




1

- **There are multiple models for formation programs**
- **Some are based on spiritual discernment**
- **Others employ psychological framework**
- **While still others are modeled on**
  - **conversion patterns**
  - **The nature of the vows**
  - **The PPF**
  - **Or a founder's charism**
- **Most are a mixture of such elements**



**Intro**

2

## THE RITUAL WAGER



- Without displacing other models
- Taking into account
  - The attraction to
  - And power of ritualization
- Ritualizing Is an important aspect of any formation program
- For multiple reasons that we will here explore:

3

1. The ritualizing instinct

2. The power of ritual

3. Embodied cognition

4. The catholic imagination

5. The centrality of liturgy

**Our progression**

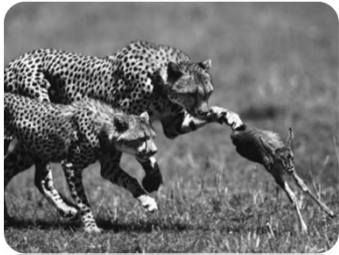
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5

- In the animal world
  - Rituals are essential for survival of the species
  - In mating
  - Hunting
  - And reproducing
- Ritualizing is a deeply embedded animal instinct
  - Essential to survival

**RITUALS AS A SURVIVAL TACTIC**





6

7

- Humans ritualize for some of same reasons
  - For courtship
  - Organizing the hunt
  - Harvesting the crop
  - Caring for offspring
  - Avoiding life-threatening conflicts
- Ritual in humans is also an instinctive survival tactic

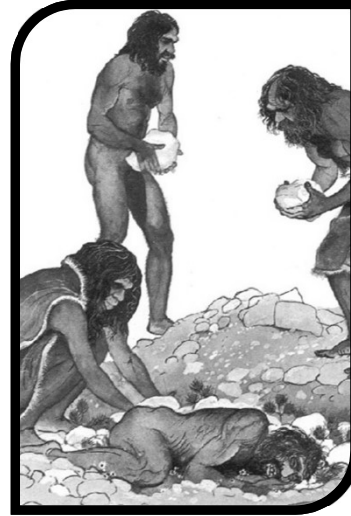


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8

- Recently some have argued
- That ancient hominids
- Ritualized to avoid disaster, e.g.
  - ritualized food preparation may have been attempts to prevent disease,
  - ritualizing the burial of the dead
  - insured their safe passage in another world



## HUMAN ORIGINS OF RITUALIZATION

9



## CONTEMPORARY RETHINKING OF THE NATURE OF RITUAL

10

## The classical consensus

- **Concern is how ritual**
  - Affects the organization
  - And working of a social group
- **Basic premise**
  - Rituals are media that convey ideas
  - Give rise to certain meanings
  - Or create certain relationships
- **Fundamental belief**
  - Rituals have a distinctive
  - Message or content to communicate



11



12




- Ritual is not a container of content
- Rather it is a strategy or technology
  - For achieving some purpose
- Catherine Bell:
  - Rituals are creative strategies
  - By which human beings continue
  - To produce and reshape
  - Their social and cultural environments
- They are a de facto exercise of power

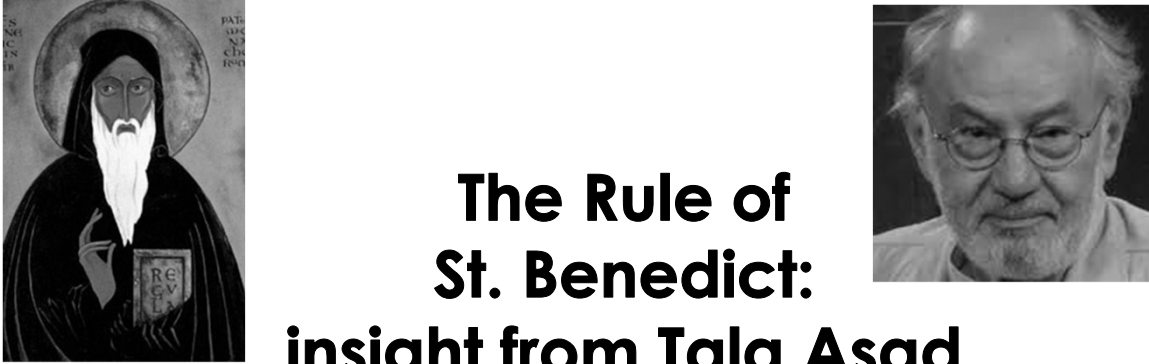
## Emerging Ritual Theories

13

- From this perspective
  - Intention is useful but insufficient
- Ritual is essentially evaluated as a performative act
  - Is it an effective strategy for shaping the environment?
- With the new question: is that done ethically?




14



## The Rule of St. Benedict: insight from Tala Asad

15




- In medieval Benedictinism
- Ritual not a symbol system to produce meaning
- But a **technology**, an embodied skill
  - Aimed at the production of a **virtuous self**
  - A monk obedient, humble, chaste, hospitable and wise
- Ritual was not a separate mode of behavior
  - Divine office
  - Manual labor
  - Lectio

} similar  
time  
import


16





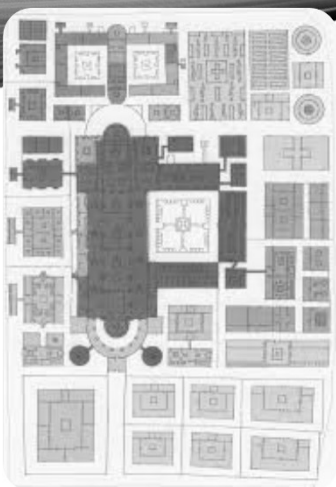
- All prescribed actions **cultivated the ability**
  - To behave bodily in certain ways
  - E.g., obediently, humbly, etc.
- Ritual like labor teaches the body to develop
  - **Spiritual virtues by material means**
- Monastic life and ritual
- **inscribe meaning on the skin**

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- In RB ritual means thinking with the skin
- It teaches the body spiritual virtues by material means.
- Ritual competence is bodily competence,
- Monastic rituals are
  - cognitively "empty" and "meaningless."
- Their significance is acquired and interpreted by the body.
- Their "meaning" is inscribed on the skin, borne by the blood, carved in the bone.


18



**Not restricted to Chapel**

- Ritual formation is not just about “liturgy”
  - More than the chapel
- The entire monastic environment
  - For work
  - Prayer
  - Sleeping
  - Eating
- Was a place for shaping the monk
- Exactly how we were ritualized into our families of origin

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**Our Families of origin:**

**laboratories of**

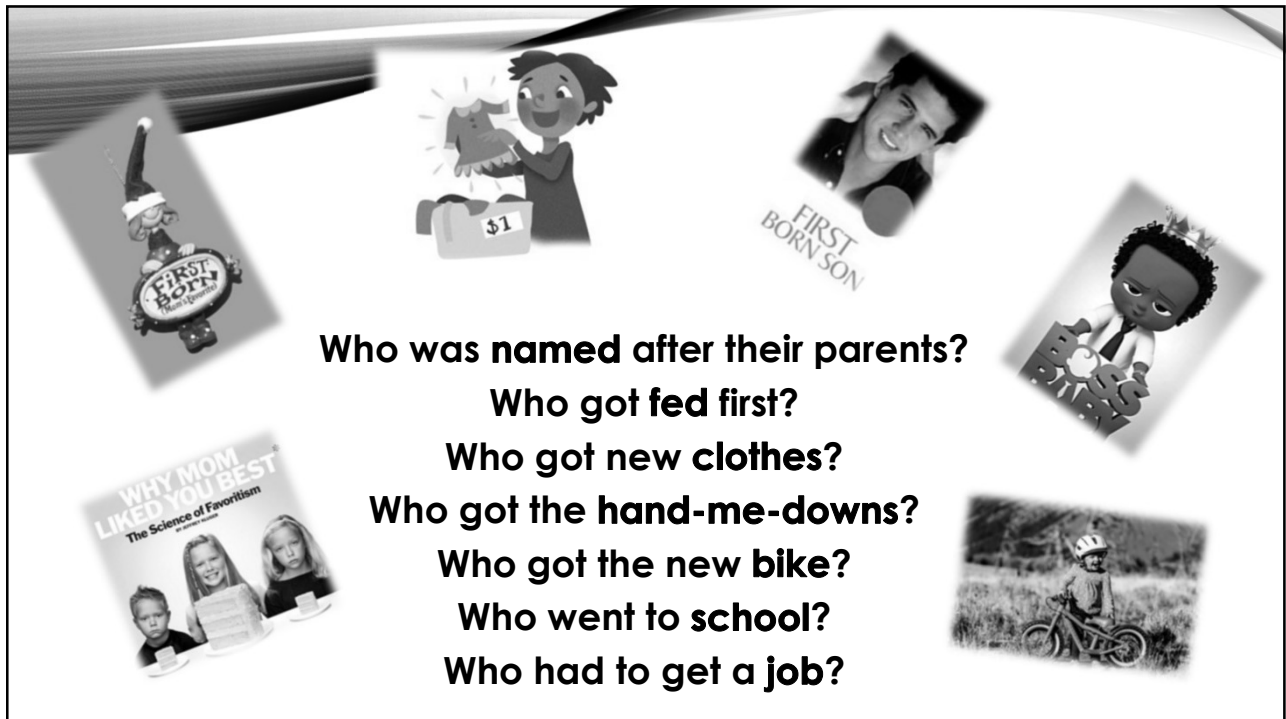
**ritual formation**

20



**While seldom conscious of it  
We were ritualized into our  
Family of origin**

21



**Who was named after their parents?  
Who got fed first?  
Who got new clothes?  
Who got the hand-me-downs?  
Who got the new bike?  
Who went to school?  
Who had to get a job?**

22

- As children we and parents
  - Were often unreflective
  - About how patterns of behavior
  - Ritual repetition
  - Shaped our thinking
  - Shaped our being
- Formation directors
  - And formandi
  - Should reflect on ritualization


*TECH SAVVY PARENTS*

*IT'S JUST A MATTER OF WORDING*

23


## RECKONING WITH EMBODIED COGNITION

24



- 20<sup>th</sup> century rejection of
  - mind-body dualism
  - Descartes' "disembodied mind"
- Cognition not confined to our brain
- Already in 1939, Henri Bergson:
  - Intelligence of the body
  - Logic of the body
  - Body memory
- The body is not simply a container
- It is an integral part of an embodied mind

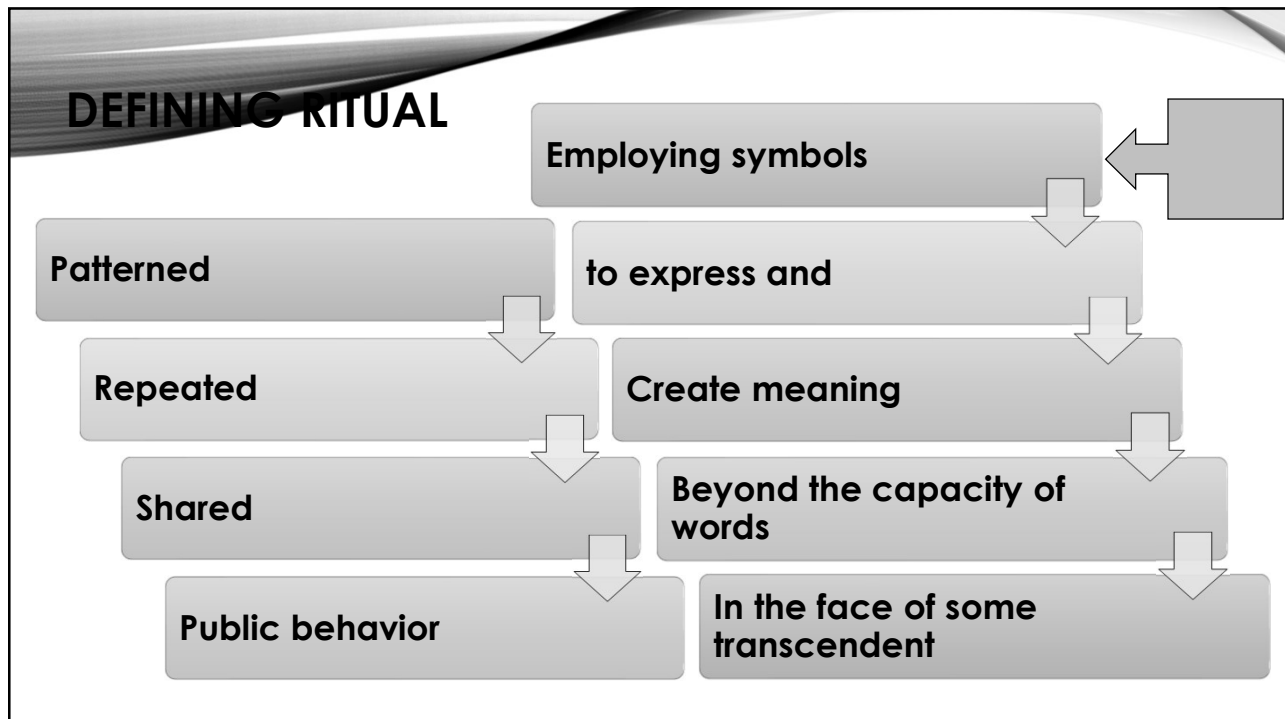
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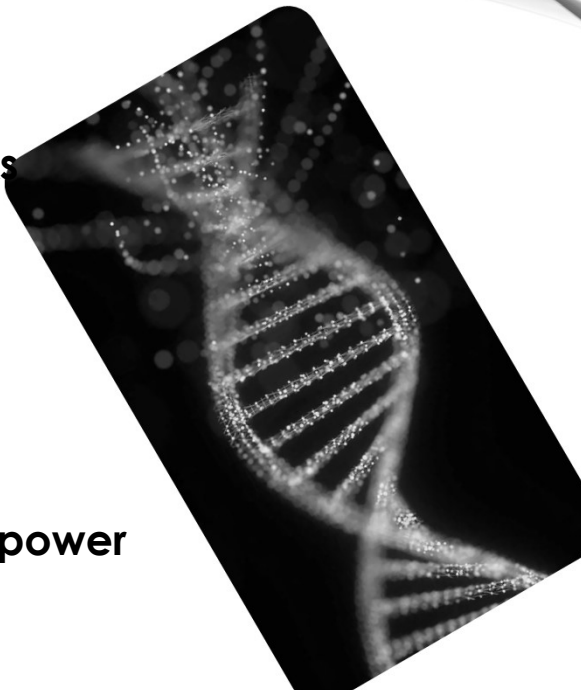


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28

- **Symbols are the building blocks**
  - The fundamental DNA
  - The elementary units
  - The essential ingredients
  - For any ritual
- **If religious life is a ritual life**
  - Formators and formandi
  - Not only need to grasp their power
  - But also develop symbolic competence (Regis Duffy)



29

- **conventional sign**
  - provide information
  - quite pragmatic
  - must be immediately recognizable
  - arbitrary
  - "Hot" according to McLuhan
  - "things" pointing to another



**Distinguishing ordinary signs from true symbols**

30

- **Symbols**
  - **Disclose/create meaning**
  - **have a level of useless extravagance**
  - **recognizable surface meaning but inexhaustible meaning**
  - **"cool" according to McLuhan**
  - **actions employing things which**
  - **disclose/create relationships**



31

- **Symbols are verbs not nouns**
  - **Its not the religious habit**
    - **But the investing**
    - **Wearing**
    - **Buring one in a habit**
  - **Not the cross**
    - **But the giving**
    - **The receiving**
    - **And the wearing of the cross**
  - **Not the vows**
    - **But the speaking**
    - **The hearing**
    - **The receiving**
    - **And the living of the vows**



32



# Expressing and Creating

- Symbols do not simply “express”
  - What people think, believe or feel
- Symbols also “create”
  - New thoughts, beliefs, feelings
- Philosopher Paul Ricoeur
  - Symbols give rise to thought



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## THE TURN TO DINING

34

# DINING $\neq$ EATING

- Eating is an act of biological priority
- Of one species over another
- Focus is the food
- The goal is the survival of the species
- Animals can *only* eat
- Humans can both eat and dine



35

- Humans “eat” for biological survival
- They “dine” for the survival of
  - Relationships
  - Culture
  - Beliefs
  - Values
- Focus is *not* the food
  - But the people
  - The relationships
  - The stories told
  - The culture enacted



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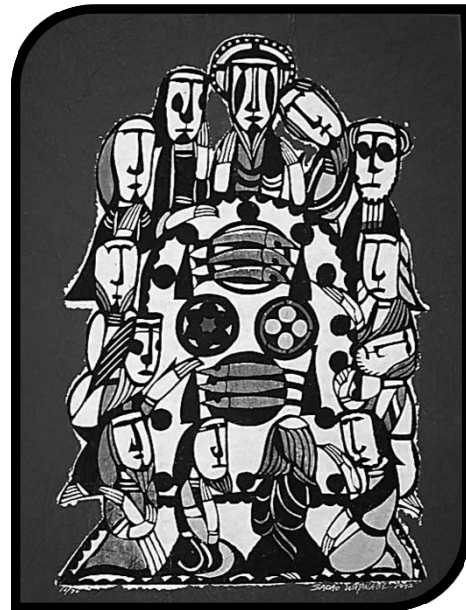
## The Scientific Data

- 2005 Columbia University survey
  - Teens who eat dinner **5 times a week with family**
    - **40%** More likely to get A's and B's
    - **42%** Less likely to drink alcohol
    - **59%** less likely to smoke cigarettes
    - **66%** less likely to try marijuana
- Consistent with findings from
  - **Harvard University**
  - **University of Minnesota**
  - **Columbia University**
  - **National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse**



37

- **Maybe Jesus, whose most emblematic public act was eating and drinking [with sinners] was on to something**
- **He ritualized followers into discipleship**
- **They killed him because of the way he ate**
- **Notice it was not "belief" but "meal" which seemed to be the only thing that survived the cross**



38

## Post-resurrectional appearances



- Virtually all include meal or meal allusions
  - Emmaus [Lk 24.13-35]
  - Sea of Tiberias [Jn 21:12]
  - Community in Jerusalem [Lk 24:36-53]
- Acts 10:39-41
  - We are witnesses to all that he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him, finally hanging him on a tree, only to have God raise him up on the third day and grant that he be seen not by all but only by such witnesses as had been chosen beforehand by God – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

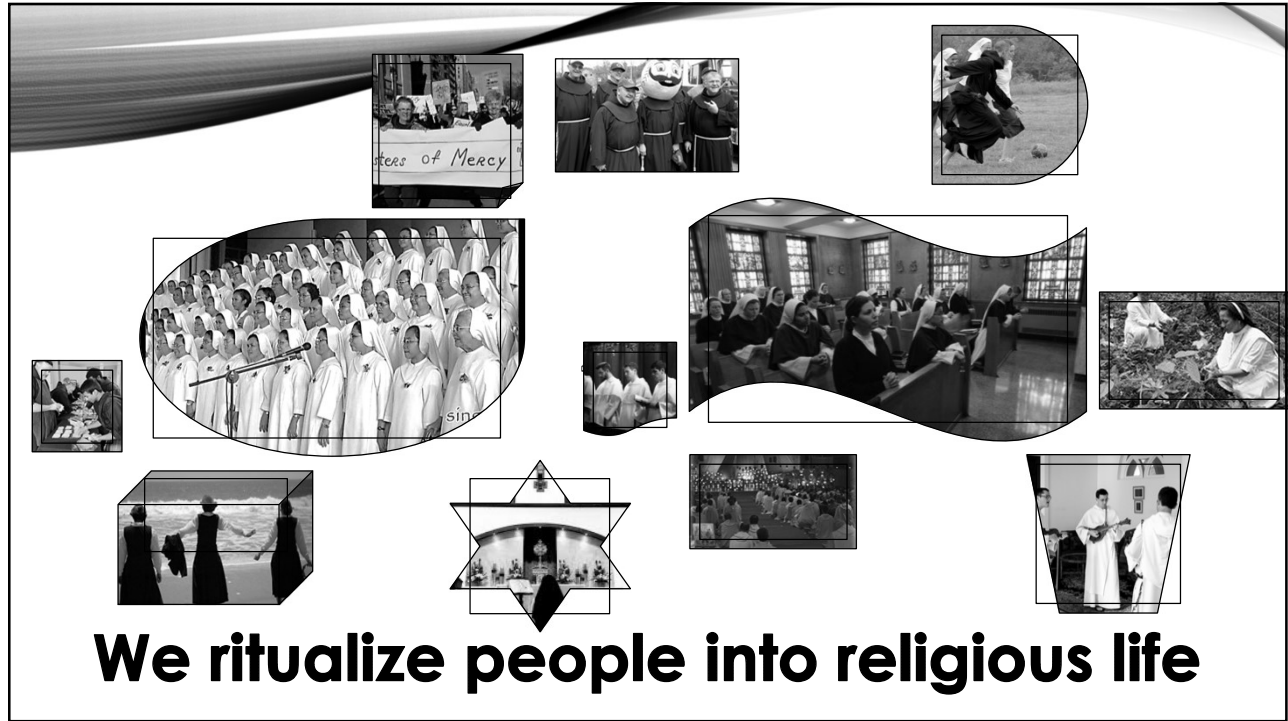
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**The Eucharist existed  
before the Church  
even before  
the New Testament**

- De Lubac: The church was born around the table
- John Paul II: *Ecclesia de eucharistica*
- Just like most of you experienced rituals before you had faith
- So the early community was “ritualized” into discipleship
- The table = place of encounter with the risen Lord [Easter!]

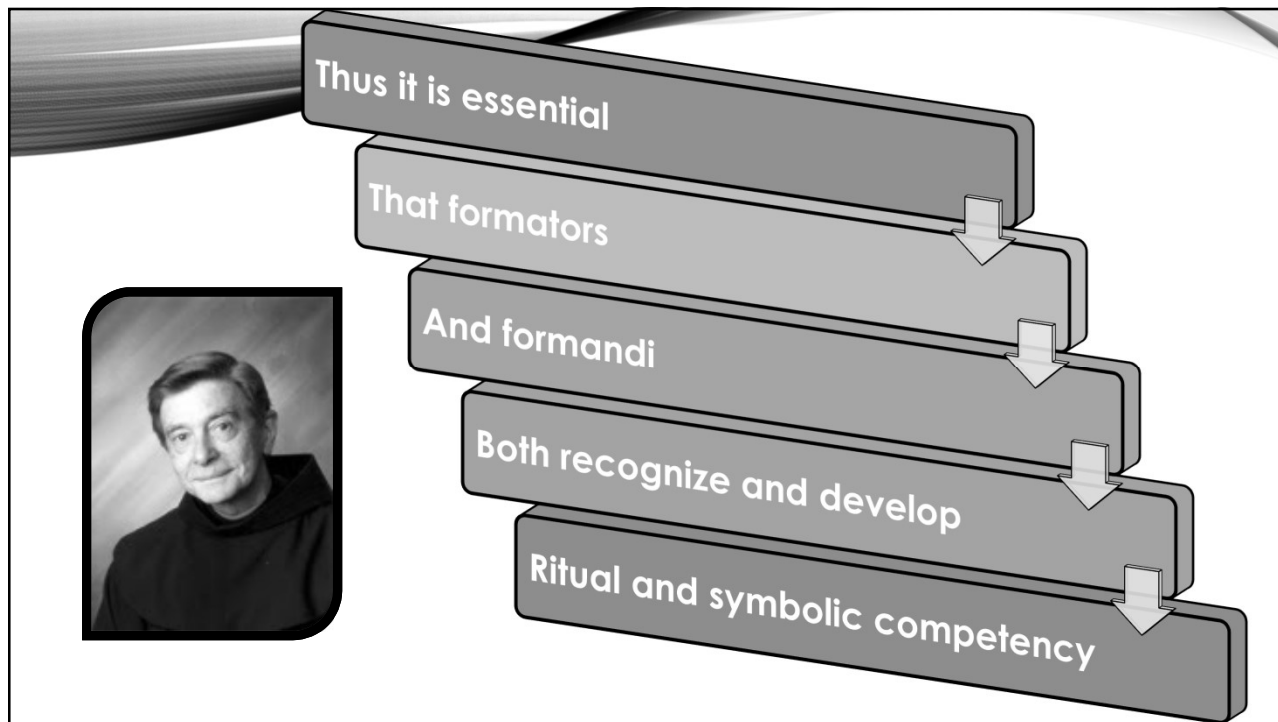
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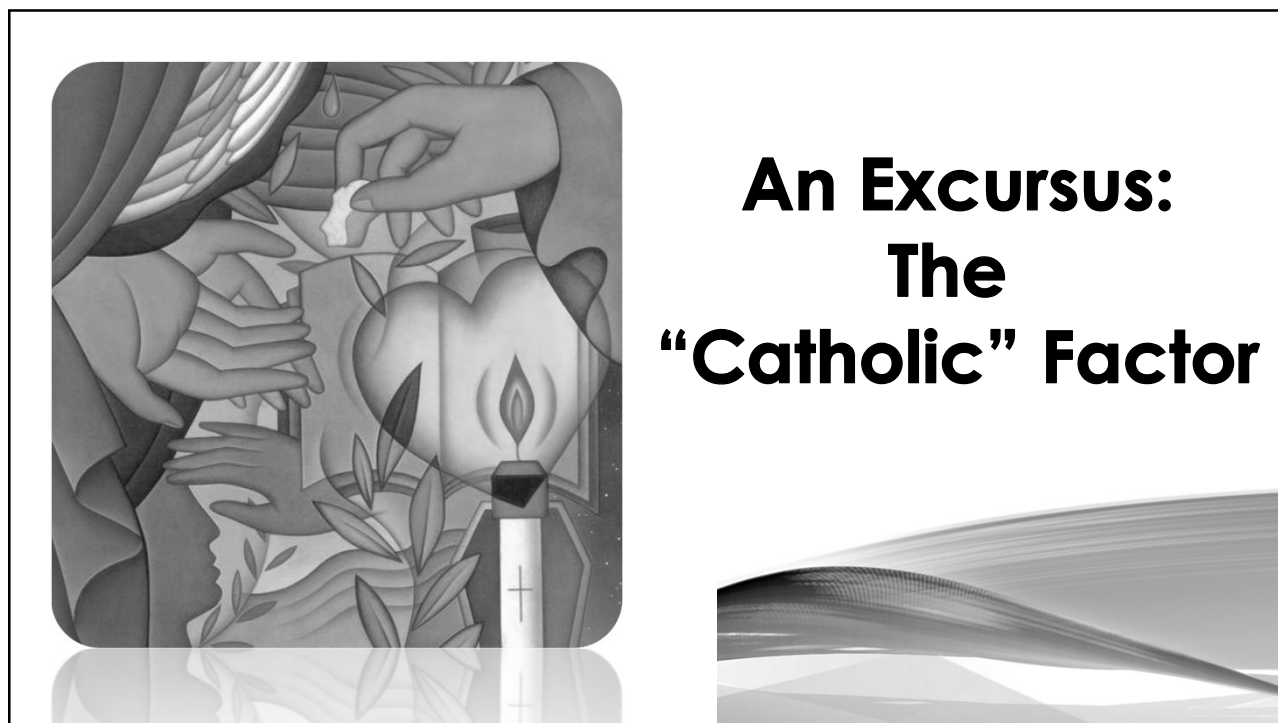
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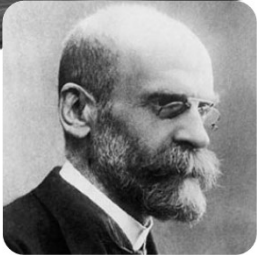
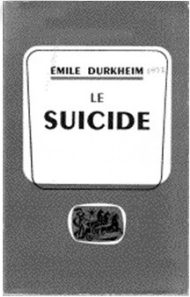
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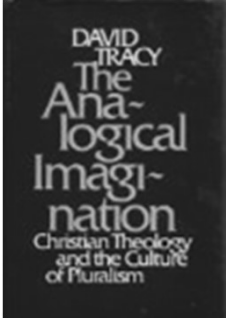




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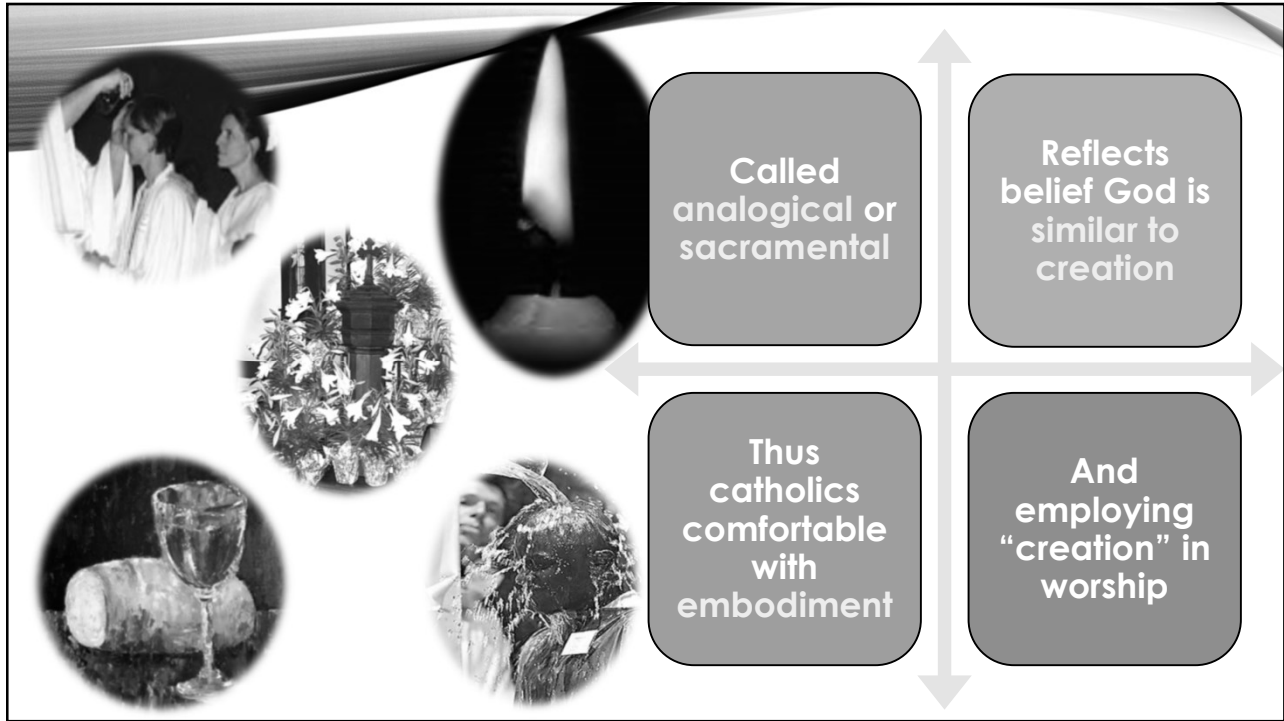
- Over last century various social scientists have argued that Protestants and Catholics think differently
  - E.g., Émile Durkheim's study *Le Suicidé* (1897)
- Or studies of how Protestants emphasize relationship of individual with God
  - Catholics emphasize relating as a member of a community

45

- Theologian David Tracy believes Roman Catholics have a different “imagination” than Protestants
- Andrew Greeley believed he could prove this empirically

46



47

DEUS ABSCONDITUS

- is more "dialectic"
- assumes a God radically absent from the world
- who discloses God-self only on rare occasions
- the world and its events, objects and people tend to be radically different from God

## Tracy's Protestant Imagination

48



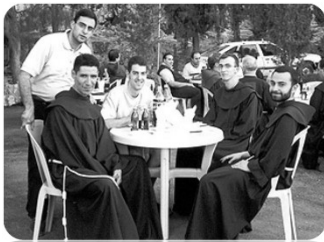
- **Enormous diversity within Protestantism**
  - Some more “sacramental”
  - Some more “evangelical”
- **Tracy’s generalization**
  - The more true
  - The more one moves toward the evangelical side of Protestantism



## Caution

49

- **Enormous diversity within Roman Catholicism**
- **Well exemplified in “spiritualities”**
- **Instead of analogical and dialectical**
  - **Spiritualities which embrace creation and the body**
  - **Those that diminish creation and the body**



## Furthermore

50

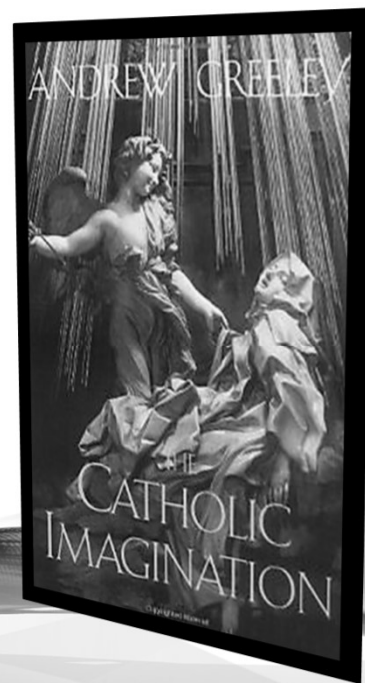
- Among the billion Catholics in the world
  - Many world accepting
  - Many world rejecting
- Dominant strand is world-accepting
  - Francis of Assisi in your birdbath
  - Not Bernard of Clairvaux



## The dominant strand

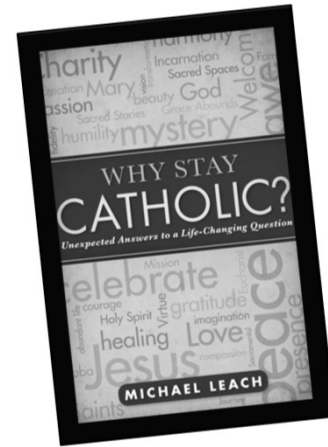
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## Andrew Greeley's Empirical Work



52

- Greeley began to study why Catholics “stay”
  - If/when they disagree with church teaching
- Eventually concluded
  - All RC’s in U.S.
  - Are “cafeteria” Catholics
  - Picking and choosing beliefs



## Triggered by *Humanae Vitae*

53



- 13 reasons given why people stay with the Catholic Church
- Only 2 were statistically significant
  - faith to pass on to children
  - and the sacraments

54

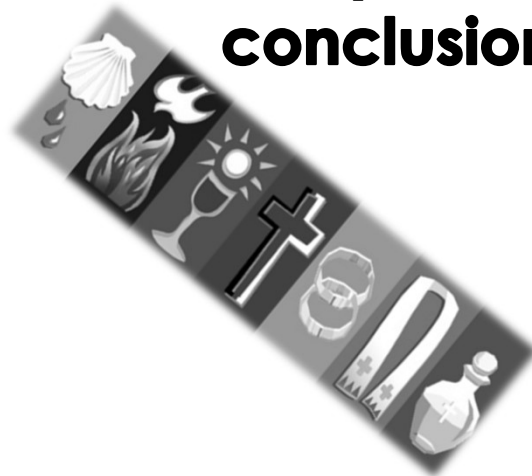
- When compared with other agencies (churches)
- substitutes can be found for all reasons given for being catholic [e.g. something to hold families together, consolation in times of sorrow, etc.]
- faith can be found in other religions
- sacraments are uniquely central to catholic spirituality



55

- Catholics are a “sacramental” people
- Catholics are a “liturgical” people
- this sacramental/liturgical impulse is at the heart of a truly Catholic spirituality
- So a Catholic imagination is a “sacramental” imagination
- Which is a ritual imagination

## Greeley's empirical conclusions




56



**SO WIDELY  
BELIEVED  
WE JOKE  
ABOUT IT**

57



**The  
Mystagogical  
Pedagogical  
turn**

**The underlying question:  
Do you have  
any explicit method  
for forming candidates?**

58

59

- **If formandi**
  - **Have a catholic-sacramental-ritual imagination**
  - **Then it is useful to engage a method for the same, i.e., *mystagogy***
- **mystagogical method:**
  - **an interpretive method**
  - **which brings to light the very core of a ritual-liturgical action**
  - **by making the ritual-liturgical event and its experience as primary**



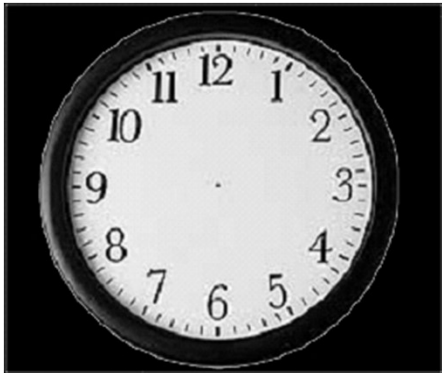
**The need for method**

59

60

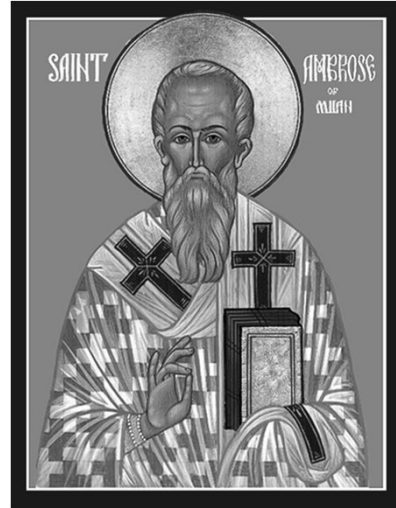
- **Too often mystagogy is defined as a “when”, e.g.,**
  - **as “post” ritual reflection, especially after Christian Initiation (RCIA)**
- **Mystagogy is not a matter of chronology**
  - **It can happen before, during or after a ritual event**
- **It is essentially a matter of how, i.e., focused on the ritual experience**

**Not “when”  
but “how”**



60

- Often 4th century bishops
- are cited as the model **mystagogues**
- The “definition” of **mystagogy as a post-initiation event**
- Is especially predicated
- Of **Ambrose of Milan**
- and **Cyril of Jerusalem**



## History Redux


61



- For some time now ... I have<sup>62</sup> desired to discourse to you on these spiritual and celestial mysteries. But I well knew that **visual testimony is more trustworthy than mere hearsay, and therefore I awaited this chance of finding you more amenable to my words, so that out of your personal experience, I could lead you into the brighter and more fragrant meadow of Paradise on earth [Mystagogical Catechesis 1.1].**

## Cyril's instruction

62



63


- ***The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1972) instructs:**
- following the initiation of adults through water, chrism and Eucharist
- neophytes were to embark upon a
- "period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy" [§37]

## Ambrose and Cyril Enshrined in the RCIA

63

- **John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia**
- provide instruction “before” initiation
- “Since you are on the threshold of the time when you are to receive these great gifts, I must now teach you, as far as I can, the meaning of each of the rites, so that you may go from here with knowledge and a more assured faith
- [Chrysostom, *Baptismal Catechesis*, 2.12]

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## Our tradition Is pluriform

64





- Not when but how
- performance based
- Ritually/liturgically cued
- Experiential
- Communal
- Affective
- Embodied
- For the sake of transformation


## The Mystagogical Method

### A formational method

65

## The Consequences


- What happens
- When you think of yourself
- Not as a “formator” but a “mystagogue”
- not just accompanying people in their formation journey
- but enabling them
  - To be aware
  - And be able to reflect upon that journey
- Mystagogues decenter power



66

**Tell me what you pay  
Attention to, and  
I will tell you who you are**  
Jose Ortega y Gasset

- To accompany mystagogically
- Means fostering a spirit of
  - Theological reflection
  - As a spirit of attentiveness
  - To God's presence and action
  - Especially in the daily rituals
    - Of community living
    - And community prayer
- That discerns both grace and malpractice

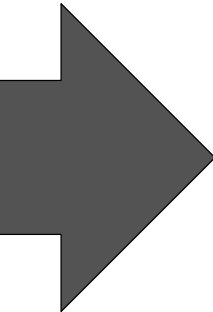



**Mystagogues  
Pay attention**

67


*Attention, taken to its  
highest degree,  
is the same thing as  
prayer.  
It presumes faith and  
love.  
Absolutely unmixed  
attention is prayer.*

**Simone Weil**







**How you dine**



**How you pray**

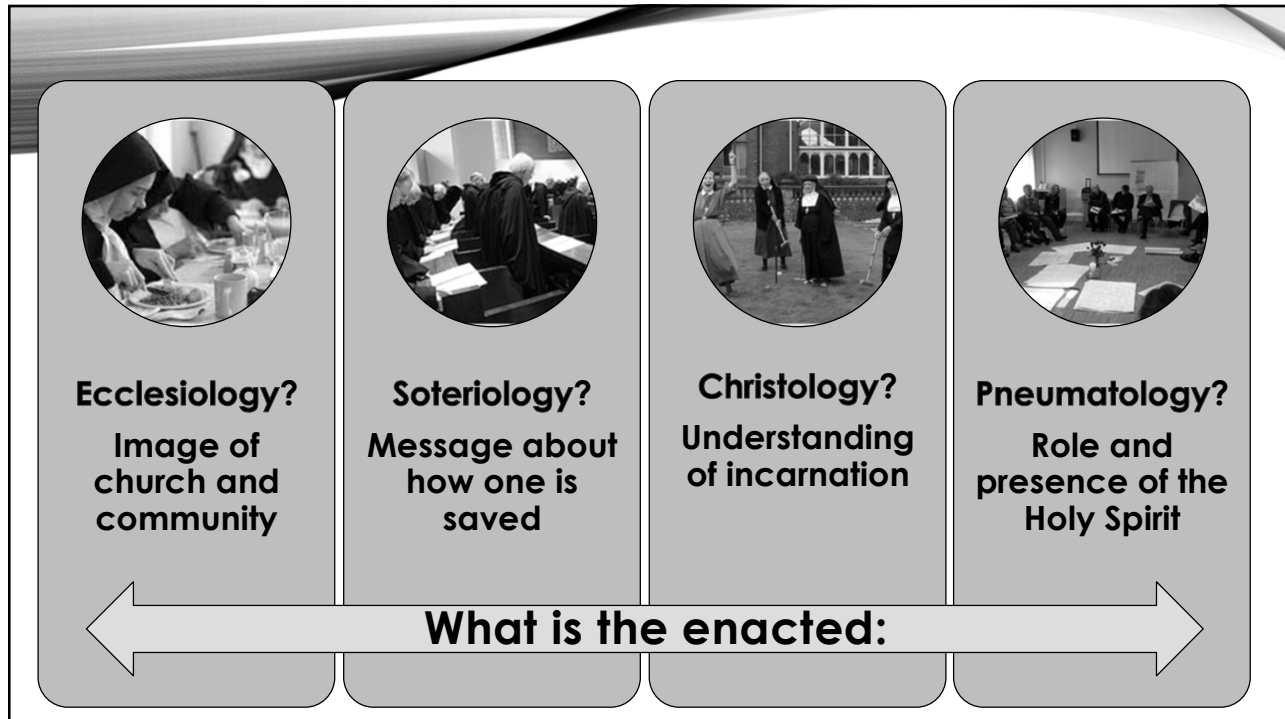


**How you decide**



**How you play**

68



69

70

- **Keep in check the need to explain**
- **TR is not what it “should” mean**
- **But what meaning is experienced**
- **Not simply by individuals, but by the group**
- **Feelings are valuable**
- **rituals are about enacting that which cannot be put into words alone**
- **respect the mystery**
- ***Si comprehendis, non est Deus***

70

- A ritual approach to formation
- Is not a stand-alone approach
- But one to be integrated
- Into the formation process
- It's goal is not just understanding
- But also the development of a habitus
- That nourishes
  - Symbolic competence
  - A richly catholic imagination
  - And ritual fluency
- That serves
  - community, church and world

71

72