

## How Am I Doing, Lord?

One of the characteristics of our American culture is to be critical and judgmental about just about everything. Sometime we may be blind to our own flaws and very eagle-eyed about flaws, real or imagined, in others. Jesus's statement about not seeing the beam in our eye as we point out the speck in another's eye comes to mind.

A while ago I was doing some reading and research into a process called Action Research as an improvement process for individuals and groups. While the writers did not write about spiritual development directly, they did write about personal development, change for improvement. Much of what they said seemed to me to be very adaptable to my self-improvement spiritually and, perhaps, a guide to a more positive way of working within groups for improvement on multiple levels.

The basic premise to applying action research concepts to Catholic Christian spirituality seemed to be that people's capacity to be a Catholic Christian can be judged in terms of whether they improved the quality of someone else's life experiences, including their openness to the influence of God. Key questions would be:

- How have I helped others to be more reflective, more other-centered, drawing upon their faith to guide and strengthen them?
- How have I encouraged people, including and beyond my personal example, to put their faith into action, making a positive difference in the world?
- How have I inspired others to take responsibility for their own behaviors, work, and ongoing development?
- What clear connections can I make between my real life actions and those of the people whose lives I have influenced?

Our personal theories of Catholic Faith at work are produced from within our practice, within the actions of our daily lives. Hopefully, criteria and outcomes are presented in terms of the quality of practice, *particularly* the relationships between people. Our stories of personal practice may be presented verbally, but the words have to show the lived reality of practice and *how it is impacting on others*.

In order to appreciate how we give meanings to our lives within the Catholic Faith tradition, we have to show in reality how we understand concepts such as faith, love, and caring by what we do to live out those concepts. It is important to develop forms of personal belief that enable us to show the meanings we give to our lives through action. Actions do speak louder than words.

I believe that living faithfully is a process that leads to **loving** for personal and social benefits. I believe in the value of personal freedom and social justice, and the right of all people to live a peaceful and productive existence and enjoy loving relationships. I encourage people to learn how they can improve whatever aspects of their Catholic Faith practice they want to focus on; in Faith at Work terms this is often their own selves as they are in company with others.

Catholic faith-based living is learning how to do things in more personally and socially beneficial ways, and education in this way of life is derived from the experience of interactions between people that leads to further loving and caring.

As Catholics dedicated to living lives of faith we need to investigate the nature of the loving relationships we create, how we find ways of creating them, and how we can judge our own influence in the lives of others to ensure that we are influencing in the directions of social good. Therein we will find the clues to the answer, "How am I doing, Lord."

Based in part on concepts from Jean McNiff in *Action Research: Principles and Practices*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), NY: Rutledge Famer, 2002.