Instructor’s Notes

As suggested by the Ferder essay and my micro-lecture, the New Testament notion of gifts or charismata is closely related to the ways that we seek to discover and cultivate our innate abilities—“qualities”—into skills for ministry—“competencies.” Paul’s epistles make clear that each person is to discover, develop and exercise one’s gifts as a vital part of the Body of Christ. This is necessarily done with and for others as collaborative ministry. Sofield and Juliano define collaboration as “the identification, release, and uniting of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of mission.” In the first part of her article, Ferder uses the beautiful story and image of Jesus and the Samaritan woman to show how, if we root ourselves in a spirituality oriented toward Jesus, he will lead us in such identification, release and uniting of our particular gifts with those of our brothers and sisters in his Body.

In more secular language, Ferder’s discussion of “qualities” and “competencies” refines this discernment further. Her use of such terms is similar to other writings in the United States. Our highly professionalized culture makes it important for leaders in any discipline to cultivate their abilities. Often there is an organization that identifies the essential competencies for a given field and requires that its practitioners demonstrate and document how they are meeting those competencies.

While we can certainly learn and practice many skills/competencies, it’s worthwhile to recognize that often a competency is quite dependant on some prior quality or innate ability/disposition. Thus there may not be much distinction, in the end, between qualities and competencies—although a serious deficiency in a given quality will probably decrease the likelihood that one can cultivate the related competency.

A couple of examples may be helpful here. For instance, Ferder lists “self-awareness” as a key quality for the catechetical leader. While some of us naturally are more self-aware than others, this quality can certainly be improved over time, with support from others and one’s own effort—and in that form it is very similar to a competency. Conversely, if one wishes to become a good preacher but is innately fearful of public speaking, or even has a speech impediment, developing the competency will be very difficult and perhaps impossible.

Thus a healthy dose of realism is necessary when assessing one’s qualities and the potential to develop them into true competencies. Along with this, however, is the recognition that I don’t need every gift of the Spirit, and indeed am not required to have

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every competency in equal strength. The Body of Christ exists as the holy community in which gifts of all members are brought together and build upon one another for the sake of mission. In the Book of Exodus, Moses, God’s chosen deliverer of Israel, needs Aaron to speak for him before Pharaoh. In the Book of Acts, Saul needs Ananias, Barnabas, Prisca, Aquila and other co-workers literally to “open his eyes” and to accomplish the tasks that Christ appointed to him.

As a final observation, notice how Ferder’s article is a kind of TR. Wishing to describe the experience of developing qualities and competencies in the catechetical leader, she chooses the evocative story and sculpture of Jesus and the Samaritan woman as her major source from Christian tradition. She uses it to illustrate central aspects of the catechetical leader’s relationship to Christ and to the faith community as developed through a lively spirituality. Her understanding of important qualities and competencies through a version of social analysis allows for illumination of the real-life needs of leaders and their communities, and for action recommendations as to how the minister can continue to grow in response to these.
Glossary

- **Gift/charism**: As expressed in the New Testament: a particular manifestation of God’s grace (*charis*) in a Christian, to be exercised for the sake of the community. The plural form is *charismata*.
  - Go back

- **Quality**: an internal disposition or characteristic which is formed early in life; it may be positive, negative or neutral in its effects
  - Go back

- **Competency**: a skill that is learned and refined with time and practice, and is often related to an innate quality
  - Go back

- **Experience**: participation in an historical event or episode. There is no “pure” experience; it is always interpreted through use of our bodily senses, cognitive, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Example: a specific encounter with another person in ministry.
  - Go back

- **Christian Tradition**: what Christians receive and pass on in their faith communities through teaching, preaching, worshipping, and other central activities. Tradition is drawn from “Scriptures, symbols, myths, rituals, liturgies, creeds, dogmas, doctrines, theologies, practices, spiritualities, expected lifestyles, values, art, artifacts, structures, and so on.”²
  - Go back

- **Social Analysis**: analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural factors uncovered in experiences and situations. Typically this incorporates some use of relevant social sciences and their findings (sociology, economics, politics, anthropology, cultural studies, etc).

• **New Actions:** The specific, practical measures that people decide upon and perform in order to realize the fruits of TR.