

---

## EFFECTING A UNIVERSITY'S MISSION: THE PRAXIS OF CHARISM

ROBERT J. MURRAY, O.S.A.

*Villanova University*

*Religious communities engaged in educational ministry have been challenged by the Second Vatican Council both to reappropriate the initial charism of their founders and to review their ministry in the schools staffed by their communities. Compounding this challenge has been the shift in the number of members of the founding congregations in their faculties. This article reframes the discussion in terms of an issue of committed culture. After presenting a theological foundation and sociohistorical critique of charism, a praxis model for mission effectiveness as it is applied to student orientation within a Catholic university setting will be introduced.*

The documents of the Second Vatican Council offer two distinct but related challenges to religious orders engaged in educational ministry. These challenges, stated in the *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life* (Abbott, 1966) and the *Declaration On Christian Education* (Abbott, 1966), encourage religious orders engaged in education to reappropriate the initial charism of their founder and to review the ministry exercised within the schools owned by the order. Such a review's purpose is to assure that this ministry reflects the teaching of the Catholic Church, is a faithful expression of the founding congregation's charism, and is an authentic response to emerging ecclesial needs.

Compounding this challenge to charism, most Catholic colleges and universities in the United States founded by religious orders have experienced a shift in the number of administrators, faculty, and staff who are members of the founding congregation. These numbers have declined over the past 20 years, due to a decrease in the overall membership in the religious community and to members of the order opting to work in fields outside of higher education. Without significant change, this trend seems likely to continue (Nygren & Ukeritis, 1992).

A review of the mission statements and publications from these institutions indicates that they offer what is popularly known as a Catholic education in the tradition of a specific religious community. Without a significant presence on campus of members of the founding congregation, religious communities are concerned that the educational heritage of their institutions of higher education might disappear. Ambiguity also exists among faculty members regarding what is meant by an education in a specific community's tradition. Does it hinge upon the presence of that community? Can the non-religious convey the heritage and cultural values in the same way that the religious have? Will the tradition still be tangible when there are few or even no religious left on campus?

In response to these issues, religious and nonreligious faculty are actively examining and reclaiming the components of the religious community's heritage as well as devising appropriate procedures to orient faculty members. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990) has created ample discussion about the identity and mission of Catholic universities and colleges, but there has been little dialogue concerning the religious heritage of these institutions. This is a significant juncture in Catholic higher education because it marks a point in time when measures need to be taken which will ensure preservation and control over the future of the religious community's philosophy of education. This article seeks to reframe the discussion more in terms of forging a committed culture and less in terms of shifting numbers.

## CHARISM: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The word *charism* was contributed to religious vocabularies by Paul of Tarsus; however, Paul VI gave it a specific meaning for religious men and women (Renfro, 1986). The term, first used in the Letter to the Corinthians (I, 12), has been translated into Latin as "gift" or "grace." From this Biblical foundation, the construct of charism has been explored, examined, and described.

The early Christian community understood charisms to be gifts of God given through the Spirit to individuals for service to the community. These gifts provided the community with a "locus and common framework for individuals to serve the community" (Schutz, 1974, p. 56). The life and words of Jesus empowered others to continue his life and ministry by calling others to exercise their gifts in freedom and love (Rahner, 1975).

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) desired to rekindle the spirit of the early Christian community by calling all the faithful to recognize and respond to the gifts of the Spirit within them. In its critical second chapter, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, (Abbott, 1966) spoke of the charisms given by the Spirit for the renewal and building of the Church. It also distinguished the hierarchical gifts from the charismatic gifts.

Although *Lumen Gentium* never applied its doctrine on charism explicitly to religious life, the majority of the theology of gifts is contained in its sixth chapter, which deals with religious life in the Church. Similarly, *The Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis)* (Abbott, 1966), contains many of these same elements and even adds an essential note, namely, that the origins of religious life lie under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Collectively *Lumen Gentium* and *Perfectae Caritatis* make significant contributions to the development of religious life as a charism. Neither document discussed religious life in the juridical language of status or the state of perfection to be acquired. By refusing to subsume religious life under this juridical heading as its primary category, Vatican II cleared the way for the further theological developments of *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life (Evangelica Testificatio)* (Paul VI, 1971), which brought them together under the general rubric of charism. Paul VI challenged religious communities to reexamine their unique charism, stating that the various forms of religious life are derived from the founders of these religious communities, who were raised up by God through His gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the charism of the founder gives each religious community a defining dynamism, often called its particular spirit. Secondly, it provides for the future a certain constancy of orientation that allows a continual revitalization and change in external forms. *Evangelica Testificatio*, then, is a categorical shift from religious life classified primarily as a canonical reality, to a charismatic reality, whose forms and constitutions themselves are judged by the classic signs of the Spirit.

Paul VI took the Church's general teachings about charism and the charismatic and applied them to religious life repeatedly during his pontificate. *Directives for Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church* (Sacred Congregation for Religious, 1978) highlights the most critical responsibility of religious superiors as their call to assure the fidelity of their members to the charism of their founder by fostering the renewal prescribed by the Council and required by the times. This apostolic letter refers to the charisms of a religious community as "an experience of the Spirit, transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth" (par. 14C). It is this unique experience of the Spirit that gives the distinct character to a particular religious community. Paul VI's accomplishment was to describe the radical identity of religious life as one of developing its charism.

This radical identity found support in the writings of John Paul II whose pontificate has encouraged religious, their institutes, and associations to live fully the mystery of redemption according to the specific charism of their religious life (John Paul II, 1983). In *Apostolic Exhortation to Men and Women Religious on Their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of*

*Redemption* (John Paul II, 1984), John Paul II insisted that the charism of every religious order exists for the different needs of the Church and the world at a particular moment in history, thereby encouraging religious communities to be enterprising in their undertakings and initiatives (Sacred Congregation for Religious, 1980) so that the Gospel way of life may be an authentic and viable cultural model (John Paul II, 1996).

Both Paul VI and John Paul II indicate the dynamic nature of the charismatic: Fidelity to the charism of the founder will demand the changes indicated by the Council and required by the times (Paul VI, 1971). Essentially, charism is a living reality, and like every living reality, it must continually confront the questions of growth or decline, of development or disintegration. The sober assessment of this change constitutes the continual discernment done in most religious communities.

## CHARISM: A SOCIOHISTORICAL CRITIQUE

The call to renewal has led congregations to study the historic life of their founders and to unveil the social and political environment in which the founder functioned. More recent research has invited religious orders to uncover both the sociological as well as the theological nature of the construct and to appropriate the insights gleaned from their conversation (Lee, 1989).

Marianist Father Bernard Lee (1989) challenges well-meaning religious and theologians who address charism as if it were a property or possession that is transferable from one generation to the next. According to Lee, charism is not a thing, but a deeply historicized social phenomenon that cannot be duplicated in any other time or place:

The rediscovery of charism has been a self-conscious quest for religious communities during the renewal period following Vatican II. Most communities have gone back to their beginnings, have looked deeply at their contemporary situation, and have articulated a daring new vision. Few communities, however, have dared the structural and behavioral changes necessary for refounding themselves in their new socio-historical situation. (Lee, 1989, p. 12)

Lee's insights suggest the need for a paradigm shift. Lee contends that since Vatican II, charism has too often been used as a label for what could be described as a community's "deep story" (Lee, 1989). Rooted in the structural movement, a deep story is a category of interpretation, a method for understanding group identity. He challenges a widespread understanding that neglects how fully historicized and time-bound charism is. No vision from an earlier time, even that of Jesus, can be lived intact and as powerfully in another age. The gift of the founder or foundress is not a community's charism.

The real founding gift is a narrative structure that supports and reflects a charismatic event in the foundation's birth and may do so again. Thus, if members of a religious community were asked to identify the most important features of their community, the responses most likely would not be identical. However, if asked to identify their responses when compared to those of other communities, they would recognize them because communities have deep stories into which each member is socialized.

Deep stories are not narrow constraints but supple structures that allow for many a plot. Such narrative structure always remains elusive because it is instinctual and unconscious even more than it is deliberate and self-conscious. Lee (1989) argues that charism is the effective connection between a deep story and a contemporary social situation. It is not the community itself that judges whether the connection is effective. Charism names a public perception of a particular community as both faithful to its deep story and provocatively and effectively responsive to the cry of the age. Charism is a public adjudication about the salvific presence of God's power in the relationship between a community and its larger world.

Given the contemporary appreciation of charism as a dynamic entity embedded within social relationship, the development of this construct will change as the culture and the environment of the members change. It follows, therefore, that each generation will instantiate the charism differently and is responsible for bringing to individual and communal consciousness both the overt and covert methods in which charism is enculturated. The Catholic university is one setting in which a shared praxis model for enhancing committed culture is to be examined.

## THE PRAXIS OF CHARISM

To be able to invoke charism as a descriptive category, the following conditions must be obtained for enough of a community's membership to constitute a critical mass.

They are rooted in their deep story, that is, the Christian deep story and that of their religious heritage. These are people who feel the urgencies of our age, its hesitations, its apprehensions, its social exigencies, and its spiritual quest. They understand that God's Spirit speaks in precisely these ways (Abbott, 1966). They are deeply inserted into their own culture. They are not accommodating to its coarser manifestations, but they experience its essential passions. They mark its hungers in themselves. They do not just observe them accurately and objectively in others. Because they own their experience, they are better able to speak a commanding articulation of it, that is more like poetry than philosophy or theology. They also have committed insight into what can and must be done, and practical plans of action. (Lee, 1989, p. 132)

For charism to be evoked as a descriptive category, it is the vocation and responsibility of each religious community to facilitate the conversation between its deep story and the sociohistorical context in which it serves. The Praxis of Charism Model (PCM), a combined adaptation of the religious education theories of J. Patrick Murphy (1991) and Thomas Groome (1991), offers one illustration of how such facilitation can be mediated (see Appendix).

## **THE PRAXIS OF CHARISM MODEL**

The Praxis of Charism Model (PCM) serves as a guide for those attempting to evoke charism as a descriptive category. This model maps how deep stories or structures are formed and communicated through disciplined conversation with one's psychohistorical context. PCM also highlights those competing forces that may obstruct its effective functioning. The initial component of the PCM is "Sources of Deep Structure," that mainly focuses on ideology.

### **SOURCES OF DEEP STRUCTURE**

Rootedness in a deep story is one prerequisite for effecting that experience which can be described as charism. In the context of Catholic institutions of higher education, the sources contributing to a community's deep structure include but are not limited to: (1) the organizational mission, including both the Catholic tradition as well as the religious heritage of the founding congregation; (2) the academic institution's historical response to the institutional ideology; and (3) the committed response and contribution of institutional leadership including administration, faculty, and others involved in student development (e.g., campus ministry, student life) as indicators of personal and institutional commitment to the deep story.

#### **1. The Organization's Mission: The Catholic Tradition and Religious Heritage**

All Catholic universities and colleges exist to proclaim and advance the mission of Jesus Christ within his body, the church (John Paul II, 1990). The church is a multifaceted and multipurpose mystery. It is present in a hierarchy of governance as well as in a community of worshipers. It is small, organic, and local as well as being catholic, i.e., universal. It is called to bring the poor to a new sense of humanity and the wealthy to a new sense of responsibility. The Catholic academic institution has its origin along this continuum of good news. Time has witnessed the founding of many Catholic institutions of higher learning, each an instance of God's grace encountering human need. Frequent are the instances in which institutions of higher learning founded by religious orders of men and women have provided the historical

setting for such encounters with the divine.

The birth of a religious community's story or its narrative structure begins with a group of people and an individual who is able to articulate the people's unique Christian aspirations and consolidate them. The leader is able to do this because he or she embodies these values. The founder or foundress and the followers create a lifestyle that gives flesh to certain Christian values and generate a spirit within which their faith is lived. There is power in what they do, and it is supported by wide appeal. These first members are starting a story. A narrative structure is taking shape. Out of their life together, priorities are chosen, patterns are formed, and structures emerge. It is the vocation and responsibility of each religious community to facilitate the conversation between its narrative structure and the sociohistorical context in which it serves. The fruit of such discussion is articulated in the community's mission statement.

The mission of any given system, including academic systems, is the "broad, overall long-term purpose of the institution" (Welzenbach, 1982, p. 15), and is most typically embodied in the university's mission statement. Interest in the fashioning of a university mission statement has gained momentum in the past two decades. Mission statements provide clarity of focus and assist universities in shaping a broad range of decisions, from curriculum to the hiring of faculty and staff. While recent Vatican documents such as *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* have encouraged Catholic universities to reflect upon themselves in terms of Catholic doctrine taught and experienced, many of these institutions fail in their articulated mission to highlight their unique expression of Catholic identity as it has been embodied in the lives and spirit of their religious founders. Simply stated, as religious communities in the Catholic Church exist to highlight specific charisms or gifts of the Christian spirit, so too must the ministries of such communities give expression to that same spirit. The identity documents of such ministries should not exist solely on paper but be evident in the actual praxis of the university's mission.

In their work, *A Sense of Mission: Defining Direction for the Large Corporation*, Campbell and Nash (1992) suggest that successful mission statements share four qualities in common: (1) they present a clear statement of purpose; (2) they present a clear strategy of how that purpose will be achieved; (3) they have a clear statement of the values or morally based beliefs of the organization; and (4) they offer a clear statement of behavioral expectations or standards for employees. With clarity as the common thread to each of these qualities, it is unfortunate that the mission statements of too many good Catholic colleges and universities are, at best, vague, in their public statement of identity. To state that "our institution was founded to continue the Gospel of Jesus Christ," while good and important, does not distinguish this institution from other Catholic institutions of higher education. However, to state that Franciscan University of Steubenville's "purpose of the

University, publicly identified as a Catholic and a Franciscan institution, is to promote the moral, spiritual, and religious values of its students. The University will be guided by the example and teaching of St. Francis of Assisi" (Franciscan University of Steubenville, 2001) does so.

## **2. Institutional Response to Ideology**

Understanding an institution's response to its Catholic identity and religious heritage is best approached by assessing its culture. Like other systems, a school's culture could be defined as the unique collective, mutually shaping patterns of institutional history, mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, practices, and beliefs that influence the behavior of individuals and groups (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Understanding an institution's culture provides a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions within and without the system (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Various researchers have articulated concepts and approaches that are useful in the analysis and intervention within an organizational culture (Borum & Pedersen, 1990; Gagliardi, 1990; Hatch, 1993; Pedersen, 1991; Turner, 1990; Young, 1989). However, Schein (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) has developed perhaps the most enduring and comprehensive conceptual framework from which to analyze and intervene in organizational cultures. Schein suggests that an organization's culture is: (a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relationship to those problems (Schein, 1990).

According to Schein (1985), organizational cultures exist on three simultaneous yet separate levels: artifacts, values, and basic assumptions. Each level can serve religious communities as a target for assessing the climate and culture in which their charism and mission are embedded (see Appendix).

### ***Artifacts***

On the surface of any organization are the visible, tangible, or concrete manifestations of the organization's varied activities. Schein (1985) and Parsons (1996) termed these products artifacts. Artifacts can be divided into three groups: physical (i.e., those things that surround people, such as space, architecture, or technical machinery), verbal (e.g., stories, written and oral histories, and special words), and behavior (e.g., rituals and ceremonies). Artifacts include items such as an organization's symbols, logos, slogans, images, and metaphors in addition to its formal organizational charts, rites, and rituals (Kuh et al., 1991). A university that, for example, has "unity, truth, and love" as a motto reflective of its mission, could conceivably instantiate that mission through the following artifactual means.



Physical artifacts are “those things that surround people [technology, indoor and outdoor spaces, art, architecture] and provide them with immediate sensory stimuli as they carry out culturally expressive activities” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 16). The environment created within a collegiate setting is a significant variable in communicating and enhancing a community’s charism. For example, a university whose articulated mission includes the communal search for truth through love has, as one of its priorities, those events and structures that facilitate the gathering of the school community. This charism could be called into question, however, if the environmental layout of the campus lacks adequate gathering space or if the chosen design for new dorms and office spaces allows for private entrances, thereby preventing the possibility of students and faculty meeting informally. A tour of such institutions committed to the search for truth should readily find advertisements and invitations about guest lecturers or other forms of structured conversation surrounding themes central to the school’s mission.

Stories, both written and oral, about wisdom figures whose legacies permeate the academic culture of a university are verbal artifacts that impact the mission of a university. However, it is not enough that the names of these men and women grace the doors of living and learning structures. The successful projection of a founding group’s charism requires that its stories continue to be told and that its spirit continue to be instantiated. Special attention should be given to the religious community’s founder as well as to significant contributors within the community who have advanced the mission within the university setting. Such attention would be manifested in school policies, electronic mail, class and departmental prayer, and reflective discussion.

Rituals and ceremonies are examples of behavioral artifacts perpetuated or intentionally introduced and sustained by college leaders or the student culture. Traditions or celebratory events connect the past with the present; they are means through which an institution’s character is formed and perpetuated (Masland, 1985). For example, at Mount Holyoke College, “milk and crackers” is not only a study break in the evenings, but is also a century-old tradition that encourages students to share what they are learning both inside and outside of class (Kuh et al., 1991; Parsons, 1996). At some colleges, educationally purposeful traditions have taken root more recently such as the “move-in weekend” prior to the beginning of fall classes, a time when student groups, student affairs staff, and faculty work together to greet new students and their parents. Another example is the opening fall term picnic featuring such activities as volleyball with coed teams comprising faculty, staff, and students.

Ceremonial traditions bring people together periodically. Used properly they provide opportunities to punctuate important community challenges such as mission clarification, budget reductions, collective mourning, or festival celebrations. The annual gathering for founder’s day has become for many

academic institutions one concrete opportunity for advancing the unique mission of a university.

### *Values*

The next level of the PCM focuses on the values or social principles, philosophies, and standards of the organization (Schein, 1985). The philosophy of the system is the manifestation of widely shared values and assumptions, many of them tacit, about human nature and the process of doing what it is the system is created to do (e.g., for education systems, to teach and to promote learning). The values of a system present that system's view of the importance of certain goals, activities, relationships, and feelings (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Values can be espoused (what people say they believe but may not always do) or enacted (beliefs that people or the institution put into practice) (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Kuh, 1993).

Values stated in the form of some assertion about how the system should function can be different from those values observed in actual practice. Often it is the enacted values—the way people and the system actually prioritize and function—that shape policies, decision making, and other operations. The religiously based institution, therefore, must be mindful of both the espoused and the enacted values along with the possible impact of any discrepancy between these two forms. For example, one of the core values at Trinity College in Vermont is the “personal challenge,” a value uniquely fitted to each person. Students at this institution staffed by the Sisters of Mercy are invited to pursue their interests and are challenged to “think outside the box”—that is, take risks—to extend themselves as individuals and do things that they would never consider possible with the hope of instilling confidence and opening future doors of opportunity.

### *Basic Assumptions*

The final level on the PCM (see Appendix) is the system's basic assumptions, which reflect the organization's taken-for-granted beliefs about reality and human nature. These assumptions form the unquestioned, nondebatable truths and reality of people within the system (Schein, 1985). When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted to the point where what was once only a hunch starts to be treated as a reality, as if this is the way nature really works. These basic assumptions then serve as the foundation from which the system defines structures and process to guide its operations (Schein, 1985).

It is this deepest level, the level of basic assumptions, that Schein believed held the key to understanding and thus changing the culture of an organization. What organizational members assume to be true shapes what they value and the form these values take. For example, a university that celebrates “unity through diversity” has as one of its assumptions the need for

creating settings and experiences in which such differences are recognized, discussed, and, hopefully, accepted.

### **3. Leadership Experience with Ideology**

In his enlightening distinction between good educational practice and educational excellence, Sergiovanni (1995) describes "good educational practice" in terms of classroom management, meaningful communication, and mastery of curriculum and instruction. It is from this basis of competence, Sergiovanni (1995) reminds us, that good educators become excellent educators as they strive to fulfill the substantive purpose at the heart of their profession.

For Catholic educators, however, good educational practice is not enough. In addition, Catholic educators must also convey the assumptions, beliefs, and values representing Catholic culture, as these have been transmitted throughout the Christian centuries in scripture and tradition. Like parents, who are the first educators of youth, Catholic educators are challenged to translate Catholic culture into their interpersonal relations, modeling for their students what is true about human existence and citizenship in this world as well as the next. (Jacobs, 1996, p. 17)

If translating Catholic culture into interpersonal relationship is the responsibility of all Catholic educators, then it is the duty of school leadership to ensure that such translation is effective. According to Eisenstadt (1968), the charismatic quality of a leader lies in his or her connection with the sacred, with a realm of meaning central to human experience. The relationship between the realm of meaning and the charismatic leader, though not one of total identity, provides a system of values which influences the ordinary leadership activities and priorities espoused. Murphy (1991) relates one early experience of meaning that profoundly shaped the life of Sr. Jeanne O'Laughlin and led her to the Dominicans and to education:

One day as a young girl Jeanne O'Laughlin was riding on a streetcar in Detroit. She noticed a black woman with two squirming children a few seats away (Jeanne is white). She offered to hold and soothe one of the kids and the mother was pleased. During the course of the ride a white woman boarded the streetcar, looked at the unlikely group and spit at Jeanne. Later that evening she asked her parents why anyone would spit at another for doing a good deed. Her wise parents explained that the spitter didn't really understand, that she was uneducated. (Murphy, 1991, p. 10)

By addressing such formational experiences, religious leaders such as Sr. Jeanne are forced to evaluate early assumptions and values and consider life choices that coincide with such reflection. The fruit of such reflection led Sr. Jeanne to the Dominicans and to her interest in minority education. As an

administrator, Sr. Jeanne understands one function of her position is to encourage the admission and education of minorities as well as social programs that heighten and sensitize the faculty, staff, and entire school community to minority concerns.

## **LANGUAGE AND DEEP STRUCTURE**

In the author's nonscientific polling of both secondary and higher institutions of learning staffed by religious orders of men and women, it is not uncommon to hear faculty and staff recount a common reaction offered by first-time school visitors: "there is something different about this school." When asked to assign language to this "difference," these same visitors frequently become quiet. Such silence confirms the truth that a community's deep structure, while real, is easier experienced than described. Attempts at description will frequently surface moments or instances of charism, such as abstractions like "community," "caring," "simple," and "welcoming." Such instances are expressions of a community's deep structure as they are given flesh within mission, culture, and leadership.

While religious communities are called to bring to individual and communal consciousness both the overt and covert methods in which charism is enculturated, the schools staffed by these communities are afforded privileged settings (classroom, dormitory, dining halls, retreats) as well as opportunities in which covert, supple experiences may be given discussion. Thus, it is the responsibility of all school leadership, including administration, faculty, and staff to facilitate the process of disciplined conversation so that charism is not only experienced but also articulated.

## **FACILITATING DISCIPLINED CONVERSATION**

Every person involved in the ministry of education has an approach or a method, which can be regarded as an informed and reflective way (theory) about doing the work. An individual's approach is shaped by the responses this person makes to some foundational questions such as who, where, and how. The approach or method constitutes a distinctive style of being with people as one engages them in structured discussion. Groome's (1991) Shared Praxis Model (SPM) is such an approach. It is not a method or a theory; rather it is a paradigm, a general style of action, which is informed by theoretical foundations. One can use SPM in a variety of contexts, even in non-school situations. SPM facilitates participants' understanding and appropriating of certain Christian values reflected in the religious heritage of the founding religious community.

The following example applies SPM to the appropriation of one specific Christian value, the communal search for truth, espoused by several religious communities, including the Augustinians. The specific context chosen for this

appropriation is freshman orientation, which for most undergraduates is the first formal introduction to the institution's unique heritage. While most orientation programs may be described as functional, that is, directed toward introducing new students to academic and personal support services (Janosik, 1991), it is equally imperative that such programs invite students into an academic community's unique style of thinking and behaving. The following model is offered ever mindful that what is articulated and experienced during orientation must be reinforced in the classroom, dormitory, dining hall, and playing field as well as in the campus chapel.

## **THE CONSTITUTIVE COMPONENTS OF SHARED CHRISTIAN PRAXIS**

According to Groome (1991), Shared Christian Praxis (SCP) is a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their sociocultural reality (Turner, 1996). Participants have access together to the Christian story and vision and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign for all creation. In providing a "detailed description of the workings of Shared Praxis," Groome explains:

- (1) it is a "natural" approach for which people have a ready disposition; (2) it is likely to educate for a "public church"; (3) it is an instance of a broad-based pastoral movement to honor people as agent-subjects of their faith; (4) it is an "inculturation" approach that can place "the gospel" and "the culture" in dialogue for their mutual enrichment. (Groome, 1991, p. 148)

Groome credits Freire (1994) as influential in shaping his shared praxis approach. Freire's pedagogy marks a distinct shift away from the traditional banking model of education, in which education is understood as an act of depositing and the teacher's role as that of issuing communiqués and making deposits. Students are expected to patiently receive, memorize, and repeat that which has been deposited but, Freire contends, it is the people themselves who are filed away through lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. Groome summarizes Freire's message as follows:

There are three basic philosophical assumptions upon which Freire's approach to education is grounded. First, humanization is the basic human vocation. That calling, however, is constantly prevented from being realized by the many cultural and social forms of oppression that dehumanizes people. Second, people are capable of changing their reality. We can become

creators of our culture and not merely creatures determined by it. We can have critical consciousness of our reality to the point where we act to change it. Third, education is never neutral. It always has political consequences. The consequences can be either to control people or to liberate them to deal critically and creatively with their reality in order to transform it. (Groome, 1980, pp. 175-176)

As a dialectical model with potential for human and societal transformation, SCP is conceptualized in terms of five movements.

## **THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF SHARED CHRISTIAN PRAXIS**

### **Movement 1**

Movement 1 of SCP is an activity whose purpose is naming and expressing present action. To engage present praxis, students turn to their own consciousness and their own way of being in the world. Engaging students at the first movement requires that they be invited to reflect upon their present lived experience as well as what is happening to others in their current historical context. Praxis includes active, reflective, and creative aspects and provides a structure for an intentional reflection on what is going on in order to imagine and forge new possibilities. The active aspect of praxis includes all bodily, mental, and volitional activities, or what is going on in the public life of their social context.

### **Movement 2**

Movement 2 of SCP encourages critical reflection upon what was expressed as present action in Movement 1. This second movement encourages critical reflection on one's own actions as well as those of the society in which one lives. The issue of critical reflection, then, is to engage the student in (1) analytical and social remembering, (2) critical and social reasoning, and (3) creative and social imagining. The use of an analytic memory activity attempts to uncover the personal sources (biographical) and social genesis of present action. Each student tries to remember how the context shapes present praxis (what the student has been doing) and shapes, as well, each person's interpretation of it.

Critical reasoning skills are also utilized for the purpose of creating meaning or making sense of present praxis both personally and socially. By discerning underlying reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies, students are called to a personal and social analysis of their present praxis.

Creative imagination looks to the intended, likely, and preferred consequences of present praxis for self and society. The creative aspect of praxis permeates the active and the reflective and mediates between them with an

impetus for ongoing and responsible praxis. As students share their own critical reflections in dialogue on present praxis, they are able to express and have others understand their stories.

### *Case Example*

The communal search for truth has been a Christian value espoused for nearly eight centuries by the Augustinians. Rooted in the experience of the fifth century North African bishop, this common search gives witness to the early Christian community's dictum that all things—especially truth—are to be shared in common (Acts, 4). In the process of building Christian community, Augustine believed, one grows in self-knowledge as well as in the awareness of the God who lives within. It is this revelation that is to be shared with others and further develops the community.

The importance of community and its development is a theme ripe for undergraduate orientation, especially given the heightened sense of isolation and loneliness which frequently accompanies new experiences. Students engaged in the tasks required of the first movement frequently articulate isolation or lack of community as an experience true of their present praxis. In light of the advances in technology and transportation, students have come to understand this theme as one of the ironies of this era. Movement 1 invites students to address the relevance of community as a generative theme by sharing their experiences of common life, including family and friendships, and of how those experiences have increased their self-awareness as well as contributed to the common good. Such discussion often uncovers stories and statistics surrounding issues of loneliness, self-esteem, and depression as they are manifested in abuse, addiction, and suicide.

The task of Movement 2 is to invite students to consider the underlying reasons or cause for such isolation in our society as well as to critique present societal comfort with community as a value. Discussion would consider those forces, both positive and negative, which impact its being experienced.

### **Movement 3**

Movement 3 of SCP makes accessible to the student the symbols of story and vision that emerge from the faith perspective of the Christian community over time and history, from the past into the present. Groome (1991) asserts:

The third movement makes accessible expressions of Christian Story and Vision as appropriate to the generative theme or symbol of the learning event. Its Story symbolizes the faith life of the Christian community over history and in the present, as expressed through scriptures, traditions, liturgies, and so forth. Its Vision reflects the promise and demands that arise from the Story to empower and mandate Christians to live now for the coming of God's reign for all creation. (p. 215)

Within the orientation experience, the story can be taken from original sources such as the rule of life provided by religious founders. Of special assistance also have been the writings of contemporary spiritual writers from specific religious traditions who bring to the discussion both the rationale and praxis for shaping one's Christian life according to a specific religious heritage.

### **Case Example**

Movement 3 is very applicable to undergraduate orientation in that it affords the setting for a disciplined conversation in which both primary and secondary works of a religious founder on the specific theme of community are discussed. Within an Augustinian university, for example, Movement 3 would center upon the writings of St. Augustine, especially his *Confessions* and his *Rule*, with their emphasis upon searching for meaning and truth and the influence which others have on that search. It is essential that the orientation leadership be prepared and versed in their ability to accurately present a religious founder's writings on a given theme as situated within a specific sociocultural context and present such hermeneutics as relevant today.

### **Movement 4**

Movement 4 of SCP, "Dialectical Hermeneutics to Appropriate Story/Vision to Participants' Stories and Visions," has participants place their critical understanding of the present praxis around a generative theme or symbol (Movements 1 and 2) in dialectical hermeneutics with Christian story and vision (Movement 3). In the fullest expression of its dynamic, participants ask, "How do this story and vision affirm, question, and call us beyond present praxis?" And conversely, "How does present praxis affirm and critically appropriate the version of story/vision made accessible in Movement 3, and how are we to live more faithfully toward the vision of God's reign?" (Groome, 1991, p. 149). Such dialectical hermeneutics between the two sources of Christian faith (present praxis and Christian story and vision) enable participants to appropriate the community story and vision to their own lives and contexts, to know it for themselves through judgment, and thus to make it their own as agents-subjects in the larger Christian community and in the world.

### **Case Example**

A disciplined conversation involving Movement 4 would require the orientation leaders to be willing to walk with students as they find parallels between their story and both the Christian and the Augustinian stories. The interest of Movement 4, when applied to this Augustinian value, would be to assist students in viewing their lives, their dreams, and their struggles in the context of Christianity as uniquely lived and modeled by St. Augustine. Students are



encouraged to know that they are not alone in their present experience and that one has gone before them who has already raised their questions and lived their mistakes and who, in time and with God's goodness, came to understand that truth is ultimately to be found in God as God is experienced in community.

### **Movement 5**

Movement 5 of SCP is entitled "Decision/Response for Lived Christian Faith" and offers participants an explicit opportunity for making decisions about how to live Christian faith in the world. In keeping with an understanding of Christian faith that engages people's whole being in place and time toward truth that is cognitive, relational, and moral, responses chosen by participants, depending upon the generative theme or symbol, context, and so on, can be primarily or variously cognitive, affective, and behavioral and may pertain to the personal, interpersonal, or social and political levels of their lives. Decisions, too, may be personal ones for each participant or be made by the consensus of the learning community:

Whatever form or level of response invited, the practical intent of the dialogue in Movement 5 is to enable participants, by God's grace working through their own discernment and volition, to make historical choices about the praxis of Christian faith in the world. As long as they maintain continuity with the central truth claims and values of Christian Story, reflect the faith of the broader teaching/learning community—the church—and are creative of the vision of God's reign, they are likely to appropriate decisions for lived Christian faith. (Groome, 1991, p. 266)

### ***Case Example***

Within an Augustinian setting, Movement 5 would invite new students to some commitment to their new reflected awareness. This movement necessitates the articulation of specific structures or forms within the university in which community and the search for truth in God are and are yet to be instantiated. It is also within the intention of this movement that students acknowledge themselves as personal agents of this school's charism who are called to continue the conversation between a specific Christian deep story as it seeks to live and breathe at this moment in history—their history.

## **COMPETING FORCES**

As definitive and detailed as SCP is, there are competing forces that may impede the process of effectively communicating a system's mission. Catholic universities and colleges are committed to a mission, but these institutions must bring to awareness the dynamic involved within this process, and they must also be ever sensitive to those competing forces that potential-

ly challenge mission effectiveness. Gallessich (1974) differentiated among the many forces that may prove significant to the understanding and effective functioning of any system, including schools. She identified three classes of such forces: internal, external, and trajectory.

### **Internal**

Internal forces are those operating within the climate or culture of the organization. These would be forces created by the structure and processes existing within the organization (e.g., the system of authority, the rewards employed, decision-making processes). Even Catholic colleges and universities with clearly articulated mission statements and active mission effectiveness committees have experienced tensions that result from decision making, including hiring (e.g., hire the more published, experienced candidate versus the candidate more willing to advance the mission of the institution), curriculum (e.g., requiring more courses that have greater potential for advancing the school's mission versus requiring more courses that could enhance students' major or satisfy the demands of technology and the job market), and faculty professionalism (using resources such as time and financial resources for faculty and staff in-service mission experiences versus resources dedicated to enhancing faculty and staff expertise).

### **External**

To be effective, academic institutions need to be mindful of the powerful force and resource that the suprasystem offers (Ridley & Mendoza, 1993). In analyzing the external forces impacting the system, the focus here is upon the adversarial as well as supportive role played by the external environment.

Catholic universities and colleges committed to mission effectiveness must understand both the individual characteristics of the population (community) that may support the school via input of resources (e.g., tuition, taxes, or purchases) as well as the unique characteristics of those who will consume the system's services. Catholic universities and colleges also must be sensitive to significant trends (e.g., educational, economic, political, social, cultural) whose requirements and demands can impact effective missioning, including:

1. State and other accrediting organizations as well as the demands on curricula initiated by the job market.
2. "Economic pressures leading to downsizing or rightsizing of that organization" (Parsons, 1996, p. 206).
3. Organizational restructuring trends pushing for decentralizing of authority and the use of total quality management.
4. "Socialpolitical pressures for increased egalitarianism, diversity, and equity within the workplace" (Parsons, 1996, p. 206).

## Trajectory

Finally, universities and colleges committed to their Catholic identity as well as to their religious heritage must maintain a perspective and note that schools, as with all systems, are impacted by their own history and developmental direction (Gallessich, 1974). This "trajectory" of the academic institution as a system reflects both its history and its trend. It is essential that Catholic universities and colleges committed to the challenges of Vatican II temper their goals of identity and mission with realistic expectations. When positioned within the context of the rich histories of most Catholic institutions of higher learning, the Vatican Council's summons to mission renewal is relatively new. Therefore, small, consciously chosen steps toward such renewal are, in truth, large and should be recognized as such. While it is not suggested that the projection of movement is the sole determiner of the school's present or future functioning, it is clear that past trends—as reflective of current and future realities—can impact the nature, character, and performance of a school as it daily gives flesh to its religious heritage and preserves the quality of its future.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

More than three decades after the Vatican Council, religious communities engaged in educational ministry are at a significant historical juncture in which measures need to be taken to ensure some quality of preservation and control over the future of their community's philosophy of education. The Praxis of Charism Model offers one response to this need. It is a model for facilitating a disciplined conversation between stories, both historical and present, so that a community's uniqueness may be given a new expression. While the purview of the present discussion is student orientation as it initiates students to this disciplined conversation, future research needs to address both the macro and micro components of the school's culture which also contribute to the discussion, including faculty orientation, classroom pedagogy, as well as the establishing school clubs, fraternities, and sororities. It is only when such disciplined discussion becomes a seamless garment within the school's culture that a religious community will be recognized as being both faithful to its deep story and provocatively and effectively responsive to the cry of our age.

## REFERENCES

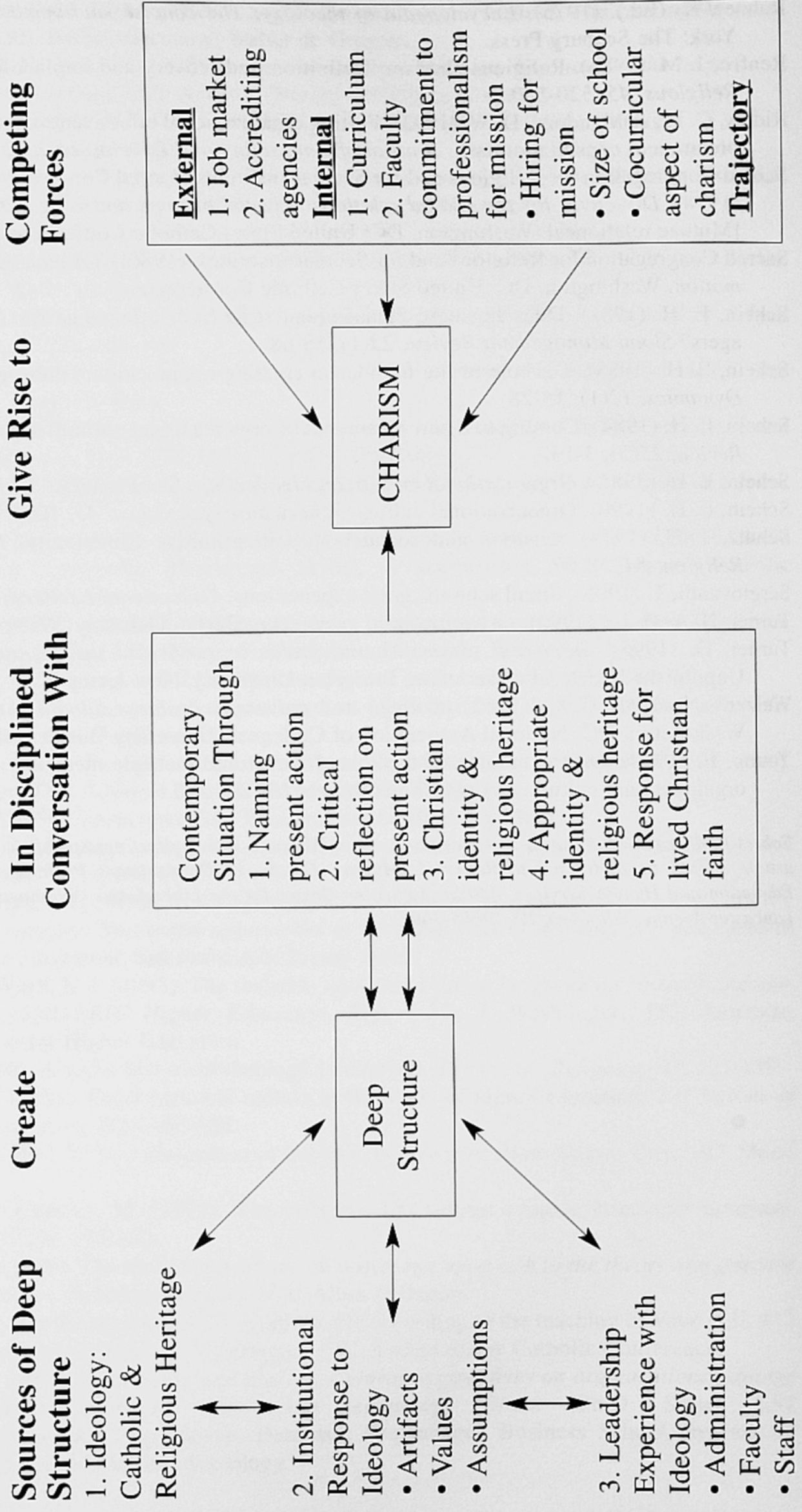
- Abbott, W. M. (Ed.). (1966). *The documents of Vatican II*. New York: Guild Press.
- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. (1978). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Borum, F., & Pedersen, J. S. (1990). Understanding the IT people, the subcultures and the implications for management of technology. In F. Borum, A. L. Friedman, M. Monsted, J.

- S. Pedersen, & M. Risberg (Eds.), *Social dynamics of the IT field: The case of Denmark* (pp. 105-120). Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
- Campbell, A., & Nash, L. L. (1992). *A sense of mission: Defining direction for the large corporation*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (1968). *Max Weber on charisma and institution building*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Franciscan University of Steubenville. (2001). *Mission statement*. Retrieved October 29, 2001, from <http://www.franuniv.edu/admissions/ucatalog/misstate.htm>
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing.
- Gagliardi, P. (Ed.). (1990). *Symbols and artifacts: Views of the corporate landscape*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
- Gallessich, J. (1974). Training the school psychologist for consultation. *Journal of School Psychology, 12*(2), 138-149.
- Groome, T. H. (1980). *Christian religious education: Sharing our story and vision*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Groome, T. H. (1991). *Sharing faith: A comprehensive approach to religious education and pastoral ministry*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing.
- Hatch, M. J. (1993). The dynamics of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review, 18*(4), 657-693.
- Jacobs, R. M. (Ed.). (1996). The vocation of the Catholic educator. *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series, 1*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.
- Janosik, C. M. (1991). Orientation: Perspective on purpose and value. *Student Life Dynamics, 1*(1), 1-3. In Student Life Division of Villanova University, Villanova, PA.
- John Paul II. (1983). Letter to US bishops on religious orders. *Origins, 13*, 129-133.
- John Paul II. (1984). *The gift of the redemption* [Redemptionis donum]. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- John Paul II. (1990). *Ex corde ecclesiae* [Apostolic constitution on Catholic universities]. Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- John Paul II. (1996). *Consecrated life*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media.
- Kuh, G. D. (1993). Appraising the character of a college. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 71*(6), 661-668.
- Kuh, G. D., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., Andreas, R. E., Lyons, J. W., Strange, C. C., et al. (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and development outside the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G. D. & Whitt, E. J. (1988). *The invisible tapestry: Culture in American colleges and universities*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education, Report No. 1. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Lee, B. L. (1989). A socio-historical theology of charism. *Review for Religious, 48*, 124-135.
- Masland, A. T. (1985). Organizational culture in the study of higher education. *The Review of Higher Education, 8*(2), 157-168.
- Murphy, J. P. (1991). *Visions and values in Catholic higher education*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward.
- Nygren, D., & Ukeritis, M. (1992). The religious life futures project: Executive summary. *Origins, 22*(15), 257-272.
- Parsons, R. D. (1996). *The skilled consultant: A systematic approach to the theory and practice of consultation*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Paul VI. (1971). On the renewal of the religious life according to the teaching of Vatican II. #12 in *The Teachings of Paul VI*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- Pedersen, J. S. (1991). *Continuity and change: Central perspectives on organizational change and transformation in information technology firms*. (Ph.D. Series 2.91 Samfundslitteratur). Copenhagen, Denmark: Copenhagen Business School, Institute of Organization and Industrial Sociology.

- Rahner, K. (Ed.). (1975). *Encyclopedia of theology: The concise sacramentum mundi*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Renfro, J. M. (1986). Religious charism: Definition, rediscovery and implications. *Review for Religious*, 45, 520-530.
- Ridley, C. R., & Mendoza, D. W. (1993). Putting organizational effectiveness into practice: The preeminent consultation task. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 72(2), 168-177.
- Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, Sacred Congregation for Bishops. (1978). *Directives for the mutual relations between bishops and religious in the Church* [Mutuae relationes]. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. (1980). *Religious and human promotion*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- Schein, E. H. (1981). Does Japanese management style have a message for American managers? *Sloan Management Review*, 23(1), 55-68.
- Schein, E. H. (1983). The role of the founder in creating organizational culture. *Organization Dynamics*, 12(1), 13-28.
- Schein, E. H. (1984). Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review*, 25(2), 3-16.
- Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist*, 45, 109-119.
- Schutz, J. H. (1974). Charism and social reality in primitive Christianity. *The Journal of Religion*, 54, 58-69.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1995). Small schools, great expectations. *Educational Leadership*, 5(3), 48-52.
- Turner, B. A. (Ed.). (1990). *Organizational symbolism*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
- Turner, D. (1996). *Story and vision: Shared praxis in service to an institutional mission*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, New Jersey.
- Welzenbach, L. F. (Ed.). (1982). *College and university business administration* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: National Association of College & University Business Officers.
- Young, E. (1989). On the naming of the rose: Interest and multiple meanings as elements of organizational culture. *Organization Studies*, 10, 187-206.

Robert J. Murray, O.S.A., is an assistant professor at Villanova University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Robert J. Murray, O.S.A., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Education and Human Services, 330 St. Augustine Center for the Liberal Arts, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085-1699.

# APPENDIX PRAXIS OF CHARISM MODEL



Copyright of *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* is the property of Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.