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Programming Overview

Formation Consultation Services

Reflective Living: the heart of ongoing formation

Our mission at *Formation Consultation Services* is to provide ongoing human formation to clergy and religious. We assist individuals and communities to take personal responsibility for their formation and ongoing human growth by cultivating the art of *Reflective Living*. We integrate *Reflective Living* through our *Rediscovering the Sabbath* sabbatical program, our *Foundational Formation for Formators* process, and our *Reflective Leadership* process.

Reflective Living fosters an increased awakening and awareness of everyday experiences with the various people, events and things that we encounter throughout the day. By attending to self, others and the world, we do not take daily life for granted. This permits us to soak in the awe and wonder around us. We appreciate who we are. We value and honor others, even though we all have our own self-doubts and idiosyncrasies. We increase our tolerance and patience concerning our individual limitations and inconsistencies as well as those of others. We learn to surrender to our reality and to let go of our worries and insecurities by living in an appreciative manner. This helps us to place daily life into perspective. In so doing, we foster balance, fulfillment and peace.

Reflective Living prevents us from becoming overwhelmed, burnt-out, disillusioned, and out of control. *Reflective Living* reduces the unhelpful influences that our insecurities foist upon our daily lives. We often react to our insecurities by indulging in various compensations like overworking and over-eating, being codependent and people pleasing, abusing alcohol and sex, being domineering and controlling, etc. In turn we pray and meditate less. We become excessive and rigid in some areas. We become unaware and insensitive to others, the world, and ourselves. Consequently, we seek to satisfy our *self-interest-ego strivings* in an effort to cover-over our insecurities and inadequacies.

Reflective Living opens our eyes, ears and heart to *how* people, events and things in our daily lives impact us, affect us, push and pull us, and bump us off course. The essence of maturing in and being self-aware is to notice *how* others and situations of the day impact us in helpful and unhelpful ways, as well as *how* we impact others in helpful and unhelpful ways. The ebb and flow of daily life has a way of knocking us constantly off balance. *Reflective Living* is an ongoing corrective, a rebalancing, a way of maintaining harmony and personal integrity. We reduce stress and maintain peace of mind when we focus on living in a reflective manner.

Reflective Living is about deliberately, specifically and intentionally deciding and choosing how to go about being a human being today. *How* we undertake our daily tasks of ministry, of

living and working with others, of relating to ourselves, others and God is the substance of *Reflective Living*. *Reflective Living* cultivates ordinary intimacy with self, others and our God. We accomplish this by incrementally increasing our awareness of both our particular obstacles to ordinary intimacy and our unique facilitating conditions that welcomes ordinary intimacy. *Formation Consultation Services* seeks to enhance the quality of life, ordinary intimacy, and spirituality of clergy and religious by cultivating the art of *Reflective Living*.

Rediscovering the Sabbath Process and Program

Formation Consultation Services will introduce and assist participants on sabbatical to cultivate the art of *Reflective Living* through the *Rediscovering the Sabbath* program, one of our ongoing human formation processes.

Rediscovering the Sabbath is an individualized in-depth sabbatical process that may unfold over a week, two weeks, one month, two months, and beyond. Individualized programming proposes to meet a participant's unique formation needs. The average stay is about 10-12 weeks.

Our *Rediscovering the Sabbath* program is based upon a process of helping participants to experience and to articulate their foundational stories. We provide an experiential focus for participants to process the ongoing formation of their human heart. We work within whatever time and funds permit. Our method is grounded in promoting safety, gentleness, and security.

Participants are invited to slow down, pause, ponder and reclaim the unique truths of their *sacred life text*. They are invited to *come home* to – who they truly are. In becoming grounded in their story, participants are encouraged to make more explicit what moves their heart and cultivates the unfolding of their human spirit. In understanding their story, participants discover what really matters. They also uncover the obstacles that prevent them from growing into ordinary intimacy and thus deepening their spiritual life. This is part of integrating the art of *Reflective Living*.

An individualized *Rediscovering the Sabbath* sabbatical program could include all or some of the following foundational stories and process segments:

- **Structured Autobiography**
- **Formative Process of Awareness (FPA)**
- **Family of Origin Story**
- **Muscular Therapy**
- **Sexuality Story**
- **Spirituality of the Body**
- **Celibacy Story**
- **Ordinary Intimacy Story**
- **Hospitality Story**
- **Being a Girl Becoming a Woman**
- **Being a Boy Becoming a Man**
- **Trauma Story**
- **Spirit Story**
- **Reflective Living Process**
- **Work Story**
- **Reflective Leadership Process**
- **Awakening to the Culture We Live In**

Foundational Formation for Formators

Foundational Formation for Formators and its accompanying processes take up human formation as the nurturing earth within which spiritual/charism, communal, intellectual/professional, and apostolic/ministerial formations are cultivated, grow, and mature. Everyone and in particular local community and Provincial leaders really understand – that it is individual community member's human stuff, a person's unresolved stuff from the past, a community

member's resulting obliviousness to their impact on others, as well as their self-interest-ego strivings that gets in the way, that makes life problematic, that hinders their full potential, that hurts them and the community. It is *FCS's* experience that unless a person attends to his or her human stuff, that being an openhearted, self-aware, and mature religious or clergy person for the Church of the 21st century will be difficult, if not impossible. **Every problem that a Province and community faces with individual members more often than not has as its source – the person's immaturity and underdevelopment as a human being.**

The processes that *FCS* has researched and developed for our *Foundational Formation for Formators* program are not counseling or psychotherapy techniques. Rather they are reflective processes that assist a person – to increase self-awareness and self-knowledge, to grow in the art of *Reflective Living*, to appreciate their potency as pulsating creative human beings, to understand their unique psycho-sexual-affective maturation process, to mature through the evangelical counsels and the charism of their congregation/order/society/diocese in a manner that unfolds in freedom and maturity, and not in limitation or burden.

***FCS's* processes associated with our *Foundational Formation for Formators* program are designed specifically for religious and clergy whose primary ministry involves formation. They would be formators who appreciate the necessity and urgency of human formation as the building block for religious and clergy formation for the 21st century.**

Foundational Formation for Formators includes segments for **formation committees and teams**. The process is for individual formators involved in initial formation, e.g., vocational accompaniment, postulancy, novitiate, post-novitiate, and for personnel charged with ongoing formation for their Province. Our *Foundational Formation for Formator* processes are designed to address the professional and educational requirements as well as to support the unique needs of today's formators.

Reflective Leadership Process

FCS's Reflective Leadership Process is designed to assist religious and clergy as leaders to take up leadership through the perspective of the human heart and spirit, rather than through a self-interest-ego striving approach. Ego-strivings such as harshness, arrogance, dismissiveness, rigidity, intolerance, insistence, as well as any over-focus on achieving, performing, succeeding – hinder leadership that is open and receptive, creative and insightful, firm and directive, stirring and empowering, adaptive and visionary. Leadership, involving participation on councils, teams, committees, and commissions, whether within the religious organization or as service within ministry, can be hampered and derailed by a person's self-interest-ego strivings, as well as a person's unresolved human stuff. This results in insecurities that mutate into unhelpful compensations. In turn, they become obstacles to leadership and collegial participation, as they take on dimensions e.g. of stress, over-work, perfectionism, control, pushiness, autocracy, demanding demeanor, manipulateness, stubbornness, unrealistic expectations, etc.

Our *Reflective Leadership Process* is for Provincials, Congregational Leaders, any leadership team and/or any individual in a leadership position. The process can unfold in a variety of ways depending upon the needs, desires and unique circumstances of the individual and/or team. For teams, *Reflective Leadership* is a powerful creative enhancing experience that continues to bear fruit months and years following the initial process and experience.

Hospitality Story

In 2010 *FCS* added a program and process focused on *hospitality*. *FCS* has researched and unfolded the disposition of hospitality from a human formation perspective. Many communities highlight hospitality as one of their charisms. In brief, genuine hospitality unfolds as an expression and shared experience of openhearted graciousness, as an exchange of gift and grace between provider and recipient. Many times, as the recipient of diluted hospitality, we experience more of a perfunctory, functional, behavioral interaction. The encounter lacks the warmth and attentiveness of openheartedness and graciousness, welcome and kindness. Hospitality is not only about gracing others but also includes gracing and gifting one's self.

We offer and accept genuine hospitality to the degree that we have experienced such in our own lives. For this reason, everyone has a hospitality story. At birth, we hopefully were truly welcomed into this world—a welcome comprised of warm embraces, reassuring eye contact, and smiles, all signaling recognition and full acceptance. Again hopefully, the power of that primal extension of hospitality continued and was reinforced as others helped us make ourselves at home in the space and time given to us.

Our first experiences of hospitality arrived in the form of nourishment, nurturing, and joyful reception, all of which led to a profound sense of safety and security. That profound welcoming provided us with space in which to play, express ourselves spontaneously, find rest, and in short, be ourselves.

In time, our experience of hospitality matured, gradually leading us to an awareness of ourselves as the precious, fragile, and vulnerable beings we are. Our hospitality stories share a common narrative about being welcomed by others (our hosts), who encouraged us to make ourselves at home, be ourselves, and find rest.

The process of arriving at our hospitality stories as guests emphasize both the formative and deformative dimensions of:

- the nature and quality of being welcomed by others throughout our lives,
- the quality as a guest of our ability to receive and respond to the other's invitation,
- the quality of making ourselves at home wherever we find ourselves,
- the quality of our capacity to be our true and real selves, and
- the quality of our capacity to find rest wherever we may be.

These five dimensions will also be explored from the other side of hospitality—from the viewpoint of the host extending welcome. We can all agree that hospitality is a disposition fundamental to our faith and formation traditions. Although many religious Congregations, Institutes, Apostolic Societies, and Dioceses point to hospitality as key to their charism and foundational values of living, this disposition has all too often been taken for granted. Too often, the result is that in both initial and ongoing formation, this profound sense of hospitality can be wanting in our day-to-day living.

Our faith and formation traditions are grounded in the disposition of hospitality. All religious traditions perceive hospitality as the means by which the guest is welcomed as Deity.

Our culture, our church, our clergy, and our religious, need to become specialists in giving life to the disposition of hospitality. To do so is to realize our abilities to offer genuine transformation. Through exercising true hospitality, we personally deepen our experience of religious presence. That is to say, through the power of hospitality, we come to an appreciation of our moment-to-moment capacity to be welcoming to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Consciously cultivating the disposition of hospitality may be of some interest to you. *FCS*, in our usual methodical and in-depth approach, could assist you and/or your community in reflecting on your hospitality story as giver/provider, as receiver/recipient of this basic human gift and grace that we call *hospitality*.

For comprehensive information on *FCS's* programming, please review our web site: www.fcs-bilotta.com or e-mail us: formation@fcs-bilotta.com