Thomas Groome, whose work I have cited in various units of this course, is known for an approach called “shared Christian praxis.” While he first developed this for use in religious education, he has also adapted it to other areas of pastoral theology such as pastoral counseling, justice and peace ministry, and liturgy. Shared Christian praxis can be visualized similarly to our TR method, with five phases—or “movements,” in Groome’s term—proceeding in sequence. However, in his usage for various ministerial areas, he states that a person or group might “enter” the method with any movement, and that the movements do not necessarily proceed in the same order for every situation.

Now that you have worked to acquire the habitus of TR with our circular, four-part method, you can consider ways to be flexible with it in your ministry. Some possibilities for adaptation could be:

1. Beginning the process with a different element and proceeding in a different order through the TR method. One prominent ministerial activity in which we do this is preaching at Sunday liturgy or offering reflections on Scripture readings in other forms of worship. In such cases, the lectionary or some other text typically establishes the major source from Christian tradition that you are expected to use. This, in effect, becomes your starting point for TR. Perhaps you would prepare your talk by reflecting on a central image in the assigned Scripture in relation to some prominent, current experience or situation of your community. Your homily might then develop a new social analysis that leads to your suggesting possibilities for new actions by the community.

2. Emphasizing one element more than another, or omitting an element. While I believe that in your ongoing practice of TR in ministry you should draw upon all the elements, there may be occasions when some elements are more important than others. For example, if you are visiting a dying hospital patient, you must be especially attentive to the experience of this person at this time. Your prior social analysis as relevant to this person’s cultural context will probably be quite helpful in directing your words and actions. Your selection of an aspect of Christian tradition, however, may be limited to a set of Scripture texts and sacramental rituals that are “standard” in these situations, such as Psalm 23 and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. And the variety of new actions that you are able to suggest to the dying person is understandably very limited. You are more likely to emphasize caring presence and prayer with them.
The short reading from *Vamos Caminando* in this unit shows evidence of TR adaptations. The book from which it is excerpted is a “catechism,” originally in Spanish, used with poor peasants in Peru. Each “lesson” draws on a Gospel theme. The title, which means, “We Walk,” connotes our journey of Christian faith. The book is greatly influenced by Latin American liberation theology, in which the poor are called to be active “subjects” in analyzing their experiences and situations in light of Scripture. The most important theme from Christian tradition, as the name suggests, is liberation. The poor meet in small, “base” Christian communities for prayer and reflection on the Bible, with a particular focus on how God delivers people from slavery and oppression into freedom. Such liberation entails the active participation of those who are oppressed, and the denunciation of oppressive actions and systems as sinful.

As you read this excerpt, imagine its use by a group of peasants meeting in a home or field as a Base Christian Community. Look for the four elements of TR as creatively adapted for these people in their cultural context. The Discussion Questions will invite you to share your findings with one another.
Glossary

- **Pastoral Theology**: Engagement in practical theology within Christian communities, focusing on their needs and mission as they seek to become more faithful and effective in their discipleship in the world. This occurs especially through the traditional forms of pastoral care, catechetics, liturgy, and other means.
  - Go back

- **Habitus**: "a cognitive and affectional disposition or orientation toward God, others, and creation" that shapes how Christians live; and the way in which such dispositions and orientations are consciously cultivated. For our purposes, theological reflection in ministry will be understood as a *habitus* that promotes orientation to service of God and God's Kingdom in the real-life circumstances of our world.
  - 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 lifestyle, values, art, artifacts, structures, and so on.”
  - 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

- **Situation**: an ongoing set of experiences constituting a recognizable pattern. Example: a series of encounters with another person in ministry revealing certain recurring characteristics, styles of interaction, etc.

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1 Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 651.
- **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).
  - Go back

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

- **Culture:** all the interrelated elements that are produced by people to create their way of life, including objects, beliefs, customs, symbols, values and worldviews.
  - Go back

- **Context:** the particular setting in which a particular group of people has experiences. This includes time and place as well as members’ self-understanding of their identity and the factors shaping it (including history, social class, etc).
  - Go back