

Characteristics of the Mature Adult Catholic

Notes on a Presentation by Tom Zanzig

Starting with the end in mind . . .

The integrated and mature Catholic: (a) recognizes both the distinctions and connections between personal spirituality and communal religion; (b) accepts the ebb and flow of spiritual and religious formation; (c) doesn't expect religion to substitute for the hard work of spiritual growth; and (d) is moving toward a healthy integration of personal and communal spirituality and religious practice. *More specifically*, she or he . . .

1. is guided by the vision and values of Jesus reflected and summarized in his proclamation of the Reign of God, and holds the church accountable to that vision

2. recognizes that the church exists for the Reign of God, not for the edification or fulfillment of its individual members

3. freely embraces Catholicism—its teachings, life, and practice—and accepts personal responsibility for living it with integrity

4. is grounded in prayer, both personal and communal, and is moving toward a contemplative worldview and posture; is truly *catholic*, i.e. sees no division between secular and sacred, recognizing that "everything belongs" (Rohr)

5. avoids simplistic answers and is increasingly comfortable with ambiguity and tension; open to Truth wherever it can be found

6. has a balanced and realistic sense of self (both saint and sinner) reflected in attitudes of equanimity, good humor, openness, honesty, authenticity . . . and, most of all, *gratitude*

7. has a growing awareness of the poor, powerless, disenfranchised—both within and outside the church—and a genuine *hunger* for social justice and compassionate service

8. is open to a prophetic call; when in conflict with the institutional church but unsure, will follow church leadership and Tradition; when in conflict but convinced, will act prophetically

9. if in a position of ecclesial leadership, recognizes and embraces the responsibilities that come with their role; as influence and power increase, develops skills of discernment, resists authoritarianism, and seeks deepening patience, perspective, and courage

10. knows that genuine power is discovered and exercised in powerlessness; grows in a desire to serve and in the capacity to say with Jesus, “Into your hands . . .”

11. has taken on the Catholic worldview and character as an integral part of her or his identity; simply but genuinely *loves* the church and loves *being* Catholic

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