

Social Analysis for the 21st Century, Maria Cimperman

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TH510.NA

Spring 2020

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In *Social Analysis for the 21st Century* Cimperman offers a refresh of the pastoral spiral in light of the varying issues that are at the forefront of society today versus when the model was first introduced almost four decades ago. She raises various social issues such as immigration, terrorism, and ecology that were not focal points of concern years ago. Cimperman methodically goes over the pastoral spiral and social analysis with current relevant models asking today's generation to look around and consider the issues of the day. She does well to give relevant examples of local issues and broad issues affecting the entire country, such as domestic violence in a parish context as well as the issue of fracking in our country.

A major issue today is the migration issues in this country. Cimperman provides a well developed social analysis of two contrasting views. In doing so we are brought through consideration of sociological analysis, economic analysis, political analysis, cultural analysis, environmental analysis and religious analysis. We are encouraged to consider our own wisdom as well as the wisdom of our group as we embark on our analytical journey. With regard to the immigration issues and our faith analysis she encourages us to be receptive and open to contrasting views. As we embark on our own personal reflection in these areas we are able to see places where perhaps we lacked understanding or consideration of another's view. In these moments we are able to, through the intervention of the Lord, take a more critical view of our own roles in the problem. In this faith based approach to analysis one is able to reflect in a personal sense to the plight of the migrant. For example, would I not cross a border to feed my child if that were the only way to provide for him? Also, if Jesus Christ were on the other side of that very border would He not offer me a food if I were hungry? Cimperman concludes that our willingness and openness provides an opportunity to "listen to the Spirit's invitation to respond to the cries of our world today."(Cimperman.145).

Cimperman is Catholic and often refers to Papal writings in her theological reflections. Additionally, her writing considers all aspects of social issue not only those in an urban context. She provides us with an expectation and desire to engage and join, with the intervention of the Holy Spirit, our brethren with openness to permit transformation in our own lives through our active participation in community. Application of the pastoral spiral to analyze a particular issue and need is the first step. Although we are unable to see and fix everything a proper assessment reveals that many societal issues are interconnected. Selecting a topic is the first step and can at times be difficult. It is important to bring the right group together to determine the need. Cimperman gives a thorough analysis and breakdown of effective methods in determining a topic. For example she suggests making use of narratives and data, limiting our scope, providing reasons for our selection, naming our experience and providing space for the right people at the table. However, from a Christian perspective I feel she deemphasizes the role of prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit in this particular aspect of the pastoral spiral. As effective of a tool as the pastoral spiral is, it compartmentalizes the faith reflection to an element of the process rather than the underpinning of the entire exercise.

When we arrive at the next element of the spiral, social analysis, thankfully Cimperman includes religious analysis as a component. However, once again she leans heavily on tradition and teachings. The morality of the issue is extremely important but at times can undermine the spirituality or will of God for the sake of morals. I know many “good guys” working their way to heaven on the do good express. As Cimperman progresses we move on to the faith reflection, this is the area where I clearly feel the need to emphasize. I am certain God calls us to help the poor and offer help to those on the margins but I do not want to become a mere social activist but rather be a social “activengalist”. Cimperman’s breakdown of the faith reflection is extremely

well done I was particularly touched by the radical availability component. Her use of the term “*disponibilidad*” in Spanish as meaning a complete offering of self is humbling. We must offer ourselves up as an offering to the poor to those on the margins. This aspect is so compelling, much like our Lord and Savior was offered up so must we. It is this aspect of my service that I must surrender to, my yes is on the table, I must be stretched and offered up. The final element of the pastoral spiral is the action step. Cimperman encourages us to move forward on the path and with the vision that we have working in hope and with love. She offers an example of the parish that was dealing with domestic violence issues. Initially, the parish workers would bring up the concerns of domestic violence only to never see the victim or the perpetrator again. Sometimes our action step if not well thought out can cause a perceived or real failure. Here, the action step was cultivated and revised to ensure relationship with the victim. This element is key, in that we should look at these opportunities as platforms for ministry. There is value in empowering a victim of domestic violence and in educating a victimizer but the greatest impact will be made in using these platforms for spiritual growth and discipleship. In sum, Cimperman effectively educates us on the pastoral spiral and encourages us to move forward on social initiatives to share God’s love and love our neighbor simultaneously.

WORKS CITED

Cimperman, Maria. 2015. *Social Analysis for the 21st Century*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.