adult counterparts. Today, there are YCW groups in over 90 countries as well as sister movements of students, adult workers, young farmers, adult farmers, and children (ICYCW, 2021[38]; IYCW, 2021[39]).

International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS): A second source of specialized Catholic action emerged as a response to the First World War. In July of 1921, student leaders from seventeen European Countries, Argentina, the United States and Java convened for a peace conference in Fribourg, Switzerland. The delegates, many of who had recently been fighting on opposite sides of the war, agreed to form an International Confederation of Catholic Students organized with the emblem Pax Romana. For the students involved in this pioneering student-led initiative, there was a profound sense of responsibility to take action in society (de Weck, 1946). This mission compelled them to develop relief programs, engage in advocacy with the League of Nations, and organize trainings and conferences on the responsibility of the student in the face of social themes.

Following the Second World War, Pax Romana reorganized into two autonomous movements. The International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) for university students

38 ICYCW (2021). About. International Coordination of Young Christian Workers. Retrieved from http://www.cijoc.org/node/3.

39 IYCW (2021). National Movements. JOCI-IYCW. Retrieved from https://joci.org/en/who-are-we/la-joci-dans-le-monde-2.html.

and the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA) for graduates and professionals. The student movement spread quickly organizing regional programs and secretariats in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe. In many places, particularly in Iberian Peninsula and Latin America, IMCS adopted the YCW cell-based, Review of Life model. This was especially the case where IMCS included the Young Catholic Students (YCS), a sister movement modeled more explicitly on the YCW and see-judge-act method (Pelegri, 1979). In other places, particularly in Asia, IMCS groups lived the Spirituality of Action and Review of Life through an action-reflection-action approach. Today, there are IMCS groups in more than 75 countries and YCS groups in more than 80 (IMCS Pax Romana, 2021[40]; IYCS, 2016[41]).

Like the YCW, IMCS emphasizes the autonomy and responsibility of students themselves. Among its core aims, the *IMCS Statutes* identifies the promotion of "*the student apostolate among students in higher education stressing their responsibility in life, Church's mission and in the world*" and "*to encourage pedagogies of action which help students integrate their Christian faith in their efforts to build a more just society*" (IMCS Pax Romana, 2007[42]).

These are not efforts by the church for young people, but rather, movements *of, for, and by* young people themselves (Ahern, 2015). Despite their age and status, young people in this model are encouraged to take responsibility and action here and now. This has been described by some as reflecting a "jocist mystique", a style of learning and working with young people that allows them to organize themselves and evangelize their peers.

The vision and inductive methodology adopted by YCW, IMCS and others had a notable impact on church teaching over the past century. In *Mater et Magistra,* Pope St. John XXIII endorsed the see-judge-act method developed by the YCW and popularized by the other movements as the approach for the church's social analysis (Cimperman, 2015; Wijsen et al., 2005).

> *There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act. (John XXIII, 1961, MM, 236).*

40 IMCS Pax Romana (2021). Who We Are? The International Movement of Catholic Students. Retrieved from https://www.imcs-miec.org/who-we-are-2

41 IYCS (2016). Who We Are. International Young Catholic Students. Retrieved from https://iycs-jeci.org/who-we-are.

42 IMCS Pax Romana (2007). International Statutes. International Movement of Catholic Students. Retrieved from https://www.imcs-miec.org/statutes/.

Subsequently, nearly all official documents of Catholic social doctrine follow the see-judge-act pattern.

During Vatican II and after, the spirituality of IMCS, YCS and YCW helped move sectors of the church to rethink the meaning of the lay apostolate and help to reorient the church towards liberation and praxis. Several former leaders of these movements were selected to be among the small group of lay auditors at the council and Pope Paul VI, himself a former chaplain to the IMCS group in Italy, named Cardijn a bishop and cardinal just before the last session of Vatican II (Goldie, 1974). Many of the pioneering liberation theologians, including Gustavo Gutiérrez, Tissa Balasuriya, and Albert Nolan were deeply engaged in these movements. "*It was from both the practice and theory of these groups*", as Enrique Dussel points out, "*that the most important theological break in Latin American history was to emerge*" (Dussel, 1992, p. 392; Bidegaín, 1985).

Three Truths: The specialized model embraced by the YCW, IMCS, and YCS is grounded in what the movements describe as a Spirituality of Action. In his accompaniment of the YCW movements, Cardijn framed this spirituality according to what he described as "three truths", the truths of life, faith, and action (Cardijn, 1935).

The truth of life speaks to the beginning point of the Spirituality of Action, the lived experience of human beings and their communities. This spirituality, like its Review of Life method, in other words, is rooted in experience rather than abstract theory. As a Christian spirituality that takes the Incarnation seriously, the Spirituality of Action prioritizes in a special way the experience of the poor and the excluded rather than the privileged and politically powerful. This is a key feature shared with many SL programs.

While many students will come into service-learning knowing full well the experience of suffering and injustice, others especially those from middle class comfortable backgrounds might find discovering this truth disturbing and eye-opening. In his visit to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa following the drowning of many migrants nearby, Pope Francis decried the temptation to ignore what is really happening around us by retreating into "*soap bubbles... In this world of globalization we have fallen into a globalization*

Like the critical approach to service-learning, the Review of Life and Spirituality of Action more broadly, seek to move past the soap bubbles that reinforce the status quo and mask the inequalities of power and privilege. By attending to experience, by taking life seriously, the Spirituality of Action helps to pop the bubbles of illusion and indifference.

of indifference. We are accustomed to the suffering of others, it doesn't concern us, it's none of our business" (Francis, 2013).

Like the critical approach to service-learning (Mitchell, 2008), the RoL and Spirituality of Action more broadly, seek to move past the soap bubbles that reinforce the status quo and mask the inequalities of power and privilege. By attending to experience, by taking life seriously, the Spirituality of Action helps to pop the bubbles of illusion and indifference.

While looking at reality reveals many positive dimensions of life—from the joy of friendship to the beauty of the natural world—experience, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the poor and marginalized, illuminates the stark reality of sin, of suffering, of the crucifixion. For far too many people this means dehumanizing working conditions, war, inequality, racial discrimination, ecological destruction, human rights abuses, and marginalization. As Pope Francis summarizes, for far too many people "*it is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity*" (Francis, 2013, EG, 52).

The truth of life finds itself in contradiction with a second truth, the truth of faith. This truth points to the fullness of God's Kingdom preached and initiated by Jesus Christ. This is the ground of all Christian life, belief in a good creator God, a God of life and love who is capable of making "all things new" (*Revelation* 21:5). The Biblical tradition offers many inspiring metaphors of this reality, from the peaceable kingdom in the *Book of Isaiah* (11:1-9) to the many images of the heavenly banquet in the *Gospel of Matthew*. This vision of God's Kingdom is about wholeness and holiness, resurrection and healing. Michael Deeb, a South African Dominican and former IMCS and YCS chaplain, puts it this way:

> *the truth of faith…assures us that we are all created in God's image. Hence, as children of God, we believe that all people are called to be co-creators in building a world that God intended, a world of love, joy, freedom, justice, peace, sharing, solidarity and service—the reign or kingdom of God. It is a world that, in our deepest being, we all really desire. (Deeb, 2018, pp. 199-200).*

What can be done in the face of this contradiction or dialectic between a reality too often marked by suffering and the vision of the Reign of God offered by the gospel? Between the truth of life and the truth of faith?

One response involves retreating into the comfort of one's soap bubbles, looking away from the suffering of others and overlooking how one might be complicit in structural injustice. This happens in a number of ways and is supported by social structures that benefit from the status quo including patriarchy, clericalism, consumerism, and racism.

A somewhat opposing response dismisses the truth of faith by rejecting the core of the Christian message as an unrealistic utopic dream. One version of this response is to relegate the Gospel to another plane of existence. Yes, Jesus proclaimed and initiated the Kingdom of God, but this is something for the afterlife, for some spiritual realm detached from the realities of the world, or at best it is the job of saints, priests and nuns.

The Spirituality of Action, however, offers another response to the dialect. The spirituality of action is not content with the status quo and the continued existence of suffering and injustice. In the face of the contradiction between faith and life, Cardijn points to a third truth, the "truth of action". What is needed to confront this contradiction, he insisted, is organized action on the part of young people at the local, national and international level:

> *Leaders and members learning to see, judge, and act; to see the problem of their temporal and eternal destiny to judge the present situation, the problems, the contradiction...; to act with a view to the conquest of their temporal and eternal destiny. To act individually and collectively, in a team, in a local section, in a regional federation, in a national movement, in meetings, in achievement, in life and in their environment, forming a single front... (Cardijn, 1935).*

Action has long been a central element in the Christian moral life. In the *Gospel of Matthew*, for instance, Jesus laments those who fail to take action as being like the foolish who build their houses on sand (7:24-27). In a similar vein, in what is likely the most famous part of his epistle, St. James decries those who claim to have faith but who fail to take action for the poor. "*Faith without action*", he teaches "*is dead*" (*James* 2:17).

Fifty years ago in 1971, two texts embody the Spirituality of Action. In *Octogesima Adveniens,* St. Pope Paul VI calls all Christians to examine what they have done and what they have failed to do in regard to the social questions. Like St. James, Pope Paul stresses that words alone are insufficient: "*It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action*" (Paul VI, 1971, OA, 48). Echoing St. John XXIII, Pope Paul affirms the see-judge-act method as a way for local Christian communities to respond to social questions (Paul VI, 1971, OA, 4).

Several months later, *Justicia in Mundo*, the final statement of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, makes clear the need to put faith into action *"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world*", as the Synod famously states in its introduction, *"fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel*" (Synod of Bishops, 1971/2010).

Deepening Spirituality and Solidarity in Service Learning

How might this spirituality and the distinctive approach offered by specialized Catholic action enrich and inform service and community-engaged learning today? Recovering this spirituality which frames the see-judge-act approach has the potential to enrich SL in at least four ways.

i. *First, the Spirituality of Action draws attention to the value of experience as a starting point for personal and social transformation*. In the Review of Life methods, the foundation of social engagement (the see stage) is always reality. Given the nature of service-learning, this commitment to the lived reality of people and community organizations is likely a value most programs already possess. At its best, SL, like the movements of specialized Catholic action, acknowledges that much can be learned in the direct engagement with people who are poor and marginalized.

For example, in the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF), the Indian affiliate of IMCS, opening university students to the lived realities of the marginalized has been a central part of their pedagogical approach since the 1950s. Marina D'Costa, a former national leader in AICUF comments on the importance of "exposure" in her own formation:

> *In my formative years in AICUF I explored villages in South, West, and North India that gave me a picture of what India really looks like. By offering an alternative approach to education, rather than the traditional classroom learning, AICUF pushes students into uncomfortable zones that lead them to awaken their inner selves and raise critical questions. (D'Costa, 2018, p. 64)*

Seeing experience through a compassionate lens is a foundational value in the Spirituality of Action. But it is only a first step. By itself, experience, even when it facilities compassion, is insufficient and can even be harmful to community partners. This leads to a second dimension of the Spirituality of Action critical analysis.

For the South African Dominican theologian Albert Nolan, who has long worked the specialized Catholic action, exposure, when done correctly, is an important element in developing compassion. "*The more we are exposed to the suffering of the poor*", he writes, "*the deeper and more lasting our compassion becomes*" (Nolan, 2009, p. 38).

From the Christian point of view, getting out of one's bubble and becoming exposed to the realities of those around us, particularly the poor, can be transformative. The Chris-

tian looks to experience, not because it is "interesting", "tweetable", or because it will look good on a resume. The Christian looks to experience because it is a source of revelation, along with scripture, tradition, and reason. Christians look to experience because they can discover God at work in our midst. Taking time to consider the beauty of creation, for example, illuminates the work of God, the creator. "*The entire material universe*", as Pope Francis points out in *Laudato Si'*, "*speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God*" (Francis, 2015, LS, 84).

In the *Gospel of Matthew*, Jesus tells us that he is present whenever two or three people are gathered in his name (18:20) and in a special way in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned (25:31-46). And in the *Acts of the Apostles* and writings of St. Paul, we are assured that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world, including through the animating gifts of Grace.

Seeing experience through a compassionate lens is a foundational value in the Spirituality of Action. But it is only a first step. By itself, experience, even when it facilities compassion, is insufficient and can even be harmful to community partners. This leads to a second dimension of the SoA critical analysis.

ii. *Second, the SoA affirms the need for critical social analysis.* Without going deeper, exposure programs risk becoming self-referential, experiences of service-tourism, and charity programs that reinforce the status quo. To avoid this, the Spirituality of Action emphasizes the need for critical analysis and prayerful discernment on experience and reality. The Review of Life methodologies of the see-judge-act, action-reflection-action, and pastoral spiral are all aimed at this task. Theologian Maria Cimperman offers a helpful guide to address six "key areas of social analysis", namely sociological, economic, political, cultural, environmental and religious analysis (Cimperman, 2015, p. 85).

In the Christian tradition, wisdom, study, analysis, and discernment have long been recognized as important elements. St. Paul, for example, calls upon believers to not accept the status quo by discerning God's will and determining what is good (*Romans* 12:2, 1 *Thessalonians* 5:19). Like experience, the Christian tradition understands reason to be a source of revelation. Created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:27) human beings, endowed with intelligence and reason, even those without university degrees or formal education, are called to put this intelligence in the service of God.

In the Review of Life methods, special attention is paid to this prayerful discernment to uncover and investigate the root causes and structural dynamics behind the suffering, injustice, and power inequalities experienced by community partners. Too often, the suf-

fering experienced by community partners are symptoms of deeper socio-economic and cultural problems that must be uncovered.

As Nolan points out, "*poverty in the world today is not simply misfortune, bad luck, or inevitable – the result of laziness ignorance or a lack of development. Poverty in the world today is the direct result of the political and economic policies*" (Nolan, 2009, p. 40). This same thing can be said for the suffering caused by war, climate change, racial and gender-based discrimination. The Spirituality of Action demands analysis of the root causes and structural violence that cause harm *"as a result of unequal distribution of power and privilege*" (Moe-Lobeda, 2013, p. 72).

College and university students by their nature have the time, resources and arguably a vocational responsibility to engage in the social analysis and praxis necessary to uncover these structures. Critical SL offers a unique opportunity to help students better understand the complexities of the reality, power distributions, and the intersectionality with other social problems and social structures (Mitchell, 2008; Santiago-Ortiz, 2019). For example, if community partners are experiencing homelessness or a lack of access to decent affordable housing, service-learning might invite students to study the roots of the crisis by examining housing policies and the relationship between housing and deeper social sins, such as racism, sexism, classism, and ecological destruction.

As students engage in social analysis, they may discover that they unwillingly benefit from or perpetrate the unjust dehumanizing social structures that harm community partners. This can be challenging. Coming to terms with unjust social realities, their deeper structural roots, and the complicity of many of us awakens what the Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire describes as "consciousness-raising" or conscientization (Freire, 1970). From the perspective of Christian theology, this may even reflect a type of conversion experience. For some students, this can be as jarring and sudden as the experience of St Paul on the road to Damascus (*Acts* 9:1-19).

Done well, this analysis will, as Albert Nolan suggests, break open a desire to "*want to engage in certain activities that are calculated to bring about social and political change*" (Nolan, 2009, p. 42). Channeling this desire into effective and long-term strategies for change, however, cannot happen in isolation and this illuminates a third value of the Spirituality of Action: community.

iii. *The Spirituality of Action is profoundly communal*. "*Jesus's followers*", as Gustavo Gutiérrez points out, "*should live their faith in the God of life in community*" (Gutierrez, 2011, p. 76). For the movements of specialized Catholic action, this often takes shape in

small groups or clubs that meet regularly according to the Review of Life method. These clubs or local communities then link up with one another in national and international movements.

In the context of service-learning, community can be facilitated in a number of ways. Within classroom settings, small groups can be cultivated among students throughout the academic term. In immersion programs where a group of students may travel for service, building a sense of community before, during and after the trip are important elements.

At Manhattan College in New York, for example, a number of students are involved in the Lasallian Outreach Volunteer Experience or LOVE program where they visit partners at a number of sites in the United States and beyond. As the program has developed, campus leaders have recognized the importance of facilitating a community experience. "*Preparation and critical reflection in teams and small groups is essential*" according to Lois Harr and Jennifer Robinson. Weekly meetings of the students, before, during, and after trips, "*challenge students to examine their own assumptions, to recognize their own perspectives, and to begin to imagine from the perspective of another. Notions of charity and justice come into play, helping students uncover systemic injustice as they face the challenges of the immediate charitable responses and the need for long term, just solutions*" (Harr & Robinson, 2018, pp. 147-148).

Being a part of a community, including small groups in classrooms, can help students to support one another and to discover a fourth dimension of the Spirituality of Action: agency for social transformation.

iv. *Fourth, the ultimate goal of the Spirituality of Action is to mobilize agency for personal and social transformation.* In societies marked by patriarchal ageism, consumerism, and clericalism, young adults are often told they do not have agency. They are told that they are the future, but not the present.

The *Spirituality of Action,* by contrast, affirms the agency and social responsibility of young people in the world here and now. Young people are not just the future but the present. In his 2019 exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis captures call to action well. After affirming the role of young people in taking to the streets for social justice, he urges them to become "protagonists of change":

> *"...Continue to fight apathy and to offer a Christian response to the social and political troubles emerging in different parts of the world...do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander. He got involved. Don't stand aloof, but immerse yoursel-*

> *ves in the reality of life, as Jesus did". Above all, in one way or another, fight for the common good, serve the poor, be protagonists of the revolution of charity and service, capable of resisting the pathologies of consumerism and superficial individualism (Francis, 2019, CV, 174).*

Discovering one's agency as protagonists of change is something many young people find with the Spirituality of Action and this can have a lasting impact on a young person's sense of vocation. Writing on her experience in IMCS groups in Mali, Afou Chantal Bengaly speaks about this. "*Through my involvement in the local community, I felt called to serve the students of my country, not just my university. I felt called by God to work for social justice in my country...to be an agent in correcting the injustices of this world*" (Bengaly, 2018).

In an SL setting, helping young people engender a sense of agency as protagonists may not always be easy but it is, as Tania Mitchell (2008) point out, an important part of the critical service-learning approach. Power and agency in traditional classrooms, after all, are often in the hands of professors and university administrators. Finding ways to give students some agency and responsibility in determining the design of the course and implementation of projects would be an important challenge offered by this Spirituality of Action.

Moreover, the Spirituality of Action challenges SL to move from analysis and activities to action. Among the movements of specialized Catholic action an important distinction is often made between actions and activities. Activities are those things that we do without much reflection or analysis. These can be very necessary: reminding students about the time and location of the next meeting; advertising upcoming speakers; organizing travel to the community partner.

Actions, by contrast, are those things done that flow from the other three values, the critical analysis on experience done in community. Actions do not always mean doing more. Sometimes actions may even call us to do less, but in a more intentional way. Actions go beyond the "clicktivism" and shallow self-gratifying behavior we find on social media. Simply liking a page, joining a group or sharing a story are not actions.

The Review of Life in Service-Learning: A Brief Guide

The main RoL methodology, commonly known as the see-judge-act, offers a practical way to help move students to action. This methodology can be incorporated into SL courses in at least three ways.

First, the Review of Life can serve as a framework for designing SL courses and programs. Second, the Review of Life can be incorporated into SL courses through thematic modules. A third way to bring in the Review of Life into service our name would be to use the see-judge-act method as the basis of debriefing sessions following student service experiences and exposures.

First, the RoL can serve as a framework for designing SL courses and programs. For traditional courses with experiential components, the syllabus can be designed to roughly follow the see-judge-act pattern, beginning with the experience of the community partners, analyzing that experience in light of course themes, and exploring possible responses.

For example, an SL course with a focus on ecological justice can begin with introducing students to the realities of climate change in their communities with students visiting local partners affected by or working on these issues. The students can then reflect on these experiences through scientific and ethical texts, including scholarly articles on the roots of the climate crisis and Pope Francis' ecological and encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The course would be directed towards student assignments that explore, evaluate and proposed lines of action based on the experience of the community partners. Students would be encouraged to propose lines of action that they could actually act upon and to do so in consultation with community partners.

Second, the Review of Life can be incorporated into SL courses through thematic modules. The IMCS and IYCS chaplain, Buenaventura Pelegri, describes this as a "planned Review of life" (Pelegri, 1979, p. 176). This would invite students to engage experience through the lens of specific themes related to the course topic, Catholic social teaching, key human rights, sustainable development goals, or other thematic groupings. In her book, *See, Judge, Act: Catholic Social Teaching and Service Learning*, Erin Brigham (2019) offers helpful resources to engage key themes Related to Catholic social teaching using the seed judge act method. These suggested resources can serve as modules to assist students in understanding the connections between the experiences of community partners and the insights of Catholic social teaching. These thematic modules can be adapted for students involved in a short term or semester-long community engagement.

A third way to bring in the Review of Life into service our name would be to use the see-judge-act method as the basis of debriefing sessions following student service experienc-

es and exposures. This small group approach would be most consistent with the model as it originally developed in the YCW, YCS and IMCS movements.

In semester-long courses where students engage the community throughout the term, these debriefings can be built into the weekly rhythm of the course. Organizing this with groups of six to ten students would be valuable. For example, half of the weekly class sessions could be devoted to small group reflection using the see-judge-act model.

For more intensive short-term exposure programs, such as a weeklong visit to a site over university holidays, this group debriefing could happen every evening. In either case, the following guide might be helpful as a basis for unpacking the experience.

Opening prayer: Many, but not all, Review of Life groups begin and end with prayer. Small groups following the see-judge-act approach are ideal places to bring in more explicit prayer and spirituality into the SL experience. Depending on the context and the comfort of students this can be done in a variety of ways from beginning each session with the gospel reading of that Sunday to sharing poetry or music.

Reviewing past actions (if applicable): Before taking up a new experience, the community should review any previous commitments decided from the last gathering.

i. Have we followed up on the commitments we made?

ii. If yes, what results did we see? If no, why not?

This need not take a lot of time. And if the action needs more thought and reflection, the group may decide to focus on this for the rest of the meeting.

See: The first stage in the review of life process is sharing experience. Some SL programs utilize journaling as a way to encourage self-reflection among students and advisors. Unpacking one's experience in the community in such reflective ways can help students better prepare to share that experience with others.

In the tradition of the Review of Life, these experiences are often called "facts". Sometimes community settings can be spaces for emotional and cathartic relief this can be useful, but the review of life is not intended as group therapy it is fundamentally a process for personal and social transformation.

i. Brief check-in: What have you seen with your community engagement over the past day/week? What has moved you and why?

ii. Identifying a "fact:" after the common sharing, the group can decide to pick one or more experience, a fact, to examine more deeply. this should be specific and not simply a vague impression. As a group they seek to get more clarity on the fact:

- ***a.*** What do the community partners feel about this?
- ***b.*** Who is involved? Who benefits? Who suffers? Who is indifferent?
- ***c.*** What are some of the deeper power dynamics or structures of sin/violence that are at play?
- ***d.*** How are we implicated in this experience? Have we contributed to or benefited from this situation in any way?

Judge: The second stage of the review of life opens the door to think more critically in a discerning way. Faculty and advisors can help students by preparing/assigning as readings some of the texts from Catholic social teaching, the work of Catholic social organizations, and scripture that relate directly to the course focus. In this space, students, including those who do not identify as Catholic or Christian, can be invited to build on the first stage to "*define what is good and right, which can be drawn from any number of sources—religious doctrine, scriptures, cultural mores, philosophical perspectives, the teachings of inspirational figures*" (Brigham, 2019, p. 24). Guiding questions include:

i. How does this experience relate to course readings?

ii. How does this experience relate to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God that he preached (the truth of faith)?

iii. How does it relate to other religious traditions and other moral-ethical frameworks (e.g., human rights, civil rights, ecojustice)?

Act: The third stage opens up the space for students to engage the realities facing the community partners with a goal towards personal and collective transformation. Here, the group is invited to identify concrete actions that can be taken with community partners. These actions should be both practical and prophetic. In other words, they should be able to be accomplished but also be challenging and transformative. For example, "we will end homelessness" is not an achievable goal for a group of students in an SL course, but finding a room on campus for a specific family or setting up a meeting with a government official to discuss housing policy could be. Careful attention, as Brigham points out, should be paid to

distinguish between actions aimed at addressing immediate needs (charity) and longer-term actions aimed at addressing the deeper roots causes (justice): "*distinguishing between charity and justice can be a helpful reminder that each aim is important and incomplete without the other*" (Brigham, 2019, p. 25). Key guiding questions in this stage include:

i. What actions are needed to address both the immediate needs (charity) and deeper structural issues (justice)?

ii. What do community partners believe we should do with them?

iii. What impact can we have as students? As a university community?

iv. Can we partner with existing movements and organizations already working on this issue?

How will we make sure that community partners remain active agents in the design, implementation and evaluation of our actions?

It is important to note here that this guide for integrating the Spirituality of Action into service-learning through the Review of Life should not be understood in a formulaic or rigid way. The see-judge-act method is not meant as a type of checklist, like the detailed instructions on how to put together a new piece of Scandinavian furniture. Instead, the review of life proposes a style or way of approaching social questions that can and should be adapted to different realities the rhythm often becomes clear after participants engage in it several times. soon many students will discover that the review of life becomes a way of seeing the world and helps to shape their response to social injustice.

While it emerged in the context of movements of, for and by young adults, the Spirituality of Action strengthens and supports the critical approach to SL by drawing attention to several values, including experience, critical analysis, community, and goal of personal and social transformation. This spirituality, and its method of the Review of Life, can enrich service-learning by engendering solidarity through agency.

Conclusion

In his 2015 address to popular movements, Pope Francis concluded with a call to action: "*the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize*" (Francis, 2015). At its core, the Spirituality of Action is about mobilizing people, particularly young people to be as agents for change in the community.

While it emerged in the context of movements of, for and by young adults, the Spirituality of Action strengthens and supports the critical approach to SL by drawing attention to several values, including experience, critical analysis, community, and goal of personal and social transformation. This spirituality, and its method of the RoL, can enrich service-learning by engendering solidarity through agency.

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UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

"We will not change the world, if we do not change education"

Pope Francis

3

Spirituality and Higher Education: Perspectives from Service-Learning

A research topic that is increasingly attracting the attention of the academic world is the link between teaching and spirituality, understood in its broadest sense. This will be the focus of the volume that we present to our readers today. The aim is to provide, both for Catholic Institutions of Higher Education and universities at large, a space for reflection in their itinerary of discernment about their identity and specific mission.

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