

ACTS

**ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC
TERTIARY STUDENTS**

**MODALITY
AND
METHODOLOGY OF REFLECTION**



IMCS SOUTH AFRICA

International Movement of Catholic Students

MODALITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF ACTS

MODALITY

The Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS) is a student-driven faith community within the Church of South Africa located within the Catholic Chaplaincies of the Universities. Together with the Chaplaincies the students are continually challenged to develop a student spirituality by 'discerning the signs of the times'. The development of programmes and activities should, in fact, emerge as responses to the identified 'signs of the times'. In this way ACTS at all levels, nationally, provincially and branch, will remain relevant.

SPIRITUALITY

The spirituality of continually discerning the 'signs of the times' challenges ACTS to reflect on the local context and, from this reflection, to develop meaningful responses. In this way ACTS is in line with the suggested spirituality of the International Movement of Catholic Students. The invitation to reflect and respond is an attempt to be in continual dialogue with the living God, a living God who is always speaking to the individual and to the community – refer to 1 Samuel 3:1 – 18.

An ACTS Branch can see itself as a 'holy space' in which the living God, through the Holy Spirit, is continually challenging and waiting for responses. In this way young Catholics are given a space to express and formulate their lives in a meaningful way to themselves.

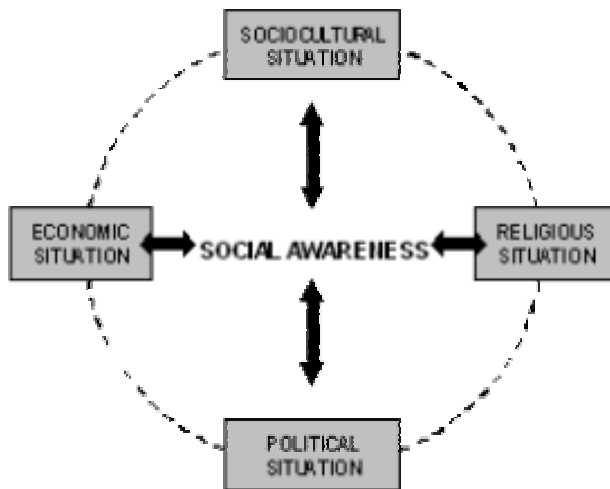
Over the years ACTS has attempted to discern the 'signs of the times' and the following policies have been developed:

- National Youth Service Programme
- African Church Policy
- ACTS Gender Policy
- ABCD Lifestyle Campaign
- High School Campaign Policy
- Alumni Policy
- Evangelising the Catholic Students on Campus

METHODOLGY OF REFLECTION - PASTORAL CYCLE

Fr. Gabriel Afagbegee, svd

The youth of the Church do not exist or live in isolation from their socio-cultural, economic, political and religious environment or contexts. They are part and parcel of the society in which they live. Thus they cannot and should not close in on themselves being unconcerned about what goes on in the wider community around them. For our youth to genuinely live out their Christian calling, they have to be inserted into, and engage the society in which they are and are part of. They therefore have to become socially aware and interested in the socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political situations of their environment - village, town, city or country (and the world at large) just as they are or are expected to be interested in religious matters or situations. Thus they are expected to be in the position to reflect on and respond adequately to issues, challenges and/or problems of their life situations from the perspective of faith as Christians and specifically as Catholics. These four situations of life are not independent of each other. Rather they are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent as illustrated below.



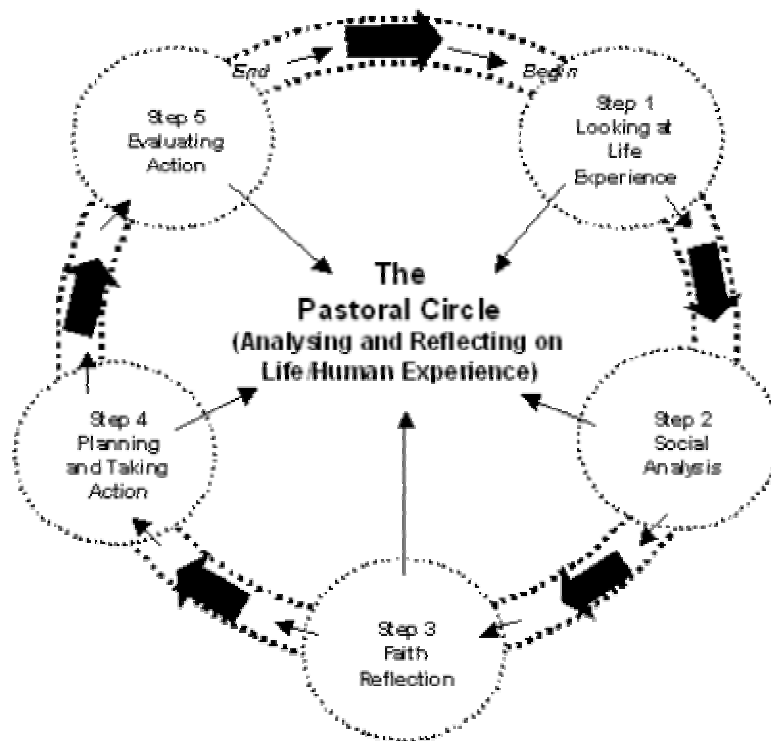
But the question is how can they (the youth) do such analysis of their concrete life situations and respond adequately to the challenges that face them? And how are you chaplains assisting them or can / should assist them in their efforts?

To be in a position to reflect on and go through a process of systematic analysis of their concrete life situations in an integrated and consistent manner, I think the youth could be introduced to the concept and practice of the Pastoral Cycle. This is a method that would help them respond skillfully and effectively to issues, challenges and/or problems of life in accordance with God's Word and in light of

their faith.

The Pastoral Circle is a process of five steps of insertion, analysis, reflection, planning and taking action, and evaluating the action taken as illustrated below.

As can be seen in the illustration, at the heart of the process of the five steps (of the Pastoral Cycle) is the concrete life/human experience, which is the, centre, the point of reference or the starting point of what takes place in the process - thus the arrows from each step pointing towards the centre. It is the concrete human experience that forms the basis of the reflection and analysis hence the first step (as explained below) is that of insertion into the situation/experience.



1. Looking at Life Experience

This is not looking at life experience in a superficial way (merely as an outsider) but rather insertion (being able to enter) of the community into the concrete/particular human situation or experience that is the focus or purpose for reflection and discussion. It involves:

Asking the question: What is going on?

Identifying the issues; i.e., clearly seeing what the issues are.

Researching the issues; i.e., investigating the issues and gathering as much information as possible about them.

2. Social Analysis

Having been inserted into the situation and asking the relevant questions, plus gathering enough information on the situation, the community now begins to look critically at the issues by:

Analyzing them to understand why they exist and understand their root causes and

Asking the questions: Why is this happening? What or who is responsible for its happening?

3. Faith Reflection

The community engaged in this process of the pastoral cycle is a community or person of faith. That is, what has brought and holds them together (as a community) is their faith in the Risen Lord. Thus their looking at, and analysis of the human experience is from the perspective of their faith (looking at what the Scriptures and (Social) Teachings of the Church say about the issues) and

Asking the questions: Lord what do you say about the issues? How would you want us to respond as a faith community so that whatever action/s we take portray us as your witnesses?

4. Planning and Taking Action

Having listened to the Lord in prayer for guidance as to what and how he would want them to respond to the issues as his witnesses, the members of the community now proceed to plan how exactly they would act. They decide on specific actions needed to reach their objective (all in the light of the message of Christ). In planning they are guided by questions such as:

Where have we come from? (What is the situation we have been examining?)

Where are we right now? (Having analyzed the situation and reflected on it in the light of faith, how do we now see the situation?)

Where do we want to be at? (In the light of our faith, based on Scripture and the Church's teachings what are we being called to do in response to the situation to bring about transformative change?)

How are we going to get there? (What specific actions/steps should we take in order to bring about the transformative change?)

5. Evaluating the Action

It is not enough to plan and take action. Also important and necessary in the pastoral circle is evaluation of whatever actions/steps have been taken to effect the transformative change. This would entail:

Assessing the success and/or failure (the outcomes) of the action taken and learning from them (especially for the purpose of avoiding mistakes in the future).

The evaluation does not end the process but leads back to further insertion, analysis etc. In this sense, the process is not a circular but a spiral one.