

A holistic practical pedagogical moral approach: the Lord's Prayer as an example for a moral formative Christian practice

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Abstract

Young Christians live in a pluralistic society today and face diverse moral challenges. These challenges and contextual issues are making the application of traditional norms and values a difficult exercise. This article focuses on a pedagogical moral approach and a Christian moral practice. A holistic person and world view combined with a holistic practical moral approach is of paramount importance. The Lord's Prayer, within a pedagogical praxis approach, serves as a Christian practice that can guide young Christians through its story and vision to appropriate its meanings to their own situations that require responsible choices and actions. This applied practical communicative pedagogic-moral approach can assist youth in their actions and in knowledge of their identity within their context, in becoming what and who they should be and to conduct responsible actions in a pluralist society. The ultimate object is a responsible, committed Christian and moral relationship with fellow human beings and with God.

Introduction

A safe and secure society with shared values and norms which apply for everybody and everywhere characterise our society (Alma & Heitink 1998:27; Ter Horst 1997). Contemporary children and young people live in complex moral situations having to make responsible choices and act responsibly without the necessary knowledge, value and skills training (Prins 2001:109). Young people live with a diverse and pluralistic world and life view (Prins 2001:115). Indicative of the fragmented experiential world of young people is a moral vacuum (Alma & Heitink 1998:27; Van der Ven 1998:1). Modern technology forms in unprecedented ways the actions, values and personalities of young people. A market-driven world economy is tailored for only the rich and powerful – the poor and weak have far less influence and place/space in such a world. The result is a limited future vision by the youth – which leads, for example, to crime, gangster practices, prostitution and HIV and AIDS (De Villiers 2001:1).

How should we orient young people morally in such a world? How can we assist young people to make meaningful and responsible choices and act accordingly? (cf. Burger 2000:229-230). These how questions guide us to practical theology, more specifically religious pedagogy.

2. Holistic religious pedagogy for moral formation

Ploeger provides an answer to the question how young people in contemporary South Africa should live meaningful lives in the light of ethical challenges. Young people should be oriented towards engendering and applying responsible and virtuous choices and actions. Meaning making in a pluralistic society, in terms of Ploeger (1995), offers an important link between ethics and religious pedagogy. The question how life orientation develops in a child is based on a holistic life view in terms of the 'triple timing' (thoughts, will and hope) (Ploeger 1995:116-117; Van der Ven 1998:21-22). The 'triple timing plus one' human-spiritual approach entails learning about particular traditions, life views and religious frameworks within contemporary life worlds. *Thoughts* refer to a particular aspect of a person's culture that represents a specific cognitive foundation, for example the Bible and the Christian tradition, oral traditions of faith-moral-experiences and ritual actions, referring mainly to the culture within the life world of a person. *Will* refers to social relations with a conative foundation into which people grow up in their life worlds. *Hope* refers to one's own personality, inclusive individual existential experiences and needs with an affective foundation. A holistic biography of people includes these three for the duration of human life (cf. Richards 1975:60-66). The 'plus one' refers to critical reflection of completed actions. The human-spiritual aspect refers to intersubjective relationships, focusing on solidarity and involvement in the suffering and needs of people (Ploeger, 1995:220).

Nel's (2003) personality formation theory becomes of import in this regard. Nel's theory highlights one aspect that practical ministry for the youth is neglecting. The church's ministry for young people is not sustainable and consequent (Nel 2003:152). The development of young people as independent spiritually functional people (as members of churches and civil society) is failing (cf. Dames 1998:232,239). A focus on young people as *complete* people is lacking. Selfish individualism develops consequently --

instead of *individualisation and individuation*, which focus on sociological (context) and psychological personal (identity) formation. Identity refers to personal (identity) formation and self-definition and social definition (Osmer 1996:21 in Nel 2003:162). Personality formation is the result of biographical heritage, cultural formation, cognitive style and spiritual inspiration (Allport 1961:567-573 in Nel 2003:164). The individual develops continuously in a more developed personality and can strengthen and exceed the aforementioned characteristics. Each individual has unique and particular personal characteristics. Behaviour may change according to changes circumstances (Nel 2003:164). Nel's argument is clear that Christian ministry for young people should always focus on the *complete/developed* person.

Youth ministry should work from a holistic (person) and relational (social/contextual) approach. The young person functions as a unique personality in relation to the neighbour (social-cultural), within creation *and* for God (spiritual). Ploeger's (1995:150) religious pedagogy provides a valuable departure point for a holistic-moral formation approach. His theory is about a meaning-forming process – through the accumulation of knowledge, a social life, personal formation and experience (cf. Van der Ven 1998).

The fourth aspect ('plus óne') focuses on action learning and critical reflection on *completed* actions. Prins (2001:116-117) highlights the import of reflective thinking of young people learning about and giving account of themselves: the general tendency among young people is to act without reflection, on the spur of the moment in terms of what will be fun.

Accountable moral action is about critical reflection on past-actions and characterised by response, interpretation, accountability and social solidarity (De Benedittis, 1981:72). Ploeger (1995:59) argues for an emancipatory approach without prescriptive norms and rules, but for greater independent choice formation and actions by learners. Life values are being sought creatively and intersubjectively. The 'triple timing plus óne' human-spiritual approach offers a useful framework for moral formation.

Ploeger's religious pedagogy may play a key role for formation processes between contemporary life issues and faith/moral values. This approach is essentially holistic-emancipatory and critical-reflexive. Young people should be helped to live with a critical

tendency. Cultural-social relations become possible; intersubjectivity, personal-existential aspects, needs and experiences are recognised. A holistic moral formational approach will henceforth be developed.

3. A Holistic Ethical Approach for Moral Formation

We need to focus on complex and multiple modern ethical issues on personal/psychological, social/structural, religious/philosophical/ideological and global/international level (Kretzschmar 1994:3). Complex contemporary moral issues render traditional/normative right/wrong approaches impractical (Kretzschmar 1994:3). People perceive reality with diverse moral visions through a pluralistic world view (Wolterstorff 1983:vii).

Each individual forms an integrated and organised whole (Maslow 1987:3 in Nel 2003:170). Individuation is crucial in the light of a diverse, pluralistic and differentiated society. "Individuation allows persons to make their way through the wide range of differentiated institutions in which they participate on the basis of a coherent and self-conscious understanding of themselves" (Osmer 1996:22 in Nel 2003:163). Individuation has an important function and meaning in the development of moral formation, especially with reference to the psychological function of the modern self: "...to individuate in a postconventional moral and religious world" (Osmer 1996:22 in Nel 2003:163).

Contemporary young people function in and through diverse contexts (Kretzschmar 1994:3). The development of a coherent self-image becomes almost impossible and inconceivable (Nel 2003:151). General right/wrong norms for contemporary moral situations are not appropriate for responsible actions (Villa-Vicencio & De Gruchy 1994:86-87).

The ethical question should instead focus on the acting person, the identity of the person, the good person (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:61-62). It represents a shift from the view that ethics focuses only on the *good person* (as good actions). The primary ethical question should not be *What should we do?*; instead it should be *Who are we?* or *Who do we want to become?* The assumption is that identity *and* context/culture are orientators of the acting person. The question *What should we do?* must rather

be *Why are we doing particular things?* or *What ought we to do, what ought to be?* Are we acting in terms of our identity or our culture or context? (Kretzschmar 1994:11). The two questions should not be separated in virtue-ethics – the who question (about identity/context) should exceed the what question (about action or behaviour) (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:62; O'Connell 1998:151).

Identity/context do not only determine behaviour; behaviour also engenders identity/context and culture. Questions about good behaviour and the good person are mutual. Ethics helps our understanding that the question *What should we do?* (in other words, *What is good behaviour?*) rests on the question *Who are we?* (in other words, *What is the identity of the moral person?*) (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:76). The question for Christian ethics is not just *Who are we?* but *Whose are we?* or *For whom are we?* The Christian moral life cannot just focus on moral formation through formal processes. A relationship with the Triune God and a context and culture offers a particular moral value impetus. Pneumatology in the Christian moral life prevents the virtuous life in limiting it to a prescriptive law. "It is not only about *doing* the right thing, but essentially about *living the right life*" (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:62-63; cf. Kretzschmar 1994:3; Dingemans 1986) (own translation). A holistic human and world view is consequently essential in doing justice to a lived morality.

Holistic Ethical Approach for Moral Formation

Responsible ethical actions focus on all facets of the person, albeit the holistic-ethical school (Douma 1981:24; Steensma 1995:22; Barth 1981:39). Thoughts, words, attitudes, actions, feelings and their end results form a holistic ethical dimension and actions. These can be distinguished from one another, but not separated. The *whole* person should live from a holistic relationship with the neighbour (social-cultural), creation and God. Ethical actions refer to only those actions which relate to the whole person, context/culture and their relationship. These actions touch on the whole person's status, place, function, vocation, destiny and formation. Ethical actions relate in one or the other way, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to the person (identity) being of humans and their neighbours (context/culture) (Steensma 1995:21).

Christian moral life focuses essentially on a holistic relationship with the Triune God and a contextual-cultural relation with the neighbour. Our virtuousness is primarily rooted in God's virtue (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:76) and secondary in the inherent virtues of our context/culture. Nel (2003:167) argues that young people's personalities are not predetermined through biological and socio-cultural heritage. The individual is a unique human being that informs and forms their lives with meaning. This substantiates the way a young person can excel in living a responsible life despite difficult moral situations.

Life as a whole has to do with ethics (Barth 1981:5,9;33). Ethics cannot be reserved for only particular parts of the human life – ethics are part of the whole life and person, forming an integral part of each second and facet of life 24 hours a day (Smit 2003).

The “ethical triple timing, *etiese drieslag*” holistic-spiritual moral formation approach offers a holistic-ethical life perspective and pedagogical-moral approach. The “ethical triple timing” provides for a better and wider perspective on the right or wrong ethical question scheme that prescribes good behaviour or actions with rules and norms. The “ethical triple timing” holistic-spiritual moral approach relate therefore with the “triple timing plus óne” human-spiritual pedagogy of Ploeger (1995). Relevant moral formation should recognise holistic, critical and cultural-contextual aspects in constructing an “ethical triple timing” holistic-spiritual moral formation methodology.

Moral formation should apply the total person, his or her life world and God's virtues to fostering healthy virtues in the lives of young people and their living world.

Life as a whole has to do with ethics and calls for a holistic-spiritual moral formational approach. The question then is: Where does this “ethical triple timing” spiritual-moral formational approach fit into the ministry of the church?

4. Christian moral practices for spiritual-moral formation

Christian ethics should focus in tandem with theological theories and praxes. Praxis is critical and creative informative interaction between reflection and action (theory and practice) (Kretzschmar 1994:3). The “ethical triple timing” spiritual-moral formation and the “triple plus óne” human-spiritual approach should be functional for Christian moral practice formation, within the perspective of the church, and social and familial context

(cf. Koopman & Vosloo 2002:42). Moral orientation and formation happens through practices which capacitate persons to embody certain values and truths in their lives (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:98). Moral formation cannot function as a separate church action – other cultural practices and perspectives should also be applied. A practical approach could assist in enhancing and structuring diverse societal influences and the unique of church traditions. Ploeger (1995) and Dykstra (1999) help in bridging general practices and Christian practices. Dykstra (1999:67-68) refers, in line with MacIntyre (1981), to Christian faith life as “practice”. MacIntyre (1981:181-203) calls for the incorporation of virtues into practices (cf. Koopman & Vosloo 2002:98; Burger 2000:237-238). Bonhoeffer (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:97) in his *Life together* emphasises the import of Christian practices for the communal Christian life. Bonhoeffer, for instance, introduced young people to daily reading of Scripture texts and the communal /shared reading of the Psalms as prayers (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:97). Liturgy and life form a reciprocal relation. Christian practices are not only intended for the edifying of faith communities; they are also important to life with a sense of responsibility within the concreteness of the world. Discipleship as Christian practice embodies a set of concrete values as well as intuitive ethical practices (Patte 1996:38). The individual has to develop skills in applying certain values in search of the good example/practice, and *in why* it is important (Porter 1999:191). This article embodies precisely the establishment of such a methodological search; and it underwrites Koopman’s and Vosloo’s, Bonhoeffer’s, MacIntyre’s and Patte’s principle that Christian practices include moral values. Practices are also **corporative** human actions through which individuals and communities can develop in moral character and content (Dykstra 1999:69-70). Groome (1991:134) understands praxis, psychological and social, as consciousness of someone’s total “being” in the world as an agent-subject-in-relations. Dykstra’s **corporative** practices and Groome’s “shared praxis” pedagogy are crucial for moral practice formation. We can refer to a holistic participatory communicative faith-moral action, within a particular context/culture, which are not only individualistic, but holistic and communal. Moral formation can happen through practices which make particular values part of our lives (Koopman & Vosloo 2002:98; O’Connell 1998:64).

Christian practices embody inherent spiritual and moral values (De Villiers 2001:2; Prins 2001:113). These practices may include Scripture understanding, confession of sin, prayer, forgiveness and hospitality. Prayer, for instance, informs content to ethics and prayer and ethics stand in a reciprocal accountability and 'stewardship' relation (Rothuizen 1976:15,34). Faith practices form a coherent and complex system of socially established corporative human actions. The values of *to live, to be* and *to understand* God's preferred vocation for us can, thus, be realised (Dykstra 1999:78, MacIntyre 1981:187).

Worship, for example, plays a crucial role in Christian ethics (Smit 1998:4; Koopman & Vosloo 2002:54-55). Prayer practices that do not engender virtuous lives are scantier/poor prayer practices (Rothuizen 1976:24). Contemporary Christian practices function in multi-social contexts and a greater plurality of practices. Christians should therefore be oriented to participate virtuously in multi-social contexts. Multi-social contexts can become meaningful, be renewed, changed and even improved through comprehension and skills (Dykstra 1999:71).

Culturally and socially fragmented communities on the one hand make it practically impossible for natural practice-formatational opportunities; and they call for planned and systematic formational processes (Dykstra 1999:73-74). Informal and natural formation practices should also be developed. Groome (1980) provides an answer in this regard: Groome's (1980; 1991:135) shared Christian praxis is a participatory dialogical pedagogy -- young people are enabled in reflecting on their own historical background in time and context and on their own sociocultural reality. Their shared reflection /study on the Christian Story/Vision personifies its application with creative intention of a possible new Christian faith praxis. God's Kingdom for the whole creation is the objective. The ground theory, for both Groome and Dykstra, is the formation of new Christian faith and moral practices, in service of the Kingdom of God. Christian faith practices are learnt through multiple gestures, physical movements -- and in doing particular things (Dykstra 1999:71). Intellectual actions, through discernment and creative imagination, highlights the objective and meaning of a specific practice (Dykstra

1999:71-72). This process can be compared with an athlete's training. Exercise and repetition are key activities in learning and exercising about particular techniques for being ethical skillful. The same training process for skills training is necessary for Christian ethical practice formation (Dykstra 1999:72; Prins 2001:114).

Moral practice formation helps addressing the how question (methodology) in the light of Christian and communal virtues. Christian practices function as orientators in moral formation and provide a particular Christian content to virtues and values.

Prayer practices may play a particular pedagogical and moral formative role in the development of virtuous lives.

The shared praxis approach of Groome, as dialogue and hermeneutical praxis method, could play a key role in moral practice formation. The question thus is *How does a moral formative youth ministry look?* The next paragraph will consider the framework of a basic theory for a moral formative ministry for youth.

5. Basic theory for youth ministry on moral formational Christian practices

The question is *How does youth ministry look in terms of moral formative Christian practices? How does such a ministry work?*

5.1. Presuppositions:

The discussion has highlighted the fact that the young live in a confusing and challenging moral society. Ploeger's religious pedagogy offers valuable markers for a holistic moral formative approach, which provides meaning to a diverse moral society. The ethical triple timing approach offers a corrective on the traditional ethical approach that prescribes good behaviour with prescriptive rules and norms. The development of spiritual-moral formational practices, which facilitate diverse societal influences and local church traditions, is required. The development of a basic theory for youth ministry in terms of moral formation follows next.

5.2. Basic principles:

The following principles in the design of youth ministry in terms of moral formation have reference:

1. Christian practices are signs and instruments for moral formation.
2. Christian practices for moral formation should not be regarded as a “law” that prescribe partnership and formation.
3. Prescribed rules and norms for moral formation are not the focus, but identity, character, contextual and cultural formation.
4. The following basic principles should be taken fully into account, on the adolescent’s personality, feelings, thoughts, will, culture, context and tradition (Bible, Confessions, rituals and life stories). A holistic person and world view should at all times be taken into account in moral formation.
5. Youth ministry should at all times take into cognisance and respect, in the personal formation of youth, the young person as a holistic being.
6. Moral formation should focus on the development of a coherent self-image and identity/individuation formation.
7. We should always bear in mind that we live in a post-modern society. The Christian faith and traditions are no longer an acceptable option in all respects and for all people.

5.3. Perspective of a pedagogical-moral-formatational basic theory

Moral formation is thus a psychological, relational, culture-contextual process with a holistic formational approach (Nel 2003; cf. Dingemans 1986). Moral formation focuses on citizenship in dealing with contemporary moral life issues through social responsibility (cf. Botman 1993:18 ff). Human-spiritual praxeology as framework for moral formation for youth ministry is crucial (Ploeger 1995:220). The human-spiritual approach focuses on identification and solidarity with the suffering of people. Moral formation is thus functional-formatational in both public and private situations, in itself functioning as a praxis (Patte 1996:37-38). Moral formation functions not only within the traditional church walls (culture/tradition), but with a healthy tension between the private, church, public and societal relations. Pedagogical-moral basic theory for youth ministry based on the ethical triple timing spiritual-moral formational approach focuses on coherent personal formation, the identity, contexts and culture of the youth. The objective is the *good young person with God, and a communal relationship with the neighbour*. Young people are formed *to live the right life*, not in the living of the “right”

things, but in and through a lived/relational spiritual-human-moral life, within contextual and cultural relations.

The ethical triple timing spiritual-moral formational approach functions interactively and is integrated in all facets of the church. Worship, preaching, liturgy, catechesis, service, witness and caring function essentially as Christian moral practice orientators. How should this basic theory be applied within church and public practices?

The ministry for youth should deal with the (coherent personal formation) spirituality, context, culture, identity and person of the young person in all facets of the ministry.

Work focusing only on “rules and norms” in the moral formation of young people is futile.

The next question is *How should practical moral formation be constructed?*

We look at a Christian practice, as an example of spiritual moral formation, next.

6. The Lord's Prayer as example of a moral-formative Christian practice

An empirical study found that young people in the Netherlands lack comprehension of Christian concepts (Alma & Heitink 1998:26). The same tendency may also be true of South Africa. The only way to realise the relevancy of the Christian faith and ethics for the contemporary youth lies in providing them opportunities to speak about their experiences. These experiences could be articulated in prayer, preaching and teaching (Alma & Heitink 1998:28). The prayer practice could be used as the departure to translating a diverse ethical experiential world in terms of a spiritual discourse.

Calvin argues that prayer is “... the chief exercise (*praecipuum exercitium*) of faith” (Hesselink 1997:130; cf. Barth 1981:43-44). The application of prayer as a holistic praxis exercise is of essential import (O'Connell 1998:115). The Lord's Prayer as communicative method serves as an example of a Christian practice here. The Lord's Prayer is applied as a communicative method, as an example of a Christian practice. The general application by Christian youth at schools, churches and homes is ideal for moral formational opportunities. For centuries the church has applied the Lord's Prayer as a model, norm and testing measure. This prayer is not intended to be repeated mechanically and habitually (Verkuyl 1992:358). Barth (1981:5,44,186) pleads its witnessing role in ethics, and applies it as a measure for the total Christian life. Rothuizen (1976:5) argues for a partnership between the Lord's Prayer and ethics. The

rationale is to determine its pedagogical-ethical value. The ideal in this article is that young people may apply the Lord's Prayer as an ethical guide (orientator) in contemporary praxis.

According to Dykstra (1999:69), as Calvin views it, the Lord's Prayer is a cooperative prayer (Hesselink 1997:132-137). The first prayer "Our Father" brings us immediately to ethics (Rothuizen 1976:113; Barth 1981:44). The reference to "us" refers to social implications in the prayer (Barth 1981:49-110). Each time we pray it we are reminded of our communal commitment with Christians across the world, and our responsibility towards all people, Christians and non-Christians (Hesselink 1997:134). Barth teaches that Christians already live that which they ask of God in the Lord's Prayer in their responsibility towards God, the neighbour and creation (Barth 1981:32,173). Personal integrity, social righteousness and love for the neighbour should simultaneously be viewed in *this* moral framework (De Benedittis 1981:65).

The Father-child *relationship* in the Lord's Prayer refers to more than a normative ethics which accentuates only the good and bad. Ethics as such is about the *law*, which does not refer to *relationship*, as *reference to grace*. Whoever says "Our Father" speaks also about the neighbour as our brother and sister in implicating family relations (Rothuizen 1976:113; Verkuyl 1992:359). "May your Kingdom come" implies that we hope in God in a world of disorder, corruption and suffering, and refers to discontinuity of evil and the continuity of God's Kingdom (Rothuizen 1976:117; Barth 1981:270). The Lord's Prayer offers hope for the diverse and complex issues of our day. Calvin summarises the content of the Lord's Prayer in two distinguishable parts; the first three prayers refer to God's total glory, against the status quo (Barth 1981:173). The last three prayers refer to our wellbeing and that which is good for us. The ethical value of this prayer lies in these two parts. The Lord's Prayer could be instrumental in the recreation of faith language where young people live with a limited faith understanding. The thinking, words and actions of Christians – in relation with the Lord's Prayer – should demonstrate characteristics of the virtues in the Holy Scriptures as comprehensible texts for non-Christians (Verkuyl 1992:358). The Lord's Prayer could as a faith-communicative method orient young people (*and* contemporary society) in terms of acceptable Christian values and virtuous.

The Lord's Prayer refers to personal and social implications; and it focuses on particular faith and ethical responsibilities. The Lord's Prayer can, in the light of this article, serve as an example of the Christian moral praxis.

7. Holistic pedagogical moral practice-model

The Lord's Prayer could thus serve as a moral practice – calling for a holistic pedagogical-moral praxis methodology. The “ethical triple timing” and the “triple timing plus one” human-spiritual approach become applicable. The object is a holistic-sensuous, contextual-cultural, critically reflective and moral action. Prayer should be applied creatively: “... using your creative imagination in prayer – inserting yourself into a biblical scene, applying your five senses so that you taste and feel yourself there as an active participant in Christ's archetypal story” (O'Connell 1998:115). Young people could become moral agents of God's Kingdom in a natural way within contemporary society through a holistic pedagogic-moral approach. The aforementioned objective could be achieved through the application of the Lord's Prayer in any moral praxis in terms of the “triple timing” communicative faith-moral actions.

The following “triple timing”-type questions are informative for the moral praxis in realising a holistic-formative praxis:

1. Which intellectual or value action regarding the moral situation takes place?
2. How are young people's will or attitude formed through the specific situation (context/culture)?
3. Which identity changes, personal formation or experiential actions can be distinguished in young people's existential experiences?
4. Which reflective actions occur among young people?
5. Which spiritual/moral actions can be distinguished?
6. Is there any indication of personal moral transformation or solidarity/commitment with the suffering of other people?

These questions represent the total actions of a person at any given moment. It presents a holistic human perspective and offers the key to a moral-formative method about the Lord's Prayer. It is, however, a cumbersome/clumsy method to apply practically.

This article proposes that young people should apply the Lord's Prayer practically in terms of a pedagogic-moral method in their daily living praxis.

Groome's (1991:123-124) shared praxis approach, with a holistic human and world view could prove instrumental in this regard. Groome (1991:146) offers a dynamic hermeneutical and methodological foundation for a moral praxis of discernment. In a moral formational situation the process of "shared praxis" requires firstly a focus action or generative theme. The situation or theme to be tackled in the formative situation should be clear. The wide-ranging method is shared communicative moral action in which shared and critical reflection take place. (The "triple timing" approach, on this point, relates to the "shared praxis" approach.) The shared praxis process develops through five movements: *"Naming/Expressing Present Action", Critical Reflection on Present Action, Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision, Dialectical Hermeneutics to Appropriate Story/Vision to Participants, and Decision/Response for lived Christian Faith"* (Groome 1991:146-148). Young people could apply the Lord's Prayer practically in contemporary living praxes in line with a shared pedagogic-moral praxis method.

Such a practice can guide young people in confusing moral situations to healthy virtues and responsible choice formation.

An example of such a practical method will consequently be developed.

8. Example of pedagogic-moral praxis method

The Lord's Prayer as a Christian moral-practice will be applied in line with this holistic-pedagogical-moral praxis method. The method could be applied on both a formal and an informal level. The following case study is based on the actual communication of young people in a practical parish ministry; and it represents only an example of a pedagogic-moral praxis method.

8.1 Case Study

8.1.1 "Focus activity"

Two teenage girls of parish X have befriended a dangerous gang. The result is that the girls became addicted to drugs and alcohol, and eventually prostitutes.

8.1.2 "Movement 1: Naming/Expressing Present Action"

Participants say that the community is threatened by gangster praxes. Young people become part of gangs in order to be “protected”. Many young people are without parental oversight during the day, because they have working parents.

8.1.3 “Movement 2: Critical Reflection on Present Action”

Participants feel vulnerable and powerless. It is as if “evil powers” rule the community; and young people become easy prey. Many young people have no inclination to join a gang, or knowledge about gangs, or about what is wrong or dangerous!

8.1.4 “Movement 3: Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision”

The Lord’s Prayer teaches that God is our Father, that He loves us and protects us by His grace. All people are our neighbours and our collective responsibility. God’s Kingdom and His church include the youth in His salvation where young people could feel safe and belong to a larger family. God’s Kingdom overpowers “evil” and demonstrates His power.

8.1.5 “Movement 4: Dialectical Hermeneutics to Appropriate Story/Vision to Participants”

Participants indicate that the youth do not consider the promises of the Lord’s Prayer. Young people have a flawed comprehension of faith and virtue.

The youth act on the spur of the moment for what is “in” and “fun”; they do not live from the vision of God’s Kingdom, where God lives and rules in-and-through everything and all people.

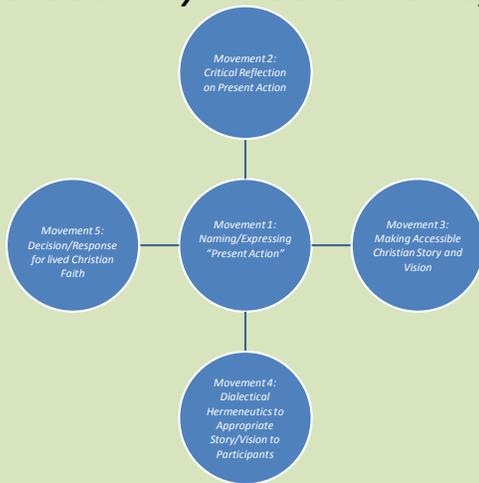
8.1.6 “Movement 5: Decision/Response for lived Christian Faith”

Participants discover anew the value of the Lord’s Prayer for their own and other’s lives. They develop greater comprehension and empathy for the situation of the young girls.

They undertake to mobilise adult role models as “foster parents” in the parish for young people, especially where their parents work difficult shifts.

They undertake to start outreach programmes for young people in the community, and in being witnesses in word and deed of God’s Kingdom vision for all people.

Case Study: “Focus activity”



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Case Study: “Focus activity” -- Movement 1: on Christian Faith

Conclusion

The church needs appropriate recognition of the context and humanness of young people. The pedagogic-moral-formative praxis method assists in establishing moral-formational thinking, attitudes and actions in a “moral-vacuum” world (Van der Ven 1998:31). The Christian moral-practice value of the Lord's Prayer centres on helping young people interpret and analyse their thinking, attitudes and actions in a particular moral situation. A new Christian-moral and accountable praxis and identity are the result. Moral reflection is ultimately not the essential, but in O'Connell's (1998:53) view “... [it is] committed to living the moral life”.

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