

# Executive Ministry Leadership Formation

Monday, July 15, 2025



**Ascension**

## Opening Reflection

### Where I'm From By George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the back  
porch.  
(Black, glistening,  
it tasted like beets.)  
I am from the forsythia bush  
the Dutch elm  
whose long-gone limbs I remember  
as if they were my own. . . .



## Wishes for Group 20 from Group 18

- Take it seriously
  - Immerse yourself
  - Lean into community
  - Be willing to be vulnerable
    - Transparent and connected to peers
    - Reciprocate vulnerability shared by others
  - Lean in - even when it's uncomfortable
  - Block time for EML on your calendar each week
  - Be present
  - Have fun
  - Meet in the pub at night
  - Listen for your sense of calling
  - Make this a spiritual, not just intellectual, journey
- Don't leave early. Commit to being there the whole time each time
  - Have an open heart to what might be different
  - Take it out - share with your teams; colleagues; family and loved ones; don't wait and invite others in. Share readings/practices/experiences letting them know what you're going through and why
  - It's a personal spiritual journey as well as a professional one.
  - Believe that you can make a change - in yourself and in the organization
  - Don't hesitate to tap into the EML alumni (especially Group 18 😊)



# Break



# It Starts with Awareness

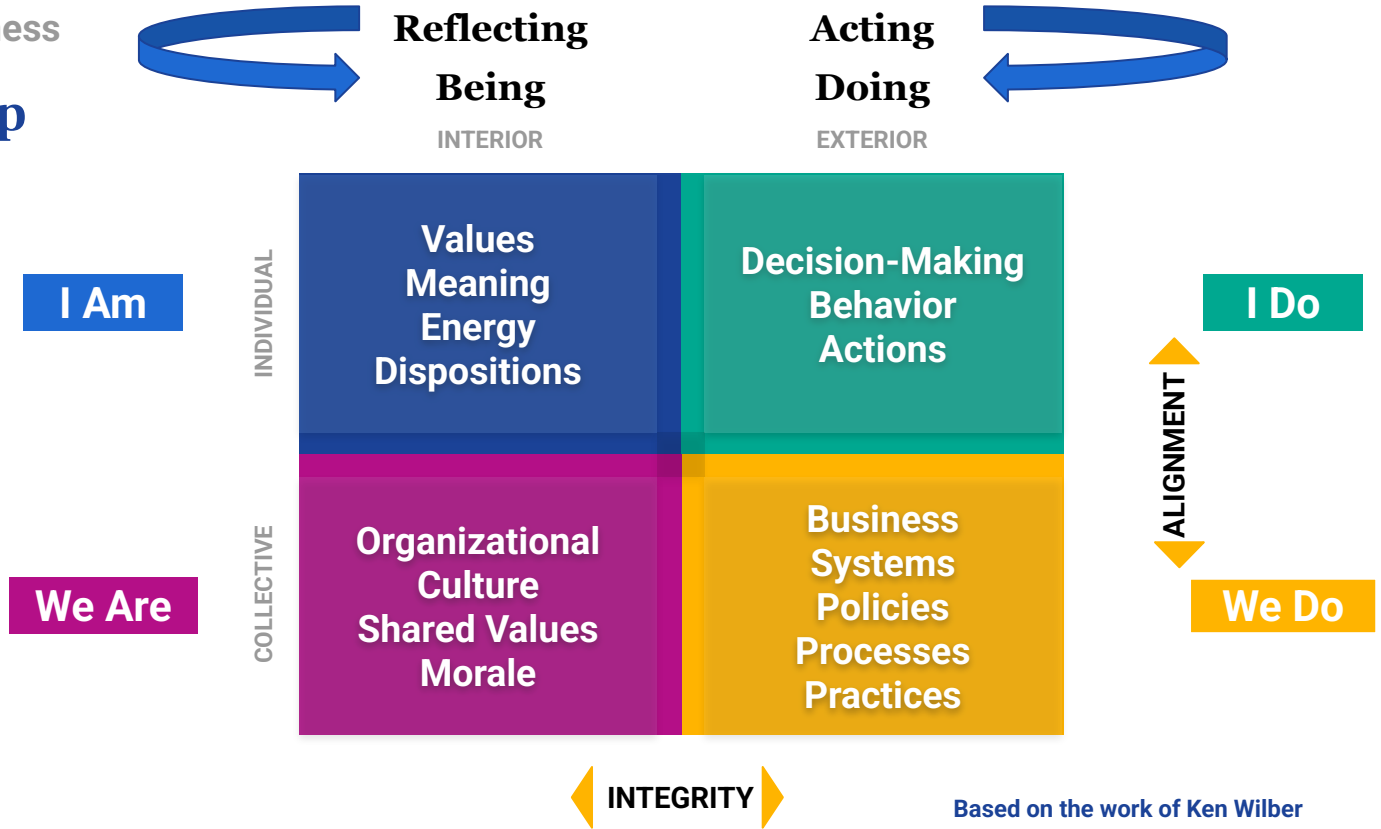
Tom VanOsdol, *MS, MA, FACHE*

*Executive Vice President and Chief Mission  
Integration Officer, Ascension*



It Starts with Awareness

## Formation Map



Based on the work of Ken Wilber



## What is Formation?

$$F = R(i5) \times [C] \times T$$

Formation is Reflection on Identity  
- personal, professional, communal, ministerial and organizational -  
in Community through Time



**Leaders are magnanimous in their dreams, visions and sense of mission; in their capacity for hope, confidence and daring; in their enthusiasm for the effort required to bring their work to a successful conclusion; in their propensity for using means proportionate to their goals; in their capacity to challenge themselves and those around them...**

**Magnanimity and humility go hand in hand in leadership.**

**Magnanimity generates noble ambitions; humility channels these ambitions into serving others.**

**Alexandre Havard, founder of the Virtuous Leadership Institute**

**Magnanimity ~ The striving of the spirit for great things**



## Journal and Discussion

Consider leaders who you have experienced in your life (work and non-work)...

In your journal:

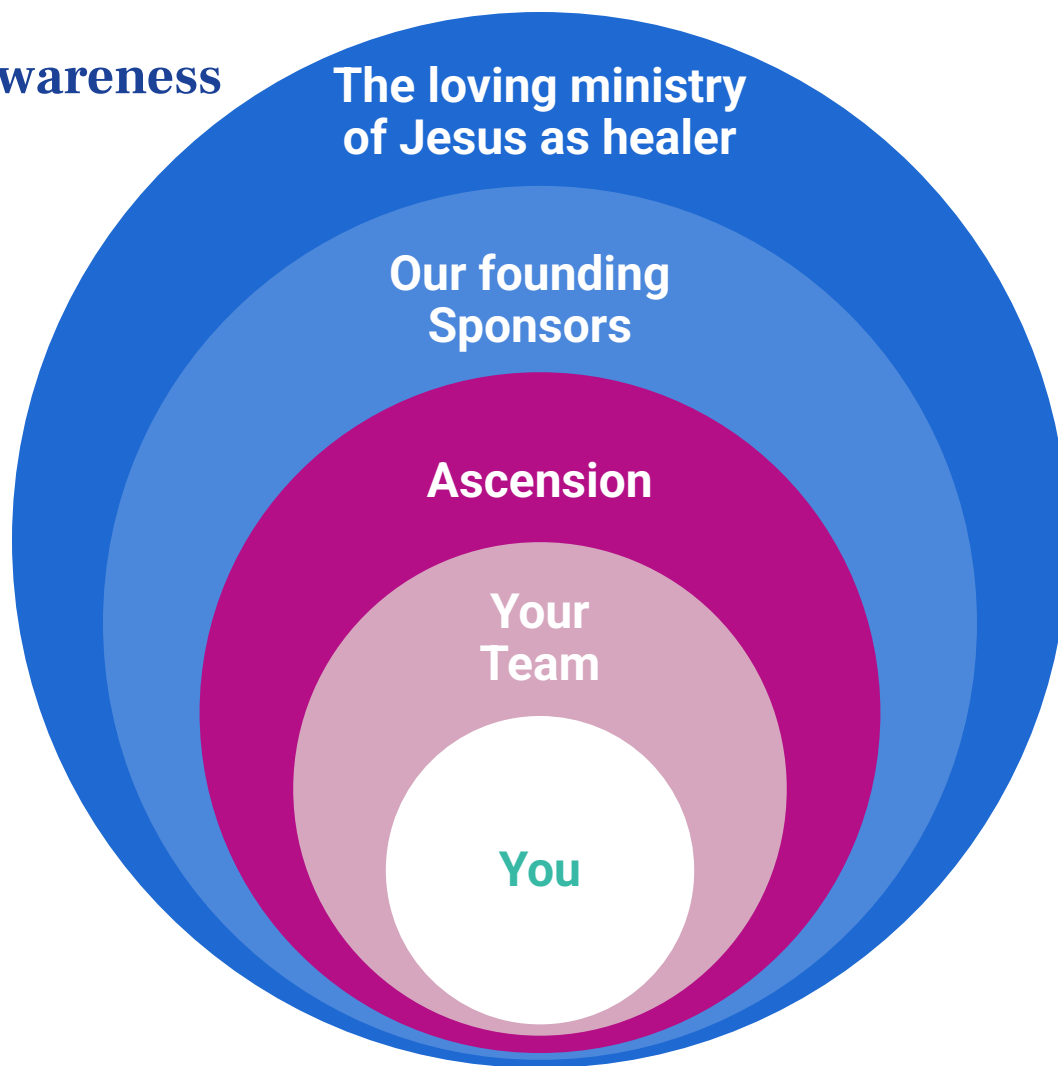
What adjectives would you use to describe them?

To describe what they invoked in others?

To describe how they made you feel?



## It Starts with Awareness



## Discussion

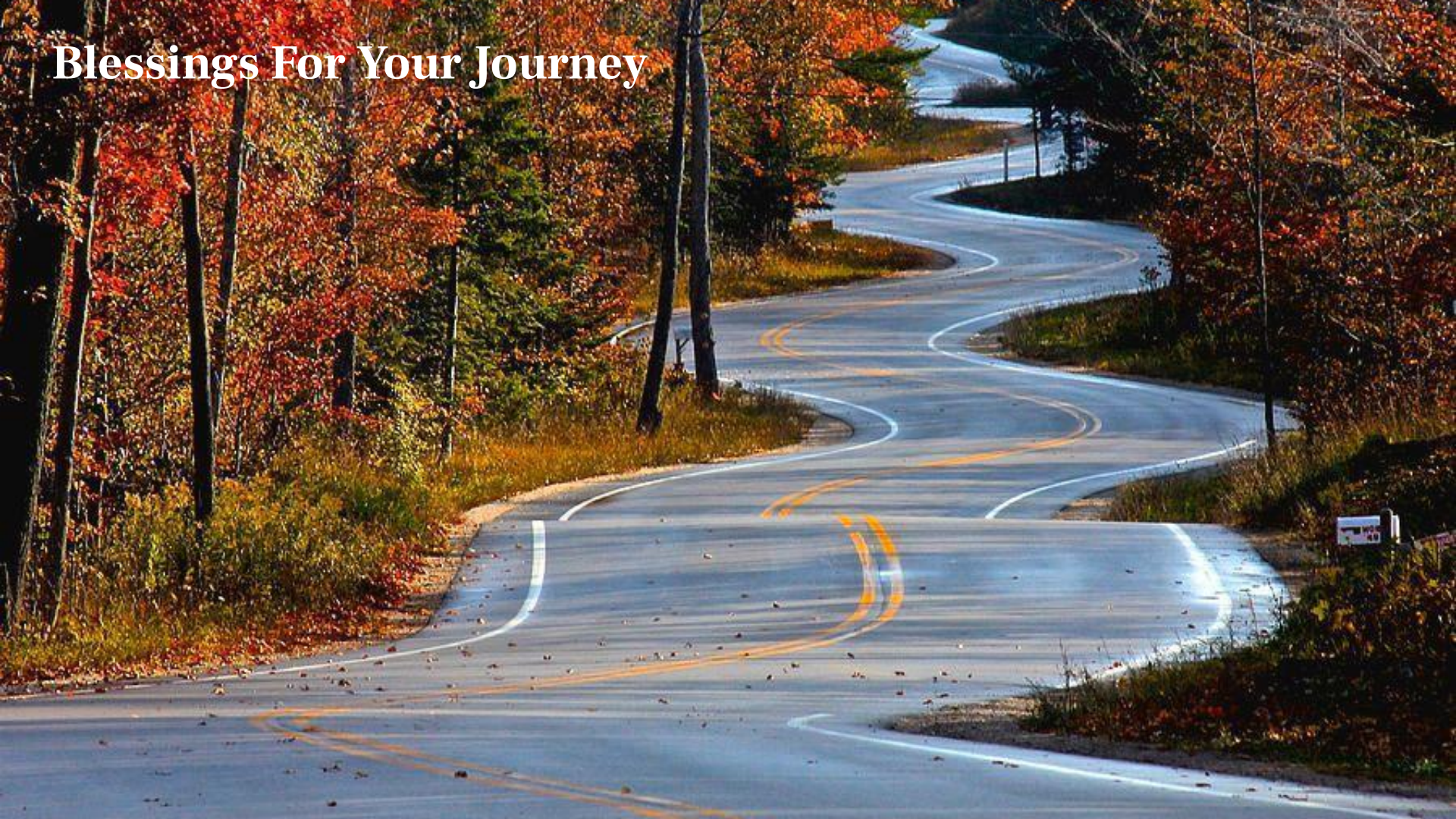
What practices might help us grow in awareness?

What does it mean to you to offer your work as ministry?

What does this mean for your leadership and how you endeavor to inspire others?



**Blessings For Your Journey**



# Executive Panel Discussion

*Dr. Sam Antonios  
Chief Clinical Officer, Ascension Kansas*

*Lisa Davis  
Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Growth &  
Ancillary Businesses, Ascension*

*Paula Phillips  
Senior Vice President Operations Infrastructure, Ascension*

*Tom VanOsdol  
Executive Vice President, Chief Mission Integration Officer,  
Ascension*



# Announcements



# Executive Ministry Leadership Formation



Tuesday, July 16, 2025



**Ascension**

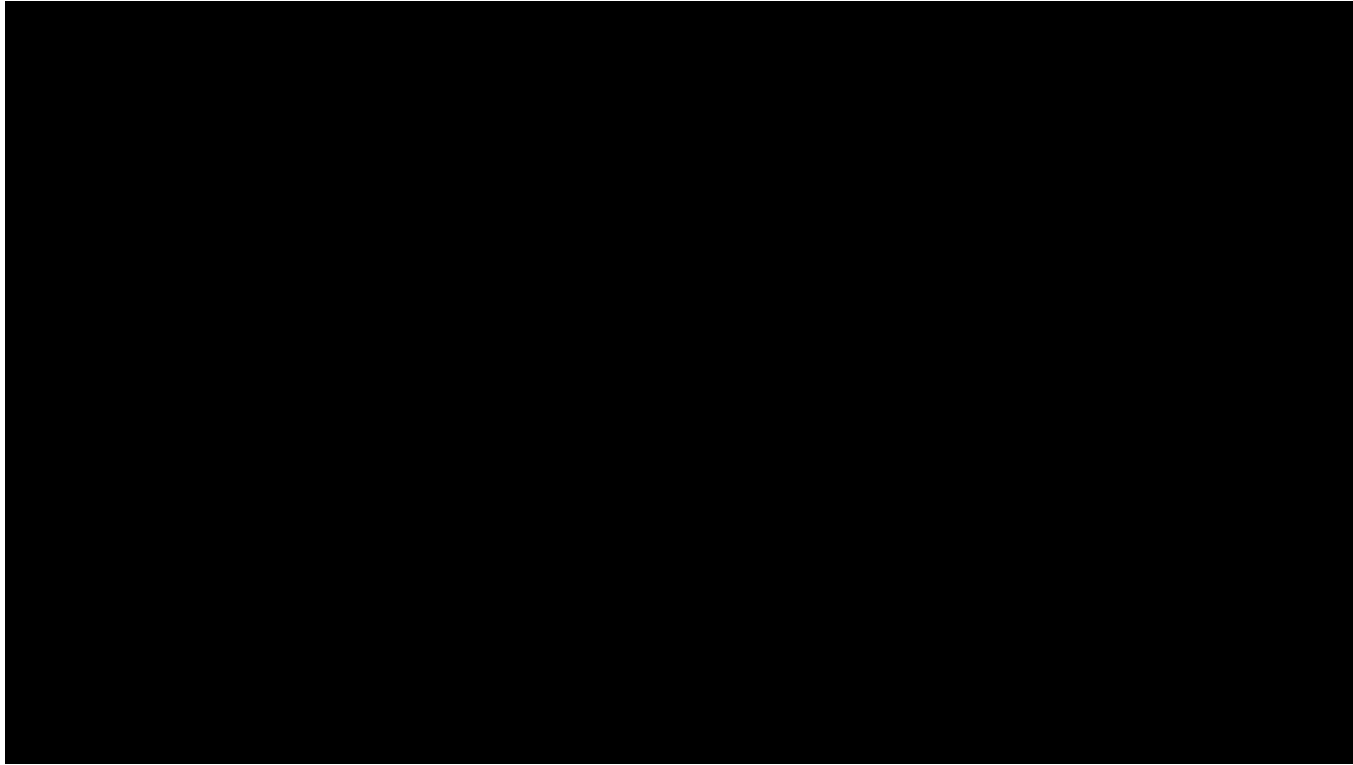
# Check-in



# Reflection



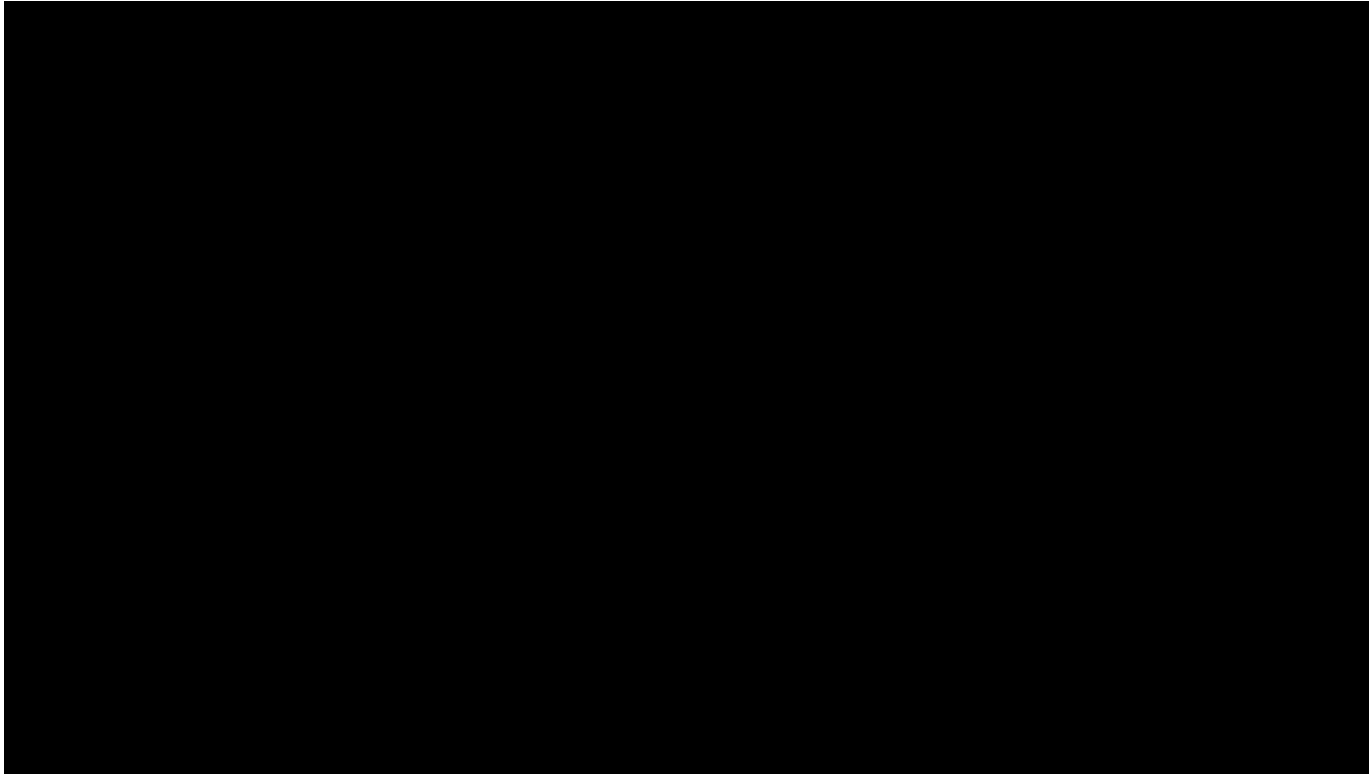
## Reflection



Raj Mohan, Senior Vice President, Growth, Marketing and Digital Experience



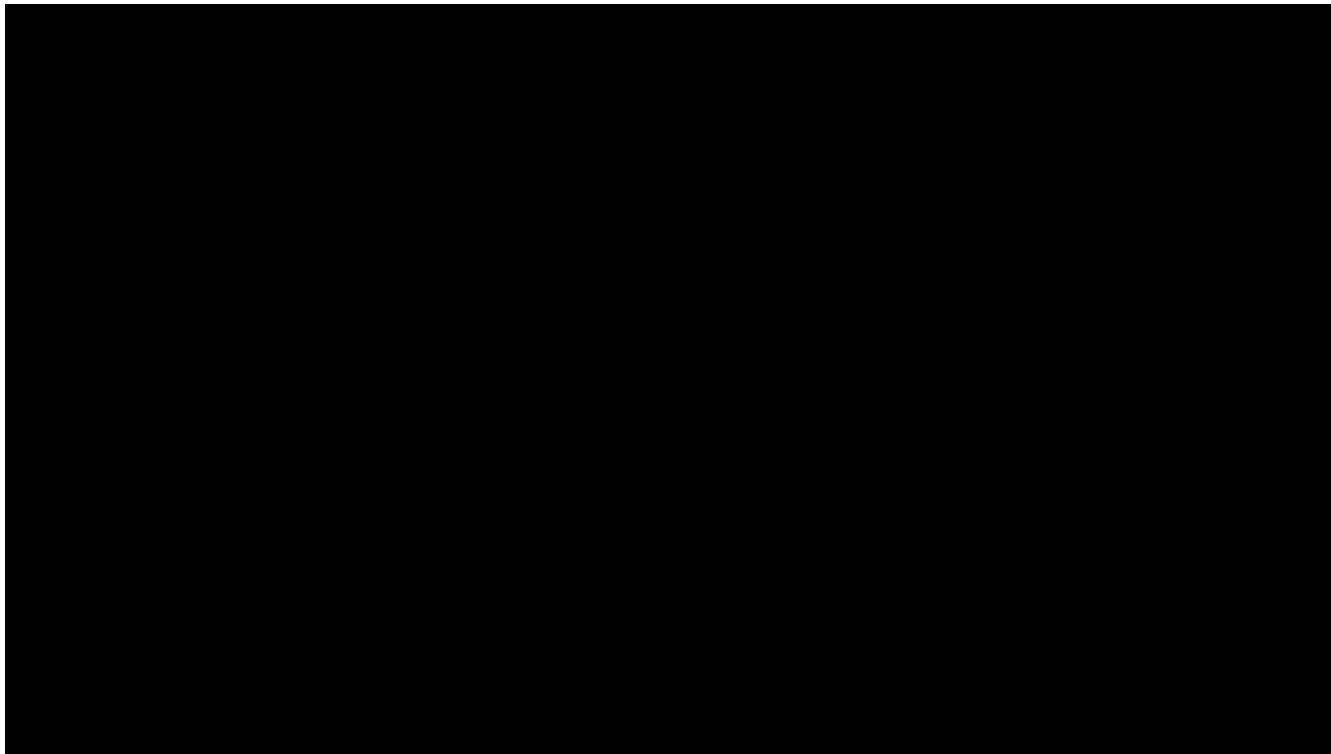
## Reflection



Michael Finegan, Chief Operating Officer, Ascension St. Agnes



## Reflection



Sr. Maureen McGuire, DC



## Awareness

From all that you are gathering about the journey ahead, and all that is yet to discover, what are you noticing?

In you? In the group? In the “more” that is possible?



# Connecting to our Value of Reverence

Respect and compassion for  
the dignity and diversity of life.



# Human Dignity

Everyone is sacred; no one is expendable.

Our bodies, minds, souls and spirits are inseparable.

We are made for relationships; we are made for flourishing; we are made for God.

We are called to community; we are called to wonder; we are called to love.

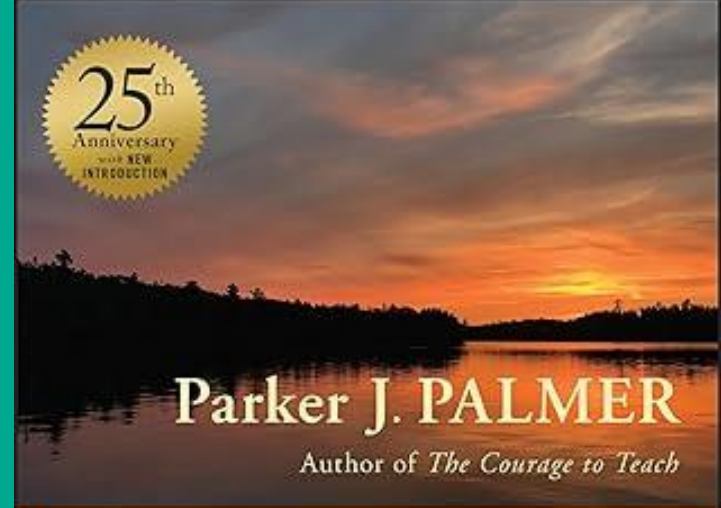


# Break



# Let Your Life Speak

## A Vision of Vocation



Parker J. PALMER

*Author of The Courage to Teach*

# Let Your Life SPEAK

Listening  
*for the Voice  
of Vocation*

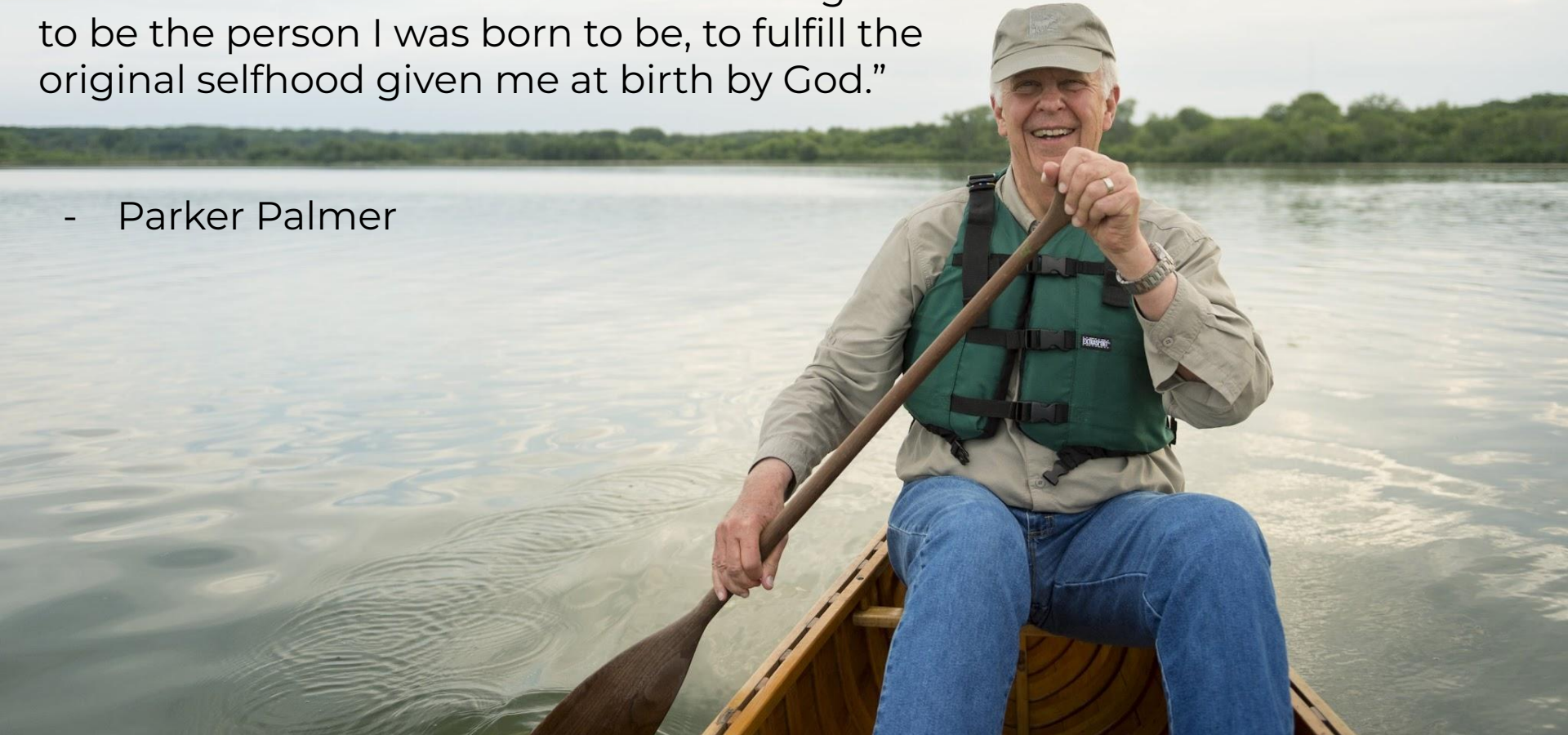






“Vocation does not come from a voice ‘out there’ calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice ‘in here’ calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.”

- Parker Palmer



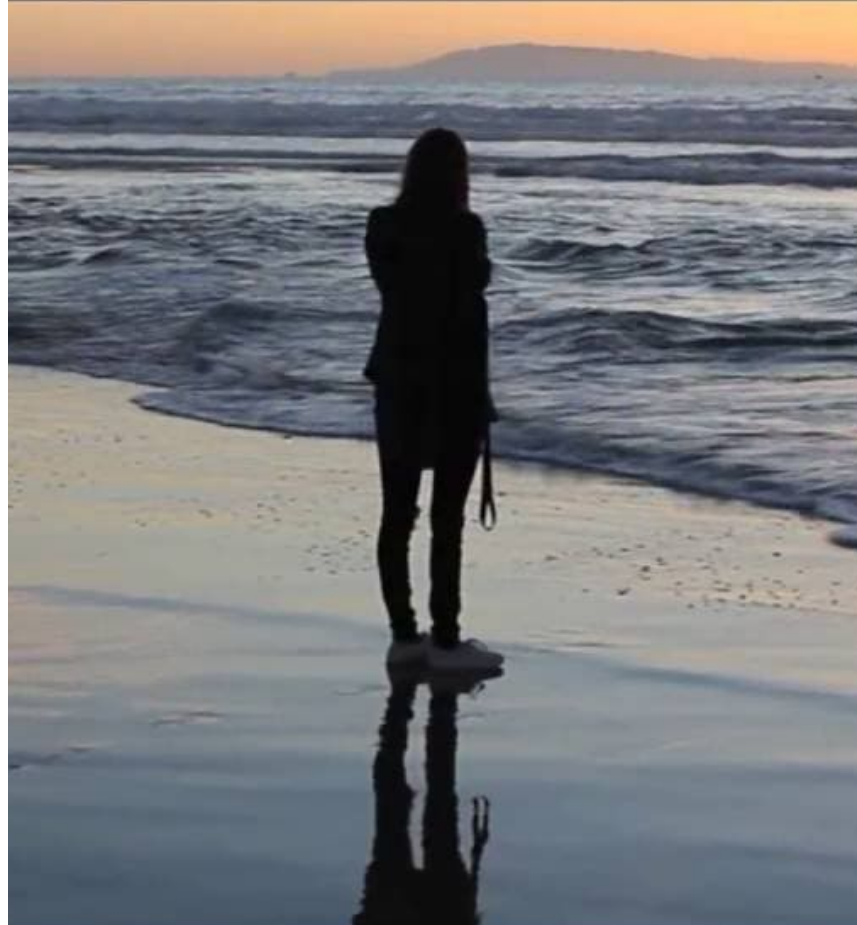
## Part for the Whole

“

When others run to windows or out  
of doors  
To catch the sunset whole, he is  
content  
With any segment anywhere he sits.

From *Part for the Whole*, by Robert Francis, 1976

”

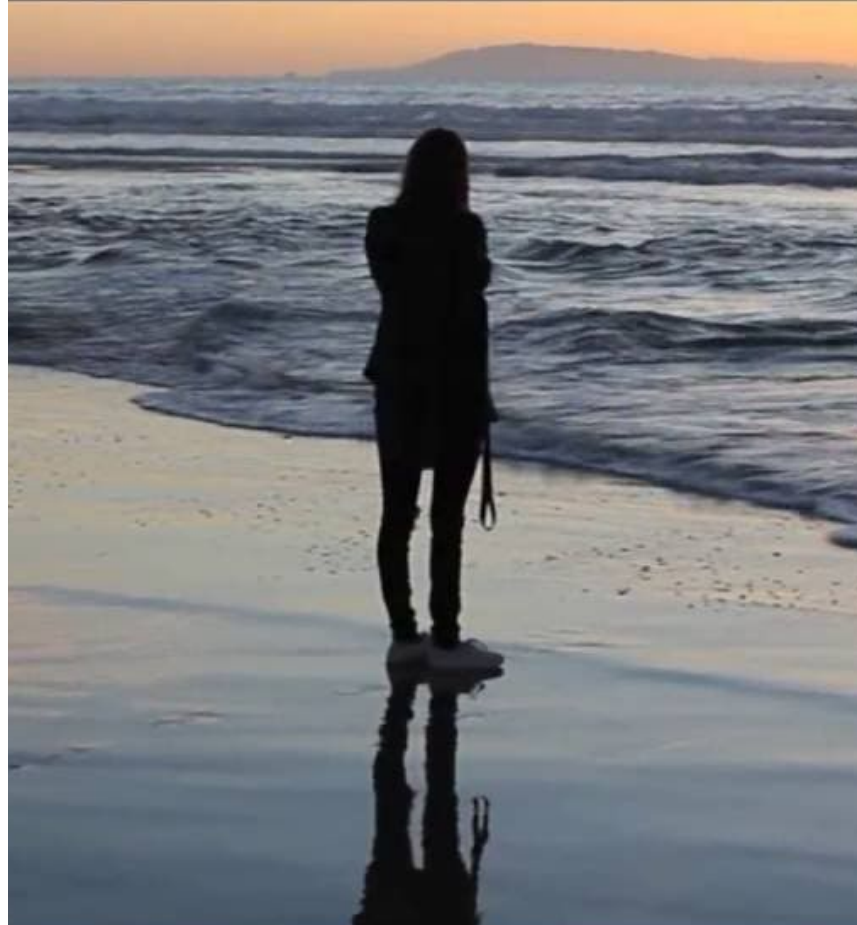


Let Your Life Speak

## Discerning the Whole

What sense do you make of this statement?

In what ways do these words connect with your own experience?



## Our Foundational Vocation: The True Self

“So let me clearly realize first of all that what God wants for me is myself.

God’s will for me points to one thing: the realization, the discovery and the fulfillment of my self, my true self.

God’s will for us, before all else, is that we should find ourselves, find our true life.

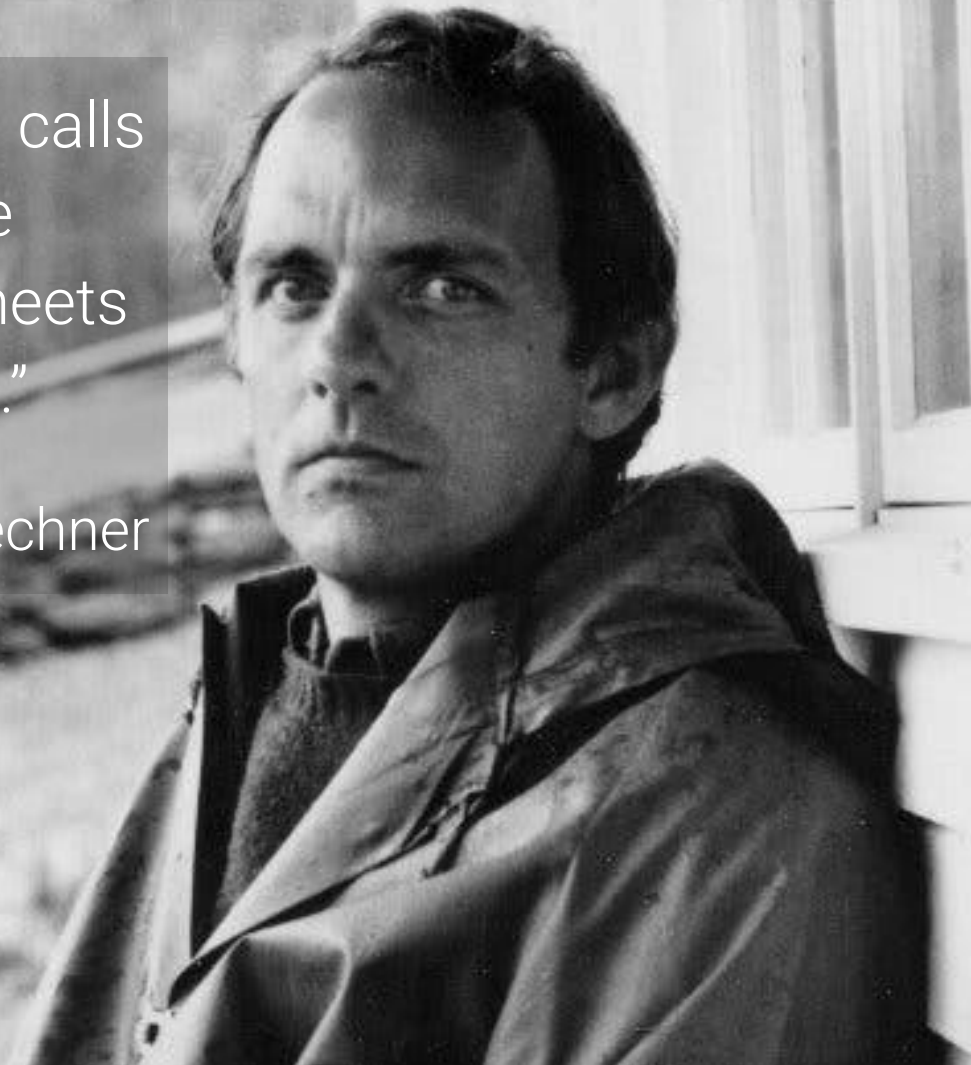
God's will for us is not only that we should be the person God means for us to be, but that we should share in his work of creation and help Him to make us into the persons he means for us to be.”

*Thomas Merton*



“The place where God calls  
you is the place where  
your deep gladness meets  
the world’s deep need.”

- Frederick Buechner



# Pathways to the Interior

Accessing Experience Through Narrative



**It is so easy to douse the inner light of a human being.  
And we busily assist in doing just that as we learn to  
make the world's efficiency our own. We cut ourselves  
off from our own experiences by looking at them as  
irrelevant and not worth talking about, or what is no less  
cynical, not communicable at all. . . .We are losing  
dreams, those of the day, and increasingly we are losing  
the visions of our life.**

**Dorothee Söelle, theologian**  
The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance



## Accessing Individual Experience

**Relax and travel in your memory over your actions as a leader in the last month. Let your mind drift over the days and experiences until one moment of your leadership stands out vividly in your mind.**

- When you come upon a moment that catches your attention, stay with it, and let the picture of that moment fill your mind.
- Many moments will come to your mind. Make sure you pick one that you are willing to share with the group.
- Recall the story in detail.

## Non-Judgmental Narration

**Write out your story:**

- Tell the event, that particular moment – what happened – with as much detail as you can.
- Describe what you saw, heard, smelled, felt, thought and did at the time.
- Do not evaluate it in any way – no “should haves, could haves, oughts.”
- Do not interpret or draw any conclusions about it. Just tell the story.



## Sharing Your Stories

### **Readers:**

- Leave a silence, then begin.
- Notice what happens in you when you read – and hear – your own story.
- Read your story as you wrote it – resist the temptation to edit/add.

### **Listeners:**

- Notice feelings, other memories, and images that are evoked in you as you listen.
- Honor the story, perhaps with silence and few words.
- Ensure everyone at your table has an opportunity to share.



# What did you just experience?

Sharing together



## Walk and Talk

Talk about the experience of having the group listen to you. . .

- If you let your life speak, what is this particular moment in your life telling you?
- What aspect of your true self is revealed, or affirmed in your story?



**The trivialization of experience is perhaps the  
strongest anti-mystical force among us**

**Dorothee Söelle, theologian**  
The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance



# Lunch



# Practice Leading Reflection and Prayer





## Why do we reflect and pray at work?

- As a ministry of the Church, it is a part of our history and identity
- It creates community, drawing us together to a shared space in our hearts
- It opens us to the action of the Divine in our lives and in our work
- It focuses on our shared mission and values
- It is a critical part of the healing process, and therefore central to who we are and what we do
- Done well, it is a way to invite unity in our diversity



## **Prayer Leadership *is* an act of genuine leadership**

One who leads prayer or reflection well brings a quality of personal presence that creates a sense of welcome, safety and space that enables participants to be fully present and open to the presence of that which is sacred in our midst. Without calling attention to themselves, a good prayer leader helps the group to see their own connection to the divine within them and all around them.



## What is prayer and reflection and why does Ascension value it?

|                 | Group Prayer                                                          | Group Reflection                                                           |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Movement</b> | A turn toward the Divine, both beyond us and within us                | A turn inward in community                                                 |
| <b>Action</b>   | Engaging with the Divine - or Source of meaning - in our lives        | Pausing, quieting ourselves, and reviewing what is before us and within us |
| <b>Content</b>  | Scripture, mantra, contemplation, meditation, an open heart, and more | Poem, story, quote, letter, song, video, image, silence, and more          |



## Ingredients of Group Prayer and Reflection

**Content:** that aligns with your awareness of yourself, the group, and the movement of the Divine

**Contemplation:** empowers the group to experience the prayer and reflection to its fullest; generates safety, quiet, calm, attentiveness, presence, and openness

**Action:** invite the group to take reflective action

**Closing:** simple blessing or prayer to close, using inclusive language (e.g. in God's Holy Name we pray).



## Our Process

### 1. Prayer Scenarios

2. Plan

3. Lead and Feedback

4. Process Together



## Practice Leading Reflection and Prayer

### Start in your journals

- Recall a time from your experience when a prayer or reflection offered (by you, or by another person) to an audience felt disconnected, like it was “just checking a box,” or even caused harm.
  - What did you notice in this experience?
  - How did you react? What about the group?
  - What might have been done differently? How?

## Our Process

1. Prayer Scenarios
- 2. Plan**
3. Lead and Feedback
4. Process Together



## Practice Leading Reflection and Prayer

### Gather together

1. Each person reads their scenario aloud (what was the meeting, what was the reflection, what made it feel disconnected)
2. Using the stories shared, select one scenario that you would like to offer a more connected reflection
3. Draw upon our discussion and the online module you completed as pre-work
4. **Plan** a 5-7 minute reflection and **Prepare** to lead it

## Our Process

1. Prayer Scenarios

2. Plan

### 3. Lead and Feedback

4. Process Together

## Practice Leading Reflection and Prayer

### Facilitate

- 1) Share the context of the gathering/meeting
- 2) Facilitate the prayer/reflection your group created

### Feedback

- 1) Table:
  - a) How did you select which scenario to plan?
  - b) What surfaced as you discussed and planned?
  - c) What was it like for you to facilitate?
- 2) Large group:
  - a) Affirmations
  - b) Inspirations
  - c) Applications
  - d) Recommendations



NOTHING  
*shall be*  
IMPOSSIBLE.





## Our Process

1. Prayer Scenarios
2. Plan
3. Lead and Feedback

## 4. Process Together

### Practice Leading Reflection and Prayer

What did you learn?

What will you apply in your leadership?

What questions or curiosities remain for you?





## Leading Reflection and Prayer for EML Retreats

1. **Morning Reflection** (sign up in pairs)
  - a. Plan together for a 15 minute reflection
  - b. Use learning and resources from today
  - c. Focus for each day of the retreat will be provided in advance; use creativity within that scope to develop your reflection
    - i. Consider the focus
    - ii. Consider the experience of the people gathered
2. **Meal Blessing** (Individual)
  - a. 1-3 minutes
  - b. Can come from any tradition or no tradition
  - c. Planned or spontaneous
3. **Reflective Close** (Sign up in pairs)
  - a. 10-15 minutes
  - b. Closing Reflection/Blessing of the retreat.

# Break



# Orienting to the Journey

Destination, Pathways, Formation Map



# Human Dignity

Everyone is sacred; no one is expendable.

Our bodies, minds, souls and spirits are inseparable.

We are made for relationships; we are made for flourishing; we are made for God.

We are called to community; we are called to wonder; we are called to love.



## What is Formation?

$$F = R(i5) \times [C] \times T$$

Formation is Reflection on Identity  
- personal, professional, communal, ministerial and organizational -  
in Community through Time



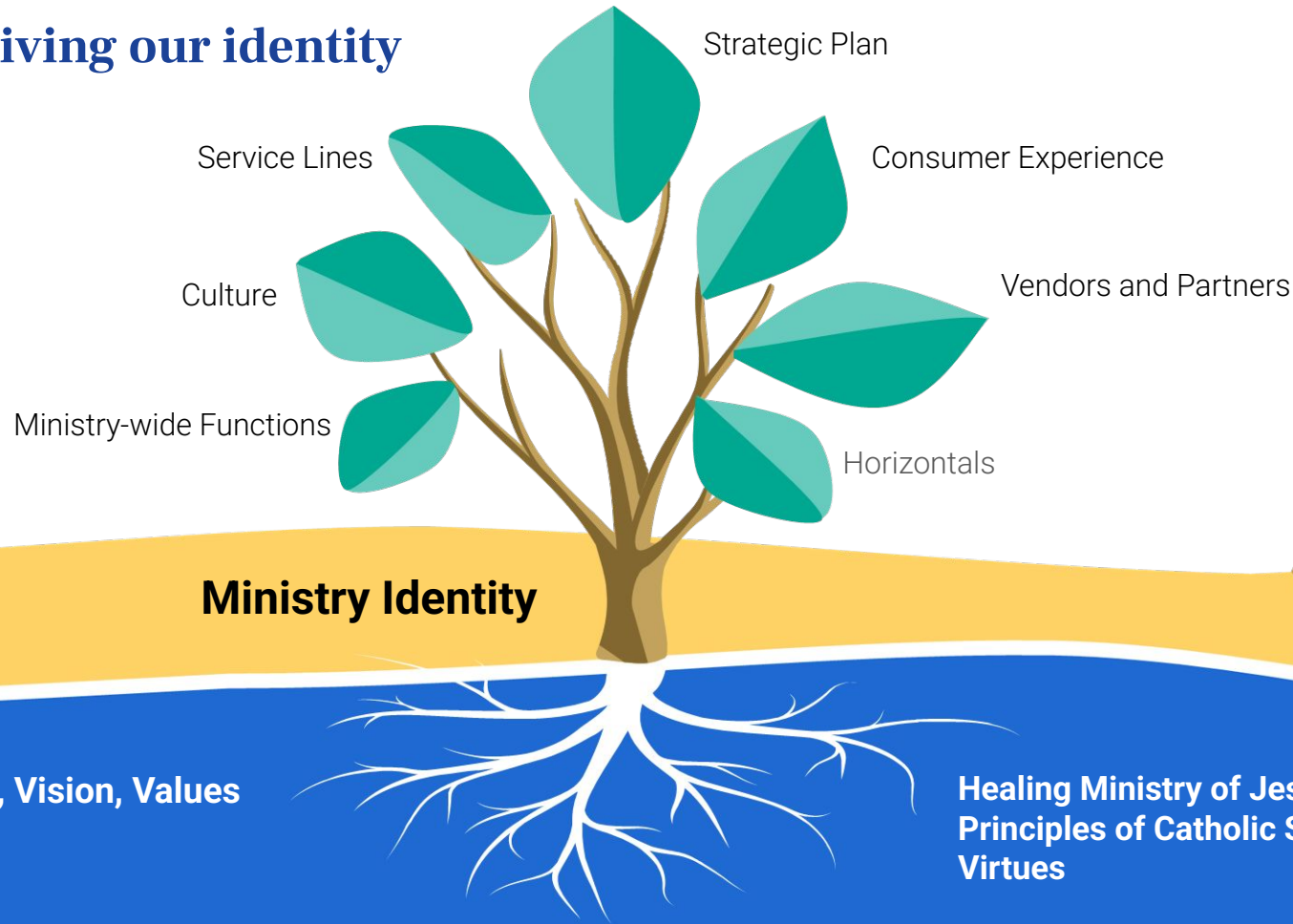
## Executive Ministry Leadership Program Outcomes

### **EML Participants will. . .**

1. Be personally committed to practices and habits of spiritual reflection that foster deeper relationship with self, God, others, community and the world as part of an ongoing formation journey.
2. Be professionally committed to the healing ministry and mission of Jesus with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable.
3. Consistently integrate and practice Virtuous Servant Leadership while being and building community.
4. Articulate foundational principles from the Catholic theological, moral and spiritual tradition in order to communicate our Ministry Identity and Mission.
5. Interpret and lead our integrated strategic, operational, financial, clinical and organizational processes as expressions of Ascension's identity as a ministry of the Church.

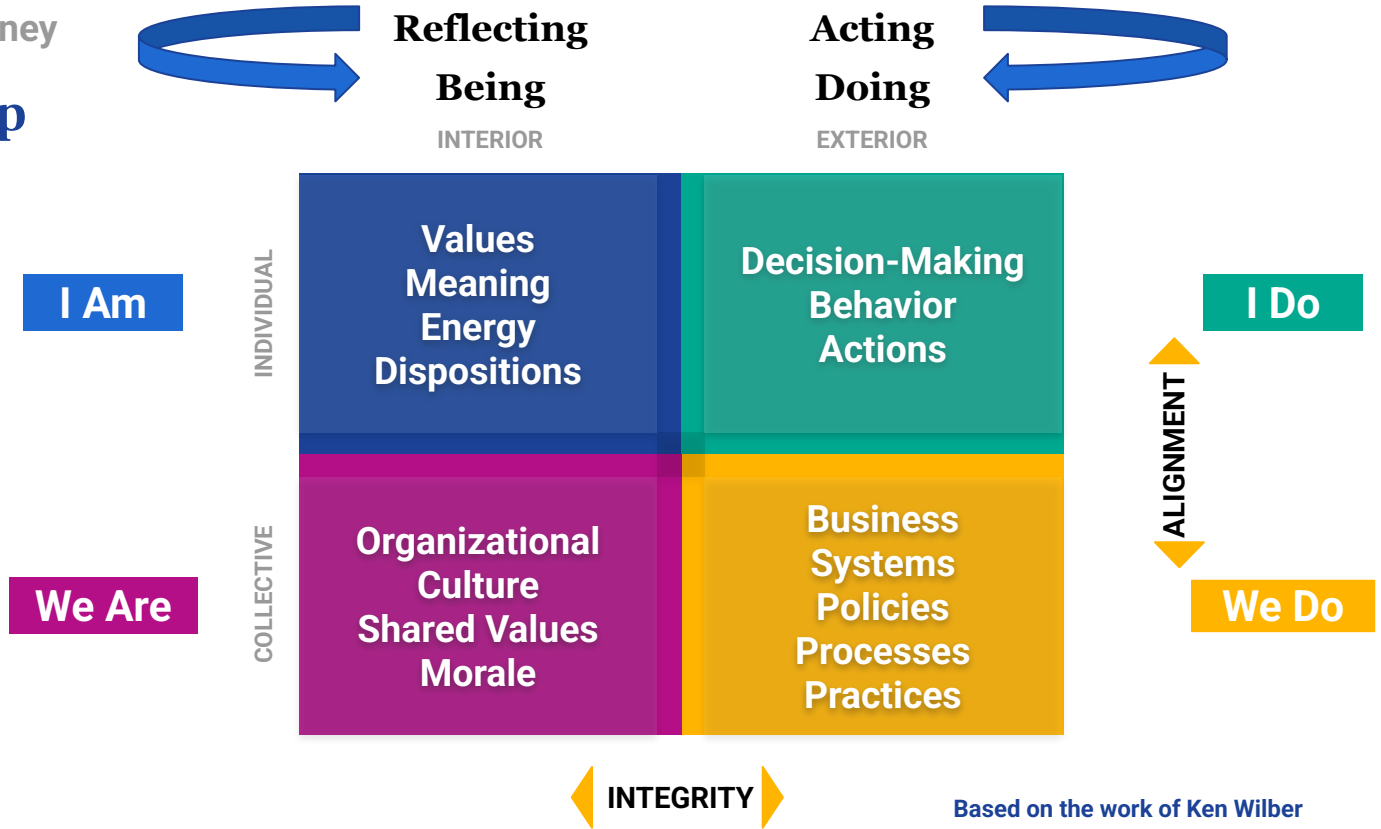


## Ways of living our identity



Orienting to the Journey

# Formation Map



Based on the work of Ken Wilber



## Reflective Practice

### SEE

personal experience in community,  
context, culture and organization.

*"What's really going on here?"*

**ACT**  
strategically, decisively  
and authentically.

*"Therefore, what  
shall we do?"*



### JUDGE

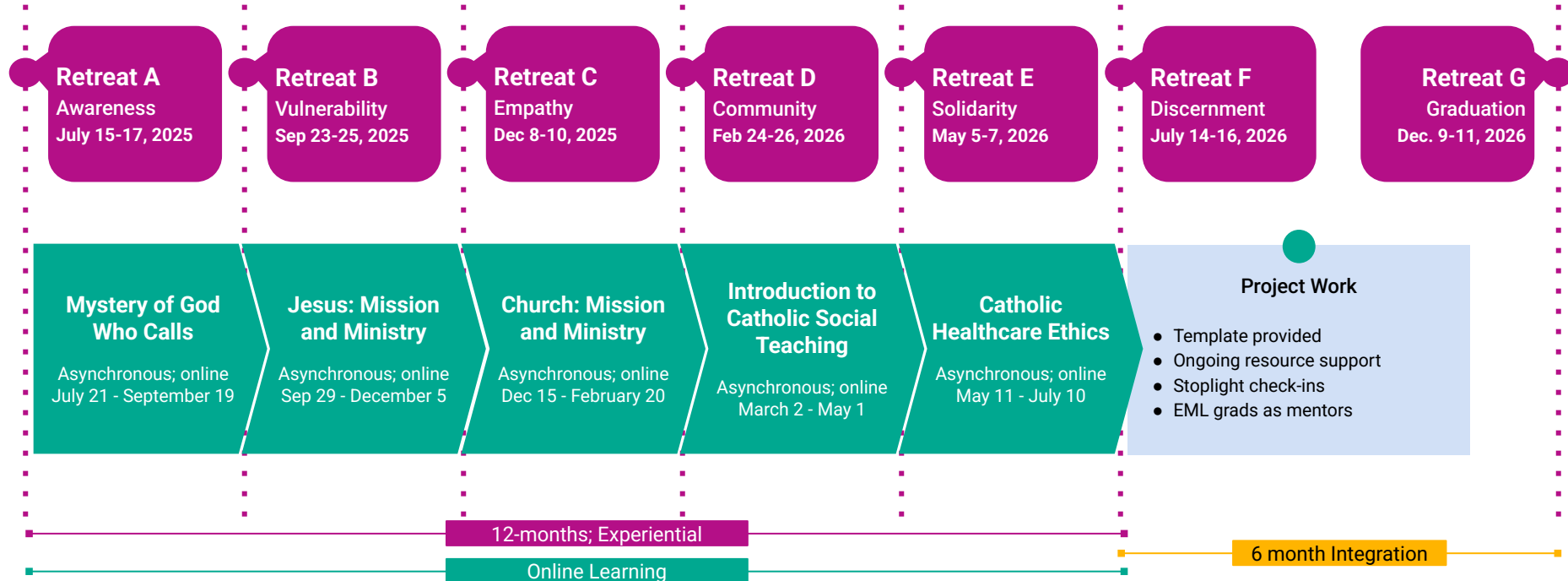
by engaging new  
awareness in light  
of our identity.

*"How shall we  
discern the good?"*



## Orienting to the Journey

July 15, 2025 → December 11, 2026



# Building Community



# Commitments



Based on the work of Ken Wilber



“The social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging. . .What makes community building so complex is that it occurs in an infinite number of small steps. . . .An afterthought becomes the point; a comment made in passing defines who we are more than all that came before. . .The key to creating or transforming community, then is to see the power in the small but important elements of being with others. . .For at the most operational and practical level, after all the thinking about policy, strategy, mission, and milestones, it gets down to this:

**How are we going to be when we gather together?”**





Group 20 Executive Ministry Leadership Formation  
July 16, 2025



# Announcements



# Executive Ministry Leadership Formation

Wednesday, July 17, 2024



**Ascension**

# Check-in



# Reflection







*Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God.  
But only those who see take off their shoes. . .*

*~ Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

# Break





# Ascension

AAA  
Speaker icon, Zoom icon, Print icon

Please complete the following survey. We appreciate your feedback.

Thank you for attending a Formation program!

Page 1 of 3

Name of Program

\* must provide value

Executive Ministry Leadership (EML)

Retreat

\* must provide value

A (EML)

Date Attended

\* must provide value

07-15-2025



Today

M-D-Y

If multi-day, please select session start date

How did you attend this session?

\* must provide value

☐ Virtually

☐ In-Person



# Introducing Course One: The Mystery of God Who Calls



# The Mystery of God Who Calls

**Pick a card and take it in for a moment**

**Discuss at your table:**

- What drew you to this card in particular?
- What does it evoke in you?
- What did you notice about the image as you looked over it?





National Library of Medicine  
National Center for Biotechnology Information



Pew Research Center

RESEARCH TOPICS ▾

PUBLICATIONS

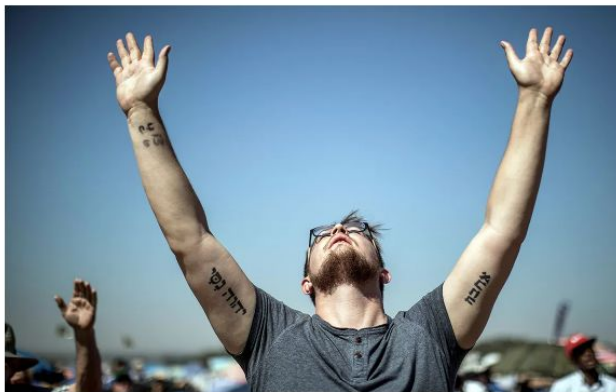
OUR MET

Home > Research Topics

SHORT READS | JANUARY 31, 2019

## Are religious people happier, healthier? Our new global study explores this question

BY JOEY MARSHALL



(Marco Longari/AFP via Getty Images)

O  
N G

ut Us Accessibility What's On Support Us + Bookshop



## Soul Boom Rainn Wilson

★ 4.7 (592) · SOCIETY & CULTURE · UPDATED WEEKLY · [MORE](#)

Soul Boom is a series of intimate conversations hosted by Rainn Wilson exploring meaningful and inspiring topics that tickle the mind, heart and soul. Never too precious, yet unafraid to touch on the profound, [Soul Boom](#)

► Latest Episode

Home / News / Religious upbringing linked to better health and well-being during early adulthood

Global Health

## Religious upbringing linked to better health and well-being during early adulthood

By Staff Writer · September 13, 2018



thirty-five dollars for forty-five great workout, but compared es, it's expensive. So why do

# The Mystery of God Who Calls

“Religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing ‘ways,’ comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all. . .”

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions  
*Nostra Aetate*, N.2.  
1965

## VATICAN COUNCIL II

*Nostra Aetate*  
(Declaration on the  
Relation of the Church to  
Non-Christian Religions)

A Completely Revised Translation  
in Inclusive Language

General Editor  
AUSTIN FLANNERY, OP



The Mystery of God Who Calls

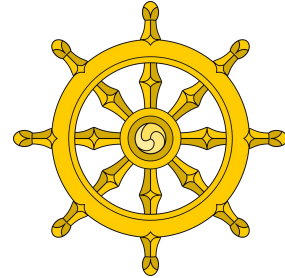
## Traditions we will explore



**Spiritual but not Religious**



**Hinduism**



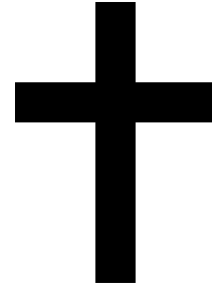
**Buddhism**



**Judaism**



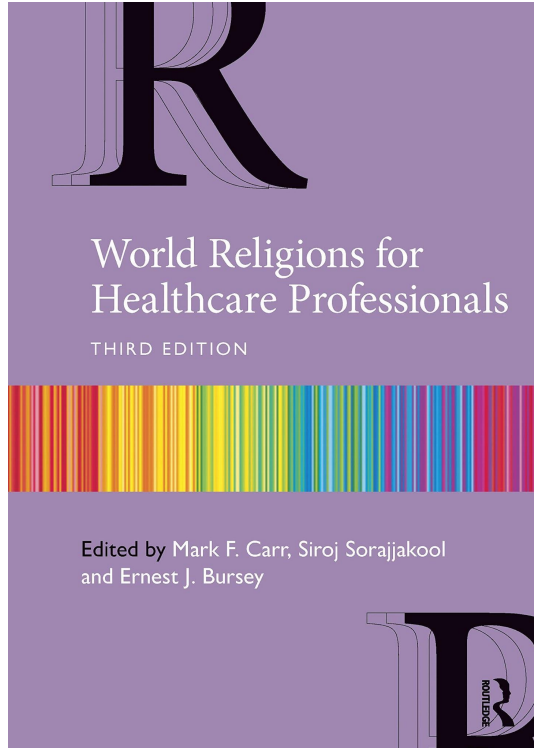
**Islam**



**Catholicism and Christianity broadly**



# Our Primary Texts



## Week Three: Hinduism

**Shubhada Jagasia, MD**  
President  
St. Thomas Midtown Hospital



Ascension





The Mystery of God Who Calls

## Unpacking Mystery

Not a problem to be solved, but an excess of reality to be uncovered.



# Unpacking the meaning of our Vision



# Embedded Theologies



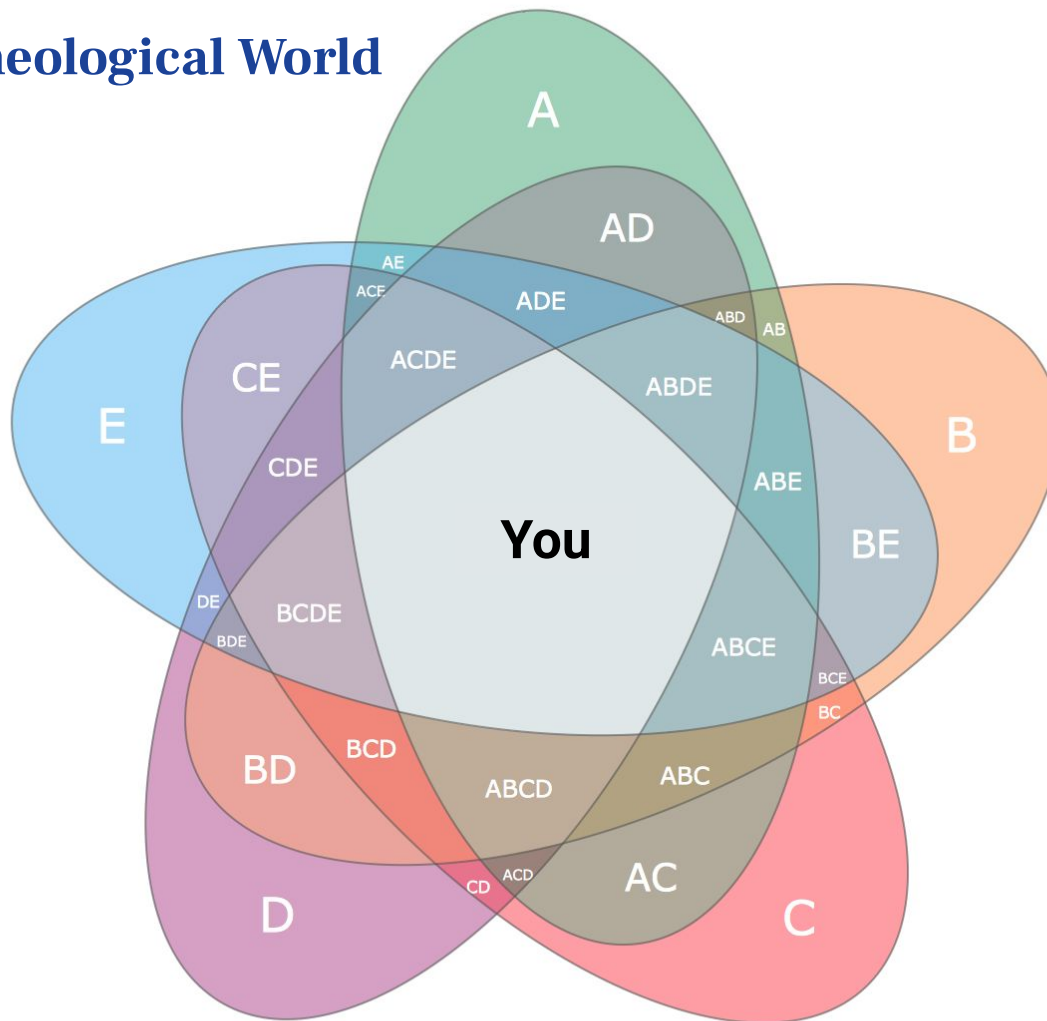
# What is theology?

*theos = God*  
*logos = word*

- For everyone: speaking about God
- Academically
  - Biblical
  - Historical
  - Systematic
  - Practical



# We live in a Theological World



[The] fact is that all of us do theology in some form or other, even if it be in negating the existence of a God. When we reflect on the meaning of our lives in relation to its ultimate values, its source, and destiny, we are theologizing. When we consider the good and bad of an action we are making a theological reflection. Our conscience, the inner light and voice within us places us before such values, and in relation to the deepest insights and instructions within us.

Tissa Balasuriya  
*Toward the Liberation of Theology in Asia*



# Why do we ask you to engage Catholic theology in EML?

## **Ascension's Integrity as a Ministry of the Church**

- Develop a working vocabulary of the foundational principles from the Catholic theological, moral and spiritual tradition in order to articulate our ministry identity and Mission.
- Interpret and lead our strategic, operational, financial, clinical and organizational processes as expressions of Ascension's identity as a ministry of the Church.

## **Personal Flourishing in Community**

- Become more actively aware of your own deepest commitments
- Grow in community as you engage these commitments with others
- Foster a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in the work of leadership



# Human Dignity

Everyone is sacred; no one is expendable.

Our bodies, minds, souls and spirits are inseparable.

We are made for relationships; we are made for flourishing; we are made for God.

We are called to community; we are called to wonder; we are called to love.



## Ethical and Religious Directive (ERD) #3

In accord with its mission, Catholic health care should distinguish itself by service to and advocacy for those people whose social condition puts them at the **margins of our society** and makes them **particularly vulnerable** to discrimination: the poor; the uninsured and the underinsured; children and the unborn; single parents; the elderly; those with incurable diseases and chemical dependencies; racial minorities; immigrants and refugees. In particular, the person with mental or physical disabilities, regardless of the cause or severity, must be treated as a **unique person of incomparable worth**, with the same right to life and to adequate health care as all other persons.

Ethical and  
Religious  
Directives for  
Catholic Health  
Care Services

*Sixth Edition*

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF  
CATHOLIC BISHOPS



## Drawn from...

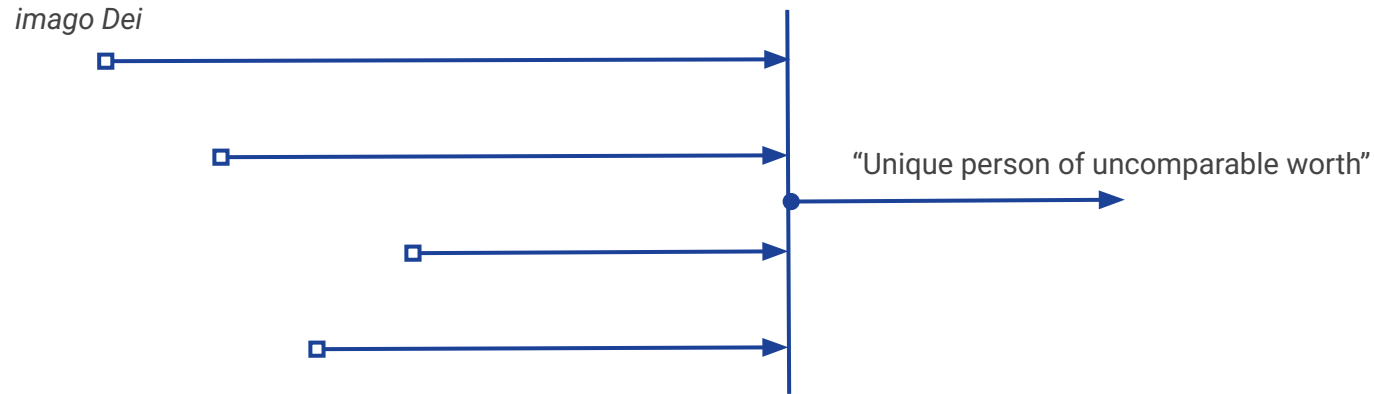
Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

God created mankind in his image;  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

- Genesis 1:26-27, New American Bible



# From theology to anthropology



## From theology to anthropology

Multitasking is essential for productivity.

Working evenings and weekends is unavoidable.

*What would you add from your experience in leadership?*



**“Every human person is sacred and inviolable. To ensure that a society has a future, it is necessary that a sense of respect be matured for the dignity of every person, no matter in what condition they find themselves.”**

***Pope Francis on X, March 21, 2023***



**Ascension**



# Exploring our Virtual Classroom



# Knowing in Community

**Figure 4.1.** *The Objectivist Myth of Knowing.*

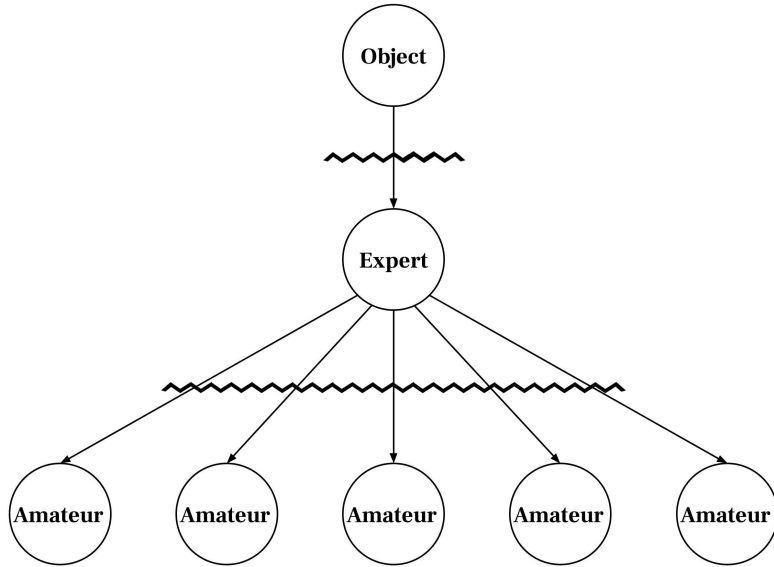
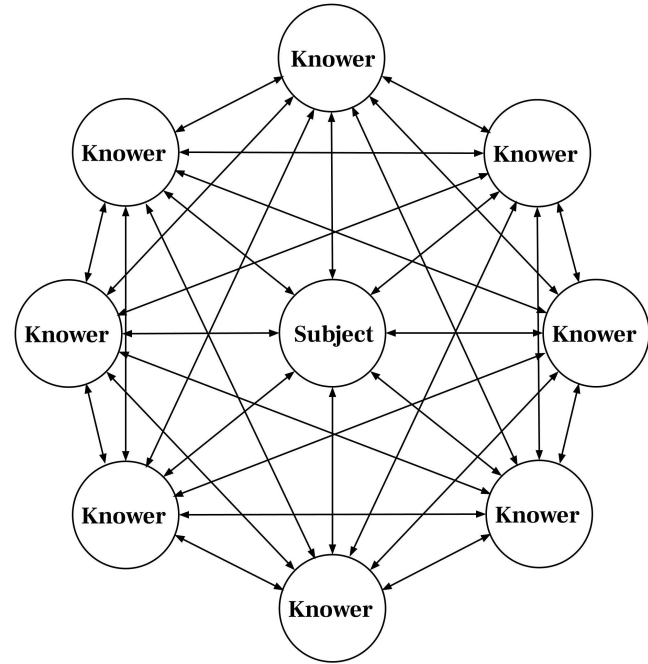


**Figure 4.2.** *The Community of Truth.*



# Executive Ministry Leadership Formation

Group 20

CONTINUE

## Welcome to your EML journey

This space is exclusively for members of Group 20

- [EML Group 20 Directory](#)
- [Retreat and Course Dates](#)
- [Slides from our Orientation Call](#)

# Closing Circle



