

# Planning a Pastoral Circle Session

## Step One: Involvement

The entry point for analyzing and acting on an issue may be

- an event—an experience of injustice
- an issue—hunger, poverty, environment, war
- a set of problems—economic deterioration of a neighborhood, pollution
- a question—why does poverty exist in the richest nation in the world?

### 1. Select a Justice Issue

- Brainstorm the issues that confront the young adults who will be attending the session. Ask: What issues touch their lives? What issues are currently in the news? What issues are most pressing?
- Choose a specific issue on which to focus:

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### 2. Develop an Involvement Activity

The variety of strategies to help young adults get involved in justice is limitless. Potential activities include:

- surveys, true-false quizzes, word association
- simulation games
- videos or films
- guest speakers, panels
- case studies, role plays, skits
- field trips, interviews, immersions
- creative art, drama, music, media
- taking a stand or claiming a viewpoint (forced choice continuum)

Choose an involvement:

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### 3. Focus Discussion

The Involvement activity should engage the young adults' heads and hearts. Encourage them to share their relationship to the issue and how they feel about it. They should also be in touch with how the community at large approaches the issue.

## Step Two: Exploration

### 1. Clarify the Focus

Identify the purpose of the Exploration through a clear statement of the issue the group has decided to explore:

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### 2. Gather the Data

Learn more about the issue by researching answers to the following questions:

1. What is the history of this situation? How long has the problem been with us? How has it changed through the years? Who benefits from the present situation? Who suffers?

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2. What influence does economics have on the issue?

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3. What influence does politics have on this issue?

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4. What values are at work or are absent in this situation (e.g., patriotism, human dignity, accepting cultural differences)?

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5. What influence do social groups and organizations have on this issue (e.g., family, neighborhood, media, communications)?

Choose a method of gathering this data. Exploration activities can include the following:

- simulations
- dialogues, debates, point-counterpoint debates
- research projects, fact-finding missions
- panels, speakers
- web or other methods of doing social analysis

Choose your method(s) of exploration:

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### 3. Analysis and Synthesis

Look at what you've learned. What are the *causes*? What are the links among the social, political, economic and cultural structures—either positive or negative?

Identify the causes and linkages in the problem area:

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Point out the resources available and the positive factors on which to build:

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## Step Three: Reflection

### 1. Identify the Religious Values

Identify the religious values and traditions that are at stake in the issue you have explored. What things in your experience and education lead you to say, "Things shouldn't be this way!"

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### 2. Explore the Scriptures and Catholic Social Teachings

Explore the Scriptures to see where and when the values you have identified have come into play. How has God's word of justice been revealed in the history of the Hebrew people? How was this issue approached by the teachers, prophets or psalmists of the Hebrew Scriptures? What did Jesus say or do when confronted by the same or similar issues of injustice? What can be learned from the life of the early Christian community as it tried to fashion a new community around Jesus' teachings and lifestyle?

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The Church's understanding of God's justice continues to grow and develop through time. What principles or approaches are set forth in the Church's Social Teaching, in Vatican documents and encyclicals, in pastoral letters developed by the bishops of the world or the bishops of our own country?

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### 3. Experience the Church in Action

Like Jesus, the Catholic community speaks not just through what it says, but by how it lives. See what the Church is doing to respond to the short or long-term problems created by injustice. Listen as members of the faith community share *why* they are doing the work they are.

What do you see the Church doing to respond to this issue?

Locally: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationally: \_\_\_\_\_

Globally: \_\_\_\_\_

Be as creative in your approach to Reflection as you were in your approaches to Involvement and Exploration. Possibilities include

- storytelling
- Scripture search and reflection
- role playing passages
- re-writing Scripture stories to fit modern times
- doing skits on principles of Catholic Social Teaching
- role playing bishops writing a pastoral letter on the topic
- exploring what the Church is doing to combat the injustice locally and globally
- creating a video of the Church in action.

Choose your Reflection activity(ies):

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## Step Four: Action

### 1. Select an Appropriate Action Response

Brainstorm possible actions appropriate to the situation as it has been analyzed. Think in terms of personal, interpersonal and structural actions.

Personal possibilities (e.g., lifestyle changes, further education, fasting and prayer, career goals, educating others, participating in an immersion experience, taking personal action, keeping informed, tithing, relating differently to others):

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Interpersonal possibilities (e.g., working with local agencies which help people, doing family or parish or campus projects, adopting a group, a poor parish, a diocese, twinning, fundraising for relief work, collecting/distributing needed materials, workcamps, peer to peer action):

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Structural possibilities (e.g., attending political meetings, lobbying and letter-writing, joining a social change organization, starting a group, boycotting, using buying power, influencing policy programming, supporting change organizations, organizing around issues, orchestrating media events to get the word out, investing differently, doing advocacy and consciousness-raising, voting/education):

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Eliminate those actions which are impossible for the group or unlikely to be effective.

List the pros and cons of each plausible option. Then use a consensus process to select the course of action for the group. Allow time for individuals to make their own personal choice of action.

## 2. *Develop a Strategy*

Describe the component pieces of your action response.

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Identify key resource materials and persons that would be helpful in planning and implementing your action response. Explore possibilities for networking and cooperative action with other groups working on this issue.

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Develop a realistic timeline for your action plan, assigning tasks and setting up procedures for accountability.

Timeline: \_\_\_\_\_

Preparation: \_\_\_\_\_

Actual dates of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflection and follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_

Tasks/Persons assigned:

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Accountability:

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Re-examine the whole strategy to see that you have included all essential elements.

**3. Implement**

After appropriate preparation and training, implement your plan of service.

**4. Evaluate**

Assess the action response and the process that led up to it. Explore its impact on individuals and on your group as a whole.

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Offer options for sustained involvement with this issue or with other expressions of the Christian call to justice.

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# Service Planning Worksheet

## Step One: Identify Issues of Concern

- Parish/Campus                       Community  
 State                                       Nation/World

## Step Two: Select an Issue of Concern

Our Issue of Concern

How this issue affects people and communities locally and globally:

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## Step Three: Select a Service Project

Select the type of service project that will address your issue of concern *and* best suit young adults, and, if applicable, an existing project with which you will work.

Serving Those in Need

- Working with a local service organization  
 Collecting resources  
 Building and repairing projects  
 Charitable giving/alternative gift-giving  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Working for Justice

- Advocacy for those who suffer injustice  
 Support for groups working for justice  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization or Project with Whom You Are Going to Work

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Service Project Worksheet

Service Project Chosen: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address & Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Service Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Project: What type of work will we be doing?

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Logistics (transportation, supplies, etc.):

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Skill or Knowledge Requirements:

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Preparation Work: How will we learn more about the issue? How will we become familiar with the service site? How will we get any training we need to serve?

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Time Commitment: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflection: When will we meet to reflect on our service experience?

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Additional Information: