

# Pastoral Circle: “See, Judge, Act”

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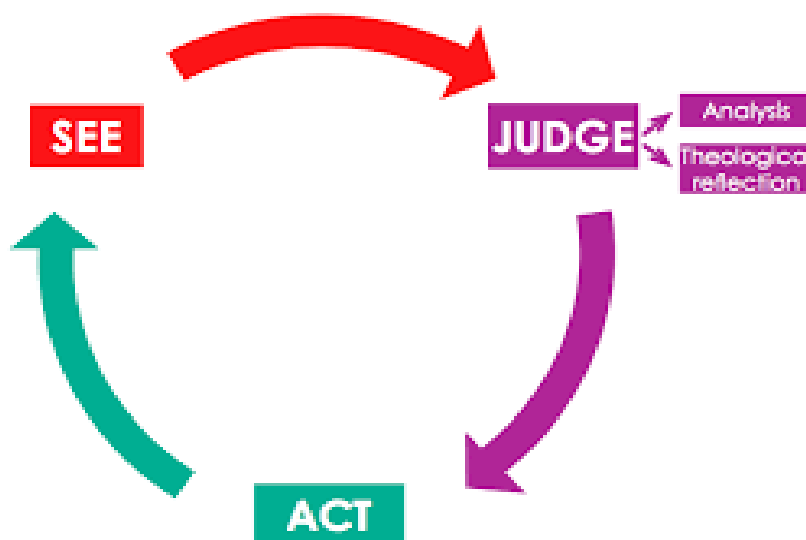
## History

- A pastoral theological method to assist groups responding to social issues, developed by Joe Holland & Peter Henriot, S.J. in their booklet *Social Analysis*, published by the Center of Concern in 1980.
- A revised and expanded edition *Social Analysis: Linking Faith & Justice* was published by Orbis Books in 1983.
- Has roots in the ‘**see, judge, act**’ method of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn which Pope John XXIII incorporated into Catholic social teaching in 1961.

## Reality

- The pastoral circle requires that we insert ourselves into a local situation (John 6:51 and Lk. 4:18-21) so we can observe, judge, and act on reality from the perspective of our faith, relying on the Catholic social tradition.
- When we insert ourselves into a situation we cannot help but be affected by reality. We are affected in stages:
  - First, we get a grip on reality through hearing the stories, direct service and encounter; that is, we are affected by things as they really are.
  - Second, we take on the burden of reality, join the struggle, in order to transform it.
  - Third, we take responsibility for reality as the body of Christ.
- The pastoral circle promotes action that touches our deepest values and motivates an organized response.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.  
John 6:51



# “See Judge Act” - a method of movement from observation to action

## SEE

### Experience: What is happening?

1. What is the lived experience?
2. What is happening to people?
3. Are we listening to the people most directly affected?
4. Can we/do we share their experience? If not, do we need to undertake exposure/immersion?

## JUDGE

### Analysis: Why is it happening?

1. What are the causes of the issue or situation? (historical, political, economic, social or cultural)
2. What are the consequences?
3. How are these elements linked?
4. Who are the key actors? (subjects, agents of influence, decision makers)

### Theological Reflection: What does it mean?

1. Are Gospel values being upheld or denied?
2. How do the Scriptures speak to this issue or situation?
3. How do the principles of Catholic Social Teaching speak to this issue or situation?
4. What does Church teaching have to say about it?
5. Can the experience of the Christian community through time help us to discern this situation or issue?

## ACT

### Response: How do we respond?

1. Direct service of the poor or marginalized?
2. Education or raising awareness?
3. Advocacy & transformation of causes/mobilization?
4. Formation of faith?

## EVALUATION

### Evaluation: Going around the circle again

- Our response will never be perfect or complete.
- We need to evaluate our action and critically examine our methods.
- Has our action led to some change in the situation, ourselves, or our understanding of the situation?
- What is happening **now**?