

the CHURCH in the 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CENTER BOSTON COLLEGE

# C2I Resources

SPRING 2011

GRACE AND COMMITMENT: THE VOCATIONS OF LAITY, RELIGIOUS, AND ORDAINED

## THE VOCATIONS OF RELIGIOUS AND THE ORDAINED



*The Church in the 21st Century Center serves as a catalyst and a resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church in the United States.*

#### ABOUT THE EDITOR

**RICHARD LENNAN**, a priest of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in Australia, is professor of systematic theology in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, where he also chairs the Weston Jesuit Department. He studied theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, the University of Oxford, and the University of Innsbruck, from which he obtained his doctorate. Among his published works are: *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Risking the Church: The Challenges of Catholic Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2004). He is also a former president of the Australian Catholic Theological Association.

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#### FROM THE C21 CENTER DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

This spring issue of *C21 Resources* brings you the second half of the Church in the 21st Century Center's 2010–2011 theme of *Grace and Commitment: The Vocations of Laity, Religious, and Ordained*. It complements the fall issue that explored the response of lay men and women to the call of Christ, emerging from baptism to take root in myriad ways in all forms of human endeavor. This issue now turns your attention to the roles of the ordained—bishops, priests, and deacons—in serving the Church, and to the many ways in which men and women religious, committed to the evangelical counsels, bear witness to Christ's continuing presence among us.

Our guest editor, Fr. Richard Lennan, professor and chairman of the Weston Jesuit Department in Boston College's new School of Theology and Ministry, has developed a rich compilation of articles that present and explore both the timeless and the changing roles of the ordained and religious in the complexity of modern society.

Paralleling this publication is a series of on-campus programs that develop further the vocations of the ordained and religious. You can find the schedule for these events at the center of this publication. For those unable to come to campus for a particular program, the date on which a video-streamed version of the program will be available on the C21C website is noted in the schedule.

Let me thank you for your continuing interest in the Church in the 21st Century Center and its mission to be a resource and catalyst for the renewal of the Church.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Newton

Interim Director, Church in the 21st Century Center  
Special Assistant to the President

*To learn more, please contact:*

**THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY CENTER**  
Boston College  
110 College Road, Heffernan House  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02467  
[bc.edu/church21](http://bc.edu/church21)

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# Holiness: The Paradoxical Vocation

BY RICHARD LENNAN

Language matters. Witness the effect of Barack Obama's appeal to "hope" as the motif of his presidential campaign in 2008: The resonances of that word attracted people in numbers that far exceeded those drawn to explicit policies. In a different way, another demonstration of the importance of language comes from the fact that we are now more sensitive to the dangers of "hate speech." Language, then, as postmodern philosophy reminds us, does not simply describe reality, it helps to construct it.

Recognition of the formative power of language ought to come easily to members of the Christian community: We believe that all that exists came into being because God "spoke." More particularly, the existence and identity of the Christian community derive fully from God's "Word," spoken in our history by the "one like us."

At their best, the members of the Christian community recognize that attention to God's word is inseparable from the willingness to be converted, inseparable from openness to the challenge of faithful discipleship, to which we are all called. We know that to speak of "God" is to involve ourselves with, in the wonderful formulation of the theologian Karl Rahner, "an almost ridiculously exhausting and demanding word."

Similarly, we understand that theology—our "God-talk"—serves us best when it leads us more deeply into the mystery of God, when it promotes wonder, prayer, and self-giving. In short, members of the Church know that language can be sacramental, can be a means of encounter with the God whose Spirit reconciles us with God and with one another in order that our lives might witness to the reign of God already at work in our history.

However, we know too that the language of the Church can be a source of controversy. This controversy arises when, for example, we become aware of the gap that exists between our speech about the equality of all the baptized and those practices that reveal the Church to be, still and in so many ways, a "top-down" body in which those in authority resist shared decision making. At those times, members of the Church—to say nothing of the wider community—can regard the Church's language as empty, even fraudulent.

In the last decade, that suspicion has focused in a particular way on the language applied to the Church's ordained ministry and consecrated life. As a result of the sexual abuse crisis, it seems to many in the ecclesial community and beyond a cruel irony to refer to those vocations under the caption of "the call to holiness." Similarly, the sexual abuse crisis has sparked demands that priests be held more accountable for their ministry and life,

an accountability that, the critics argue, can all too easily be evaded by referring to the priest as the one who acts *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ"). The fear is that such language can become a justification for the privileges and, more darkly, the destructive behaviors that express "clericalism."

One suggestion for overcoming such dangers, and for promoting the equality of the baptized, is to apply to the priesthood the straightforward language of "function" rather than anything that suggests that the ordained have a unique relationship to all that is sacred. Advocates of this approach regard it as a necessary precondition for doing justice to the burgeoning of non-ordained forms of ministry in the Church, forms of ministry that struggle for oxygen when the emphasis is primarily, even exclusively, on the priest as *alter Christus* ("another Christ").

Clearly, there are, as the articles in this volume will illustrate, significant, even urgent, issues orbiting around the future of the ordained ministry and religious life in the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, those requirements do not mean that we ought to abandon the language of the "call to



Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications

holiness” when considering ordained ministry and religious life in the Church. Faithfulness to the Spirit, who breathes through the living tradition of the Church, requires that we address those issues as a people, as the Body of Christ. It requires too that we do so in a way that includes openness to change. It is possible to do so, however, by retrieving an understanding of holiness that recognizes it as a project, one inseparable from our conversion, rather than as a static quality independent of personal response, as something fixed, even petrified.

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***The paradox of the Church’s holiness is that it is more manifest in our willingness to acknowledge our failures and turn to God in repentance, confident in God’s mercy and love, than in our constructions of perfection, which can keep us aloof from the messy reality of being human.***

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As part of our retrieval of holiness, we need to distinguish it from “perfection.” Indeed, the paradox of the Church’s holiness is that it is more manifest in our willingness to acknowledge our failures and turn to God in repentance, confident in God’s mercy and love, than in our constructions of perfection, which can keep us aloof from the messy reality of being human.

The Church’s ordained ministers and religious, like all the baptized, are holy as people in need of conversion, as people who minister God’s good news in the midst of their own weakness. That analysis does not license mediocrity, must less abusive behavior, but it does highlight that God’s sacramental word will always be spoken by “one like us.”

As we continue to struggle with the questions that orbit around the vocation to ordained ministry and religious life today, we can draw inspiration from two figures whom the Catholic Church has recognized in recent months as belonging to the company of those with a place in the fullness of God’s life: Mary MacKillop, a religious who founded a congregation of sisters who played a significant role in the development of the Church’s life in Australia, and John Henry Newman, a priest and theologian.

At first sight both MacKillop and Newman are unlikely candidates for the recognition they have received: MacKillop was once excommunicated by a local bishop (surely not a standard feature of a saint’s CV!), and Newman, a high-profile convert to the Catholic Church from Anglicanism, was viewed with distaste by many within both ecclesial traditions. Yet, both prompt us to deepen our understanding of “holiness.”

Neither was “perfect,” but both were deeply committed to their relationship with God, to the Gospel, and to helping others to experience the hope that we have in

Christ. Both confronted what they saw as the narrowness of the Church in their own time; they confronted it because it limited the mission of the Gospel. Both were also willing to accept the consequences of their action, trusting that, as Mary MacKillop wrote often, “God will take care of us all.”

If we want a healthy future for the ordained ministry and religious life, if we want religious, bishops, priests, and deacons whose lives bear witness to the reign of God that is working itself out in our history, then what is required is not a ban on references to holiness, but a more nuanced grasp of holiness. We need to grapple with the reality that the Spirit is truly present in weakness, that raising difficult questions can be an expression of faith, not its denial, and that the tradition, as Maurice Blondel noted at the beginning of the 20th century, is as much about conquest of the future as it is about preservation of the past. In short, we need, among ordained ministers and religious, no less than among all the baptized, people willing to engage with the paradox of holiness.

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#### Endnotes

FR. RICHARD LENNAN is the editor of this issue of *C21 Resources*.

## PRAYER

Loving God, Is it I, Lord?

Are you calling me to a vocation of ministry in the Church as Priest, Sister, Brother or Deacon?

Or if I am already living out a life’s vocation, are you asking me to help call others to the ministry of leadership in the Church?

We do need men and women to help lead us as Church, Lord. We are your people of the valley, prairie and pines.

Speak to us Lord.

Open the minds and hearts of many men and women to live your Word and build your Kingdom.

Speak to me Lord.

Plant your Word within me so that whatever you call me to be or do I may say Yes, Here I Am Lord.

# A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium

BY THE CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF  
CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

*This document, published in 2002, explores both the challenges facing those seeking to live as consecrated religious today and possibilities for such a life of witness.*

## Rediscovering the Meaning and Quality of Consecrated Life

12. The difficulties that consecrated persons face today take on many faces, especially if we take into account the different cultural contexts in which they live.

The decrease in members in many institutes and their aging, evident in some parts of the world, give rise to the question of whether consecrated life is still a visible witness, capable of attracting young people. If, as is affirmed in some places, the third millennium will be the time of promotion of the laity, of associations, and of ecclesial movements, we can rightfully ask what place will be reserved for the traditional forms of consecrated life? Consecrated life, John Paul II reminds us, still has a history to be written together with all the faithful.

We cannot, however, ignore that, at times, consecrated life has not seemed to have been held in its proper consideration. There have even been times when there was a lack of confidence in it. Given the ongoing religious crisis that heavily confronts parts of our society, consecrated persons, particularly today, are obliged to look for new forms of presence and to raise not a few questions regarding the meaning of their identity and future.

In addition to the life-giving thrust, capable of witness and self-sacrifice to the point of martyrdom, consecrated life also experiences the insidiousness

of mediocrity in the spiritual life, of the progressive taking on of middle-class values and of a consumer mentality. The complex management of works, while required by new social demands and norms of the state, together with the temptations presented by efficiency and activism, run the risk of obscuring Gospel originality and of weakening spiritual motivations. The prevalence of personal projects over community endeavors can deeply corrode the communion of brotherly and sisterly love.

These are real problems that should not be taken lightly. Consecrated persons are not alone in living the tension between secularism and an authentic life of faith, between the fragility of humanity itself and the power of grace; this is the experience of all members of the Church.

13. The difficulties and the questioning that religious life is experiencing today can give rise to a new *kairos*, a time of grace. In these challenges lies hidden an authentic call of the Holy Spirit to rediscover the wealth and potentialities of this form of life.

Having to live in a society where a culture of death often reigns can become a challenge to be stronger witnesses, bearers, and servants of life.

The evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience, lived by Christ in the fullness of his human nature as the Son of God and embraced for the

love of God, appear as a way for the full realization of persons opposed to dehumanization. They are a powerful antidote to the pollution of spirit, life, and culture; they proclaim the liberty of the children of God and the joy of living according to the evangelical beatitudes.

The impression that some have of a decline of appreciation of consecrated life in some sectors of the Church can be seen as an invitation to a liberating purification. Consecrated life does not seek praise and human appreciation, it is repaid by the joy of continuing to work untiringly for the kingdom of God, to be a seed of life that grows in secret, without expecting any reward other than that which the Lord will give in the end (cf. *Mt* 6:6). It finds its identity in the call of the Lord, in following him, in unconditional love and service, which are capable of filling a life to the brim and giving it fullness of meaning.

If in some places consecrated persons become *little flocks* because of a decrease in numbers, this can be seen as a providential sign that invites them to recover their very essential tasks of being leaven, sign, and prophecy. The greater the mass of dough to be raised, the greater the quality evangelical leaven called for, and the more exquisite the witness of life and charismatic service of consecrated persons.

The growing awareness of the universality of the call to holiness on the part of all Christians, far from making the belonging to a state of life particularly adapted to the realization of evangelical perfection superfluous, can become an added motive for joy for consecrated persons. They are

now closer to the other members of the People of God with whom they share a common path in the following of Christ, in a more authentic communion, in mutual respect, without being superior or inferior. At the same time this awareness challenges them to understand the sign value of consecrated life in relation to the holiness of all the members of the Church.

If in fact it is true that all Christians are called “to the holiness and perfection of their particular state” consecrated persons, thanks to a “new and special consecration,” have as

their mission that of making Christ’s way of life shine through the witness of the evangelical counsels, thereby supporting the faithfulness of the whole body of Christ. This is not a difficulty, it is rather a challenge to originality and to the specific contribution of the charisms of consecrated life, which are at the same time charisms of shared spirituality and of mission that foster the holiness of the Church.

Clearly, these challenges can constitute a powerful call to deepen the living of consecrated life itself, whose witness is needed today more

than ever. It is fitting to remember the ability of holy foundresses and founders to respond to the challenges and difficulties of their times with a genuine charismatic creativity.

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### Endnotes

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium” (2002), [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccsclife\\_doc\\_20020614\\_ripartire-da-cristo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_20020614_ripartire-da-cristo_en.html)

## FIVE MOVES FOR THE LONG HAUL

Recently I heard an interview with the bishop of a large diocese. At one point he was asked, “As a leader in the Church today, what do you consider as your single most important task?” The bishop, a sincere and prayerful man, answered, “To protect the faith.”

I once heard England’s Cardinal Basil Hume give a very different answer to the same question. Asked by a journalist what he considered to be the most important task facing the Church today, he replied, “To help save the planet.”

The two are very different and I think we know which runs closer to Jesus.

Jesus, in defining his meaning and ministry, said, “My flesh is food for the life of the world.” We can easily miss what’s contained in that. Notice that Jesus is not saying that his flesh is food for the minister or for the life of the Church. His body is food for the life of the world and the world is larger than the minister or the Church.

We need to keep that horizon in front of us always as we do ministry. The biggest danger in ministry is not so much that we will burn out, but that we will be too self-concerned and too self-protective to live the vulnerability that lies at the heart of Jesus’ ministry. A minister is meant to be vulnerable, vulnerable enough to let himself or herself be wounded, taken for granted, and ultimately “eaten up” by the needs of the world. If we don’t constantly remind ourselves of that, our ministry very easily becomes a matter of feeding *ourselves*, looking good to others, having success in numbers, or creating safe little enclaves against the world.

Some years ago, when I was the dean of theology at a college seminary, I received a phone call from a local pastor. Our conversation ran something like this:

“Are you the dean of theology at the seminary?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Well, I thought I’d let you know that your students

are a pain in the posterior! They go to the seminary, take a couple of courses, then come back to their local communities and terrorize everyone with what they know. Nothing’s ever good enough for them again, whether it’s our preaching or our theology. I don’t doubt that they’re right, but don’t you teach them any compassion?”

His comments underscore a key aspect of ministry, that being right is not the only important thing. As ministers we are, biblically, “shepherds,” pastors, men and women who are trying to build community. In that task, the right truth is not enough. We can be brilliant, right, and still dysfunctional and hurtful. A good spirituality of ministry invites us to move beyond our need to be right. It tells us “to speak our truth in parables” so that, like Jesus, we can radiate a compassion and understanding that is wide enough to also embrace those who are different, wounded, ecclesially illiterate, politically incorrect, or in any other way unable to walk the road as it is mapped out in our favorite seminary textbooks.

Part of this compassion includes a willingness to bracket, when necessary, our own temperaments, ideologies, and ecclesiologies (both liberal and conservative) in order to have a compassion that, like that of Jesus, is beyond the selective sympathies of both the right and the left. It also means moving beyond the need to be successful, the need to put our own stamp on things, to leave a legacy, and to be recognized as brilliant. Fidelity, not necessarily success, is what ministry asks of us. A healthy spirituality of ministry is concerned first about the building up of community, and only afterward about having things go its own way.

— FR. RONALD ROHLEISER is a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Ronald Rohleiser, “Five Moves for the Long Haul,” *Church* 21 (2005): 5–11.



# The Future of Religious Life

BY TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, O.P.

Everything exists because God calls it into existence. God says let there be light, and it sprang into being. There is a lovely passage in the prophet Baruch: “The stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them and they said, “Here we are!” They shone with gladness for him who made them” (Baruch 3.34). The existence of a star is not just a bald scientific fact. Stars joyful say Yes to God. The existence of everything is a Yes to God.

What is odd about human beings is that we do not just say “Yes” by existing. We say Yes to God with our words. God speaks a word to us, and we reply with our words. It is for this that we were created, to answer God’s word with our words. This human vocation is summed up in a beautiful Hebrew word, *Hineni*. It means, “Here I am.” When God calls from the burning bush, Moses replies, “*Hineni*,” “Here I am.” When God calls Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, then Abraham replies, “*Hineni*,” “Here I am.” When Isaiah hears a voice saying, “Whom shall I send?” he replies, “Here I am. Send me.” But when God calls Adam in the garden, he does not say, “Here I am,” but he hides in the bushes.

We express that truth of that human vocation when we make profession as religious. We place ourselves in the hands of our brothers or sisters, and we say our definitive Yes. Here I am. This is more than the acceptance of obedience to a rule. It is more than the commitment to a way of life. It is an explicit sign of what it means to be a human being.

## “Living the Uncertainty with Joy”

The central Christian sign of hope is the Last Supper. Jesus placed himself in the hands of these fragile disciples. God dared to be vulnerable and to give himself to people who would betray him, deny him, and run away.

In religious life, we take the same risk. We place ourselves in the hands of fragile brothers and sisters, and we do not know what they will do with us. We even place ourselves in the hands of people not yet born, who will one day be our brothers and sisters. My prior in Oxford was born five years after I joined the order! Even today, after more than 40 years as a Dominican, I do not know what they will ask of me.

This joy is a sign of hope for those who see no future ahead of them. For the unemployed, for students who fail their exams, for couples whose marriage is going through a difficult time, for those faced with war, then our joy faced with uncertainty should be a sign of hope that every human life is on the way.

I recently received a letter from a friend of mine, an Anglican religious. He has an illness that is slowly leading to his complete paralysis. This great teacher is losing his ability to talk. And he quoted me the words of that great man, Dag Hammarskjöld, “For all that has been ... thank you. For all that will be ... yes.” That is the witness of religious life.

## Being Witnesses to Hope

It is true that religious life is, in many places, living through a time of crisis, for example, in Canada. And many individual religious live through crisis too. We may worry about the future of our province or monastery. We may feel that our own lives are rapidly going nowhere. But we can only be a sign of hope for a generation that is living through a crisis if we are able to confront our crises with joy and serenity. It can be part of our vocation as religious to confront crises in our vocation as moments of grace and new life.

In every Eucharist we remember the

crisis of Maundy Thursday night. Jesus could have run away from that crisis, but he did not. He embraced it and made it fruitful. So, if we encounter a moment when we can see no way ahead, and when we may feel tempted to pack and go, then this is precisely the moment when our religious lives may be about to ripen and mature. Like Jesus at the Last Supper, this is the moment to embrace what is happening, and trust that it will bear fruit. That is part of how our vocation witnesses to hope.

These crises may even include facing the death of our own communities. For many monasteries in Western Europe, there is no apparent future. Do we dare face even that with joy?

## Giving Our Life Until Death

A couple of years ago there was a Congress in Rome about religious life, and many people questioned whether commitment until death was still a necessary part of religious life. I am all in favor of opening our communities to all sorts of friends, associates, and collaborators, but I would still argue that at the center of religious life, there must be the courageous gesture of giving our lives until death, *usque ad mortem*. It is an extravagant gesture that speaks of our hope that every human life in its totality, up to and including death, is a path toward the God who calls.

Once an elderly friar, facing death, told me that he was about to fulfill a great ambition, to die a Dominican. At the time I did not think that this was much of an ambition, but it is one that I have come to treasure. He made a gift of his life and, despite difficulties on the way, he did not take it back. He was a sign of hope for the young.

I have been told a thousand times that the young cannot be expected to make that definitive commitment, until death. It is true that the young live in



a world of short-term commitments, whether at work or in the home. The average American has 11 different jobs in a working life. Marriages often do not endure. And so it is asserted that we cannot expect the young to make permanent profession.

But it is precisely because we live in a culture of short-term commitments that profession until death is a beautiful sign of hope. It speaks of the long-term story in which every human being is summoned to God. It is an extravagant gesture, but we must ask the young to make brave and crazy gestures, and believe that they can, with God's grace, live them out.

### Called into Community

So to have a vocation is to say something about what it means to be human. But we are not just called. We are called into community and sent on mission. Each of these movements, into community and out in mission, expresses a truth about our hope for the Kingdom.

First of all, the vocation to community: This is a sign that God calls all of humanity into the Kingdom, in which all divisions and violence will be over. The human vocation is for that peace when, as Isaiah says, the nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2.4). Jesus is the one in whom the wall of enmity has been broken down. Our communities should be a sign of the Risen Lord who said to the apostles, "Peace be with you."

But because our society is so filled with people who are alone, then community life can be difficult. We are not used to sharing our lives with many other people. I grew up in a large family, with six children, my parents and grandmother, and other people too. I learned that my mother loved me even when she seemed to forget my name! When I joined the novitiate, then it was not much of a change from home. But

even I sometimes find it hard to live in community. So it is the desire for community that attracts any to religious life and the difficulty of community that means that some do not stay.

### "Community Life, a Sign of the Kingdom"

But it is both the joy and the pain of community life that speaks of the Kingdom. I have already spoken of the joy, which is an intrinsic part of our vocation. But it is also part of our witness to the Kingdom that we live with people who are unlike us, who have different theologies, different politics, who like different food and speak different languages. Life with them may be sometimes wonderful but also hard.

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*Once an elderly friar, facing death, told me that he was about to fulfill a great ambition, to die a Dominican. At the time I did not think that this was much of an ambition, but it is one that I have come to treasure. He made a gift of his life and, despite difficulties on the way, he did not take it back. He was a sign of hope for the young.*

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With them we may be tempted to beat our pruning sticks into swords rather than the other way round. But our common life is a sign of the Kingdom precisely because of our differences. A community of like-minded people is not a sign of the Kingdom. It is just a sign of itself.

I lived in France for a year as a Dominican student. It was wonderful and terrible. One day I was sitting with four very clever French Dominicans, who seemed to take no notice of anything that I said. Finally I stopped

the conversation and said, "Now I know why Descartes was French. Because in France, if you do not prove your own existence, then there is no reason to believe that you exist!" Yet it was living with these French Dominicans, whom I came to love, that I discovered how we are only signs of the Kingdom if we endure and enjoy difference.

The most powerful sign of this that I have ever seen has been with my brother Yvon, on visits to Rwanda and Burundi during the difficult years. Yvon knows vastly more than I how difficult that was. It is hard to sit at table and in the church with people whose brothers have murdered your brothers and sisters. But that pain is also an expression of hope.

The temptation of our society is to search for community only with the like-minded, people who share our views, our prejudices, and our blood. Conservatives associate with conservatives, and progressives with progressives. Old people are sent to old people's homes, teenagers spend their time with teenagers, and so on. Instead of being homogenous, like a block of vanilla ice cream, we should be like good casserole, in which it is the different tastes that give the savor.

### Endnotes

FR. TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, O.P., is the former worldwide master of the Dominicans.

Timothy Radcliffe, "The Future of Religious Life," *CMSM Forum* (Fall 2008), [http://www.cmsm.org/forum/forum\\_fall08\\_future.html](http://www.cmsm.org/forum/forum_fall08_future.html).

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[www.bc.edu/c21resources](http://www.bc.edu/c21resources)

# Religious Life as a Prophetic Life

BY SANDRA SCHNEIDERS, I.H.M.

*Sandra Schneiders explores the notion of “charism” as it applies to the religious life; most particularly, she examines what the “prophetic” charism of religious might mean for the Church and world today.*

Religious life has been called a prophetic life form both in official documents and in spiritual writing almost since its inception. The meaning of this affirmation, however, is often unrealistically romanticized or left so piously vague as to be useless. In the current situation in which the nature of ministerial religious life as a prophetic life form in the Church is in public contention it would be helpful for us, as a Church in general and as religious in particular, to clarify the meaning of this affirmation.

First, it is the life form, not the individual religious, that is characterized as “prophetic.” Just as entrance into an enclosed monastic community (often called a “contemplative order”) does not make one a contemplative, and there are many genuine contemplatives who do not enter monasteries, so entering religious life does not make one a prophet and there are many prophetic figures who do not enter religious life. However, different life forms in the Church offer corporate witness (corporate as in “organic,” not as in “corporation”) to particular dimensions of Christian life in which all the baptized are called to participate. All are called to contemplation, to fidelity and fruitfulness, to prophetic witness. But certain life forms, such as enclosed monastic life, matrimony, or ministerial religious life raise one or another of these dimensions to particular visibility by their corporate living of this charism. So what follows makes no claims that all ministerial religious are prophets or that religious life has any monopoly on

the charism of prophecy in the Church.

However, the life form as corporate witness to the charism of prophecy does (or should) explicitly challenge its individual members to the exercise of this charism and empower, support, and promote their fidelity to this charism. The felt call to prophetic ministry and the gifts of spirit, mind, and heart for the exercise of such ministry, therefore, should be factors in discerning a vocation to religious life.

At certain times in its history, religious life has been so caught up in a hyper-institutionalized and over-clericalized understanding of Church and ministry, and of itself in that framework, that many congregations lost sight of this vocational criterion. They preferred candidates who were compliant and docile. The less experienced and competent, the more girlishly romantic about their calling, that they were at entrance, the better, since they were more easily “formed” for submission. Most congregations today prefer candidates who have a sturdy sense of self developed through education and work experience and sufficient maturity to live and work well outside a “total institution” environment. Such candidates are more likely to grow into a truly prophetic ministerial identity and spirituality.

Second, some can be tempted to label “prophetic” any kind of protest that is extreme, conspicuous, or stubborn, or to claim the title of “prophet” for anyone whose ideas or behavior are questioned by authority, no matter how reasonably. The truly prophetic are typically very

reluctant to call themselves prophets. They know well their fear in the face of conflict and the high cost of putting themselves in the line of fire of angry officials. Furthermore, they recognize the need to receive seriously and incorporate responsibly institutional authority’s positions and concerns into any discernment that influences other people, in or outside the Church. Again, discerning between the genuinely prophetic stance and mob fanaticism, between courage and arrogance can be very difficult. It requires prayer, communal consultation, testing, and a humble willingness to consider seriously all reasonable and respectful disagreement with one’s position.

## The Inaugural Vision or Prophetic Call

Religious life begins, both corporately and individually, in an experience analogous to the inaugural vision of the Old Testament prophets and of Jesus himself. Although the literary form of the biblical narratives of prophetic calls convey the substance but not necessarily the historical details of these experiences, all these texts indicate that the prophetic vocation is not undertaken on one’s own initiative. Nor is one appointed to it by human beings. The call comes from God, often to one who feels frightened, unworthy, or incompetent. Even Jesus is clearly sobered by the dimensions and evident dangers of the life to which he is called. God’s call to him is powerful and compelling, but Satan’s opposition is both real and dangerous.

Religious orders begin, typically, in the charismatic experience of one or more founders who feel impelled to give themselves to God and God’s work, almost always in response to some historically pressing need. Subsequent members respond to a personal call to join the founders in

Religious life, then, is a charismatic life form, called into existence by the Holy Spirit, to live corporately the prophetic charism in the Church. It is not a workforce gathering recruits

*Religious life, then, is a charismatic life form, called into existence by the Holy Spirit, to live corporately the prophetic charism in the Church.*

When members of the hierarchy get panicky about the decline in numbers of religious they reveal a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the life. No congregation “needs” more

members than are actually called to it by God. There is no optimal or minimum size for orders or length of their life span. Some orders have never had more than a few dozen members and others have thousands. Some are centuries old and others have had a very brief history. The purpose of the life is not to perpetuate particular congregations nor to staff Church institutions; it is to live intensely the witness to the Gospel to which the congregation is called and for as long as it is so called. As long as an order and its members are able to live religious life according to its own founding charism and approved constitutions, intrusion by ecclesiastical authority into its internal affairs is not only unwarranted; it is unjustifiable and counterproductive (see e.g., Canon 586).

Sandra Schneiders, "Tasks of Those Who Choose the Prophetic Life Style," *NCRonline* (January 7, 2010).

WWW.BC.EDU/CHURCH2I 9

# Let Your Life Shine

BY MARGARET ELETTA GUIDER, O.S.F.

*As a leader in a religious institute, Margaret Eletta Guider reflects on what she has learned from the experience of leadership in challenging times.*

In April of 2008, I was elected to serve as councilor for the Franciscan congregation of which I have been a vowed member since 1981. Amidst the challenges and blessings of the past three years, I have undergone what might be best described as a “change of mood” regarding religious life in particular and consecrated life in general. Early on in my term of office, I had the opportunity to be a delegate at an international Franciscan assembly in Assisi where I found myself in conversation with the keynote speaker, Anthony Gittins, CSSP, my former professor and thesis director, about his book *A Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship*.<sup>1</sup> In the book, he makes use of grammatical moods as an interpretive key to understanding discipleship. I have found my own evolving understanding of vocational identity illuminated by his insights. In reviewing the trajectory of my 30 years in religious life, I have known the indicative mood of “This is religious life,” as well as the imperative mood of “This is how religious life is to be!” I also have known the interrogative mood of questioning, “Is this religious life?” as well as the subjunctive mood of “If it were not for religious life.” However, what I have come to know with greater clarity during these past few years is that as a Franciscan sister, the mood with which I most resonate is the optative mood that speaks to my hope for religious life, the dream to which I hold fast, and my wish that the light I share with other consecrated persons may shine.

This year, guided by the theme “Let Your Light Shine,” the Church

celebrates the 15th World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life on February 6, 2011. Inaugurated by Pope John Paul II in 1997, the annual commemoration has three purposes: *to esteem, renew, and rekindle* the Church’s commitment to consecrated life. When issuing his call for the entire Church “to esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels,” the Holy Father presented to the People of God an enlarged understanding of the term “consecrated life” as articulated in his 1996 Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*. In this more expansive understanding of the term consecrated life, religious life and consecrated life ceased to be interchangeable equivalents. While religious life remained unquestionably

a form of consecrated life, not all forms of consecrated life were religious life per se. Still constituting the vast majority of consecrated persons demographically speaking, men and women religious found themselves in the company of other consecrated persons representative of diverse forms of consecrated life, some of whom were in the process of retrieval, rediscovery, and restoration. This shift in the Church’s conceptual framework signaled much more than an evolution of consciousness. It also disclosed that much of the Church, including men and women religious themselves, did not fully grasp the implications of the shift. In calling for an ecclesial demonstration of *esteem* for *all* consecrated persons, the Holy Father urged the People of God to value, appreciate, cherish, admire, and respect the testimony not only of men and women religious, members of societies of apostolic life and secular institutes, but also of growing numbers of consecrated virgins, widows, and hermits. Calling for attentiveness,



Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications



mindfulness, and thanksgiving for *all* consecrated persons throughout the world, Pope John Paul II invited the Church to observe with eyes wide open the collective *and* individual witness of consecrated persons.

In accord with his vision, Pope John Paul II proposed that the second purpose of the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life would be to create the conditions for those of us who are consecrated persons “to renew” our commitment to the Gospel Way of Life in the midst of the People of God. This meant finding ways of enabling such renewal to occur by bringing together consecrated women and men to renew their commitments of self not only to God, to God’s people, and to the Church, but also to one another. In doing so, we as consecrated persons become a visible memorial to the sacrifice and enduring faith, hope, and love of those *disciples, prophets, and mystics*, our sisters and brothers, who have gone before us, striving to live the evangelical counsels all the days of their lives. Cognizant of the trials, uncertainties, fears, and scrutinies of our own times, it helps to remember the conviction, creativity, courage, and compassion of those women and men who, individually or collectively, have been our sources of inspiration for running the race, for staying the course, for doing what is ours to do, for being all that we can be.

And so, as we renew our professions in cathedrals, monasteries, parish churches, and village chapels around the world, we are called to testify in the words of St. Paul that “our faith does not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5), for it is in the very act of profession to live this Gospel Way of Life that we have become the consecrated men and women who stand—not behind or before, or above or below the People of God, but with and beside the People of God. Held accountable by the words of the Prophet Isaiah, we are reminded of the conditions and criteria under which our light will break forth like the dawn: sharing our bread with the hungry, sheltering the

oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked, satisfying the afflicted, not turning our backs on our own, and by removing from our midst oppression, false accusation, and malicious speech (Is. 56:7-8). Strengthened by God’s grace, we renew our professions with bold humility, confirmed in our common conviction that for the sake

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of the Gospel and the mission of Jesus Christ entrusted to our care, we will sustain insult, injury, indifference, and injustice, not as beleaguered remnants living in darkness and the shadow of death, but as unwavering protagonists, unrelenting reconcilers, and faithful servants of the Reign of God whose lights must shine (Matt 5:16). But it is not enough for us—all of us—to stop there.

Conscious of the third purpose set forth by Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life, “to rekindle the fervor that inspires our offering of self” to the God of Life, the People of God are called to greater collaboration in nurturing vocations to the consecrated life. Set ablaze by that Pentecostal fire of faith, hope, and love, consecrated women and men urge others—mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers, sisters, relatives, pastors, priests, deacons, neighbors, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, employers—to recognize that in their midst are young women and men who may have a spark of Pentecostal fire burning in their heart—young servants, young prophets, and young mystics who are endowed

with creative energies, the capacity to serve and to sacrifice, the ability to say “yes,” as well as the integrity and strength to live the consecrated life for which the Church prays. The process of “rekindling the fervor” is a dynamic process that involves prayer, inquiry, invitation, encouragement, urging, discernment, and accompaniment. Above all, it is a process that relies on sources of inspiration and “moments of grace” necessary to “kindle” in young men and women the desire to “set the world on fire.”

In their book, *Sustaining the Spirit: Callings, Commitments and Vocational Challenges*, Michael Carotta and Catherine Cronin Carotta speak of “collecting moments of grace”,<sup>2</sup> moments when someone *reverences* our effect on them. This “collecting” is a spiritual practice of remembering who we are—“reclaiming and remembering what [we] do best, what [we] care about most, and what others saw in [us] when they first offered [us] the blessed assurance of our trustworthiness and capabilities.”<sup>3</sup>

Mindful of the fact that the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life provides an opportunity for consecrated persons, united with all the People of God, to collect such “moments of grace,” I am conscious of the witness given by consecrated persons in Haiti a year ago. Amidst death, disaster, and devastation, the Salesians, the Sisters of St. Ann, the Montfort Missionaries, the Christian Brothers, along with many other religious, shared the fate of the Haitian people as their own sisters and brothers died in the earthquake. Still, these men and women religious continued to be moved by the One who spoke to their hearts. They joined together, whether in habits or blue jeans, to testify not to the blasphemy that our God is a God who abandons his precious ones to death, but rather, to bear witness to the everlasting and eternal truth that our God is the God of Life, of mercy and compassion, who intimately shares the suffering of His

*Continued on page 22*

# The Formation of Bishops

BY THE CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS

*In this document from 2004, the Congregation for Bishops discusses the person and role of the bishop in the light of the categories of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral—that are now also generally applied to the formation of lay ministers and priests.*

## The Duty of Ongoing Formation

The bishop will realize that he too has a duty to attend to his ongoing formation, a duty he shares with all the faithful whatever their age or condition in life, whatever their level of responsibility in the Church. The inner dynamism of the sacrament of orders, the bishop's own vocation and mission, and his duty to study closely the particular problems and issues of the society he has to evangelize, impel him to grow day by day toward the fullness of mature manhood in Christ (cf. Eph 4:13). In this way, the charity of Christ and the Church's solicitude toward all people will shine forth ever more clearly through the testimony of the bishop's human, spiritual, and intellectual maturity in pastoral charity: the key to his ongoing formation.

## Human Formation

As a shepherd of the People of God, the bishop should continually attend to his human formation, allowing his episcopal personality to be shaped by the gifts of grace, and cultivating the human virtues listed earlier. He needs to develop these virtues if he is to deepen his human sensitivity, to grow in his capacity to welcome, to listen, to engage in dialogue and personal encounter, and to expand his knowledge and his ability to lead others. In this way, his humanity will become richer, simpler, more authentic and more transparent, so as to reveal the mind and heart of the Good Shepherd. The bishop, like Christ himself, should manifest the most

genuine and perfect human qualities if he is to share the daily life of his people and to be one with them in times of joy and sorrow. This human and affective maturity is required of the bishop if, like a good father, he is to exercise his episcopal authority as an authentic service to the unity and right ordering of the family of God's children.

In exercising his pastoral authority, the bishop should constantly seek to achieve a good balance of all the facets of his personality as well as a healthy sense of realism, enabling him to discern and make decisions in serenity and freedom, aiming solely at the common good of persons.

## Spiritual Formation

The bishop's path of human formation is intrinsically linked to his growth in personal and spiritual maturity. The sanctifying mission of the bishop requires him to live deeply the new life of baptismal grace and the pastoral ministry to which he has been called by the Holy Spirit, conforming himself ever more closely, in a spirit of continual conversion, to the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

This constant spiritual formation enables the bishop to animate his pastoral activity with an authentic spirit of holiness, tirelessly promoting and sustaining the universal call to holiness.

## Intellectual and Doctrinal Formation

Conscious of his responsibility for the entire ministry of the Word in his particular church, where he has

been commissioned to proclaim the faith, to teach with authority, and to bear witness to divine and catholic truth, the bishop has an obligation to deepen his intellectual preparation through personal study, with a serious commitment to keeping abreast of cultural developments. In the light of the Word of God, the bishop should be able to discern and evaluate currents of thought, as well as anthropological and scientific trends, so as to respond, with fidelity to the doctrine and discipline of the Church, to the new questions arising in society.

Keeping up to date in theology is necessary if the bishop is to explore the inexhaustible riches of revelation, faithfully to guard and expound the deposit of faith, and to establish a respectful and fruitful working relationship with theologians. Such dialogue can lead to new insights into the deepest truths of the Christian mystery, an ever greater understanding of the Word of God, and the appropriation of suitable methods and language with which to present it to the modern world. Through his theological reading, the bishop can give an ever firmer foundation to his magisterial task for the enlightenment of the People of God. His knowledge of current theology also enables him to monitor the conformity of new theological ideas with the content of tradition, countering objections to sound doctrine and correcting any distortions.

## Pastoral Formation

The bishop's ongoing formation also applies to the pastoral dimension, the goal toward which the other aspects of his formation are directed and a key factor in determining their content and particular character. The Church's earthly pilgrimage requires the bishop to be attentive to the signs of the times and to adapt his style and behavior so as to

ensure that his pastoral action responds effectively to the needs of society.

Pastoral formation requires from the bishop an evangelical discernment of the sociocultural situation, a readiness to listen, to enter into communion and into dialogue with his priests, especially the parish priests whose mission renders them particularly sensitive to the changing needs of evangelization. It is most valuable for the bishop and his priests to share their experiences, to consider different approaches, and to evaluate new pastoral resources. Dialogue with experts in pastoral science and in socio-pedagogical fields further assists his pastoral formation; so too does in-depth study of the law, of liturgical texts and the spirit of the liturgy.

Despite the interrelatedness of the four aspects of ongoing formation—human, spiritual, intellectual-doctrinal, and pastoral—the bishop needs to pursue each of them individually. The whole of his formation is directed toward a deeper contemplation of the face of Christ and a true communion of life with the Good Shepherd. The faithful in turn can contemplate in the bishop's face those qualities given him through grace. When he proclaims the beatitudes, they should shine out as if from Christ's self-portrait: the face of poverty, of meekness, and of passion for justice; the merciful face of the Father, of the peace lover and peacemaker; the face of purity that gazes solely upon God and that brings to life Jesus' compassion for the afflicted; the face of fortitude expressing the interior joy of those persecuted for the cause of Gospel truth.

### **The Means of Ongoing Formation**

Just as other members of the People of God are the ones primarily responsible for their own formation, so too the bishop should consider it his duty to make a personal commitment to ongoing integral formation. By virtue of his mission in the Church, he has to offer the faithful an example in this area, since they look to him as a model disciple in the school of Christ. The

bishop follows him with daily fidelity in a life of truth and love, shaping his humanity by the grace of divine communion. For his ongoing formation, the bishop should make use of those means that the Church has always proposed as indispensable elements of his spirituality, enabling him to trust in God's grace. Communion with God in daily prayer leads to the serenity of spirit and the prudent intelligence that help the bishop to relate to people with paternal openness and to evaluate carefully the various questions arising in pastoral governance. Proper attention to rest will allow the bishop to nurture a profound humanity with wisdom, balance, joy, and patience. Following the example of Jesus himself, who invited the apostles to rest from

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the labors of their ministry (cf. Mk 6:31), the bishop should ensure that he has sufficient time to rest each day, a regular day off, and a holiday every year, according to the norms established by the Church's discipline. The bishop should remember that Sacred Scripture speaks of the necessity for rest, when it indicates that God himself, on completing his work of creation, rested on the seventh day (cf. Gen 2:2).

Among the means of ongoing formation, the bishop should give particular attention to the study of doctrinal and pastoral documents issued by the Roman pontiff, the Roman Curia, the Episcopal Conference, and his brother bishops. This not only allows him to live his communion with the Successor of Peter and with the universal Church, but also provides useful insights for his pastoral work, so that he may enlighten the faithful regarding the major questions repeatedly asked of Christians by modern society. Through study, the

bishop should follow developments in theology, so as to deepen his knowledge of the Christian mystery, to evaluate, discern, and safeguard the purity and integrity of the faith. He should be equally assiduous in following cultural and social currents of thought, so as to recognize the "signs of the times" and to evaluate them in the light of the faith and the permanently valid heritage of Christian thought and philosophy.

The bishop should be particularly keen to participate, whenever possible, in formation gatherings arranged by various ecclesial bodies: the annual colloquium for newly ordained bishops held by the Congregation for Bishops, meetings arranged by national or regional Episcopal Conferences or by continental Councils of Episcopal Conferences.

Further opportunities for the bishop's ongoing formation are provided by those gatherings of the diocesan presbyterate that he himself arranges with the help of his diocesan advisors. So too are other cultural initiatives through which the seed of truth is sown in the field of the world. On certain more important topics, the bishop should seek opportunities to listen at length, to enter into dialogue with experts, sharing experiences, methods, and new resources for pastoral ministry and the spiritual life.

The bishop should always remember that his lived communion with other members of the People of God, through daily contact with priests and lay faithful, provides the setting in which the Spirit speaks to him, reminding him of his vocation and mission, and forming his heart through the vibrant life of the Church. Hence the bishop should always adopt an attitude of careful listening to what the Spirit is saying to the Church and in the Church.

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### **Endnotes**

Congregation for Bishops, *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* (Apostolorum Successores) (2004).

# C2I UPDATE

SPRING 2011

GRACE & COMMITMENT: THE VOCATIONS OF LAITY, RELIGIOUS, AND ORDAINED

## JANUARY

### MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2011

PERFORMANCE

*Vocations of a Christian Artist: Ministry of the Word, the Stage and the Sacred* **PRESENTER:** George Drance, S.J., Jesuit Artist-in-Residence at Fordham University at Lincoln Center and members of his professional theater company Magis **LOCATION/TIME:** Robsham Theater, 7:30 p.m., FREE EVENT **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center and BC Theology Department **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** February 15, 2011

## FEBRUARY

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2011

PANEL

*Diocesan Priesthood in the 21st Century: Perspectives from Three Generations* **PRESENTERS:** Moderator: Fr. Robert Imbelli, Panelists: Fr. Bryan Hehir, Fr. Paul O'Brien, Fr. William Lohan **LOCATION/TIME:** Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, Lower Campus, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center and BC Theology Department **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** February 28, 2011

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2011

LECTURE

*Prophets and Apostles: Vocation in the Scriptures I* **PRESENTER:** Richard Clifford, S.J., Professor, School of Theology and Ministry **LOCATION/TIME:** Room 100, School of Theology and Ministry, 9 Lake Street, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center and School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** March 5, 2011

## MARCH

### TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2011

LECTURE/LUNCHEON

*The Changed and Changing Roles and Relationships Among Laity, Religious, and the Ordained in the 21st Century* **PRESENTER:** Fr. Michael Himes, Professor, BC Theology Department **LOCATION/TIME:** Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 12:00 p.m., FREE luncheon event **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, BC Office of Employee Development, School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** March 15, 2011

### FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2011

LECTURE

*The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* **PRESENTER:** James Martin, S.J., Author, and Culture Editor, *America* magazine **LOCATION/TIME:** Robsham Theater, Lower Campus, 7:00 p.m., FREE EVENT, please RSVP to kostiguy@sjnen.org (space is limited) **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, School of Theology and Ministry, New England Province of Jesuits **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** March 16, 2011

### TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2011

LECTURE

*Whither the Diaconate?* **PRESENTER:** Deacon William Ditewig, Professor of Theology, Saint Leo University (past executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for the Diaconate) **LOCATION/TIME:** Murray Function Room, Yawkey Center, 7:00 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** March 28, 2011

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2011

LECTURE

*Prophets and Apostles: Vocation in the Scriptures II* **PRESENTER:** Daniel Harrington, S.J., Professor, School of Theology and Ministry **LOCATION/TIME:** Room 100, School of Theology and Ministry, 9 Lake Street, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** March 28, 2011

### MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2011

LECTURE

*Preparing to Serve: Seminary 2011* **PRESENTER:** Sr. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., Endowed Chair for the Social Scientific Study of Religion, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas **LOCATION/TIME:** Room 100, School of Theology and Ministry, 9 Lake Street, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** April 5, 2011

### TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2011

EPISCOPAL VISITOR

**TITLE:** *Boston College Welcomes Cardinal Mahony* **PRESENTER:** Cardinal Roger Michael Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles **LOCATION:** TBA **TIME:** 4:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, School of Theology Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** April 15, 2011

### THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

PANEL

*Three Jesuits: Who Do They Say They Are? Personal Perspectives* **PRESENTERS:** William P. Leahy, S.J., President, Boston College, Jack Butler, S.J., Vice President for University Mission and Ministry, Jeremy Zippel, S.J. **LOCATION/TIME:** Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, Lower Campus, 7:00 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, School of Theology and Ministry, BC Theology Department, Center for Ignatian Spirituality, BC Alumni Association **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** April 15, 2011

## APRIL

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011

LECTURE

*Women Religious: Today and Tomorrow* **PRESENTER:** Sr. Margaret Guider, O.S.F. **LOCATION/TIME:** Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C2I Center, BC Theology Department, School of Theology and Ministry **WEBCAST AVAILABLE:** April 20, 2011

INFORMATION FOR EVENTS:

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## BC ALUMNI LENTEN SERIES

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2011

*Living in Relationship* **PRESENTER:** Fr. Tony Penna, Director, BC Campus Ministry  
**LOCATION/TIME:** BC Club, 100 Federal Street, Boston, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C21 Center, BC Alumni Association **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/alumni/association/spirituality](http://www.bc.edu/alumni/association/spirituality) 617-552-1607.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011

*BC Alumni Lenten Series—Living Gratefully* **PRESENTER:** Dr. Thomas Groome, Professor, School of Theology and Ministry **LOCATION/TIME:** BC Club, 100 Federal Street, Boston, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** The C21 Center, BC Alumni Association **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/alumni/association/spirituality](http://www.bc.edu/alumni/association/spirituality) 617-552-1607.

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### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2011

*"Ambassadors of Reconciliation": Confronting Sin and Moral Failure* **PRESENTER:** James T. Bretzke, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** 9 Lake St., Room 100, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce) 617-552-6501.

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2011

*Hope for Today from Three Doctors of the Church: Saints Catherine, Teresa, and Thérèse* **PRESENTER:** Catherine M. Mooney, Associate Professor of Church History, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** 9 Lake St., Room 100, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce) 617-552-6501.

### THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2011

*Cinema Divina: Viewing Film as Spiritual Practice* **PRESENTERS:** Daughters of St. Paul **LOCATION/TIME:** 5:30–8:30 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce) 617-552-6501.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2011

*Healing God's People: Practical Skills and Pastoral Approaches* **PRESENTERS:** Featuring Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds, Co-director, Fordham Center on Religion and Culture, speaking on "Restoring Trust" and Robert C. Bordone, Clinical Professor of Law, Harvard Law School, speaking on "Understanding and Managing Difficult Conversations," and integrative remarks and process by Thomas H. Groome, Professor of Theology and Religious Education, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** East Wing, Law School, Newton Campus, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce) 617-552-6501.

Early registration recommended. FREE EVENT. Cosponsored by Paulist Reconciliation Ministries.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2011

*Healing Through Pastoral Care* **PRESENTER:** Melissa Kelley, Associate Professor of pastoral care and contextual education, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** 9 Lake St., Room 100, Brighton Campus, 5:30 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce) 617-552-6501.

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[www.cmsm.org](http://www.cmsm.org)

The Crossroad Publishing Company  
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Deacon Digest: A Publication of Abbey  
Press  
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Contemporary Church  
[www.thefurrow.ie](http://www.thefurrow.ie)

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Liturgical Press  
[www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

National Catholic Reporter  
[www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org)

Paulist Press  
[www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com)

United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops  
[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

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# Saying AMEN to Lay Ecclesial Ministry

BY BISHOP MATTHEW CLARK

*Bishop Clark identifies the promotion of lay ecclesial as a key dimension of his episcopal ministry, as a way of furthering the mission of the Church in his diocese.*

The act of ordination does not make one holier than he was before, but leaves one a pilgrim with everyone else. A bishop or a priest is also a searcher, a seeker, and a person of faith whose guidance will always be the Gospel, the teaching of the Church, and the well-being and growth of his local community. No one holds all the answers or all the truths. All Catholics, including bishops, have the gift of the Holy Spirit—alive in the Word, the Eucharist, and the community—as the foundation and source of our faith life.

We know that our communities will be less than what God wants them to be if we do not share our gifts. In a community of faith as broad, as ancient, and as complicated as our own, we have to be open to the truth wherever we find it. I think someone in my position could make the mistake of assuming that he has within himself such knowledge of the dogmas of the Church and such an expert ability to apply them, that he doesn't need those around him to understand how to move forward.

Surely faith is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus as the one who saves and reconciles us to the Father. Thus, it is a wonderful insight to realize that one is not more brilliant than another, one is not more dedicated than someone else, one is not holier than another may be. When we are appointed to lead the community, it is a very challenging experience. You realize that you, as limited and fragile as you are, have become a primary symbol of unity and faith of that community. You recognize that this will not be realized simply because the appointment has been made, or because you will it to be

so. Rather, the key is in the invitation to others, issued through our common commission as baptized people, to live in, to love, and to serve the Lord as best they can. So how we behave and speak in the midst of the community, how we learn to express in our own voice what is available in the community for the noble purpose to which we are committed, is itself a communal exercise.

Whether we are bishops or not, we can't do this by ourselves. We live fully in the community of the Church. We can only continually invite and encourage, bring people together, urge people to live fully and faithfully the gifts they have for the Gospel we profess.

I have heard of bishops who apparently resist the use of the term "lay ministry." I'm not sure what this means in reality. For example, I was recently told about an archbishop who has urged those in his diocese not to use the term "lay ecclesial ministry." He thinks the term is misleading and problematic in a number of ways. At the same time, though, there are real and concrete signs in that diocese of the emergence of genuine lay ministry: An education program at the local seminary is strengthened by diocesan support and healthy enrollment, and many parishes employ lay people in a variety of pastoral ministries. While the use of the term may not be encouraged, and the general concept may be under scrutiny, the archbishop is helping the reality flourish in his archdiocese.

Another potential difficulty could be reflected in the comments of another bishop who complained at one point that lay ministry is causing a new caste or class system to be created in our

dioceses. I have to say that my own experience has not at all indicated that a new ranking or class system is emerging among the people I know who are engaged in ministry. It is rare in my experience to encounter a lay ecclesial minister who appears to be in ministry for power or prestige. Still, I understand my colleague's concern in terms of the many ways in which our proneness to sin can make all of us vulnerable to temptations to move in that direction.

Another friend once shared with me his concern that affirming lay ecclesial ministry might indicate a diminishment of commitment to recruiting and developing fine priests for the service of the Church. He seemed to indicate that to support one implies a neglect of the other. My own position is quite different from that. I think the mutual support of both highlights and raises the other to new levels. In my thinking, the fullness of Christ is more fully manifest through the support of both.

God so often works in and through the relationships we have with one another. In relationships we experience the Gospel alive in the hearts of our companions. This can only bring us closer to the Lord and renew our confidence and courage. We are not computers. We are human beings who have freedom and the power to choose. We live in a world that is much more complex, more demanding, more difficult than we could ever anticipate. We face scientific and technological advances that can be both promising and frightening. In short, we need to keep searching. We see this most concretely, perhaps, in the sacraments of initiation. These are really just the beginnings of saying "yes" to the Lord, of learning to appreciate his promises to us and to appreciate what the Church represents to us. Here is where we start

*Continued on page 27*

# The Ministry of the Bishop: Theological Foundations

BY POPE JOHN PAUL II

*In his 2003 response to the Synod on bishops, Pope John Paul II identifies God's life as Trinity as the foundation for episcopal ministry; he finds in the Trinity the grounding of the bishop's ministry to teach, lead, and sanctify.*

## The Trinitarian Foundation of Episcopal Ministry

7. The Christological dimension of the pastoral ministry, considered in depth, leads to an understanding of the Trinitarian foundation of ministry itself. Christ's life is Trinitarian. He is the eternal and only-begotten Son of the Father and the anointed of the Holy Spirit, sent into the world; it is he who, together with the Father, pours out the Spirit upon the Church. This Trinitarian dimension, manifested in every aspect of Christ's life and activity, also shapes the life and activity of the bishop. Rightly, then, the Synod Fathers chose explicitly to describe the life and ministry of the bishop in the light of the Trinitarian ecclesiology contained in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

The tradition which sees the bishop as an image of God the Father is quite ancient. As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote, the Father is like an invisible bishop, the bishop of all. Every bishop, therefore, stands in the place of the Father of Jesus Christ in such a way that, precisely because of this representation, he is to be revered by all. Consonant with this symbolism, the bishop's chair, which especially in the tradition of the Eastern Churches evokes God's paternal authority, can only be occupied by the bishop. This same symbolism is the source of every bishop's duty to lead the holy people of God as a devoted father and to guide them—together with his priests, his co-workers in the episcopal ministry, and with his deacons—in the way of salvation. Conversely, as an ancient text exhorts, the faithful are to love their bishops who are, after God, their fathers and mothers. For this reason, in accordance with a custom widespread in certain cultures, one kisses the bishop's hand as one would kiss the hand of the loving Father, the giver of life.

Christ is the primordial icon of the Father and the manifestation of his merciful presence among men and women. The bishop, who acts in the person and in the name of Christ himself, becomes in the Church entrusted to him a living sign of the Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Spouse, Teacher and High Priest of the Church. Here we find the source of pastoral ministry, and the reason why, as the homily outline in the Roman Pontifical suggests, the three functions of



Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications

teaching, sanctifying, and governing the People of God are to be carried out in imitation of the Good Shepherd: with charity, knowledge of the flock, concern for all, mercy towards the poor, the stranger, and those in need, and a willingness to seek out the lost sheep and to bring them back to the one sheepfold.

Finally, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, by configuring the bishop to Christ, enables him to be a living continuation of the mystery of Christ for the Church. Because of this Trinitarian shaping of his existence, every bishop in his ministry is committed to keeping watch over the whole flock with love, for he has been placed in their midst by the Spirit to govern the Church of God: in the name of the Father, whose image he represents; in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, by whom he has been established as teacher, priest, and shepherd; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and by his power strengthens us in our human weakness.

## Endnotes

Pope John Paul II, *Pastores gregis* (2003), from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Bishop.

# Collaborators in Ministry: The Bishop and His Priests

BY BISHOP ROBERT LYNCH

I think our priests want us to be collegial in the years ahead. They have as much and sometimes more of a stake in the decisions that we make for our dioceses than many of us bishops. Oftentimes they have to live with the consequences of our decisions long after we are retired, dead, or transferred. The only way to begin to break down the attitude of “us vs. the chancery” is to bring the priests into the thought, planning, and decision-making processes that will ultimately affect the lives of many.

The only thing lost to a bishop who chooses a strong collegial approach to his relationship with his priests is the final trace of autocracy in the Church.

Our priests want us to share with them our dreams and visions, to consult with them on things that ultimately affect their lives, and to affirm their vision of where the Church might be headed and how best we might get there.

Courage is slightly more elusive but just as important in the relationship that a bishop has with his priests. I think our priests are, by and large, courageous men in themselves. It takes courage to present oneself week after week to a parish or school community and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in and out of season. They are often called upon to make tough calls in the lives of their parishioners, and they often exhibit high levels of personal courage as well.

No priest has asked me in these past four years to take a position other than that clearly articulated and taught by the Church, but most look to me to display some courage in facing the real problems the Church is encountering today. They want their bishop to speak out against injustice toward migrants, the marginalized, the outcasts of

society, and sometimes even those they feel are on the fringe of the Church. They want me, or so it would seem, to speak honestly about human failure in the priesthood—but also to speak with equal or more forceful courage in pointing out the good that priests, deacons, religious, and laity do, not only in the Church but also in society.

I perceive that they also wish me to be courageous in facing a somewhat uncertain future. Like many dioceses, my own is not currently replete with vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We are working on it, but any success we ultimately have will be years in coming to tangible fruition. I sense that the priests of my diocese don’t want me to conduct business as usual but to show some courage in proposing strategies that will work for the Church until the decline of clergy can be reversed.

Most of the older and middle-aged priests have concerns about women in society and the Church. They would like to see me lead in courageously offering to competent women every opportunity that does not require ordination. Priests tend to be “inclusive” in their view of the Church and don’t desire to exclude people from the life of the Church.

Compassion in a bishop seems like an automatic “slam dunk,” but it is not always easy. In today’s Church, the bishop is often at the vortex of strong feelings from every segment of the church life. Even in relationship with his priests, the bishop can often feel like he is on the “hot seat.” Some may wish he were more traditional, while others would like him to move faster, begin new changes, and lead more assertively. Every bishop, when he is ordained, feels that the priests especially have great expectations of him—perhaps even unrealistic expectations.

I have found the fragility of the diocesan priesthood to be much more of a challenge than I ever imagined prior to becoming a bishop. While at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, I would hear stories about challenges that bishops faced in their dioceses, but I think I was ill prepared for what I actually found. It is in reaching to those among the presbyterate who are hurting (or perceived as hurting) that the bishop has his greatest opportunity to exercise the charism of compassion.

Every bishop knows the heartache of compassionately listening while one of his brothers informs him of a decision to leave ministry and pursue marriage. Many bishops know the challenge to compassion occasioned by that first conversation with a priest accused of sexual misconduct. To listen compassionately while still making decisions for the good of both the Church and the priest is an incredible challenge and requires every interpersonal gift that the bishop can command.

Creating a climate of trust oftentimes demands a level of creativity. The others that I have detailed above have a lot to do with creating a climate of trust; sometimes there is little a bishop can do in his relationship with his priests because, for whatever reason, trust does not seem possible. Even though most of us try to act fraternally with our brothers in the presbyterate, sometimes the priest himself will just not move beyond suspicion and caution. I have found that many situations involving relationships between priests and bishops arise from the priest’s own family life, which fashions his view of authority. The priest’s relationship with his father often determines and guides the relationship between the priest and his bishop. If anger, resentment, or distrust of lawful and legitimate authority is present, then



many times this will transfer into the priest's life in the Church. Breaking down these historical barriers requires a certain amount of creativity on the part of the bishop.

I believe that I may be a source of disappointment to some among my youngest clergy. Their hopes and aspirations for the Church differ markedly from my own. It is too facile to say that younger priests today long for the Church prior to the Second

Vatican Council. It is also too facile to try to label the younger clergy with an ideological tag. Their hopes are much more rooted in a return to authority and in, perhaps, a clearer articulation of right and wrong than I seem willing to make. On the other hand, I know that 80 percent of my clergy do not wish to see a return to an authoritarian model. In fact, most priests are happy to be left alone in their ministry, with little or no moments of contact with the bishop.

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#### Endnotes

BISHOP ROBERT LYNCH is the current bishop of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Bishop Robert Lynch, "Collaborators in Ministry: The Bishop and His Priests" in *Priests for a New Millennium: A Series of Essays on the Ministerial Priesthood by the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, ed. Secretariat for Priestly Life and Ministry (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 54–62. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

# The Ministry of the Priest

BY POPE JOHN PAUL II

*John Paul II develops a theology for understanding the ministry and identity of the ordained priest; he relates the priest to God as Trinity, God's self-revelation in Jesus, and to the mission of the Church.*

#12. "The priest's identity," as the synod fathers wrote, "like every Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity," (20) which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ, establishing, in him and through the Spirit, the Church as "the seed and the beginning of the kingdom." (21) The apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, summarizing the Council's teaching, presents the Church as mystery, communion, and mission: "She is mystery because the very life and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the gift gratuitously offered to all those who are born of water and the Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:5) and called to relive the very communion of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history [mission]." (22)

It is within the Church's mystery, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as head and shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world. (23)

In this way the fundamentally "relational" dimension of priestly identity can be understood. Through the priesthood which arises from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God, that is, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit's gift of unity, the priest sacramentally enters into communion with the bishop and with other priests (24) in order to serve the People of God who are the Church and to draw all mankind to Christ in

accordance with the Lord's prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one ... even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn. 17:11, 21).

Consequently, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity. (25) In this context the ecclesiology of communion becomes decisive for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission among the People of God and in the world. Reference to the Church is therefore necessary, even if not primary, in defining the identity of the priest. As a mystery, the Church is essentially related to Jesus Christ. She is his fullness, his body, his spouse. She is the "sign" and living "memorial" of his permanent presence and activity in our midst and on our behalf. The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ himself, the one high priest of the new and eternal covenant. The priest is a living and transparent image of Christ the priest. The priesthood of Christ, the expression of his absolute "newness" in salvation history, constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood shared by all Christians and the priest in particular. Reference to Christ is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of priesthood.

— Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis* (1992), from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests.

# Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers

BY MICHAEL HIMES

The sacramental principle so central to the Catholic vision holds that what is always and everywhere true must be embodied somewhere, sometime, so that it can be recognized and celebrated. Sacred time and sacred space are examples of this principle. If God is everywhere, we must select somewhere to acknowledge and honor the presence of God. There is nothing intrinsically holier about a church than about a parking lot, a bank, or a supermarket. By consecrating a particular place as a church or chapel, we set aside a space in which we attend to the divine presence.

This sacramental principle may provide a classically Catholic way of distinguishing the laity and the clergy.

I suggest that there are responsibilities to which the Church is always called at every moment of its existence, whether in the earliest days of the fledgling community in Jerusalem or now as a worldwide community, and on every level of its life, be it the domestic Church at its most local level, the family, or the Church universal. Many such responsibilities undoubtedly exist at any given time or place, but at least three are always and everywhere part of the Church's mission. One is the responsibility to maintain and build up the unity of the body of Christ, to hold together the local community and foster the communion of all local communities with one another in the universal Church.

The second responsibility is to and for the word of God, by which I mean Scripture as well as the whole of the Church's reflection on and celebration of the revelation of God normatively expressed in Scripture, what we have often called tradition. Church tradition must be explored, explained, and passed on to others, especially the next generation.

The third responsibility always and

everywhere present in the Church is service to others within and outside the community. Any person or community that claims it has no interest in or sense of responsibility for fostering communion, handing on the word of God, or responding to those in need is clearly not the Church of Christ.

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*What is given to all must be sacramentalized by some. That is what ordination does: sets aside some persons to incarnate the episcopal, priestly, or diaconal role to which all are called by baptism.*

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These three responsibilities have classic names: episcopacy, presbyterate or priesthood, and diaconate. The episcopal role in the Church is the building up of the body of Christ by deepening the communion of Christians with one another and the unity of the local communities with one another and with the Church universal. The presbyteral or priestly

role is preserving and unfolding Church tradition in word and worship, and the diaconal role is giving direct service to those in need inside and outside the Christian community.

Who has these three responsibilities? Everyone, by virtue of baptism. We are accustomed to speaking of a universal or common priesthood, a priesthood of all believers. I suggest that there is also an episcopacy of all believers and a diaconate of all believers. Each of us became responsible for the episcopal, presbyteral, and diaconal dimensions of the Church's life when we were baptized. But in accord with the sacramental principle that so deeply characterizes Catholicism, if by baptism everyone is bishop, priest, and deacon, some persons must publicly embody each of these responsibilities. What is given to all must be sacramentalized by some. That is what ordination does: sets aside some persons to incarnate the episcopal, priestly, or diaconal role to which all are called by baptism.

This inverts the way in which the relation of the laity and the clergy used to be cast. In the early and mid 20th century, the mission of the laity (usually termed "Catholic Action") was



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described as the extension of the mission of the hierarchy; the laity participated in the mission of the ordained. I suggest that the fundamental episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate in the Church are conferred on all of us by baptism. Baptism is more fundamental than holy orders. What is conferred on all by baptism is sacramentalized by some in orders. The episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate of the laity are made manifest, are sacramentalized, in the ordained episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate, which in turn express the episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate of all of the baptized.

To conclude, let me point out three

consequences of this sacramental understanding of the clergy's relationship to the laity. First, it is not only unnecessary, it is impossible to distinguish the laity from the clergy by delineating different spheres in which they work for the Gospel, assigning "the church" to the clergy and "the world" to the laity. Second, the ordained ministry exists for the sake of and in service to the ministry of the baptized ... If the ministry of the ordained sacramentalizes the ministry of the baptized, then there can be no ministry of the ordained without the ministry of the baptized. Third, the best way to strengthen a sign is to strengthen what

it signifies. The best and truest way to affirm and support the ministry of the ordained is to affirm and support the ministry of the baptized. Neglect and disparagement of the episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate of the laity inevitably destroy the episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate of the clergy.

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#### Endnotes

FR. MICHAEL HIMES is a professor of theology at Boston College.

Michael Himes, "Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers" in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard Miller (Ligouri, Missouri: Ligouri, 2005), 84–7.

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## Priest: Public, Personal, and Private

BY DAVID RANSON

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*David Ranson explores the tension between the social identity of the priest and the personal being of the priest; he argues for the integration of the personal and public dimensions.*

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As public figures, priests' lives are to be marked by the tension between the public and the personal life. Acceptance of the tension is the foundation of its resolution. But such integration begins with the distinction between "personal" and its oft used, but misleading, synonym, "private."

Public figures are not their own person. Their actions, their peccadilloes, have an effect that can be as dramatic as they are significant. A media-conscious society has put public figures perhaps under the most intense scrutiny in history. No longer can royalty, for example, have its customary mistresses and affairs and keep public appearances going with unmitigated aplomb. No longer can politicians have unusual financial arrangements, no matter how long ago, without it all coming out to be devoured by a public hungry to be shocked.

Public figures are public because

they are so deeply embedded within the social fabric. They gather that fabric into their own persons. Indeed, their demise highlights the depth of our own sociality and how that sociality naturally looks for its symbol in certain figures ... All is public. "Private" is defined as simply that which has not yet caught the attention of the media.

Who then would be a public figure today? Who is without blemish? Who has a private life that exists in ever readiness to become public? Every ordained minister is a public figure. Is "private" for clergy, too, simply that which has yet to gain public attention? But then what scope or room is subsequently given to clergy for making mistakes? What room is given clergy for entering into the messy processes of growth, especially sexual maturation?

As public figures, clergy are particularly vulnerable because the area in which they are most

accountable in the public mind, and the area which they are expected by the public to be permanently at the ideal, is the area of life that by its very nature breathes process, is never at the ideal whatever of the rhetoric, and requires experiment and mistake and practice if it is to grow at all—i.e., our sexuality. Moreover, this dimension of life has for such a long period been consigned to be lived out under the celibate cloak of silence, a cloak that most priests assumed far too prematurely and without adequate discernment and formation.

The problem of being denied room for sexual growth is accentuated by the social expectation in the Church community itself that clergy "have it all together" especially in reference to their sexuality. This social expectation, in no small part emerging from a laity kept for far too long in tutelage from a removed clerical caste, requires sensitive challenging. Ignored, it further exacerbates the tendency toward a splitting occurring in the life of many clergy. The private life gets

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# Priest: Public, Personal, and Private

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split from the public and clergy get trapped into quiet lives of duplicity.

The public can deal quite well with issues of growth and process. Beneath a mock titillation at scandal, it can deal quite well with a private life full of contradiction and vulnerability and mess. The public privately identifies with it. What the public cannot deal with is hypocrisy. The public is not concerned with the private peccadilloes of a president. The public is concerned that a president could lie. The public is concerned that its chief lawmaker would break the law.

When they smell hypocrisy the public will expose the private life of a public figure with vengeance. That is why the financial and even more specifically the tax lives of politicians are so much under scrutiny. How dare someone make laws about my income when they themselves are rorting the system! Conversely, that is why the sexual lives of clergy are under so much scrutiny and rarely their taxation structure. It is interesting to note how an alcoholic priest is far more acceptable to a community than a priest who might be cautioned about loitering. How dare someone preach morality when his own relationships lack morality! Of course, such vengeance reaches its zenith in the exposure of sexual abuse and other forms of boundary violation.

While the principle is transparent in such extreme cases, more generally, for better or worse, public life does, however, mean the end of private life. A public figure no longer has the luxury of a private individual life. For politicians it means the end of private financial lives. For clergy it means the shattering of the illusion of a private sexual life. Politicians must be transparent, so must clergy. That is the price of public life.

Such a declaration, however, should not be interpreted as the end of privacy. Personal privacy is a basic right. Privacy is the space allowed an individual or a community to conduct its own

affairs without interference from an unacquainted public gaze. Perhaps it might be argued that the more public the figure, the greater the right to privacy. But the right to privacy is not a justification for a private life that has been divorced from its fundamental social responsibility.

Even more significantly, the end of a private life does not mean the end of a personal life. Indeed, the more public life is, the more personal it needs to become. When public figures, including clergy, can make the distinction between a private and a personal life they are on the way to integrating the public and the nonpublic dimensions of their lives.

Personal does not mean “private.” Knowing something as deeply personal is also to know it as deeply social and to express it accordingly. So, if “personal” does not mean “private,” even though it has the right to “privacy,” what does it mean? The “personal” might be considered as that which arises from within the self, belongs to and reflects back into the self. It is that which is distinct from the otherness of “public.” The personal relates to that which I do to engage my own sense of self, to grow into my own sense of what it means to be human, and enlivened by divinity. The “personal” relates to the contact that I have and develop with my deepest identity beyond and beneath the social roles I am given. The “personal” is the celebration of what is uniquely mine: my own likes and dislikes, my own most deeply creative self-expressions, the activities that express my own interests, which are not dependent on the demands given one by public life.

The “personal” needs privacy but does not become “private.” We might recall the Rogerian dictum, “that which is most personal is most universal.” When I am authentically engaged with the “personal” then, even though I am alone, I have a sense of communion, of being one with humankind in some ways. When the “personal” has been truncated to the merely private, then that sense of communion is not there but rather a residue of fragmentation and alienation and even guilt.

Understood in this way, the “personal” grounds the public dimension; being real/true to oneself is what will enable the priest to sustain the public dimension of his life. While it remains in tension with it, it is not in conflict with it. The public dimension in turn acts to deepen the “personal.” The two dimensions exist in a healthy tension, always one with the other.

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## Endnotes

DAVID RANSON is a priest in the diocese of Broken Bay, Australia.

David Ranson, “Priest: Public, Personal and Private,” *The Furrow* 53 (April 2002): 219–27.

# Let Your Life Shine

*Continued from page 11*

people. When I think of my hope, my dream, and my wish for consecrated life in the 21st century, it is moments of grace such as these that are my source of inspiration—in the present and for the future. Amidst the shadows cast by our divisions and tensions, whether real or perceived, these moments of grace reflect the light that shines upon and through the bonds of affection, solidarity, and mutual concern that continue to hold consecrated persons together in God’s love and service to God’s people. Amidst the scandals associated with our sins and failures, such moments of grace are manifestations of the good, the true, and the beautiful ways in which God’s holy manner of working shines upon and through our charism—and our very lives!

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## Endnotes

SR. MARGARET ELETТА GUIDER, O.S.F., is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate and an associate professor of missiology at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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# Presbyteral Identity Within Parish Identity

SUSAN WOOD, S.C.L.

*Since most people experience priests (presbyters) in the context of a parish, Susan Wood examines the role of the priests in parishes as an expression of unity within the parish community and of communion with the wider Church.*

Many baptized persons are called to give pastoral care in such roles as parish administrators, catechists, liturgical ministers, and directors of catechumenate programs. Many of them do so as professional ecclesial lay ministers. What distinguishes them from the ordained pastor is that in the case of the ordained minister the community elects this person for ordination by prayer to the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands by the bishop to represent them in communions corresponding to the threefold office: communion of churches within a pastoral office; communion with Christ's self-offering within a prophetic office; and communion in apostolic faith within a prophetic office. The presbyter represents his people in the communion of churches through his participation in the priesthood of the bishop. He represents the ecclesial body of Christ in Christ's Eucharistic prayer to the Father and is able to represent Christ to his people in the sacraments. He exercises a prophetic office in proclaiming the faith of the apostolic church to this community. Ultimately, a presbyter's identity is defined representationally rather than functionally. His representational role is not limited to his priestly role within the Eucharist, but extends to the rest of the threefold office. It is not simply a formal role, but entails particular pastoral responsibilities.

Perhaps the most important role of ordained ministry is to assure the communion of a local community both with the apostolic tradition and with other Eucharistic communities so that a local church is a communion in communion with other communions. We do not generally speak of presbyters as being in apostolic succession. The college of bishops is in succession to the apostolic college. Thus, the presbyter's claim as guarantor of apostolicity is tied to his relationship with his bishop. The presbyter extends the bishop's teaching role to the particular circumstances of the baptismal community that presbyter serves.

The communion of churches is mediated by the communion of bishops. Parishes are united with this communion because of the relationship between priests and their bishop. Each particular church is defined as an altar community under the sacred ministry of the bishop. There can be no Eucharist apart from communion with other Eucharistic communities. A Eucharist in isolation or division is a self-contradiction. Hence, ordination is more

than a sacred power to confect the Eucharist; it is also the authorization through the election of the community, prayer to the Holy Spirit, and the laying on of hands to represent the community within the communion of churches.

The pastoral identity of the presbyter as pastor of a baptismal community includes the pastoral care of a church. Even though Roman Catholicism identifies the basic unit of the Church as the particular church under the ministry of the bishop, the particular church comes to event through the baptismal community of the parish. However, the difference between a particular church (the diocese) and a parish is that a parish cannot exist apart from its relationship to its bishop, who in turn represents the particular church on the communion of churches of the universal Church. A church cannot exist as Church in isolation. This communion is accomplished through the personal relationships of ordained presbyters to their bishops and of bishops to other bishops within the college of bishops. Ordination constitutes this network of relationships by authorizing a person to represent ecclesial communities in these relationships.

A parish does not include everything within itself needed to constitute a church, since it is lacking the ministry to represent it in the communion of particular churches. However, as we have seen, it does have ecclesial identity as long as it is in relationship with the rest of the particular church through the relationship of the presbyter to the local bishop. Here a presbyter is defined not by what he does not represent, namely, the particular church, but by what he does represent, namely, the parish. As the parish has an ecclesial identity, so the presbyter finds his identity in relationship to this segment of the Church. He represents it and is the primary person responsible for its pastoral care. He has oversight of the various ministries within it.

As the person who is charged with the internal communion of the parish and its communion with the particular church, the presbyter presides over the sacrament of communion, the Eucharist. Presbyteral identity envisioned as a pastoral charge to a baptismal community is not in conflict with priestly identity within a Eucharistic theology. Baptism and Eucharist celebrate the same mystery of Christ's dying and rising. What is celebrated once and for all in baptism is celebrated repeatedly in the Eucharist and in a sense is

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# Deconstructing the Priesthood

BY RICHARD LENNAN

*In the wake of the multiple challenges confronting the ordained priesthood today, Richard Lennan considers not only why change is difficult, but why change is necessary.*

The contemporary circumstances of the ordained priesthood confront the Church with what Theresa Monroe names “adaptive challenges.” Drawing on principles of leadership theory, Monroe argues that these challenges arise “because some fundamental aspect of the ‘world’ in which an individual or organization operates has changed.”<sup>1</sup> In order for adaptation to occur, however, there must be a commitment “to re-examine deeply held values, beliefs, habits, ways of working, or ways of life.”<sup>2</sup>

The basket of “crises”—aging, vocations, “busyness,” and sexual abuse—the ordained priesthood faces suggests that “the world” of ordained ministry has changed, that there is a lack of congruence between the contemporary circumstances of the priesthood and ways of thinking and acting that were formerly applicable. Nonetheless, there appears to be little enthusiasm for facing such issues. In part, this might be because negotiating change “generally produces a degree of distress as people are challenged to give up perspectives and behaviors that are no longer helpful or productive in furthering the deepest purposes of the organization.”<sup>3</sup> As a result of this reluctance to address the questions, there is a danger of the Church being seen, particularly in the context of clerical sexual abuse, to practice “autoimmunity,” that is, to be resisting the implications of the very beliefs that it claims as constitutive of its identity.<sup>4</sup>

While avoidance of difficult questions might grant temporary immunity from both the distress attendant on facing them and the

spectre of change that they presage, that immunity comes at a cost. Thus, for example, the deleterious effects of the refusal to face directly the implications of the reduced number of priests are already evident in the levels of “busyness” and frustration among priests: “at our worst we act like castaways, men seemingly forced by circumstances to rush and improvise and juggle just to get through the day.”<sup>5</sup>

One issue that various authors identify as an obstruction on the path to reform is the prevailing image of priests. Thus, Enda McDonagh argues that the notion of the priest as “superior mystery-man, even magic-man” has been so popular, among both priests themselves and the general populace of the Church, that it has eclipsed

conceiving priesthood as an expression of the discipleship that unites all members of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Michael Heher suggests that “this pious image of ourselves, while charming and useful in former times, will haunt the effectiveness of our ministry if, as it obviously has in the past, it remains or is seen to be a convenient way for us to evade taking responsibility for our actions.”<sup>7</sup>

Such arguments resonate well with the work of Kenan Osborne, who highlights the deleterious impact on the Church of what he terms “the Euro-American image of the priest or bishop.” This image, etched in popular culture by its repetition in books and films, identifies priests by cassocks or black suits with Roman collars. Osborne sees danger in the image’s implication that priests are not only always and everywhere the same, but are so because that is Jesus’ desire for the Church:

On the whole, Roman



Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications

Catholics not only think that priests and bishops *are* the same worldwide, but they also *want* their priests and bishops to conform to that image, an image that has been enforced by the artifacts of popular culture in film, TV, and for the literate, books ... A radical change in how priestly or episcopal leadership is constructed and exercised would be suspected of challenging the true nature of the Church as intended by Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

Although Fritz Lobinger focuses on the role, rather than the image of the priest, his analysis also accords with that of Osborne, especially in his identification of “non-negotiables” that hinder openness to new models of the priesthood. Lobinger maintains that most members of the Church continue to want what he characterizes as “the provider-type priest,” who meets the religious needs of the members of the Christian community, thereby allowing them the freedom simply to be consumers of the services offered. This mind-set manufactures its own shibboleth: Proposals to alleviate the difficulties that result from fewer priests are acceptable only to the degree that they cohere with the prevailing notion of how priests ought to be. Lobinger illustrates that claim by applying it to the oft-advanced proposal for the ordination for *virī probati*, men of “proven character,” including married men, who might approach priesthood without the requirement of celibacy or the usual preparation in seminaries. Lobinger acknowledges support for such a proposal, but also suggests that:

In industrialized societies the majority of a congregation are intent on perpetuating the provider-type priest. If there is any possibility of continuing the status quo, this will be strongly favoured by them. So if *virī probati* are introduced as Church-employed priests, they

will very probably continue the pattern of the provider-type of priesthood. It is most unlikely that they will guide the congregations to abandon that dated form of the Church to create a new form, a new vision.<sup>9</sup>

Amongst priests themselves, it appears that one alternative to adaptation and the search for new models of priesthood is to carve out a space in which they can feel both secure and effective. Thomas Curry, however, laments the findings of surveys indicating that newly ordained priests “are in the main cultivating their own garden, with a good deal of contentment but without much knowledge of, or concern for, how they connect with the larger Church.”<sup>10</sup> Curry suggests that without a renewed focus on mission for the priesthood, “the newly ordained will have to continue to cope...but possibly be destined to lives spent reacting to needs without any sense of overall purpose, and ultimately leading them to focus on protecting themselves from the people rather than on assuming positions of leadership.”<sup>11</sup>

The circumstances described here underscore a stark choice for the Church: “We can back into the future, simply adjusting to changing circumstances on an ad hoc basis until we find ourselves with a new pattern of priesthood we did not directly choose and regret that we have inadvertently chosen. Or we can be more deliberate in shaping the roles of priests in the light of changing circumstances.”<sup>12</sup> Only the latter would be an expression of hope, rather than despair.

## Endnotes

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1. Theresa Monroe, “Hidden Challenge of Taking up the Role of Pastoral Leader” in Dean Hoge, *The Experiences of Priests Ordained Five to Nine Years* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Education Association, 2006), 155.

2. Ibid, 156.

3. Ibid.

4. See John Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernity for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 136; Caputo sources the term to Michel Foucault.

5. Michael Heher, *The Lost Art of Walking on Water: Reimagining the Priesthood* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist, 2004), 5.

6. Enda McDonagh, “The Risk of Priesthood,” *The Furrow* 51 (2000): 592.

7. Heher, *The Lost Art of Walking on Water*, 11.

8. Kenan Osborne, *Orders and Ministry: Leadership in the World Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 106–107; original emphasis.

9. Fritz Lobinger, *Like His Brothers and Sisters: Ordaining Community Leaders* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 97.

10. Thomas Curry, “Church and Challenge for the Newly Ordained” in Dean Hoge, *The First Five Years of the Priesthood: A Study of Newly Ordained Catholic Priests* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), 111.

11. Ibid, 114.

12. Oscar Lipscomb, “Dialogue about and within Priesthood,” *Origins* 28 (May 21, 1998): 10; for a description of the way in which ad hoc pastoral practices in response to declining numbers of priests can affect received understandings of the priesthood, see Susan Wood, “Priestly Identity: Sacrament of the Ecclesial Community,” *Worship* 69 (1995): 121–126.

## PRAYER

Eternal God, please bless our priests, who represent you on this earth.

Make them more greatly aware of the grace that you pour out through them when they minister the sacraments, and help them to fall more deeply in love with You after each and every Mass that they celebrate.

Please strengthen our priests, who shepherd your flock, when they are in doubt of their faith, that they may be examples of your Truth and guide us always on the path to you.

We ask these things of You our eternal Priest.

Amen.



# Reimagining the Priesthood

BY MICHAEL HEHER

I return again to St. Peter, dear old reckless Peter. The boat is his, but we meet him still out on the water, the place, he assures us, where we too belong. Yes, he is knocked about by enormous waves and the winds rage around him; he knows the times are desperate. But from these he is distracted momentarily by the reassuring face of Jesus. He knows his own frailty, for he will be quick to accept the rescuing hand of his Savior, glad to have hold of it.

To the extent we are unwilling to join him there, unwilling to take the attendant risk that we could, like him, end up flailing about, looking silly and nearly drowning, we will look as cowardly and sound as whiny as we are. *Please, please, please come to the seminary*, we plead. But what do we teach them to do in the seminaries? To be as bright and creative as they can? To take chances? To be ready for a life of sacrifice? Do we train them for resilience and generosity? Do we insist they manifest a capacity to live intimately and maturely upon this planet? And why should we expect it from them if we don't expect it of ourselves? This is my prediction: Until we change our ways, the young ones will not see the excitement in our way of life. The dreamers, the talented ones, the visionaries, the geniuses, the ones God may indeed be calling, they'll go somewhere else with their enormous energy. Instead, we will continue to attract men in early middle age, those, excuse me for saying this, ready to settle down.

*"Please, please, please get involved in our parishes,"* we implore our parishioners. But what do we ask of them? To give out communion? To donate sacrificially? To attend one of our self-help seminars or Bible studies? To jump through the hoops of our sacramental preparation? Where is the excitement in that? Where is the call to real service, for trusting faith

in troubling times? We have come to consider high attendance at anything a sign of success; we have forgotten that on Pentecost, the standard was a bit higher: People had to be on fire.

One of Vatican II's dreams was to renew parishes with holiness strong and plentiful enough to sustain the life of the Spirit in our neighborhoods and within our cities. The hope was to build parishes filled with saints and martyrs, to live our lives among folks with enough faith to revive among us this lost art of walking on water.

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***We meet Peter still out on the water, the place, he assures us, where we too belong. To the extent we are unwilling to join him there, unwilling to take the attendant risk that we could, like him, end up flailing about, looking silly and nearly drowning, we will look as cowardly and sound as whiny as we are.***

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We have heard Peter's story so many times, we jump to the ending. We remember as a reproach Jesus' words to Peter after he saved him from drowning, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" But wait. Go back. Look. See those stunning moments when Peter stood there on his own. One like us actually *did walk* on water. Isn't that remarkable? And if such has been done once, the argument goes, it certainly can be done again. With our eyes on Christ, I believe the whole Church can find the faith we need. And when, as is likely, we do tumble in, we'll find his saving hand grasping ours as Peter did. I prefer to

understand Jesus' question kiddingly: *Why were you so worried, Peter, with me as your lifeguard?*

To follow Peter's example demands that we take a very big risk as priests and human beings. We'd all prefer to be known for our skills, our talents, our attractions, our accomplishments, our shining brilliance. But our parishioners need us to be poor before them, to be ourselves, and to explore the life of faith in front of them and with them. Television has the Naked Chef, a man with a reputation for exuberance and not taking himself too seriously. At this moment, the Church may need priests who are metaphorically naked, a community of transparent ministers ready to be honest in communication and willing to let ourselves be seen as the apostles let themselves be seen, well, up until Luke buffed them up for his Acts of the Apostles. As has often been the case in the history of the Church, the baptized trust more those leaders courageous enough not to hide their fears and mistakes, those who let themselves be seen drowning and worse. I think our parishioners want fewer of our bright ideas and more of our empathy and honest response to life. In short, they are attracted to priests who know how to take chances—not just any chance and not simply for the sake of the thrill—but chances they perceive are prompted by the Holy Spirit; from such priests parishioners will find the guts to be courageous and docile disciples themselves.

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## Endnotes

FR. MICHAEL HEHER is the vicar general and moderator of the Curia for the Diocese of Orange, California.

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# The Priceless Gift of the Priesthood

BY WILLIAM P. LEAHY, S.J., PRESIDENT, BOSTON COLLEGE

I love being a priest. To be a priest is to be given a precious gift and invited to serve people and work for the greater glory of God in a special way. I realize that such convictions may strike some as inconceivable in today's world, but they are true for me and for so many men who have chosen to minister as priests in the Catholic Church.

I am a Jesuit priest because of the grace of God, not because I have earned or merited such a vocation. When I review my life, I see evidence of grace and freedom, freedom as defined by the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner: "the power to decide about oneself and to actualize oneself."

Ever since I can remember, there has been a sense that I would someday be a priest. I recall a moment in Iowa when I was seven or eight. My brothers, sisters, and I were talking about what we would be when we grew up. I said that I wanted to be a farmer or a baseball player, but privately I told my mother that I thought I would be a priest.

That early desire for the priesthood has always been with me, not as something oppressive or robbing me of my freedom but as an invitation. I entered the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) because I wanted to, because I felt God drawing me to it. Nothing in the years since has ever made me want to change my mind.

Ordination was not a time when I was plagued with doubts or apprehensions. Rather, after listening to myself, my deepest desires, and examining the pattern of my life, I believe I freely and positively chose to be ordained, obviously not knowing all that would be asked of me as a Jesuit priest but at the same time trusting in God's grace.

So much of the grace and freedom that I believe is part of my life has come to me through my fellow Jesuits. They have profoundly influenced me, and I owe them a tremendous debt.

I have never met a finer group of men, and they have given me far more than I deserve or have a right to expect. I have been privileged to know a great number of excellent priests, men who are deeply human and generous. The quality and commitment of their lives speak so eloquently to me about priesthood. They do not promote themselves or continually tell you about their latest achievements and insights. Instead, they have a self-possession and simplicity about them. They

do not seek for themselves, but give to others. They are ministers in every sense of the word.

The Gospel of Matthew urges, "The gift you have received, give as a gift." These words apply to the priesthood. It is a gift, a grace to be used prudently and wisely, of course, but nonetheless one that does not allow for holding back or refusing to get involved with the human situation.

To be a priest requires living a life marked by faith, integrity, and service, and it offers the possibility for doing so much good and for helping make God more present in our world.

One day this winter I visited the parents of a recent graduate of Boston College whose son, like 20 other alumni of our university, was killed in the attack on the World Trade Center.

In grief and pride they told stories about their son, and showed me photographs, awards, and diplomas that chronicled his young life.

They were speaking to me, I knew, as the president of the institution their son had loved but also as a priest. They asked if I would like to go upstairs and see their son's bedroom, which they had kept exactly as he had left it. Perhaps they would have asked the same of the president of Harvard University or Stanford University. Perhaps not. But as a priest I was glad to be there to offer whatever comfort I could.

Such moments have been part of my life as a priest, and as a result I feel truly blessed by God.

I do not deny that there have been times of suffering and sorrow in my life. Like so many others, I feel betrayed and saddened by the shameful incidents of sexual misconduct committed by some priests, so devastating and harmful, especially to children and their families.

But I trust that God and his people will sustain me and my fellow priests, now and in the future, and that my vocation, with all of its gifts, will never cease to be the wonderfully fulfilling experience that it is for me today.

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## Endnotes

WILLIAM P. LEAHY, S.J., president of Boston College.

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## Saying AMEN to Lay Ecclesial Ministry

*Continued from page 16*

to find a treasure and a strength in terms of living the life of faith.

As I have come to understand it, the realities of the pastoral situation we face often call all of us to reexamine our own assumptions. Pastoral ministry itself challenges us to be sure that we have not

equated our own life experience with the fullness of truth. This is not an easy thing, because in so many ways we want to trust our own experience. But we always have to be open to the possibility that we need to accept a broader reality than the one we are currently living.

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## Endnotes

BISHOP MATTHEW CLARK is the current bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester, New York.

Bishop Matthew Clark, *Forward in Hope: Saying AMEN to Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 21–25.

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## PRIESTLY MINISTRY IN MULTIPLE PARISHES

What is it like for priests to provide ministry to more than one parish? Their level of satisfaction is remarkably high. Priests consistently describe the celebration of the Eucharist as most life-giving to them and to the parishioners. ... The lack of staff and the small sizes of many parishes often result in such a small congregation that less than adequate responses and singing are possible, but volunteers do their best to help make it meaningful worship. It is not surprising that among the most rewarding aspects of this ministry is the involvement of parishioners and their deep gratitude for the services of the priests.

Difficulties in serving multiple parishes also are clearly described. Lack of time to do everything, especially with long distances to travel, the demands of parishioners, who are used to having their own priests, scheduling problems, and fear of parish closures all contribute to anxiety and exhaustion. In effect, what is rewarding for some priests is difficult for others—or, in some cases, what is rewarding causes difficulties. For example, the demand for ministries in multiple settings erodes the time available to perform the services well. Some appreciate being able to get to know people in small parishes, but others find that splitting their time among several parishes leaves too little time to get to know many parishioners well. Among questions about ministry that need to be addressed are how to maintain the level of enthusiasm of these priests and how to help them manage their all-embracing responsibilities more effectively.

What can be done to sustain the life and ministry of these priests? Respondents to the survey and personal

interviews offered extensive advice for colleagues new to multiple parish ministry. Two recommendations about personal and spiritual life are almost universal: Take time for prayer and make it a priority to connect with a priest support group, both of which help priests to be more spiritually centered and refreshed for the rigors of their work. Pertaining to ministry, they advise making changes slowly and with consultation and delegating responsibilities that are not reserved to the ordained. They believe the morale of priests could be improved by following these suggestions, but even more they say they would be more effective in their ministry with more support from their leaders—bishops, religious superiors, and diocesan officials. They would appreciate from them personal encouragement, but also a greater understanding of the nature of their ministry. Most of all, they would like to see that a vision for the diocese is in place and that careful planning is being done for the future of these clustered parishes, the priests who serve them, and the diocese as a whole. In particular, they would like to see more support and training for lay ministers whose collaboration could help alleviate the burden placed on pastors. This poses a twofold challenge: How to sustain the well-being of the priests and how to ensure the interest in this ministry of those in authority so that a vision for the future can be established.

### Endnotes

SR. KATARINA SCHUTH, O.S.F., holds the Endowed Chair for the Social Scientific Study of Religion at the Saint Paul Seminary, University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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## Presbyteral Identity Within Parish Identity

*Continued from page 23*

completed there, so there is a direct trajectory between the two sacraments. Conversely, what is celebrated in the Eucharist finds historical and particular expression in the everyday life of the baptismal community. This is the sense in which the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the activity of the Church. The unity between the presbyter’s pastoral identity and his priestly identity reflects the unity of these two sacraments.

A presbyter’s role of pastoral leadership encompasses his priestly and prophetic roles, but also includes the discernment and oversight of other ministries within the parish. A presbyter does not exercise pastoral leadership alone, but always collegially. This is not only the collegium of the presbyterate, but also the collegiality of shared ministry in a fully functioning

baptismal community. A fully developed catechumenate implies a diversity and multiplicity of ministries and parish participation that extends far beyond liturgical ministries. Catechists, parish visitors, directors of faith formation, youth ministers, sponsors, those charged with sacramental preparation and hospitality—all need direction, inspiration, and orchestration. All are necessary for evangelization, sacramental preparation, mystagogia, and the ongoing pastoral care of a congregation. Parishioners are not just consumers of these services, but actively participate in ministry, whether informally or formally as lay ecclesial ministers. This is as it should be, for ministry and diakonia are attributes of the Church before they are attributes of an individual.

### Endnotes

SUSAN WOOD, S.C.L., is a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas.

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# Reflections of a Priest in a Time of Pain and Privilege

BY PATRICK BERGQUIST

There is a mark left on our hearts, a scar left on our souls, as we now contemplate our priesthood. And while this mark, this scar, might be born of sin and sadness, it is not to say that it is without meaning, or purpose, or even promise. To be sure, we priests have experienced a loss. We have been hurt, even as we now come to a fuller realization of those whom we have hurt. But it is precisely from this wounded and broken place that we are called to minister. It is from this broken and wounded place that we stutter and stammer, because as of yet we cannot sing—which might explain but does not excuse our silence. It is in this place that we have grieved and are grieving still. Grief washes over us, baptizing us, as we weep for the life we once knew, or thought we once knew. And it is here in this place, in our long dark winter's night, that we are given to write a new psalm, a new poem for our priesthood.

Vesting to say Mass, now that nearly 20 winters have passed since my ordination, I pause and ask myself what is it that I see when I look into the sacristy mirror. Is it the Roman collar around my neck, faded, torn, and nearly threadbare? No. Is it the once-bright white alb, now so stained with the oil of both gladness and tears, which in the end serves only to cover my faults, my most grievous faults? No. Daring to look ever deeper, to look beyond and beneath the externals of my Church and even my priesthood, I am forced to look into my own heart, and here to contemplate the indelible mark left on my own soul. It is here in this mirror that I must face the apparent disconnect between what could be, what should be, and what is.

As a priest, my personal struggle is not really so much something sacramental, or even ministerial, as it is something existential. For how can I grab hold of the idea, the notion, the infallible teaching, that upon the sheer act of my ordination, my former self, a soul prolonged and plagued by sin, simply vanishes to be forever replaced by a soul that acts in the person of Christ at all times. Is it even possible to live with this supposed idealized reality? Thus my dilemma and my Church's as well. Can these two realities (the idealized and the actualized), these two mysteries, these two natures live in the same world, pray in the same church, breathe in the same priesthood, beat in the same heart? Maybe, just maybe, this is the sacred but scarred soul of our priesthood, or perhaps just mine.

It matters not how much I might want to look away, for it is this mark left on the soul of my priesthood that stares back at me each morning as I look in the sacristy mirror. There

is a temptation to reduce the notion of the indelible mark to some mere theological construct, composed for a perfect world, and possessed by a Church claiming to be without fault. And if indeed this is it, if this is all there is to it, then truly I must fear for my priesthood. For mine would certainly be a priesthood doomed to fade into oblivion, evaporate into obscurity, and possibly even perish into irrelevancy. All this as the world, and possibly the kingdom itself, passes us by.

In one of the final scenes of Graham Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory*, the main character, a most unlikely hero, the nameless but nearly famed whiskey priest, stares at his prison-cell wall early on the morning of his execution. He stares transfixed on the wall of his cell, which transforms into a mirror and serves only to reflect back to himself the state of his soul. Here the whiskey priest dares to see, for truly he has no other choice but to see things not as they could have been but as they truly are:

He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint.

I believe that the whiskey priest was a saint, a saint if only by his sheer and desperate brokenness and brutal honesty. I am also confident that the Church, my Church, would never find cause for his canonization. Nevertheless, by his heartfelt act of contrition, no mere rote words of empty and pious ritual, and by the scar heavy on his soul, the scar redeemed into the indelible mark of his priesthood—he was a saint, well, a saint of sorts. Oh, that this would be true for all of us priests. ... It is good for us to remember that in the end, we will all have to go to God empty-handed, saved only by the pierced hands and wounded heart of Jesus, in whose very priesthood we now cling.

Thus by God's grace the pains of our priesthood, or maybe just mine, need not be shamed by the pain of the victims of clergy sexual abuse as much as they must be reshaped and challenged by their pain. In the end, when

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# A Deacon's Wife Reflects

BY DIANE BERNING

*Deacons form the only group among the Catholic Church's ordained ministers for whom marriage is a norm, rather than an exception. What's it like, then, to be the wife of an ordained minister? Diane Berning explores what can be a complex role.*

I love my husband, Frank, and I love my Lord, Jesus Christ, and I love my Church. I believe in my husband, in Jesus Christ, and my Church. Now that I have said this you are probably saying so or where's the but. There really isn't a "but," it's more of a "let's look at the whole picture."

The picture for me is life after ordination. What was I told it would be like? My husband the deacon would be busier, more demands would be made on him. I wasn't too worried because he had just retired from his secular job and he had always worked at least 60 to 70 hours a week. We owned our own businesses for over 25 years. I would find myself sitting in a pew alone at most services. This too was not new since he had served with our previous pastor as altar server and trainer to young children so I sat with whichever one of our children were with me.

These two things were not what life after ordination really amounts to. The morning of the day my husband was ordained was bright and beautiful. I awoke feeling sad, confused, and angry. Why? To this day I can't fully explain these reactions. I will offer the following for your consideration because I don't think I am the only one who goes through this phenomenon; rather, I think others share in these feelings, perhaps not on ordination day but at some point along the way.

First, I was sad because I really believed and still do that I was losing a part of my husband, a vital part of my marriage and my life, as I knew it for 40 years. (Ordination and our 40th anniversary were within days of each other.) Confused because for five-plus years we, Frank and I, had worked hard for this special sacrament. We attended all formation, liturgical, and homiletics classes together. I attended classes in theology and ministry on a master's course level with Frank. Five years of my life were dedicated to this new life we were entering. All of a sudden, it all ended. Frank was moving on and there I was in the pew alone.

Angry. Yes, because what was I to do? Find my own ministries? I had given up all the church ministries and volunteer ministries I had been involved in at least three or four years before ordination. We weren't being assigned back to our own parish but to a parish we had been a part of while growing up. To some we had come home. To others we were there and the deacon or deacons they wanted, weren't. Even one of the deacons there retired and people believed that it was Frank's fault.

During formation and discernment, both the husband and wife grow. Your faith truly does become enriched and you want to be able to share it with everyone. You grow as a couple and as individuals. You are as well educated in the Church as your husband and I believe as capable as he is to go forth. I am not saying that wives need to be ordained but I am saying that wives need to be better prepared for life after ordination.

There are many things in our churches for all of God's people. One must identify what and where we are needed. Sometimes it's not easy. I know for some wives none of what I have said or felt will be an issue and they are all women I admire because of the confidence and belief in themselves. I don't feel, however, that I lack confidence but that I lacked the directions I needed through this new phase in my life.

It has been three years since that morning when I woke in tears and near hysterics but I am still searching. I have a loving husband, who supports me in whatever I do, I have a loving God and a Church I believe in, I just need to figure out where I am needed most.

My fervent prayer is that wives are given the respect they deserve. That they are not just considered the add-ons to the deacon. Please Lord; help wives, deacons, and your people by directing us to the ministries in which we should serve. Amen. I usually remind God that when he calls me, he needs to speak up because I can't always hear him through my own chaos.

Many people feel that even though a wife is encouraged to assist her husband throughout his years in formation and discernment (which in some places means wives giving up their own outside activities) she should know without being told that's it. What do I mean? At the end of the program comes ordination. Who is ordained? The helpmate is done. Job over. Go forth and look for another assignment. If you were in the same group as I was you will even be told not to look at any of the same ministries as your husband. What's left and what do you do after years of marriage and being a team?

Spiritual direction and discernment for the wives is as important for the wife as it is for the deacon. If we want to continue to ordain married men to the diaconate, then we must consider ways to assist their wives, so that they can contribute to the community where their husband is assigned. Unfortunately, our ordained priests do not know what married life is like and they stress marriage and then diaconate, but it's not like that in real life. What deacon's wife is going to say, "I am more important than God"? They



might get angry and try to change things, but demands are still made on the couple. To believe that when the husband is ordained a deacon, a wife is just going to step back and go back to life as it was five or six years before is wrong.

Besides spiritual direction for the couples (individually) support groups are very important. This is a place where you can receive direction, give direction, but mostly be supportive not only of your spouse but others going through the same issues as yourself. I am at present involved in pastoral planning in our parish, I am a Eucharistic minister, and I am still struggling with why did I need to be with Frank every step of the way. Did he really need me to go to classes? Apparently not, since he has gone to classes since ordination

that I haven't attended. Did I need to learn everything I did to support his decision? I don't believe so. Did I enjoy the classes, the camaraderie of the people, did I learn? Yes! Yes! Yes!

I encourage and suggest that as the wife of a deacon it is necessary that we tell the wives of men entering into discernment that they also need to be discerning what they want, need, and will do in the future. To all deacons and to all wives of deacons, may God bless you and may you find your way as a couple and individuals.

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#### Endnotes

Diane Berning, "A Deacon's Wife Reflects," *Deacon Digest* 25 (2008), 17–18.

## A PORTRAIT OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE: A STUDY FOR THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS 2009–2010

### Number of Deacons

- Twenty-one arch/dioceses report having more than 200 permanent deacons, with Chicago (646 deacons), Trenton (442 deacons), and Galveston-Houston (383) among the top three. Deacons currently minister in all but one diocese in the United States.
- Eight in 10 permanent deacons in responding arch/dioceses are active in ministry.
- The 163 Latin rite arch/dioceses that responded to the questionnaire in at least one of the last five years report a total of 14,317 permanent deacons. The six arch/eparchies that have responded report a total of 82 permanent deacons. Extrapolating to include dioceses and eparchies that have never responded to the survey, it can be estimated that there are as many as 17,047 permanent deacons in the United States today and perhaps as many as 16,349 still active in ministry.

### Demographic Characteristics of Deacons in Active Ministry

- Ninety-two percent of permanent deacons in active ministry are

currently married. Four percent are widowers, and 2 percent have never been married.

- More than six in 10 permanent deacons in active ministry are at least 60 years old. Almost four in 10 deacons are 60 to 69, and about a quarter are 70 or older.
- Eighty-one percent of active deacons are non-Hispanic whites. Fourteen percent are Hispanic or Latino. Two percent are African-American and 2 percent are Asian.
- One-quarter of active deacons (28 percent) have a graduate degree. Deacons are twice as likely to have a graduate degree in a field not related to the diaconate as to have one in a religious field such as religious studies, theology, canon law, etc.

### Compensation and Formation

- Fewer than one in five (18 percent) permanent deacons are financially compensated for ministry.
- Among deacons who are compensated for full-time ministry, three in 10 are entrusted with the pastoral care of one or more parishes (Canon 517.2). Among all deacons who are compensated

(either full-time or part-time) for their ministerial work, one in five is entrusted with the pastoral care of one or more parishes.

- Approximately four in 10 arch/dioceses have at least one permanent deacon who is compensated either for prison ministry, hospital ministry, or entrusted with the pastoral care of one or more parishes prescribed under Canon 517.2.
- Eighty-four percent of arch/dioceses require post-ordination formation of deacons. These arch/dioceses require an average of 22 hours of post-ordination formation annually.
- Ninety percent of arch/dioceses have a director of the diaconate (or a person with a similar title). In one-third of these arch/dioceses, the position is full-time.
- Nine in 10 arch/dioceses have a minimum age for deacons. Almost half (47 percent) have a mandatory age for deacon retirement.

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, *A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate: A Study for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 2009–2010*, [www.usccb.org/cclv/diaconate-post-ordination-report2009-2010.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/cclv/diaconate-post-ordination-report2009-2010.pdf)

# The Diaconate

BY CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

*Walter Kasper outlines the role of the deacon. His focus is not primarily on what the deacon “does,” but on how the ministry of the deacon expresses in a particular way the mission of the whole Church.*

In St John's Gospel, Jesus says: “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no avail” (6:63). Institutional and structural reforms too can be “useless flesh” (to use this biblical image), if they are not borne up by the life-giving Spirit. This is why the renewal of the diaconate is first of all a spiritual task. The basic spiritual attitude of the deacon must make clear that the Christian path is not an ascent or a triumphal march in glory, but a path that looks downward, following Jesus Christ who descended from heaven. This “downwardly mobile career” is described in the Christological hymn in the Letter to the Philippians (2:6-11), which prescribes the basic Christian virtue, as the spiritual tradition teaches, namely, the attitude of humility, which is a willingness to serve. This must *a fortiori* be the basic attitude of the deacon.

This includes a perceptive eye for those suffering distress, illness, or fear. The task is to bring a healing that sets free and empowers them to trust and so to serve and love others in their turn.

In some situations, the deacon can and must become the public advocate of the weak and powerless and of all those who have no other voice or lobby.

The concrete tasks must be tackled on the basis of these fundamental spiritual attitudes. The deacon is the contact partner for various problems, and all those in need must be able to look confidently to him for help. Since his ministry includes liturgy, preaching, and *diaconia*, he can make others aware of the connection between faith and

life. In his ministry at the altar, he lays the needs of human beings on the Eucharistic table, and naturally he also speaks of these needs when he preaches. He must make the parish aware of urgent situations of need, motivating them to share with one another and to give practical help.

*Spiritually motivated, well-trained deacons employed in meaningful tasks are a necessity for the Church today. They are neither substitutes for a parish priest nor social workers. They represent the deacon Jesus Christ in a sacramental manner.*

One essential task consists in finding, training, and guiding volunteer church workers. As time goes on, he must leave more and more tasks and services to these volunteers, concentrating more on accompanying them professionally, personally, and spiritually, since those who work in institutions such as kindergartens, health and counseling centers, or old people's homes themselves need pastoral care and guidance. Ideally, the deacon should initiate and support self-help groups, e.g., for single parents or drug addicts. It is clear that the contemporary problems described above are not restricted to any one community alone.

This perspective has led to the suggestion that although the deacon should be assigned to one specific parish and be integrated into its life, his ministry should have a wider scope, e.g., of a city, a deanery, or a region. With his base in one parish, he could build up the diaconal tasks in several communities and link these in a network. The emphasis here must lie on finding, training, accompanying, and supporting volunteer church workers in the individual parishes and setting up a network within one city or region.

Through his participation in ecclesial ministry, the deacon also shares in the leadership of the community, where his primary concern is to integrate *diaconia* and see that it is given its appropriate place in pastoral work. As the official representative of the community, he is the obvious contact person for regional Catholic charity organizations and health centers. He should be represented in ecumenical diaconal associations. He should also ensure that the communities are in contact with those responsible for social matters in local government and in nongovernmental aid organizations.

Many of these tasks can be done only by full-time professionals, others by a nonstipendiary deacon, whose main opportunities lie in his professional activities where—like the French worker-priests—he should represent the church locally and be present in spheres of life to which no one else from the church has access. He should then bring these experiences back into the community, where he is the advocate of *diaconia*. In this way, he would exercise his own autonomous ministry in an appropriate manner; he would not simply be an emergency replacement where priests are few in number.

Naturally, the parish is not the only ideal place for the deacon to work. Ministry to specific groups—hospitals, old age homes, industrial chaplaincies,

prisons, refugee hostels, etc.—can also be very suitable, as well as collaboration in the government of a diocese in those tasks primarily concerned with diaconal leadership tasks. The deacons of a diocese also form an advisory body that can be very helpful to the bishop; as a fellowship, they can be the bishop's eyes and ears with respect to human needs and they can help him to be “the father of the poor.”

The Church cannot exist without *diaconia*, and the Church indeed has a particular office for *diaconia*. Therefore, would it not make sense for each parish to have a deacon? This would not involve any financial problem, since one could install nonstipendiary deacons. I suggest that every parish contains undiscovered potential in this area: Ideally, the priest and the community would suggest to the bishop, or to those with responsibility for the diaconate in his diocese, that such and such a person would be a good candidate for the ministry of nonstipendiary deacon.

In conclusion: Spiritually motivated, well-trained deacons employed in meaningful tasks are a necessity for the Church today. They are neither substitutes for a parish priest nor social workers. They represent the deacon Jesus Christ in a sacramental manner, bringing into our world the love of God, which the Holy Spirit has poured out into our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

### Endnotes

CARDINAL WALTER KASPER was president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity from 2001 to 2010.

Walter Kasper, “The Diaconate” in *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 38–44.

## Reflections of a Priest in a Time of Pain and Privilege

*Continued from page 29*

all is said and done, I believe it will be their pain (which is Christ's pain) and Christ's pain that will become the very privilege of my priesthood.

The quest for a heroic priesthood lies not in being otherworldly, or in being set apart, but in the desire to conform

## THE MINISTRY AND IDENTITY OF THE DEACON

### Relationship with the Laity

56. By ordination, deacons are members of the clergy. The vast majority of deacons in the United States, married or celibate, have secular employment and do not engage exclusively in specific church-related ministries. This combination of an ordained minister with a secular occupation and personal and family obligations can be a great strength, opportunity, and witness to the laity on how they too might integrate their baptismal call and state in life in living their Christian faith in society.

57. The laity, as members of the Church, have an obligation and right to share in the communion and mission of the Church. Through his ordination to service, the deacon promotes, in an active fashion, the various lay apostolates and guides these in communion with the bishop and local priests. In collaboration with his bishop and the priests of his diocese, the deacon has a special role to promote communion and to counter the strong emphasis on individualism prevalent in the United States. Set aside for service, the deacon links together the individual and diverse segments of the community of believers. In his works of charity, the deacon guides and witnesses to the Church “the love of Christ for all men instead of personal interests and ideologies which are injurious to the universality of salvation ... the *diakonia* of charity necessarily leads to a growth of communion within the particular Churches since charity is the very soul of ecclesial communion.”

### Relationship with Society

58. The diaconate is lived in a particularly powerful way in the manner in which a deacon fulfills his obligations to his secular occupation, to his civic and public responsibilities, and among his family and neighbors. This, in turn, enables the deacon to bring back to the Church an appreciation of the meaning and value of the Gospel as he discerns it in the lives and questions of the people he has encountered.

In his preaching and teaching, the deacon articulates the needs and hopes of the people he has experienced, thereby animating, motivating, and facilitating a commitment among the lay faithful to an evangelical service in the world.

— United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States” (2005).

ourselves more closely to Christ, to conform our lives ever more perfectly to the sacred but scarred heart of Jesus.

### Endnotes

FR. PATRICK BERGQUIST is a diocesan priest of the Missionary Diocese of Northern Alaska and has been pastor of St. Raphael Catholic parish in Fairbanks since 1998.

Patrick Bergquist, *The Long Dark Winter's Night: Reflections of a Priest in a Time of Pain and Privilege* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 97–101.



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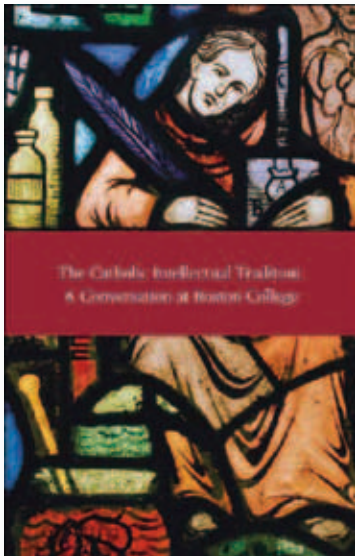
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