STMA 557 – M.DIV. SYNTHESIS
Spring, 2009
Thursdays – 9:00am to 11:50am

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SCOPE: This course assists students in the integration and articulation of their theological, pastoral and spiritual development during their course of studies for the M.Div. The lens through which this synthesis takes place represents the three-fold shape which solid theology and ministry find expression: **scripture, tradition, and practice**. The particular quality of **reflective study** and **group interaction** provides participants the leisure to review what they have learned and to draw that learning together around the significant and central insights they have gained in their degree work. It asks them to express that integration orally and engage in a critical discussion of it. This work of integration is brought to completion with a public, oral presentation and a final synthesis paper.

GOALS: At the end of the course of MDiv studies, students will review the major theological themes that will shape the ministry and spiritual growth they will offer in service to churches, communities, and all creation, as the Mission Statement of STM proclaims. In addition, students will develop attitudes and practices of ongoing formation and education to enrich their ministry in the years to come. Finally, skills of thoughtful and concise writing, clear oral presentation, and reasoned and compassionate discussion and conversation provide the instruments through which this synthesis will unfold.

TEXTS: No specific texts are assigned. We may read some short, timely pieces that may surface during our weeks together. The major texts are your books, papers, class notes, handouts from the past years. I encourage you to augment these sources with experiences in the arts in all its facets (i.e. literature, music, visual and performative), as well as engagement in political and social practice in your ecclesial and civic communities. As a great and wise Jesuit spiritual director used to say in his course on St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, the dynamic is to "go back to the place where you have found the Lord." Savor these sacred places and plumb the riches of its persistent desire which stirs your mind and heart and soul. *You may wish to keep a journal of these discoveries and re-discoveries and spiritual movements.*

STUDENT WORK FOR THE COURSE: Each student is responsible for the following responsibilities:

1. Three oral presentations of 12-15 minutes (strict time will be followed), followed by a discussion of 15 minutes, in which you interact with others in the group on areas of clarification or elaboration on the points presented; the third presentation is open to the public;
2. Two five-page papers, written in light of the presentation, the discussion, and subsequent reflection; this is due the week after the presentation;
3. Facilitation of three post-presentation discussions (15minutes);
4. A final synthesis paper based on the experience of class, in which special attention is given to how these scriptural, theological, and pastoral perspectives will be challenged in the next few decades and how theology and ministry can be a prophetic voice in 'serving, challenging, and healing'

the world (10 pages). I would like these **no later** than Wednesday, June 10 (earlier if possible).

Assignment #1 – Scripture/Bible: A 12-15 minute oral presentation of the role of scripture in your denomination, in your own theological and spiritual formation, and its use in pastoral practice, especially regarding living the Christian life today and the ethical and moral development and decision-making that entails.

The student should consider the following for this *concise* presentation and subsequent five page paper:

- key insights/methods of Christian biblical theology, with particular emphasis on your own denomination's history, worship/liturgical practice, and contemporary catechesis (teaching) regarding the Bible;
- how your ecumenical experience has challenged and shaped your present thinking;
- how a multicultural perspective offers enriched areas of interpretation of and engagement with these sacred texts, both from the viewpoint of believers of diverse ethnicities/cultures, as well as from your own image of God revealed in this diversity.

Assignment #2 – Theological and Ecclesial Tradition: A 12-15 minute presentation of the foundational principles of your ecclesial tradition, how they are articulated in your own study, reflection and spiritual experience, and their use in pastoral practice. I encourage you to engage again the ecumenical and multicultural perspectives presented above. I suggest you frame this very wide tent of possibility around the three theological virtues of **faith, hope and love**.

The student should consider the following in this *concise* presentation and subsequent five page paper:

- **What do we believe?** How do I understand and articulate my denominational and personal understanding of the role of the Triune God, incarnation, salvation, and redemption? Do you believe in the Church, and what does that mean?
- **In what do we place our hope?** How does the Church's proclamation and my spiritual journey engender a deeper trust and freedom that, as Julian of Norwich says, "Sin is necessary, but all shall be well, and every kind of thing will be well" (*Showings, 225*)? Where and how can theology and ministry most offer the world hope, and what are the challenges to such a vision?
- **How, in the end, does love anchor this all?** How can we say with assurance that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1Cor. 13.7)? How might this vision of love invite you to a deeper transformation as a minister of the Gospel?

Assignment #3 - Incorporating Scripture and Tradition in Pastoral Practice: This final and public 12-15 minute presentation synthesizes the work of the first two presentations in a way that engages the pastoral practice and skills you have developed in your years at STM. The manner of presentation for this *concise* presentation should fit your

personality, style, and pastoral area of expertise or emphasis. You may wish to consider these points:

- What would I like to say about theology and ministry, ecumenical and multicultural engagement, and its relationship to my formation as a minister?
- Emphasize areas of passion and insight you gained from the previous two presentations and from important educational and formational experiences you encountered during your time here.
- How do pastoral skills and the wisdom of spiritual traditions inform your vision and call as a minister?

These will all require a bit of rummaging through your papers and books and journals from the past few years. In addition, listening to your colleagues' own presentations, their comments on your work, and the shared experience of deepening insight we have together in class are valuable materials for your final presentation and paper.

Expectations for Written Work (I cannot do better than Fr. Mike Raschko's suggestions in this regard, which I repeat verbatim below.):

- Papers must be typed, double-spaced, on standard 8 1/2"x 11" paper.
- Use 1-inch margins all round. Use 10 or 12 pt. type. In formatting your paper, do not use right-hand justification, as it leads to oddly spaced words.
- **Staple the paper in the top left-hand corner**. Do not use plastic covers or binders.
- Keep a copy other than the one you submit.
- Provide footnotes and a bibliography.
- Papers must strictly adhere to the "Guidelines for Writing Papers, Essays, and Projects" of the School of Theology and Ministry. If there are questions of style and format this does not answer, please refer to the "Student Guide to Editing and Style" published by Seattle University's English department and Writing Center. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations by Kate Turabian is also a useful guide.

Evaluation:

Class participation = 20% This includes class attendance!
Presentation and Paper #1 = 20%
Presentation and Paper #2 = 20%
Public Presentation and Final synthesis = 40%

Class Session 1 – April 2

Schola breva, as we say in the Jesuit tradition! Getting organized; discussion of expectations; a test case of a pastoral problem that asks for theological and ministerial skill, as well as patience and understanding.

Class 2 – April 9 (Holy Thursday): four scriptural presentations and discussions

_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent: _____

Class 3 – April 16: four scriptural presentations and discussions

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_____ respondent: _____

Class 4 – April 23: four scriptural presentations and discussions

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Class 5- April 30: four theological presentations and discussions

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Class 6 – May 7: four theological presentations and discussions

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Class 7 – May 14: four theological presentations and discussions

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Class 8 – May 21: four public synthesis presentations and discussions

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Class 9 – May 28: four public synthesis presentations and discussions

_____ respondent: _____
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_____ respondent: _____

Class 10 –June 4: four public synthesis presentations and discussions

_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent: _____
_____ respondent _____

Presentations must adhere to the 12-15 minute limit.
The respondent will open the discussion and invite participation, keeping track of time and the flow of discussion. This will total 15 minutes.

Guidelines for criticism and evaluation as you engage one another in discussion (again, taken from the Wisdom of Chairman Raschko):

- Highlighting the strengths of what the student has presented:
- Why their insights are important.
- What theological and pastoral implications their material opens.
- Raising questions for further thought and development.
- Seeking clarification on points that were not clear or not understood.
- Pointing to resources and lines of thought that will help the student further develop their line of thought.

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Mission Statement

With God's help
and in creative partnership with
participating churches in the Pacific Northwest,
The School of Theology and Ministry
educates and forms women and men
as leaders in Christian ministry
to serve, challenge, and
heal churches, communities
and all creation.