

What is Theological Reflection?

Theological reflection, utilizing Holy Scripture as the basis for storytelling, describes the process of learning about God directly from our experience with the text. As an intentional and systematic activity during our time together, as well as in our personal lives, theological reflection attempts to enable each of us to discover God's presence in our own experiences, the difference God's presence makes in our lives, and what God is seeking of us as a result of God's presence. Theological reflection implicitly models spiritual discernment, by way of looking at an experience with a third eye—an eye of faith; unceasingly asking the "God question;" and examining values and core beliefs for our relationship to theology (the study of God).

Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate (collective) experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions, and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. Theological reflection respects the dignity of both. It may confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome can be new truth and meaning for living.

Three assumptions underline the use of theological reflection:

The first is that the human person is a hidden unity who discovers his or her identity in relationship. **The Judeo-Christian message is that we are generational people who discover ourselves and God in the people who have gone before us, in those with whom we share life, and in the people who come after us.** Attending to our relationship and impact experiences reveals our foundational faith convictions as well as God's ongoing revelation in our lives.

The second is that living theology holds theory and praxis together. This is the essence of an action-reflection model. **Whenever we examine what is creative or destructive about life and relationships, we are theologizing. Whenever we struggle with sin and human limitation, we are theologizing. Whenever we hunger and thirst to care and be cared for, we theologize. Whenever we attempt to bridge**

separation and cutoff, we DO theology. Our task is to birth this truth into existence.

The third is that theology is an activity of people. The biblical experience of Exodus and Resurrection provide witness to the essential truth that we are a covenant people who experience God within our history (action) and together in time recognize, retell, and celebrate (reflection) this presence together. **It is in the corporate/communal remembering and retelling of our experience that God is recognized.** The theology and mystery of the incarnation live at the center of this rhythm. The gift of God's spirit is present and active within the life of the entire community.

Excerpted from John Trokan's Models of Theological Reflection: Theory and Praxis

