

A Culture of Commencement for Maturing Discipleship Exists amid Three Elements of Parish Life

A seasoned gardener knows that the seeds of faith fall on specific soil and absorb all of the elements that enable it to bear fruit.

A Parish's Culture of Commencement for Maturing Discipleship exists in the following three "apprenticing" elements:



- **Tilling – the daily work of the faith community:** this can be discerned by participating in the rituals, liturgy, social justice activities and events that happen daily within the community; these are identifiable by simply looking at the parish's bulletin, newsletters and website. They are the most visible elements by which a parish's daily work is structured and celebrated.
- **Planting – the values of the faith community:** this can be discerned by listening to statements of parishioners about what they consider to be important and unimportant – where the parishioners and staff invest their time and resources.
- **Nurturing – the world view of the community:** not as easily discerned as tilling and planting; nurturing comprises the "soul" or interior presuppositions and attitude of the faith community that are so deeply planted within the field of the parish's identity that they unconsciously dictate the community thoughts and actions. These can be discerned amid the most revered symbols and stories within the parish, and are owned by all members.

Together these three aspects comprise the landscape of remote and ongoing catechesis for sacramental formation. It is within the "field of parish life" that we apprentice every disciple, (but most especially our young believers) in the attitudes, values, work and identity of Jesus Christ. All the while giving newness of life through the **Miracle of Deeply Rooted Plants Sprouting from Seeds – the maturing disciple is every member of the community of faith.**

Just as seedlings surrounded by thorny bushes can choke an otherwise healthy plant; so too, through the power of the Holy Spirit, a healthy community of faith that lives the "**many moments of commencement**" will protect, nurture and model the blossoming and maturing of faith that is the aim of discipleship. Confirmation celebrates the way that one's life becomes increasingly centered on Jesus Christ and the reign of God that he proclaims.

Discussion Questions

- In your small groups, take time to make an initial **survey of the landscape** of your parish's apprenticing elements of tilling, planting and nurturing.
- What is the "specific soil" of your parish's life that makes up the remote and immediate catechesis for the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation? What is the daily work, values and world view of your parish community? What are the most obvious signs of health growth? What areas of parish life need further attention?
- Do any of these apprenticing elements need new life so as to appropriate new meanings for the parish?
For sacramental formation?