

## PASTORAL THEOLOGY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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Spring 2014

Throughout the Scriptures God gives us images of his love and care for his children. Specifically in John's Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd. This image of the Good Shepherd has been traditionally used for the formation of priests. The origins of the word Priest or Pastor come from the word shepherd. Here we see clearly an important task of the Priest is to shepherd the flock entrusted to his care. The priest acting in Persona Christi allows Christ the Good Shepherd to minister to his flock through him. This is at the foundation of pastoral theology. Considering the many forms of theology that are studied pastoral is a specific form that combines dogmatic, moral and pastoral anthropology. Using the study of Pastoral theology as a 'set of blue prints for ministry'<sup>1</sup> Therefore Pastoral Theology has traditionally been reserved for the formation of the Priest and his ministry, communicating the truths of dogmatic theology in a concrete manner.<sup>2</sup>



While the needs of the flock have increased and taken different forms and shapes the study of the Pastoral Theology has also expanded to more than the formation of priest. The historical development of pastoral theology has broadened its horizons to many that are active in ministry in the Church, calling all members of the Church to share in this mission of pastoral ministry. As Pope Francis wrote in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, "In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone - priests, religious and laity - into this "art of accompaniment"<sup>3</sup> We must all learn this important form of theology in order to imitate Christ more closely.

Although in the past "Pastoral theology was not considered a proper theological discipline and it had no real other methodology than the application of the contents of theology to real life situations."<sup>4</sup> We now see that the historical development of pastoral theology has expanded to reach the needs of the Church today.

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<sup>1</sup> Anaeto, Dominic, Fr, PS 805, Fundamentals of Pastoral Theology, class notes, Lesson 1, Week 1, Traditional Understanding of Pastoral Theology Before Vatican II.

<sup>2</sup> Anaeto, Dominic, Fr, PS 805, Fundamentals of Pastoral Theology, class notes, Lesson 1, Week 1, Traditional Understanding of Pastoral Theology Before Vatican II

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Nov. 24, 2013, 169

<sup>4</sup> Anaeto, Dominic, Fr, PS 805, Fundamentals of Pastoral Theology, class notes, Lesson 1, Week 1, Traditional Understanding of Pastoral Theology Before Vatican II

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