

[This follows #761, written last week; either or both may be used next week by the group in pursuing this theme. These two and a number of prior thinksheets directly address "where we are" in the light of *What should an integration seminar for parish clergy look and feel like?* The below follows #712, my version of Glasse's case-method design. While the group next week may deal with names, there are none in this writeup: that would be too "heavy," too apt to be handled as the blaming syndrome.]

BACKGROUND--Our situation is that we are approaching a symbiosis of form/function, order/freedom, design/flow that [1] honors the task [which is emerging], [2] honors the dignity of each participant, and [3] provides experience of "integration."

DESCRIPTION--We began with mismatched assumptions--the group assuming it was free to shape its life together, including talk-content; the leader assuming that the group had bought into an integration process involving [1] the balance of givens and freedom described in the "Course Work Sheet" and [2] trust in the process-leader. The mismatch reached a crisis in the second session, several refusing the use of #317 as a way of self-offering of life/ministry in interface with the first way of being religious. Instead of pressing for this mode of interfacing, the leader said "Of course you can involve your personal data, if you wish, in some other way than writing and reading the four-level #317. But it's important that we have some structure for the interfacing, else we'll fall into chaos and power-struggle."

ANALYSIS--In spite of having been together on retreat, the group was not "together" enough to begin to share intimate personal data. Of the eight ways of being religious, Way #1 ["Personal Experience of the Holy"] is the most personal and intimate, involving telling one's conversion/culture story--which was done by some with diffidence, by some others with quiet resentment....Third session: Explosion of resistance to the sharing/"Ways" structure. This turned into a general gripe session on frustrated expectations about the D.Min. program: all NYTS personnel in range were on target ["in range" meaning involved, thus far in the year, in the program]....ISSUES: [1] Who's in charge of shaping the program, the candidates or the staff; and if both, specifically how related? [2] What's "integration," and how do you get at it in the limited time of (a) the session-length, only two hours, and (b) the schoolyear? [3] What leadership style is most appropriate in this seminar: is Willis too confrontational, too "personal," too formal? [4] How does the seminar relate to the other components of the program? [5] How balance task (= "integration") and "maintenance" (what's happening, in group, personally to the participants)? [6] Is "integration" something that's to happen in, in and beyond, or beyond the seminar sessions?....TURNING POINTS: [1] First challenge to the use of #317 as a way of involving personal data was countered not by any other candidate (indeed, two concurred) but by the leader [in the words above, lines 8-11]-- which tended to polarize group/leader, given the group's insecurities/anxieties. [2] The leader, at that point, went from hard to soft, throwing the shaping onto the group: if you don't like the design worked out by the institution, come up with one of your own....CRITICAL FACTORS: [1] Normal hesitance about a new experience, with consequent "Whoa!" resistance. [2] Mixed signals from the institution.

EVALUATION--In first session, more time should have been given to [1] orienting to the place of the seminar in the program and [2] the meaning "integration" has in this context. Once more buy-in into the process, the leader should have been firmer on insisting that the group discipline itself to the process. Leader's tendency, when group falls into chaos, to overstimulate with stories/images/ideas pertinent to the task but unassimilable in the atmosphere of group impotence-through-chaos. Ecclesiola in ecclesiam, kosmikos in cosmo: the group's experience of order/chaos is "the human condition" and "the church condition": context for learnings!

* "We" is the '75-'76 NYTS Doctor of Ministry Inegration Seminar. 24 Feb 76