



Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers

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The 1983 Code of Canon Law defines the Christian faithful as those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God. For this reason—since they have become sharers in Christ’s

priestly, prophetic, and royal office in their own manner—they are called to exercise the mission God entrusted the Church to fulfill in the world in accord with the condition proper to each one (Canon 204, 1). The Code of Canon Law then informs us the “By divine institution, there are...in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons” (Canon 207, 1).

Before turning to the rights and obligations proper to the laity and to the clergy, the code of Canon Law deals with the rights and duties of all members of the Church “free to make known to the pastors are the members of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires” (Canon 212,2) but, “according to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful...” (Canon 212,3). So laity as well as clergy are not only free, they may be obliged to speak to their pastors and to the community of the faithful at large on matters that pertain to the well-being of the Church.

Forty years after the Second Vatican Council, these canons may not strike us as remarkable. Consider, however, that less than a century and a quarter before the issuance of the 1983 code, John Henry Newman was forced to resign the editorship of the journal in which he had advanced the idea that the faithful, in particular the laity, should be consulted in matters of doctrine.¹ The highest-ranking English-speaking member of the Roman Curia at the time, Monsignor George Talbot, spoke for many church officials when he dismissed Newman’s suggestion as absurd: “What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all...”² Imagine how gratified Cardinal Newman would be and how scandalized Monsignor Talbot after reading the 1983 code of Canon Law.

Undoubtedly, the theological understanding of the vocation of the

laity has developed astonishingly in the last century. The theology of what was called Catholic Action and the groundbreaking work of scholars such as Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac laid the foundation for Vatican II’s *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People. However, the 1983 Code goes past the Vatican II decree in a significant way. Vatican II states, “The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, lay people are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world” (section 2). The Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People emphasizes that the focus of the laity’s activity is in the world, as contrasted with the clergy’s work, which is within the ecclesiastical structure. In short, normally the layperson works in the world and the ordained person works in the Church.

The division of labor seems theologically inadequate and practically unworkable. In the years since Vatican II, the steady decline in numbers of persons active in ordained ministry has reached the point that there is serious question whether the faithful can have access to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist (to which they have a “right,” according to Canon 213 of the 1983 Code). The ratio of the total number of diocesan and religious priests to the number of the faithful has dropped by 63 percent worldwide in the thirty years from 1969 through 1999. In the United States, the decline has been 59 percent in the same period. In Europe, the ratio of priests to people fell 22 percent, while Central and South America saw an astonishing 80 percent decline.

Some have tried to take comfort from the 57 percent increase in the

IN THIS ISSUE

Parish Ministry Today

In chapter six of the Acts of the Apostles St. Luke recounts how the needs of the early Christian community led the Apostles to appoint associates in their pastoral work. The Greek word Luke uses to indicate their service is *diakonia* which, in Latin, is translated as *ministerium*.

The history of the growth of the early Christian communities is a study in evolving forms of leadership. Ministry, authorized by the Holy Spirit in service to the assembly, took many forms. We read in the Letter to the Ephesians: “Christ’s gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). Over subsequent centuries, new structures continued to emerge (e.g. the Roman curia, the office of cardinal, episcopal conferences). Today, the Catholic Church in the United States is going through another evolution at the parish level. Faced with declining numbers of priests, local churches have turned to deacons, religious men and women, and laypeople and given them a variety of responsibilities. At the same time, clearer pictures of priesthood have emerged that distinguish between what is central to priestly ministry and what is secondary. In this issue of *C21 Resources*, we offer a number of reflections on the state of parish ministry today. Together, they suggest a hopeful picture. Parish life may be changing in unprecedented ways, but a number of parishes have found effective solutions to the question of how to serve their most important needs.

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—The Editors

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number of priests in Africa; however, the number of Catholics in Africa rose by 206 percent between 1969 and 1999, so the ratio of priests to the total Catholic population actually decreased by 149 percent.

In 2000, 471 diocesan priests were ordained in the United States; that same year 778 died and 85 left the active ministry, for a total loss of 392 priests.³

The primary factor that has prevented this crisis of ordained ministry from crippling the Church is the increasing number of laypeople actively engaged in ecclesial ministries. At the Long Island seminary at which fewer than 40 men will prepare for ordination to the priesthood next year, over 200 women and men are studying for degrees in theology and ministry.

Nor is this happening on the parish level alone. For example, the active membership of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the professional association of Catholic theologians in the United States and Canada, was over 90 percent male in 1971, and almost all of them were priests. In 1991, the CTSA's active membership was only slightly over 65 percent male, and only half of them were ordained. This means that the teaching of theology in Catholic universities and colleges in the United States and Canada was already predominantly a lay undertaking a dozen years ago.

The trend has, of course, only accelerated in the intervening years. It is now impossible for the Church to function on any level—diocesan or parochial—or in any mission—charitable or educational—without the active engagement of large numbers of laypeople. Thus, for practical reasons it is now impossible to distinguish between the clergy and laity on basis of spheres of work.

The attempt to make such a distinction is also theologically unsound. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II teaches that “Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less interrelated; each in its own way shares in

the one priesthood are none the less interrelated; each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ” (section 10). In the last several decades, this essential difference has been construed in two ways. One has been to invoke the metaphysical language of ontology. Thus, we sometimes hear it said that one is “ontologically changed” by ordination. If one examines this claim, however, either one ends up in conclusions that appear bizarre at best and flatly heretical at worst or one recognizes that the language of ontology is simply employed to underscore that there is a real difference between the ordained and the laity but does not offer much assistance in determining precisely in what that real difference consists.

The other way of trying to frame the distinction between clergy and laity has been functional, that is, the clergy are empowered to perform certain functions that the laity cannot, and it is the performance of those functions that constitutes this difference in essence and not merely in degree of which the Second Vatican Council document speaks. The difficulties with this approach are obvious. First, if the performance of particular functions, such as presiding at Eucharist and extending absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation, were the constitutive difference between the ordained and the laity, it would follow that ceasing to perform those functions would erase the difference. Thus, a person who cannot perform the distinctive tasks of the ordained or who resigns from active ministry would cease to be a priest. This, of course, is contrary to the Church's tradition. Further, it is extremely difficult (I believe impossible) to establish a list of functions that have always and everywhere throughout the history of the Church been the exclusive preserve of the ordained. So it would seem that the functional approach to understanding the distinction between laity and clergy is as unsatisfactory as the “ontological change” approach.

Let me suggest a different way of casting the relationship between laity and clergy, one that is more faithful to the tradition of Catholic life and thought and that better describes our current experience in the Church here

and abroad. The distinction between clergy and laity is best understood in terms of a classically Catholic category's sacramentality.

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.

So, too, all time is God's time. There is nothing intrinsically holier about Sunday than about any other day of the week. But if all time is God's time, then some time we need to notice that fact, to set aside particular times and days and seasons as holy.

Sunday sacramentalizes the holiness of all time; a church or chapel or shrine sacramentalizes the omnipresence of God. 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 communion, 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 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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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. 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 those 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 clergy used to be cast. In the early and mid twentieth century, the mission of the laity (usually termed "Catholic Action") was 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 and that some are called to

sacramentalize them by ordination. Baptism is more fundamental than holy orders. What is conferred on all by baptism is sacramentalized in some by 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. Newman answered his bishops' question "Who are the laity?" by commenting that the Church would look foolish without them.⁵ Indeed, it would. Saint Thomas famously described a sacrament as that which effects what it signifies. Where there is nothing to signify, there is no effect. 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.

Let me offer a concluding observation. We are only beginning to appreciate the mission of the laity in the life of the Church. I suspect that, as usual in the Church's history, experience must precede theological clarity. As the laity realize their mission, we will better understand its dimensions and its relation to the role of the clergy. And the theologians who do so will probably be laypeople.

From Richard W. Miller II, ed., *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past*, Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2005.

1. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. John Coulson (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1961). Newman originally published the article in the July 1859 issue of *The Rambler*.

2. *Ibid.*, 41.

3. Richard W. Miller, "Introduction," in *The Catholic Church in the 21st Century: Finding Hope for Its Future in the Wisdom of Its Past*, ed. Michael J. Hines (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004), x-xi.

5. Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, 18f.

FROM THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (1964)

32. By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another". Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"; sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on

the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus".

If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God. And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made

between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need. Pastors of the Church, following the example of the Lord, should minister to one another and to the other faithful. These in their turn should enthusiastically lend their joint assistance to their pastors and teachers. Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ. This very diversity of graces, ministries and works gathers the children of God into one, because "all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit".

Therefore, from divine choice the laity have Christ for their brothers

who though He is the Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve. They also have for their brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ feed the family of God so that the new commandment of charity may be fulfilled by all. St. Augustine puts this very beautifully when he says: "What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation".

Lay Ministry: The State of the Profession

BY PATRICIA LEFEVERE

Patti Morin saw it coming. Already in 1970 as a junior at the Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington, Md., she had to imagine a Catholic parish without a priest. Holy Cross Sr. Ann Donnelly asked the class to design a parish comprised of three congregations with only one priest.

Morin said that when she first considered the situation, she became angry: “Who would meet our faith needs?” But after much discussion with her classmates and the Holy Cross sisters who ran the academy, she came to see that “there would be someone who would meet our needs.” It might even be her, and others like her in her homeroom, parish or neighborhood.

Today Morin is director of faith formation at St. Mark Parish in Sutton, Mass., in the Worcester diocese. She holds a diocesan certificate in religious education administration, and previously worked as a director of religious education and has been a catechist since age 16.

She is one of 34,000 lay Catholics who work more than 20 hours a week in parishes, schools, health care and other settings. The group encompasses directors of religious education, pastoral life coordinators, pastoral associates, liturgical, music, youth and campus ministers. Some 18,000 adult Catholics are in training for ministry roles.

In addition more than 100,000 catechists serve U.S. parishes and countless thousands of laity volunteer for liturgical ministries as lectors, eucharistic ministers, musicians and ushers. Lay volunteers are also involved in parish and institutional outreach to the poor, the sick, to new immigrants and to prisoners, as well as to the elderly and homebound. Parish councils and finance boards depend on skilled laity.

While the number of parishes has remained roughly the same over the past three decades — 18,433 in 1974 and 19,297 in 2005, the number of priests has declined from 56,712 in 1974 to 43,304 in 2004. A substantial number of priests are over 70, retired

or semiretired, though still counted in clergy numbers, because they say a weekend Mass or occasionally pinch hit for the pastor at a funeral or other sacramental service. Overall 69 percent of ordained priests are over 55. Meanwhile, since 1974 the U.S. Catholic population has grown from 48.5 million to today’s 67.8 million.

The evolution of lay ecclesial ministers is for many an idea whose time has come, given not just the fall in clergy ranks but the even greater decline in the number of nuns.

“It’s the loss of sisters that has driven this phenomenon, more than the priest shortage,” said Franciscan Sr. Katarina Schuth, a sociologist and theologian at St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. Thirty years ago religious women totaled 139,963 compared to 69,963 today.

The restoration of the permanent diaconate by Pope Paul VI in 1967 has helped buffer the priest shortage somewhat. Deacons work as parish life coordinators -- also called pastoral

When she first considered the situation, she became angry: “Who would meet our faith needs?”

administrators — in 148 of the 566 U.S. parishes without a resident priest. Currently 15,027 deacons serve the American church — 70 percent of them over 60 — and another 1,017 are aspirants.

Another look at the laity

In November the bishops will release a document titled “Co-workers in the Vineyard: Resources for the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry.” It is their fourth look at the role of Catholic laity in 25 years. In 1980 they released “Called and Gifted: Catholic Laity” and in 1995, “Called and Gifted for the New Millennium.” Four years later the bish-

ops’ Subcommittee on Lay Ministry authored “Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions.”

The document looks at the state of lay ministry and at the theology grounding it. It contains sections on the process by which a layperson and the church discern whether the candidate has a vocation to ministry.

“Co-workers in the Vineyard” relies on consultation with lay ecclesial ministers. It uses research conducted by CARA — the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and the National Association for Lay Ministry, both in Washington, and by the National Pastoral Life Center in New York.

The document also deals with the formation needed for lay ministry as well as the question of authorization. “By whose authority do you serve?” has become a pertinent question for lay ministers, whose work can be terminated by a change in pastor or bishop.

Increasingly the authority of the bishop is taking precedence over the authority of the parish priest, who for many years installed his coworkers — often selecting candidates who were already working or volunteering at church.

“You can’t bypass the authority of the local pastor, but overall the authority for lay ministers rests with the diocese,” said Mercy Sr. Amy Hoey, project coordinator for the bishops’ Subcommittee on Lay Ministry. It will be the diocesan leaders — in consultation with the bishop — who determine the screening, recruiting and formation of candidates as well as the general guidance principles for the workplace, she said.

Still, “there’s huge resistance to dioceses picking people to do lay ministry, but not to their certification by the diocese,” said Schuth, who’s been studying seminaries and theologates for two decades. “Pastors want to retain control of their ministers.”

Professional practice

For decades the church has been blessed with professional clergy and religious men and women who hold higher degrees and bring years of specialization to their vowed life of service to the church. According to Christopher Anderson, executive

director of the National Association for Lay Ministry, it is time to improve the knowledge of lay ministers as well. With 34,000 workers already on the job and half that number enrolled in either diocesan or university-based pastoral training programs, the level of competency is on the rise, but still far from adequate, he noted.

“To do ministry poorly is to leave permanent spiritual and psychic scars on some of the world’s most vulnerable people -- the wounded and broken who are searching for God, community and peace of mind and soul,” said Mark Markuly of the Institute for Pastoral Studies at Loyola University in New Orleans.

The ripple effects of poor ministers are “dysfunctional faith communities and ecclesial structures” which lead to a breakdown of trust in the community, he told about 200 members of the National Association for Lay Ministry at their annual conference in New Orleans in June.

Markuly called for setting standards and building a culture for professional practice in lay ministry. Citing studies by the Project Management Institute, a group that has surveyed many professional groups across disciplines, he said that professions:

- Have the ability to capture the exclusive use of the name (doctor, lawyer, minister, etc.);
- Achieve official recognition from an oversight agency — in this case the bishop;
- Lay claim to the exclusive mastery of an esoteric, formal body of knowledge;
- Set educational criteria for entry into and advancement in the profession;
- Create a sense of accountability through a code of ethics or conduct.

Markuly tacked on a sixth mark: “People start making up jokes about you.”

Anderson added another: “People pay you for what you do.” In past decades that statement may have been a joke, he noted. But the movement from church volunteers, low-salaried nuns and “pro-bono ministers” to paid staff is happening.

Pay is one of the most important issues among lay ecclesial ministers,

Anderson noted. No one chooses ministry to get rich, but many wonder if they can stay in the field and still support a family.

In a 2002 CARA survey of 795 lay ecclesial ministers entrusted with the care of a parish without a resident priest pastor, the average salary of full-time liturgical, eucharistic or music ministers was \$29,750; directors of religious education and the catechuminate, \$28,600; pastoral associates, \$28,300; and youth ministers, \$26,850.

Two percent of those surveyed earned under \$10,000 a year while 10 percent made \$40,000 and more. Still 91 percent of those sampled “agreed strongly” or “agreed somewhat” that they were adequately compensated.

Ninety-one percent of parish life coordinators receive health benefits while 63 percent of lay ecclesial ministers get a health package.

To provide professionally trained ministers and uphold their competency over many years remains a challenge for seminaries, universities, dioceses, pastors and lay staff. Schuth has found that many diocesan programs “lack in quality” compared to what Catholic colleges and universities can offer.

Compensation and time off to attend classes also pose problems. Increasingly the cost of education is being paid one-third by the diocese, one-third by the parish and one-third by the lay minister in training, Anderson said. Usually religious women and men have an easier time getting funding and attending evening, weekend and summer courses than do lay ministers who are raising children and/or working at another job.

Cost factors also impede the chance for lay ecclesial ministers to attend conferences and to meet their peers in other parts of the nation. “Some bean counters in some diocesan offices have ‘X-ed’ conference travel for nearly all lay ministers,” noted Anderson. If ministers choose to attend a gathering at their own expense, they will be asked to make up the time or deduct it from their vacation, he said.

No one is yet linking such austerities to the huge awards some dioceses have had to pay to settle clergy sex offender cases. “The fallout is really serious,” said Schuth, who added that bishops must realize that even if funds are short, “scholarship money is desperately needed” for the advancement of the laity.

Future church

The fact that only 28 percent of lay ministers polled in the CARA study are age 44 or younger compared to 27 percent over age 55 and 18 percent 65 years or older, points to a graying of the corps.

In general, lay ministers are only a few years younger than the priests with whom they are working. The average age of all lay ecclesial ministers is 52, while 62 is the average for parish life coordinators. Nuns and religious brothers polled by CARA were slightly older on average than their lay colleagues.

Anderson noted there are “certain voices in the church, including several bishops,” who see the rise of lay ministers as “a temporary move.” To those who say, “Religious vocations are on the way,” Anderson rejoined, “Give me a break.”

Schuth saw another “pitfall” for lay ministers -- namely, young priests, “who surveys show are much less likely to want to work with laity,” she noted. Schuth said she has met 14 years of resistance from some seminarians to the notion that the American Catholic church “has an absolute need for collaboration between clergy and laity. ... It is a given in my class,” she said, adding that resistance has ebbed in recent years.

In the five-year-long, Lilly Endowment-funded Emerging Models Project, groups of lay ministers have sat side by side with pastors, deacons, religious, diocesan planners and pastoral council representatives to share their emerging models of pastoral leadership. Gatherings have been held in Seattle, Chicago, Atlanta and Storrs, Conn., and are planned for four other locales through next year.

By the time the project is complete, hundreds of pastoral leaders from every region and most dioceses will have had an opportunity to share their innovative approaches to parish leadership, said Marti Jewell, project director. The eight symposia are yielding “good research information and, I hope, stimulating a national conversation on ‘pastoral imagination,’” she said.

The project concludes with a national ministry summit in April 2008.

At each of the three-day symposia, lay ministers and pastors have

been invited to discuss and write about what they think the church of 2025 will look like. “It seems far away, but it’s not that long off,” said Morin.

At the Storrs symposia, attended by NCR, among the offerings were a dozen “best practices” for lay ministers:

- Be a good listener, especially to those who don’t agree with you.
- Make eye contact during homilies and in one-on-one encounters.
- Utilize the “servant” model of leadership as Jesus did.
- Fit “witnessing about one’s faith” into the Sunday liturgy.
- Rotate ministries. Cap how long one can be a lector or Eucharistic minister.
- Train and credential lay leaders from the parish.
- Make parishioners aware of educational opportunities and resources.
- Take risks rooted in prayer and study and use scripture frequently.
- Keep Christ in the center of all ministries. This will end “in” and “out” groups.

- Be collaborative and patient, particularly with new endeavors.
- Extend hospitality. Send cards on birthdays and anniversaries of reception of the sacraments.
- Challenge those who just want a “Mass factory” parish to get more involved.

“Expect no recognition, not even thanks,” said Irene Goodwin, parish life coordinator at St. Mary of the Assumption in Scottsville, N.Y. Goodwin learned that from a priest she has worked with: “He taught me to be present. People don’t need you to be charismatic; they don’t need your words so much as your presence.”

Goodwin, who has worked more than a decade as a parish life coordinator in the Rochester diocese, shared three lessons she had learned from pastors with whom she has served: “Be bold,” “learn how to party,” and “there are 25 good ways to make chicken soup.”

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Ordained leadership: a brief history

BY SHARON MACMILLAN

Deacons Ken, Mark, and Rubén stood at the beginning of the ordination rite on that bright, warm May morning, and listened attentively as their vocation director put into words the desire of the entire local church: that these men be ordained to the responsibility of the priesthood. After the bishop consented and the assembly proclaimed its gratitude to God in enthusiastic words and applause, and after the bishop's homily, Ken, Mark and Rubén stood again to promise fidelity to the demands of the priestly life about to begin.

The first question they heard offered a bit more precision to the meaning of priesthood. "Do you resolve, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral rank, as worthy fellow workers with the Order of Bishops in caring for the Lord's flock?" It is easy to miss the subtlety of that image: within the priesthood there are ranks, and these men are being ordained to the rank of presbyter identified in this promise as a fellow worker with the bishop.

During the ordination prayer itself, there is additional clarity. The bishop chanted: "And now we beseech you, Lord, in our weakness, to grant us these helpers that we need to exercise the priesthood that comes from the apostles. Grant, we pray, Almighty Father, to these, your servants, the dignity of the priesthood;...may they henceforth possess this office which comes from you, O God, and is next in rank to the office of bishop..."

At the conclusion of the celebration, Fathers Ken, Mark and Rubén were reminded of one more aspect of their priestly ministry as the bishop prayed in the final blessing: "May God make you true pastors who nourish the faithful with living bread and the word of life, that they may continue to grow into the one body of Christ."

Presbyters and the Bishop

It might come as a surprise to many in the parishes of St. Paschal, St.

Louis Bertrand, and Holy Spirit who received these new priests to know that they are also called presbyters, and as presbyters are next in rank to the bishop (or, as the original source of the prayer has it, they hold "the office of second dignity"). They are not only his fellow workers but also share in the one ministerial priesthood with him. To hear them blessed as "true pastors" would be much more reassuring.

To have heard presbyters identified as "next in rank" to bishops, as possessing an office of "second dignity" and to find them actually addressed as priests (*sacerdos* in Latin) would have been a tremendous surprise to members of the Christian communities of the early centuries. As the late Sulpician scripture scholar, Fr. Raymond Brown, wrote in his brilliant little

and while these nascent Christian assembly flourished in the vicinity of pagan priest and Jewish priests, no presbyter-bishops, no Christians, were ever given the title of "priest" until the third century, and these were the bishops, not the presbyters.

David Power explains the perspective in this way.² The Letter to the Hebrews consoles those being persecuted for their discipleship in Christ with the knowledge that in him they have found the perfect and unique high priest, the one mediator necessary whom full access to the Father is offered to all by his saving passion and resurrection. 1 Peter teaches that Christ's disciples as a whole are a royal priesthood, anointed with Christ's disciples as a whole are a royal priesthood, anointed with Christ's own Spirit, offering spiritual

office of second rank? Why does the community begin to call its bishop a priest? And eventually, how does the strong collegial ministry of the presbyters give way to the individual identity of the person call a priest?

The writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch (+107) demonstrate the first clear evidence from the existence of a separate and preeminent office of bishop.³ He presides over the liturgical life of the community as a function of presiding over the community's life as a whole, but it is a service he undertakes in collaboration with the council of presbyters. By the third century, this model becomes widely accepted: Christ, the high priest, animates each local community of priestly people led by one bishop (now also called a priest, *sacerdos*) together with a body of presbyters and another body of deacons.

An Assembly of Ministries

But a wide variety of Spirit-inspired ministries flourished in the assemblies as well: widows, catechists, lectors, psalmists, acolytes, musicians, those offering direct service to the poor, to prisoners, to the hungry and homeless were some of the many specific roles among the priestly people. Thus, in a very real sense, the church of the early centuries has no "laity," that is, all the faithful were conscious of exercising Christ's priestly ministry through whichever charism they had received from the Spirit by their baptism. And bishops could speak to their parishioners out of similar convictions:

"When I am frightened by what I am for you, then I am consoled by what I am with you. For you I am the bishop, with you I am a Christian. The first is an office, the second a grace; the first a danger, the second salvation (St. Augustine, Sermon 340.1)⁴ And also "We are all one body, having such difference among ourselves as members with members, and (we) may not throw the whole upon the priests; but ourselves also so care for the whole church, as for a body common to us (St. John Chrysostom Homily XVIII on Second Corinthians).⁵

Bishops exercise presidency but it is a leadership set firmly within a collegial context.

To have heard presbyters identified as "next in rank" to bishops, as possessing an office of "second dignity" and to find them actually addressed as priests (sacerdos in Latin) would have been a tremendous surprise to members of the Christian communities of the early centuries.

book, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections*, the New Testament uses the title "presbyter-bishop" for those who exercised pastoral leadership over the community. In those days "presbyters and bishops were for all practical purposes the same" and "as a group they were responsible for the pastoral care of those churches."¹

The apostles (such as St. Paul) were the missionary figures who founded the local churches and then moved on. The presbyter-bishops were the residential figures who presided over the community and its life. But while they presided over communal worship as an central aspect of their leadership over the entire life of the community,

sacrifices which are the gifts of their own lives. The crucified and risen Christ, then, continues to exercise his priestly ministry of praise and intercession before the Father surrounded by members of his body, the priestly people who daily present their "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is (their) spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1). The shepherds who model and foster this discipleship are the presbyter-bishops, according to the descriptions in the New Testament.

How is it that the Christian church begins to distinguish bishops from its presbyters? How do the presbyters become characterized as holding an

The Relationship between Eucharist and community

The visual image of this model of community life is well-reflected in what occurred within the Eucharistic assembly. The bishop as local pastor and president of the assembly sat on the chair (the *cathedra*) in the centre of the apse, surrounded by a semi-circle of presbyters seated on a long, low bench with the deacons standing nearby, ready to serve. Facing them and gathered before the altar were the baptized faithful, and in their midst was the reader, standing on a type of platform to give prominence to the proclamation of the scriptures. There was no one present who was not a member of an order in the church; from catechumens through the baptized faithful to the deacons, presbyters, and bishop, all know themselves to be “ordained”/ordered within the assembly for the building up of the body of Christ for the life of the world.

While the bishop ministered in the midst of the liturgical assembly in a very visible manner, the college of presbyters also actively participated in the rituals but in ways reserved to their order. Texts of the ancient *Apostolic Tradition* describe the presbyters as joining the bishop in the laying on the hands whenever that occurred, especially during the Eucharistic prayer and during the ordination of presbyters. St. Cyprian (+258) tells us they did the same whenever the bishop reconciled a penitent. They also had unique roles during baptism: anointing the elect with the oil of exorcism, performing the triple immersion, and anointing the newly-baptized with the oil of thanksgiving before the bishop anointed them again (*Apostolic Tradition* 21).

But it was the bishop who was pastor and presider during these early centuries. Comparing the ordination prayer for a bishop makes the contrast clear: the only specific “spirit of grace and of counsel of the presbyterate” that is identified in their ordination prayer is that they may “help and govern your people with a pure heart: while the list of the bishop’s responsibilities cited in the prayer at his ordination is extensive. He is “to feed your holy flock and to exercise the high priesthood,...to offer to you the holy gifts of your church,...to have power to forgive sins,...to loose every bond according to the power that you gave

to the apostles...”⁶ The bishop is at the head of the local church as teacher, shepherd, judge, and priest. He is also in communion with the other bishops and serves as the focus of unity for all the orders of the priestly people gathered around him.

The impact of expansion

This collegial model of ministry is short-lived; the Christian community expands and the need for new parishes

For you I am the bishop, with you I am a Christian. The first is an office, the second a grace; the first a danger, the second salvation (St. Augustine, Sermon 340.1)

(and thus new bishops) grows. Often during the third century, the solution was simply to elect and ordain more bishops from within their local communities. But in the fourth century, as the church becomes first tolerated, then preferred, and finally elevated as the religion of the empire, the organic process of providing pastors for all the local communities cannot keep pace with the demand, especially in the outlying areas. The local bishop will then delegate his presbyters to take up the pastoral ministry in individual new parishes within the large urban areas as well as far out in the rural regions.

How significant it is that as they take up these individual pastoral and liturgical ministries, the presbyters need not undergo any further ordination. Each will become pastor as his own bishop is, but without any additional blessing for the substantially new roles of word and sacrament he will exercise. The venerable teaching of Tertullian, Cyprian, and the *Apostolic Tradition* (among others) holds true: presbyters were ordained into the same priesthood as the bishop.

As presbyters become individual

pastors and learn to preside alone at the sacramental celebrations in their new parishes, the collegial reality of the local church begins to disintegrate. Certainly Christ, the high priest, still animates each local community of priestly people now led by one presbyter (soon also call a priest, *sacerdos*), but the presbyter is increasingly isolated from the bishop (with whom he often no longer lives, being so far away), isolated from the college of presbyters (ministering themselves in other distant parishes), and isolated from the college of deacons who for the most part remain with the bishop in the city.

Imagine the sharp visual contrast of a celebration of the eucharist at which one presbyter presides with the image of the collegial experience of eucharist gather around the bishop. In the presbyter’s church there is no bishop’s *cathedra* in the centre of the apse nor is there any bench for the presbyters. (Eventually the altar will be moved into position against the wall). The presbyter/priest in the new configuration may be assisted by one deacon or perhaps only one acolyte, a faint shadow of the earlier model rich with multiple and diverse liturgical ministries under the presidency of the

bishop. It will be but a small step from this reduced imaged of the eucharist to one in which the priest (all traces of a collegial presbyterate past) needs to assume by himself all liturgical ministries except acolyte as he celebrates the eucharist alone at the altar facing the wall of the apse.

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1. Raymond Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970) 35.
2. David Power, “Priesthood Revisited: Mission and Ministries in the Royal Priesthood,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*. Ed. Susan Wood (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003) 87-120.
3. Paul Bradshaw, *Liturgical Presidency in the Early Church* (Bramcote, Nottinghamshire: Grove Books, 1983).
4. Translated by James Puglisi in his article “Presider as Alter Christus, Head of the Body?” *Liturgical Ministry* 10 (Summer 2001) 153-58, here 154.
5. Cited by David Power, “Priesthood Revisited,” 101.
6. The best translation of these texts is found in *The Apostolic Tradition*, Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) 56 for presbyters and 30 for bishop.

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Lay Catholics firmly committed to parish life

Survey of U.S. Catholics

BY MARY L. GAUTIER

What have we learned about American Catholic laity and their relation to parish life today? Other research has found that Catholics today are much less likely than Catholics of a couple of generations ago to say that they attend Mass weekly. Their attendance at weekly Mass has been dropping steadily since its peak, reported by Gallup to be about 75 percent in the 1950s. Our poll found that just over a third, some 34 percent, report weekly attendance at Mass, although half say they attend Mass more than a couple of times a month and 64 percent report at least monthly attendance. Three in four say that you can still be a good Catholic without attending Mass every Sunday.

Nevertheless, more than two out of three Catholics (68 percent) are registered in a parish. Registered Catholics are more likely than nonregistered Catholics to be in the pews on Sunday — 48 percent of them say they attend Mass weekly, compared to just 7 percent of nonregistered Catholics. They are more likely to be married — 74 percent, compared to 63 percent of nonregistered Catholics, and to have had their marriage blessed in the church (82 percent of registered Catholics, compared to 51 percent of nonregistered Catholics). Finally, registered Catholics are much more likely (29 percent) than nonregistered Catholics (6 percent) to be high commitment Catholics on our scale of commitment to the church.

In summary, registered Catholics are more committed to the church, they attend Mass more regularly, they are more likely to be married, and they are more likely to have been married in the church. We expect that their attitudes about parish life are also different from those Catholics who are not registered in a parish.

Attitudes about parish life

Since the Second Vatican Council, lay Catholics have been taking an increasingly active role in parish life. Most parishes have only one priest assigned, but most have two or more lay ecclesial ministers on the payroll. Lay people regularly serve as director of religious education, pastoral associate, liturgy coordinator, youth minister, or in other roles formerly reserved for the parochial vicar. Some 17 percent of parishes have no resident pastor and increasingly the pastoral care of these parishes is being assigned to a lay person.

What are the general attitudes of laity relating to parish life? Overall, most Catholics seem relatively satisfied. More than nine in 10 agree that, on the whole, parish priests do a good job, and more than half strongly agree with that statement. However, more than half (53 percent) agree at least somewhat with the statement “Most priests don’t expect laity to be leaders, just followers,” and 64 percent agree at least somewhat that Catholic Church leaders are out of touch with the laity. And although the average Catholic parish has about 900 registered families, only four in 10 lay Catholics agree that “Catholic parishes are too big and impersonal.”

How do registered and nonregistered parishioners express attitudes that are somewhat more supportive of parish life than do nonregistered parishioners for each of these items (see Table 8).

Table 8
Attitudes about parish life

	Registered parishioners	Nonregistered parishioners
On the whole, parish priests do a good job	95	86
Most priests don’t expect laity to lead, just follow	45	71
Church leaders are out of touch with the laity	58	76
Catholic parishes are too big and impersonal	36	48

Table 9

Would you be will to accept in your parish...

	Acceptable		
	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
Bringing in a priest from another country to lead the parish	43%	46%	11%
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	38%	53%	8%
Merging two or more nearby parishes into one parish	35%	52%	12%
Having a Communion service instead of Mass sometimes	12%	49%	39%
Not having a resident priest in the parish, but only a lay parish administrator and visiting priests	10%	45%	45%
Reducing the number of Masses to fewer than once a week	8%	32%	60%
Closing the parish	4%	26%	70%

Attitudes about the priest shortage

We found that lay Catholics hold pretty strong opinions about what measures they would be willing to accept as dioceses try to find ways to address the shortfall of priests available for parish ministry. As Table 9 shows, some solutions are more acceptable than others.

Catholic laity express a clear preference for having a priest to pastor the parish, even if that priest comes from a different country or must be shared with another parish. More than four in 10 would find it “very acceptable” if the diocese would bring in a priest from another country to lead the parish and nearly four in 10 would find sharing a priest with another parish “very acceptable.” However, 92 percent would find sharing a priest at least “somewhat” acceptable, compared to 89 percent who would find it at least “somewhat acceptable” to bring in a priest from another country and 88 percent who would find it at least “somewhat acceptable” to merge two or more nearby parishes into one.

Some of the other measures mentioned are seen as more drastic, but still preferable to closing the parish. Six in 10 would find having a Communion service instead of Mass some of the time at least “somewhat accept-

able” and a little more than half (55 percent) would find having a lay parish administrator at least “somewhat acceptable.” Only one in 10 lay Catholics would find either of these measures “very acceptable,” however.

The final two measures to deal with a shortage of priests are clearly unacceptable to a majority of lay Catholics. Six in 10 say that reducing the number of Masses to fewer than once a week is “not at all acceptable.” Even more, seven in 10 lay Catholics say that closing the parish is “not at all acceptable.”

Participation in decisions about parish life

When it comes to lay participation in decisions about parish life, 72 percent of lay Catholics feel they should have the right to participate in selecting the priests for their parish. Registered parishioners feel less strongly about this than nonregistered parishioners — 68 percent of registered Catholics say they should have this right, compared to 80 percent of nonregistered Catholics. There is no difference in the opinion of registered and nonregistered Catholics about whether parishioners should have the right to participate in deciding about parish closings, however. Fully 83 per-

cent of registered Catholics and 78 percent of nonregistered Catholics are in agreement on this one.

Conclusions

What does this mean for the church? Our data suggest that, despite a gradual decline in weekly Mass attendance, the connection to parish life remains strong among Catholic laity. More than two in three Catholics are registered in a parish and registered parishioners remain a cornerstone of support for parish life.

Lay Catholics in sizable numbers have been seeking formation and stepping into parish leadership roles that were formerly reserved for priests and religious sisters and brothers. This increasing visibility of lay Catholics in parish leadership is having a gradual impact on Catholics attitudes about the role of laity in parish life. While most Catholics agree that on the whole, parish priests do a good job, there is some indication that lay Catholics are becoming restless with the “pay, pray and obey” stereotype that prevailed before Vatican II.

Even as the priest shortage grows more acute in dioceses across the country and bishops struggle to find ways to allocate the dwindling numbers of priests available for sacramental ministry, lay Catholics are expressing some definite preferences as to how to cope with that reality. Bringing in priests from other countries, sharing priests between parishes, merging two or more hereby parishes into one, having occasional Communion service instead of Mass, and entrusting the parish to a lay person with a visiting priest for the sacraments are all options that a majority would find at least somewhat acceptable. Each involves some accommodation on the part of parishioners but in the end preserves parish life. One thing is very clear from the data—closing the parish is the least acceptable option. Seven in 10 would find that not at all acceptable.

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Unleash the Laity

*A pre-Vatican II spirit remains strong in the Church
But it might not be the one you first think of.*

The Second Vatican council sought to change Catholics’ understanding of their vocations. The message: Lay people aren’t adjuncts to priests; lay people are to sanctify the world. What happens inside church walls shouldn’t be-all and end-all of Christian life — the Mass is the source and summit of a faith life spent elsewhere.

Simply put: Vatican II sent lay people to take the gospel to the great wide mission field outside church walls.

But many in the Church had a hard time adjusting to this change in paradigm. Perhaps they still thought of what happened inside church walls as the most important thing. At any rate, when the council called for more lay involvement, they assumed it meant more lay involvement inside the church.

At their November meeting in Washington, D.C., the U.S. bishops approved “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry.” The document is not particular law in the Church, but a set of suggestions and optional guidelines.

A guide on how to treat lay people who work for the Church is fine and needed. After all, there are more than 30,000 lay men and women working in American parishes, and the number is growing. They are the lifeblood of parishes — and thus of the faith.

But we should be careful to avoid conflating lay and priestly roles. If we steer lay people who want to do more for the Church toward priest-like roles, we send a pre-Vatican II message: If you want to be more active as a Catholic, you need to be a minister, like a priest.”

Just as bad, we say to young men who may have vocations: “You don’t need a radical commitment to a new form of life to be a minister.”

We need to learn the language of Vatican II that says: “Lay people

needn’t imitate the priest or duplicate his efforts. They are to bring Christ to the world they live in, socialize in and work in.”

But don’t take our word for it. Take the Pope’s — not just on Pope, but two, along with eight Vatican dicasteries. In 1997, Pope John Paul II promulgated an instruction “On certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the Sacred ministry of the priest.” Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who is now Pope Benedict XVI, was one of the Vatican prefects who signed it.

*Simply put: Vatican II
sent lay people to
take the gospel to
the great wide
mission field outside
church walls.*

The instruction acknowledges lay roles inside the church “in the teaching of Christian doctrine, for example, in certain liturgical actions in the care of souls,” and even allows for temporarily expanded lay roles in emergencies.

But it said that lay people’s fundamental vocation is “in their personal, family and social lives by proclaiming and sharing the gospel of Christ in every situation in which they find themselves.” It even said the lay people can’t properly be called ministers — except “extraordinary ministers” in certain situations.

Some suggested that the document was only meant to apply to certain European dioceses where lay people had been made chaplains. In a March

11, 1997, article in the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, Cardinal Ratzinger said it was also meant for North America. Pope John Paul II reiterated that in his Jubilee-Year address to U.S. bishops.

It’s important to get this right — because parish life is vitally important, more important than we sometimes give it credit for. Catholicism is as much about community as it is about conquering the world.

Cardinal Ratzinger said the Church must clearly define roles or risk “falling into a ‘Protestantization’ of the concepts of ministry and of the Church.” He also said that “a loss of the meaning of the sacrament of Holy Orders” and “the growth of a kind of parallel ministry by so-called ‘pastoral assistants’” is causing confusion about the special identity of ordained priests.

Cardinal Ratzinger said that the instruction explains the three types of tasks and services proper to the laity:

- making Christ present in the world through activities in society.
- working for Catholic institutions and organizations.
- temporarily performing functions normally reserved to a priest “in special and serious circumstances, concretely because of a lack of priests and deacons.”

In the end, the best way to promote the proper understanding of lay roles in the Church is to fully live our own. To that end, find the first of our four Advent Guides on the back page of this issue. Clip them out, pass them on, and spread the word.

Use them as a Vatican II lay person — the kind whose faith impacts the culture.

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One Pastor, Thousands of Congregants:

New Roles for Priests and Lay People

BY MONSIGNOR
ARTURO BANUELAS, PASTOR

Some years ago in our parish, as the numbers of priests continued to go down and the number of Catholics were going up, our parishioners were wrestling with how we were going to function with just one priest and so many parishioners.

I thought of a way to show them that a vibrant parish is about a lot more than just having a lot of priests and a lot of programs. So at a Ministry Council planning meeting, I read a letter, pretending that it was from the bishop. The letter said the following: "Because of the shortage of priests, this parish will no longer have a full-time resident pastor. He will be visiting. Given the situation, I would like for you to draw up a pastoral plan for the parish and present it to me within six months."

There was this silence, but no one left the room. I am convinced it was the Holy Spirit who inspired what followed. In a spirit of collaboration, they began to delegate and assign the different ministries, deciding which parish responsibilities each would assume. There really was little discussion; these decisions were obvious. They made a list of the community's gifts and began to call for the ministers. As leaders they felt a responsibility to tell the community about their impending future model of church, assuring parishioners that the future would be bright if all continued to stay united by working together as each person put his or her particular gift at the service of the parish and be taking greater ownership of the community. I was amazed by their lack of fear and by their courage to embrace a new approach to parish life. It was beautiful. They were taking responsibility for their parish, a role that the pastoral staff once exclusively had.

There was a sense of a new Pentecost in the council meeting. We all felt a fresh source of energy. It was evident

that a new model of parish life was emerging to respond to a key moment in parish life. When all the arrangements were made, I slipped a note to a council member to ask the others: "When the priest comes, what does he do?" There was a stunning silence. Then people began to articulate the role of the priest. "We will need more spiritual direction," they said. The discussion that followed focused on their new understanding of the priest's role: No longer being the sole parish minister, main parish administrator of finances and maintenance, and the one possessing all the gifts in the community. Actually, it was profoundly gratifying that the council wanted the priest to focus more on preaching, ministering to ministers, unifying the community, collaborating with ministries, doing more spiritual direction, overseeing their future growth, challenging them to work for justice, training leaders for ministry, and teaching the church's traditions. It was obvious that most had not reflected on this issue and that they needed more discussion. However, all unanimously agreed that a resident parish priest was central to the parish community. Nonetheless, their model of priest had dramatically changed, and any future resident priest would be serving a more adult Vatican II conciliar parish community.

I quickly realized that here was a vibrant community model of church that would work—if I just got out of the way. In fact, I needed to be a smaller part of the equation and the lay people of my parish a much bigger part. But the result of the exercise was the birth of a new relationship—a much more collaborative one—between priest and community. It was a new way for them to see a priest and a new way for me to see myself.

Catholic people by and large love their church and their parish. Given the opportunity and the call, an explosive dynamic happens when lay people realize that the priest does not have to be the center of this community. Christ is the center of the community. People understand that and will own

up to it, if it is properly and straightforwardly presented to them. This redefined how I now could operate—mentoring, offering spiritual guidance, and sacramental care.

This exercise also forced us to ask, "Who are we?" "What is happening in our area? What are its needs?" Parishioners began to see themselves not just as a group of Catholics who happened to worship together, but as a group of people with a real mission in a specific place at a specific time. That was very powerful. They decided that to make their plan work, before they implemented any large-scale logistical changes, they needed to deepen their friendships with each other and to build an even stronger community. They became a community with a mission.

Evangelization programs and retreats flourished and small communities developed. Ministries emerged. A new parish spirit surged, evident in parish fiestas, youth programs, increased stewardship, and outreach mission work.

As our parish leaders were wondering how exactly they should proceed with new model of a parish that had only one priest yet thousands of parishioners and potential leaders, it quickly became obvious that more training was needed. The council approved a parish requirement that all parish ministers be trained at the diocesan Tepeyac Institute (www.elpasodiocese.org/tei) and participate in an evangelization retreat. The courses give the ministers a theological and pastoral vision and a common language from which they can work. This had helped us tremendously to move together in the direction of forming a community with a mission that fosters the reign of God in our border reality.

In addition to this training, everyone in the parish who wants to partake in a ministry is asked to attend an evangelization retreat, which gives people an experience of Jesus and parish life in small communities. For many people this is the first time that they experience church as community,

even though they have been Catholics a long time. The evangelization retreat weekend includes teachings, faith-sharing experiences, the sacrament of reconciliation, festive community meals, healing services, fellowship, hearty music, calls to conversion, missioning, and a closing liturgy with the parish community at a Sunday Mass.

Our St. Pius X parish is one of many examples of parishes inspired by the Vatican II teachings. The council tenets and certain urgency from the priest shortage have occasioned a renewal in parish life. Parishes are witnessing vibrancy as they affirm the rich variety of gifts with which the Holy Spirit continues to endow the Church. We have fifty-eight parish ministries that range from elderly care, parish health care, espousal abuse, AIDS ministry, Life Teen evangelization, Colonia ministry, Singles in Ministry, Young Adults in Ministry, to Mothers in Ministry (for young mothers), to mention a few. These include professionals as well as non-experts, but all who are well trained for their service. It became clear that the more ministries, the more present is the work of Jesus the High Priest, in whose ministry we all share.

We have learned that it is important to make a distinction between a volunteer and a minister in our parish. The term "volunteer" is not a very good or useful word because it does not respect our baptismal call. Volunteers help out in their spare time. Ministers are not "father's helpers" who assist him in their free time. Ministers participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and their work has the dignity of making present Christ's own saving work. People are not baptized to be laypersons or second-class members of the church. They are baptized to be participants of the body of Christ, each according to his or her particular gift and office. Now that people are taking ownership in our parish, the recognition of gifts that people bring to the parish has become more important. We instantly recognize people's gifts in public, and people sense that their gift is their mis-

sion, their life work. Their calling has been called forth, respected, and publicly acknowledged.

Our parish budget reflects that the ministries are a priority. You may have to sacrifice certain things if you are going to spend your money training new leaders and lay ministers by enabling them to attend conferences and workshops. Each parish ministry sponsors formal expert training in their particular field of service. Theologians from leading Catholic universities and seminaries are invited to offer continuing formation, and many parishioners participate in national conferences such as the RCIA forum and the Catechetical conventions in Los Angeles. In an exciting way, the parish itself is becoming a new type of seminary for seminary for the ministerial formation of both clergy and lay ministers.

The Holy Spirit gives to the parish community the ministries it needs to fulfill its mission of fostering the reign of God in our midst. Furthermore, people are experiencing a more integrated spirituality. Putting together work life, family life, social life, and faith life by integrating them all into one vision of faith life is one of the great gifts of the church today. This is a sign of grace and of a maturing parish community and is renewing the church in our country. People see themselves as ministers, and their united witness is powerful. Additionally, while Vatican II and not the priest shortage is the cause of the emerging lay ministers, new priestly vocations are coming from these lay leaders. So actually, the increase in lay ministers is also adding to the increase of ordained ministers.

A ministerially collaborative model of parish that enables and empowers the community's ministers, that affirms the various gifts in service to the reign of God, and that evangelizes and trains its members is fomenting a renewal of parishes and the role of the priests.

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Toward a Renewed Priesthood

BY THE MOST REVEREND
GERALD F. KICANAS

Different Visions of Priesthood

Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., when he was appointed as the archbishop of Chicago, initiated a program of ongoing formation for clergy in their first three years of ministry. He developed the idea after talking with Cardinal Jean Lustiger of Paris, who some years before had asked one of his auxiliary bishops to meet regularly with the recently ordained to lead them in prayer, foster fraternity, and to attend to their ongoing human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral growth.

Cardinal George invited me to direct this new program since I had been rector at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, for ten years. I approached the assignment with concerns. I wondered how resistant the new priests would be to the idea. Would they feel that they were back in the seminary? Would they make time to break away from their pastoral work to attend to their own ongoing formation? Would they resent the program being required of them?

I directed the program for nearly four years while I was in Chicago. I was amazed and pleased that most of the recently ordained took the program seriously. They helped to plan the themes for the sessions and gave input on how those themes would be addressed. Over time I could see a growing fraternity among those who attended.

After the first year of the program, it became obvious that one of the sources of tension felt by the recently ordained was their relationship with their pastors. The recently ordained wanted to talk, to dialogue with their pastors, who are from a different generation of priests.

That did not surprise me, since I remembered well my first assignment in 1967 and the friction I felt with Monsignor Harry Koenig, my first pastor, a great priest, but from a different generation. He was, at that time, thirty-five years my senior. We often argued and disagreed. I remember on staff meeting, which meant is those days a meeting of the priests only. Msgr. Keonig yelled at me while the

first associate refereed. I wanted to be out among the people; he wanted me to be in the rectory, on call. I went over the people's houses for dinner, he wanted me at home for dinner in the rectory. I wanted to get involved in social issues in the public arena; he wanted me to pray more often. We fought. While we shared the priesthood, we had different views of what it meant to be a priest. I learned a great deal from my first pastor, not the least of which was that I didn't have all the answers and my perspective was not the only and final word.

The format planned by the recently ordained for the meeting with their pastors involved separating the two groups, forming a group of pastors and a group of recently ordained. Each group was supposed to come up with ten adjectives to describe themselves, ten adjectives to describe the other group, and ten adjectives that pastors thought the recently ordained would use to describe them and vice versa. Then we would talk.

The results were fascinating. The recently ordained saw their pastors as liberal, dissenters, socially conscious, not prayerful, wanting things done their way. And that is exactly how the pastors suspected the recently ordained viewed them.

The pastors saw the recently ordained as conservative, courageous, having an exalted notion of what it meant to be a priest, pious, focused on thinking with the Pope, lacking initiative. This, too, was exactly what the recently ordained believed was the view of them held by their pastors.

The discussion became rather heated when we began dialoguing about the results. One of the youngest of the recently ordained cried out at one point that he had pursued priesthood at a time when his family, friends, and culture questioned why he would do that. He wanted a clear identity of what it meant to be a priest. He did not want to be one among many in the church. After all, if a lay person could do everything and was so important in the church, why should he give up so much to pursue priesthood?

There are clearly generational differences within presbyterates. Just as the older pastors found it difficult to integrate the changes after Vatican II,

the older pastors today find it difficult to let go of the ways they responded to the council, some of which have not lived up to their expectations. The times continue to change and so must the pastoral response.

As I listened to the pastors and recently ordained talk to one another, I could not help but think that both articulated dimensions of diocesan priesthood that are critical. The differences do not have to be destructive, as they sometimes are. The two viewpoints, while different, are not opposed. They can be complementary.

Diocesan priests need to walk with the people. They serve among them. They enter the lives of their people at significant levels of personal sharing and they receive profound levels of trust accorded few people. Priests are identified with the struggle of their people and speak up for them. They act as servant-leaders. But they also lead people in prayer, preside at the Eucharist, and act *in persona Christi, capitis*. This means that they exercise cultic leadership and represent Christ present and acting in the Church. Priests play a unique and special role in the Church. They are called to preach, celebrate and guide *in persona Christi*.

Dioceses need to bring priests of different generations together for dialogue and conversation about their differing views of the priesthood and the Church. That dialogue will allow priests to get to know one another at deeper levels and find a priestly heart among those who differ from their thinking. Familiarity does not result in contempt but mutual understanding at a deeper level.

A program of ongoing formation for priests is critical to provide both an occasion for that dialogue and an opportunity leading to ever deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church and the priesthood. Most dioceses attempt ongoing formation, but what is needed is to give ongoing formation as much focus and attention as is given to initial formation. Priests need to grow from interaction through study and dialogue together.

From Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, Evolving Visions of the Priesthood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

Let's Put the Eucharist to Work

BY ROBERT J. MCCLORY

Is the Eucharist working? It may seem a strange question, but it's one that is worth asking, especially this year, the Year of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church.

Some have been claiming for a long time that the Eucharist is not working because of published reports that most Catholics no longer believe the bread and wine really become the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ.

Critics point to the absence of "eucharistic piety" they observe among Mass-goers: failure to genuflect when entering or leaving the church, the routine way people come up to receive Communion, the casual conversations right in front of the tabernacle after Mass. And so the church has undertaken a worldwide effort this year to educate Catholics about the nature of the Eucharist and to promote devotions such as visits to the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, perpetual adoration, even public eucharistic processions and rallies.

Others see the issue differently. That some Catholics fail to believe Christ is truly present in the form of bread and wine is lamentable, they agree. But even more lamentable, they insist, is that great numbers of Catholics, including many whose devotion to the Eucharist is rock solid, fail to grasp the intimate connection between the Eucharist and justice, between Christ present in the bread and wine and what we do or don't do in the world around us.

Dangerous disconnect

Almost 25 years ago the late liturgist Father Robert Hovda put it this way: "Our habits and our predetermined ways and the structures of our society have fastened such blinders on our harnesses that, as a whole, Christians and Christian churches in our society have only the haziest notion of any moral imperative flowing from the Sunday meeting in which we celebrate God's word of human liberation and solidarity and then act it out in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. As obvious as those ethical

demands are, they simply do not impinge, they do not get through to us. We are too well protected by the world we live in."

Hovda said the Eucharist isn't working as it should because it has been "domesticated." He cited the anguished words of a Sri Lankan bishop, who wrote: "Why is it that in spite of hundreds of thousands of eucharistic celebrations Christians continue as selfish as before? Why is the gap of income, wealth, knowledge, and power growing in the world today—and that in favor of the Christian peoples? Why is it that persons who proclaim eucharistic love and sharing deprive the poor of the world of food, capital, employment, even land?"

The Eucharist, whether seen as Holy Communion or as the Mass, can become "a kind of product cre-

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin without seeing the connection. Prominently hanging in the church are seven banners representing basic principles of Catholic social teaching, such as the option for the poor and vulnerable, the call to community, the dignity of work, the rights of workers, and care for creation.

The banners are just one manifestation of a five-year "Destination Justice" program the parish is currently committed to. Other activities include monthly social justice e-mails to update some 300 interested parishioners on subjects such as just war theory, fair housing, or the land mine crisis in Asian countries. Adult learning experiences place parishioners in 11-week programs with organizations working with the poor, the homeless, and those in prison. Skits performed

That hard message, recapitulated in homilies and given visibility in outreach programs for the poor, disturbs some parishioners, Mich admits. "Some would prefer a docile, consoling Eucharist," he says, "so this can be a challenging place."

Jane Clare Ishiguro, the pastoral associate, notes that parishioners are "all over the map" in their degree of commitment to the Good Shepherd vision. But "we all get along," she adds, "because everyone sees a church that acts more than it talks."

Money where their mouth is

In Arvada, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, Spirit of Christ Catholic Community makes the connection in several dramatic ways. First, parishioners are informed that it is a "stewardship community," which means 14 percent off the top of the Sunday collections goes to the poor and needy. And at this parish of about 3,300 mostly upper-middle-class families, 14 percent amounts to about \$300,000 a year.

Kathi Palitano, director of pastoral ministry, says recent recipients include groups digging wells in Nicaragua, providing care for AIDS orphans in Africa, and serving the homeless in the Arvada area. "It's a demanding process for us and the applicants," she says, "but it ensures the funds are going to responsible people."

Second, the parish has a "Southern Exposure" program, which so far has involved 40 groups of parishioners in constructing from scratch 150 homes in poverty-stricken areas of Mexico.

Third, some 800 parishioners participate in 80 small faith groups that discuss how the Sunday lectionary readings relate to their life in the world. Then there are the 400 persons involved in liturgical and other ministries, says Janette Fayhoe, liturgy director. And the parish's adult education forum brings in high-caliber guest speakers like Sister Helen Prejean and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton.

This intense activity is successful, says the pastor, Father Robert Kinkel, because "everything we do is presented as flowing directly from the Eucharist; the connection is in the homilies, the intercessions, the music."

"Christians and Christian churches in our society have only the haziest notion of any moral imperative flowing from the Sunday meeting"

ated for individual spiritual customers," says Gabe Huck, a veteran liturgist and former director of Liturgy Training Publications. "It's supposed to have a transforming effect on us," he says, "so that we leave church determined to do something. We should be seeing the world in a different way and have different priorities because of the Eucharist. It should affect what we do with our time, how we spend our money, how we look for a job, how we vote."

This message of a transformative connection between Eucharist and responsibility to the world may be communicated at many parishes in only the vaguest way. In others, however, where a concerted effort is made, the message is getting through.

Practice what they preach

It is impossible to attend a liturgy at Good Shepherd Parish in

before Sunday Mass alert churchgoers to a range of human concerns.

The mandate for all this appears near the top of the Good Shepherd website: "We believe that a commitment to social justice is as much a part of being Catholic as the Eucharist is, and we think it's time to bring involvement in social justice back to the center of parish life." The pastor, Father Kenneth Mich, says the parish, which was founded 48 years ago and numbers about 1,000 families, has a long-standing commitment to service.

"We don't look at Eucharist as just Jesus' Body and Blood," he says. "We see it in the context Jesus placed it in at the Last Supper. He was really saying, 'This is my body broken for you, this is my blood poured out for the world.' And when he said, 'Do this in memory of me,' he was telling us, 'Now go break your body and shed your blood in the service of others.'"

What helps make it all come together, he adds, is the location of the altar—right in the midst of the assembly. "Everyone can see what we have here," he says, "the Body of Christ celebrating the Body of Christ."

Beyond Jesus-and-me

At Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the pieces are also in place. The pews are in a horseshoe shape around the altar "so the visibility is wonderful and there's no last row where people can hide," says the Norbertine pastor, Father Joel Garner. In addition, this parish of 2,500 families has "the best and most active" St. Vincent DePaul Society in the region, a commitment to small faith communities, and a determination to link the Eucharist to the larger world.

The parishioners, about 85 percent of whom are later-generation Americans of Mexican descent, are attracted to an older, more devotional Catholicism. The church has overnight adoration of the Blessed Sacrament once a month. "That sometimes is where their energy goes—that and the veneration of the saints. This is what the people were taught to do," says Garner. The result, he says, can be a Jesus-and-me spirituality that he does not want to stifle, yet he and the staff hope to open it to wider horizons.

One strategy the staff has developed is a vigorous welcoming approach designed to push people beyond personal concerns and into the wider community. The most visible sign of this is the requirement that before Mass eucharistic ministers stand at the doors and welcome churchgoers with smiles and handshakes. "A lot of newcomers are not used to such greetings," says Christina Spahn, pastoral associate for faith formation, "but they come to appreciate it."

Consciousness-raising is also evident in the Pax Christi group now in formation; in the Mass intercessions, which relate to needs in and well beyond the parish; and in the parish's 12-year relationship with Albuquerque Interfaith, which promotes grassroots conversations and cooperative action in the city.

A sure bet

In some areas of the United States the needs of the larger community are so obvious that the leap from

Eucharist to service comes almost spontaneously. Such is the case in Las Vegas. The city may be most famous for its casinos, which foster illusions of wealth, and its glitzy nightlife, but there's a downside to all the hype. Las Vegas draws people from all over the country, some hoping to get rich quick, others certain they'll find high-

proceeds up to the altar in the center of the church with their offering; often they are asked to bring certain foods that are in short supply to place in baskets near the altar, perhaps tuna fish at the 9:30 Mass, peanut butter and jelly at the 10:30.

The message is also visually communicated through a large, triptych

"If you are what you eat, and if you receive the Eucharist over and over for years, then just about every cell in your body has been nourished with it. That's who you are! You bring Jesus' body and blood out into the world."

paying jobs; many end up penniless, homeless, and jobless.

Because of this unrelenting need, Christ the King, a parish of some 3,000 upper-middle-class residents, has become a kind of full-time Catholic Charities center and a destination point for the desperate.

"Somehow they find us," says Jane Fransioli, parish outreach coordinator, "and they just keep coming."

Fransioli oversees dozens of teams of parishioner volunteers who serve two shifts a day, five days a week, handing out sandwiches, food stamps, gas money, and clothing, taking calls and making referrals to hospitals and social service agencies.

"The need is so great, there's no way the city can handle it," she says. "The variety we get is amazing—people whose car has broken down who have no way to get back home, a whole family that had been living in a sewer pipe, a woman whose husband is dying in a motel. It never ends."

"The connection to service is just inescapable here," says Mary Jane Leslie, liturgy director. "It's perfectly clear to everyone that we gather on Sunday to hear the Word, share the bread, and then go out to do."

The message is appropriately illustrated through the Sunday collection, 10 percent of which is immediately set aside for outreach. There is no standard taking-up of the collection; everyone in church

sculpture on the patio near the church entrance. In the center panel it portrays Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and in the outer panels are the poor and sick and the downcast he came to serve.

"You can't go either in or out of this church without being confronted by this magnificent piece of art," says Father William Kenny, the pastor.

"The people get it"

At St. Pius V in Chicago it is the experiences of the parishioners themselves that make obvious the link between Eucharist and action. St. Pius is an overflowing, 4,000-member congregation composed of poor, mostly immigrant Mexican Americans. And while remnants of Spanish devotionism linger, the general response to the prophetic message of scripture comes quite naturally to these people, says Dominican Father Charles Dahm, the pastor.

"It's not hard at all for them to identify with Jesus, who was unjustly treated and executed," he notes. "Discrimination and marginality in the gospel readings resonate with people who regularly have harsh experiences with landlords and store owners and the public schools and the police." The parish sponsors a soup kitchen, a secondhand store, a counseling center, and a grammar school.

Dahm uses the Sunday preaching

as a major vehicle for connecting the Eucharist with life. "I'm always finding ways to incorporate a social justice message," he says, "and believe me, the people get it. I say things that would cause people to walk out of church if I said them in River Forest [an upscale Chicago suburb]."

In his recent book, *Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community* (Paulist), Dahm writes, "Because the Word of God is alive and must touch the contemporary world, parish preaching must include not only personal challenges like forgiveness, anger, and resentment but also current events and social issues."

Congregational singing is another vehicle at St. Pius. The parish staff has incorporated rhythms from Latin America and lyrics with a biblical perspective that reflect working-class struggles. Now, says Dahm, many who attend St. Pius, although they live long distances from the parish, say, "The music keeps us coming."

You are what you eat

The predominantly African American parishioners are also the link in two churches in inner-city New Orleans. At both Our Lady Star of the Sea and St. Philip the Apostle, the communities are bedeviled by gang activity, unemployment, and joblessness.

"So when they hear that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head," says Father R. Tony Ricard, pastor of both parishes, "they know what that means. A lot of them have been evicted from their homes a time or two themselves. They know suffering just as Jesus did."

Ricard says his churches sponsor exposition of the Blessed Sacrament only one day a year, Holy Thursday, because he wants people to realize they are the tabernacles of the Eucharist. That's what he preaches in and out of season: "If you are what you eat, and if you receive the Eucharist over and over for years, then just about every cell in your body has been nourished with it. That's who you are! You bring Jesus' body and blood out into the world."

Ricard is also striving to bring the world, especially young people, to the Eucharist. Besides the usual variety of sports and other youth activities, Ricard draws substantial numbers of teens directly into liturgical participation.

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Let's put the Eucharist to work

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"On Youth Sunday," he says, "we might have 70 or 80 up around the altar—there's the youth choir and the junior ushers and the ministers of hospitality and the readers and the dancers (we call them the movement team), and maybe eight or more servers." When the young participate, he believes, they're inclined to take more seriously what the church is all about, and so are their parents and other relatives.

Following up on this activity, Ricard and his staff recruit parishioners young and old for community ministries, including neighborhood cleanup and efforts to demand accountability from local elected leaders and city officials. Participation in liturgy and creating a better world are part of the same thing, he says, "and our people know it."

*The liturgy feeds us in
order to do the work
God sets before us.*

Making a difference

So is the Eucharist working? It is in parishes like these where strong preaching and liturgy, genuine outreach, and a welcoming community are important values. And they are not alone.

It happens at Holy Trinity in Washington, where justice-oriented preaching and a multi-service outreach packs the Masses every Sunday. More than half the worshipers are coming from Arlington, Virginia, outside the Washington archdiocese.

It happens at parishes like St. Nicholas in Evanston, Illinois, where Massgoers, gathered all around the altar, speak of the profound, often moving sense of community they feel. Says parishioner Joe Boyle, "When the priest lifts up the consecrated bread and wine, I see these holy things amid the faces on the other side of the altar, and it's like I'm linked with all of

them and we're all being lifted up."

It occurs in an area of rural Minnesota near Murdock, where five small parishes that were clustered together 24 years ago have developed a sense of community, sharing, and concern for the larger world that surpasses anything that existed when each was independent.

And the Eucharist is working in St. James Cathedral in Seattle, Washington, where the words "I am in your midst as one who serves" appear around a beautiful skylight high over the altar. "I had always thought of liturgy as a place where I could hide and recover from my difficulties," says Bill McJohn, a computer programmer. "But after I moved here and heard the preaching and saw what was going on, like the ministry to the homeless, I finally got it. The liturgy feeds us in order to do the work God sets before us."

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From the Code of Canon Law (1983)

Can. 528 §1. A pastor is obliged to make provision so that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish; for this reason, he is to take care that the lay members of the Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, especially by giving a homily on Sundays and holy days of obligation and by offering catechetical instruction. He is to foster works through which the spirit of the gospel is promoted, even in what pertains to social justice. He is to have particular care for the Catholic education of children and youth. He is to make every effort, even with the collaboration of the Christian faithful, so that the message of the gospel comes also to those who have ceased the practice of their religion or do not profess the true faith.

§2. The pastor is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful.

He is to work so that the Christian faithful are nourished through the devout celebration of the sacraments and, in a special way, that they frequently approach the sacraments of the Most Holy Eucharist and penance. He is also to endeavor that they are led to practice prayer even as families and take part consciously and actively in the sacred liturgy which, under the authority of the diocesan bishop, the pastor must direct in his own parish and is bound to watch over so that no abuses creep in.

Can. 529 §1. In order to fulfill his office diligently, a pastor is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care.

Therefore he is to visit families, sharing especially in the cares, anxieties, and griefs of the faithful, strengthening them in the Lord, and prudently correcting them if they are failing in certain areas. With generous love he is to help the sick, particularly those close to death, by refreshing them solicitously with the sacraments and commending their souls to God; with particular diligence he is to seek out the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, those exiled from their country, and similarly those weighed down by special difficulties. He is to work so that spouses and parents are supported in fulfilling their proper duties and is to foster growth of Christian life in the family.

§2. A pastor is to recognize and promote the proper part which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church, by fostering their associations for the purposes of religion. He is to cooperate with his own bishop and the presbyterium of the diocese, also working so that the faithful have concern for parochial communion, consider themselves members of the diocese and of the universal Church, and participate in and sustain efforts to promote this same communion.

Musings on Ecclesial Ministry

The New Document, 'Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord'

BY ZENI FOX

While the bishops step forward with their pastoral thinking and writing, the author lays to rest a few lingering concerns.

In November 2005, the Committee on Lay Ministry presented a document to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for their vote. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, as it is called, reflects on the reality of laypersons serving in roles of leadership in the church today. It contextualizes their emergence within our theological tradition, offers suggested guidelines for formation and authorization, and describes human resource issues and resource. In preparation since 1999, the new document augments *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions*, the earlier report of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry (1999).

A Brief History of Official Reflection on Lay Ecclesial Ministry

Co-Workers has a history of nearly thirty years of reflection by the U.S. Catholic bishops. My own reflection on the reality began about the same time. In 1976, while I was teaching a graduate course for directors of religious education, many of whom were young adults, I was struck by their love for the church, desire to serve, and commitment to learning and growing. I mused that these were the types of young men and women who would have entered the seminary and convent in the past. A few years later, while teaching interning youth ministers in a two-year certificate program, I learned how seriously such laity approached "their ministry," which is the way they came to speak of their role in the church. They willingly made considerable sacrifices in terms of salary, job security, job clarity, status, and availability of time (giving up, because they worked nights and weekends, many activities enjoyed by other

young adults). From such observations and experiences, I have undertaken a process of research, conversation, and writing that continues still.

Responses to Six Frequently Voiced Concerns

I have heard people voice various concerns about the affirmation of lay ecclesial ministry, the concepts and language used to name and describe it, and the pastoral practices developed to guide it. Such concerns are, I think a sign that the church seeks always to be faithful to the tradition, even as it strives to adapt to new needs and realities, to be a living tradition. I write this article as a public reflection on several of these concerns, addressing them in an impressionistic more than systematic way, presenting varied angles of vision relative to each and my own musings on the issues raised. To be candid, I start from a conviction that this development is rooted in the charismatic nature of the church and is faithful to its tradition, which is what

the bishops themselves have affirmed.

Why are there "new ministers" in our parishes today? Haven't we always just had priests, assisted by sisters?

Throughout its history, the church has had a diversity of ministers. St. Paul's letters draw a picture of the early church. There we meet many ministers, men and women, performing varied roles in the communities. Sometimes Paul lists these roles, sometimes he names individuals. He liked to call them his co-workers. Always Paul sees the ability to perform a ministry as the gift of the Spirit.

Church history chronicles the development of many additional ministers: monks; friars; persons engaged in ministries of hospitality, such as the Knights of Malta; individuals involved in ministries of healing who founded hospitals and religious orders; teachers who began schools for children and youth, as well as colleges and universities. The church, which continues the

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Contributing Publications

Church Magazine is an award-winning professional quarterly of pastoral theology and ministry. It is written especially for pastors, parish staff, parish leaders, and diocesan offices. It is published by the National Pastoral Life Center. To subscribe, visit www.nplc.org/.

Established in 1924, **Commonweal** is an independent journal of opinion edited by lay Catholics. It has a special interest in religion (Catholic and otherwise), politics, war and peace issues, and culture. Along with articles on current events, it regularly reviews books, plays, films, and television. It is published 22 times per year. Its goal is "to bring a distinc-

tively Catholic perspective to bear on the issues of the day." A trial subscription is \$25. To subscribe, visit www.commonwealmagazine.org.

Founded in 1927 and located in North Haven, Conn., the **National Catholic Register** is a weekly newspaper promoting the "New Evangelization" called for by Pope John Paul II. It reaches some 68,000 readers in the U.S. and abroad. To subscribe, visit <http://www.ncregister.com/>

National Catholic Reporter is an independent newsweekly that is frequently the first to report on serious issues important to thinking Catholics and a place to find open, honest and ongoing

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Origins is a publication of the Catholic News Service and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. It publishes texts from the Vatican, the Pope, bishops, Congress, Senate, Supreme Court and church leaders around the world. To subscribe, visit www.originsonline.com.

The Tidings is the weekly newspaper of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Begun in

1895, it is the only weekly Catholic newspaper in Southern California, and is the oldest continuously published Catholic newspaper on the West Coast of America.

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Musings on Ecclesial Ministry

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mission of Christ, has consistently called many people to share in the ministries Jesus began. Today's lay ecclesial ministers are co-workers with the bishops, priest, deacons, and vowed religious, following in the tradition of our church.

Doesn't affirming lay ministry contribute to the clergy shortage by blurring the distinctions between the roles of clergy and laity?

The emergence of lay ecclesial ministers in our communities, invited into ministry by pastors seeking to strengthen pastoral service in their parishes, actually predates the clergy shortage. And in most cases, the lay ministers hold roles and exercise functions that do not require ordination.

Moreover not only history, but theology supports the development of lay ministries alongside those of the ordained. As Cardinal Mahony has written, "...lay ministry rooted in the priesthood of the baptized is not a stopgap measure. Even if seminaries were once again filled to overflowing...there would still remain the need for cultivating, developing, and sustaining the full flourishing of ministries that we have witnessed in the church since the Second Vatican Council" (*A Pastoral Letter on Ministry: As I Have Done For You*, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 2000).

Theologian Thomas O'Meara observes that "church ministry expanding throughout the world suggests that the Holy Spirit is intent upon a wider service, a more diverse ministry for a church life that will be broader in quantity and richer in quality" (*Theology of Ministry*, 1999).

Sociologists such as Dean Hoge note that multiple factors in modern society influence the decline in the number of men entering seminaries in almost every country. Yet at the same time, thousands of other men are entering diaconate formation programs, and men and women are enrolled in formation programs for lay ecclesial ministry.

Perhaps one effect of such changes will be a clearer delineation of the role of the priest. Many priests seek ways to focus their energies on pastoral leaderships and spiritual guid-

ance of their communities, calling other ministers to provide leadership for some aspects of parish life. *The 1997 Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* represents an official reflection on this theme and delineates the proper exercise of varied roles of priests and laity. The grace of this moment may well be a clearer perception by clergy and laity alike of the place of the ordained priesthood in Catholic life.

How can lay ecclesial ministers say that they feel called to ministry? Aren't vocations limited to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life, and married life? Besides, feeling "called" is not the essence of vocation, every call must be accepted by the community.

The bishops of the subcommittee recognized that the conference must exercise leadership relative to lay ecclesial ministry so constructively guide its development

Scripture is replete with stories of call. Adam and Eve are called into life by God, a sign of the call that invites each person into life and into communion with our Creator. Abraham and Sarah are called to leave their country, to journey in trust to found a new community, modeling the essence of faith, following where brother, Aaron, is also called to help him lead the community. Prophets are called: Amos the shepherd, Isaiah the priest, the exiled Ezekiel, among others; they in turn call the people back

Lead Kindly Light

BY CARDINAL NEWMAN

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now,
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn these angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

to fidelity. Kings and judges, and women like Miriam, Esther, and even the harlot Rehab are called to render services to their communities in particular circumstances and times.

Call is a central theme in the New Testament. Particularly in the Gospel of John stories of call are elaborated, illustrating central aspects of discipleship or response to the call of Jesus. The call of Andrew is paradigmatic: Jesus called, inviting him into relationship ("Come and see"). Andrew followed and then invited Simon Peter to come and meet Jesus. Each becomes one of the Twelve. The call of the Samaritan woman follows the same pattern: Jesus calls, inviting her into relationship with him; she believes, and then goes to invite others to meet him. She becomes the first missionary, within her own village. John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple; Joseph continued his work as a member of the Council. When the need arose, he used the power that his position gave him and went boldly to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus, becoming then a public representative of the community of disciples. We do not have the story of the call of Martha

and Mary, but their discipleship is described, including their close friendship with Jesus and the ministry of hospitality they practiced.

Today Christ continues to call disciples into ministry, first in personal encounter in an individual's life and then through the church, the body of Christ. Because people can be deluded about a sense of call, however, in our tradition the church authenticates the personal experience of call.

While it is true that most dioceses today have not developed official ways to discern and validate the call of laity to ministry, within the lived life of the community unofficial methods abound. Pastors invite persons into leadership roles, assessing their gifts and spirituality before entrusting them with responsibility; parishioners decide whether these individuals are credible leaders. (If they decide no, and do not respond by assisting with the tasks of ministry, pastors do not retain lay ecclesial ministers in their roles.)

Research shows that the evaluation of lay ecclesial ministers by both groups—pastors and parishioners—in very positive. Teachers and formators in diocesan and academic programs that prepare laity for ministry have

developed increasingly comprehensive ways of evaluating candidates. In fact, the larger church has been assessing this development for over thirty years; canonists, liturgists theologians, and associations of ministers have reflected on and affirmed the value of lay ecclesial ministry. In diverse ways, the call in indeed tested.

Does an affirmation of lay ecclesial ministry create an elitist group, diminishing the potential of many laypersons to be involved in the mission and ministry of the church?

Not according to research conducted over the past twenty years, including the *Notre Dame Study on the Parish* and the Murnion and DeLambo studies of the new parish ministers (1990, 1997, 2005). The research shows that lay ecclesial ministers have involved significantly more other laity in the work of the parish. Some roles and ministries are new, some traditional. They include members of advisory boards and planning groups; catechists; ministers with youth, families and the bereaved; ministers of music and choir members; liturgical planners; and social outreach and advocacy workers. Furthermore, the research shows that the lay ecclesial ministers have a strong sense of accountability to those to whom they minister, not a sense of separation from them, not elitism.

Is it better to involve ordinary parishioners in ministerial roles rather than persons from outside the community who have studied for graduate degrees?

This concern reflects a classic tension for us as Catholics. On the one hand, the tradition of ministers emerging from the local community and being affirmed by it, including its bishop, is held as an ideal (An ongoing sign of it at the ordination to priesthood is the question to the gathered people about acceptance of the candidates.) On the other hand, the need adequately to prepare persons for ministry is emphasized, including in recent times a graduate degree for priests.

Since lay ecclesial ministers have a leadership role in the community, adequate preparation is of great importance. Indeed, the longest section of the document being presented to the bishops' conference this fall is devoted

to *formation* for lay ecclesial ministers. After all, these men and women will form others—children, youth, adults—both through intentional education/formation programs and through the performance of their ministries. Furthermore, especially in our society where increasing numbers of people hold higher degrees, well-educated ministers give credibility to leadership. At times, gifted parishioners will be invited to assume roles of leadership, though graduate studies may seem impossible. Flexible formats for graduate education could be explored. Many excellent diocesan programs offer other alternatives.

Who IS a lay ecclesial minister?

The answer to this question has been much debated. The bishops now emphasize that such service is characterized by authorization of the hierarchy, a role of leadership in a particular area of ministry, and collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons. Central is the decision by local bishops about which roles should fall within the definition. I think that the designation of the person is central, so that a person is a lay ecclesial minister when the church says she/he is, because the relationship with the bishop and the community requires such a designation.

A Journey in Faith

In his poem "Lead Kindly Light," Cardinal Newman prays that in the encircling gloom of uncertainty, light for the next step be granted. Lay ecclesial ministers, whose path has been far from clear, have set forth in faith on a journey. As they move forward, the church is striving to discern how to understand the path in ways consonant with our ongoing tradition. Over the past thirty years, more of the path has gradually become clear. *Co-Workers* illumines this path in yet another new way.

Dr. Zeni Fox, is professor, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Seton Hall University, She is editor, with Sr. Regina Bechtle, of Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality of Lay Leaders (Sheed & Ward, 2005).

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From Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2005), online at www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/co-workers.pdf

“Co Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord expresses our strong desire for the fruitful collaboration of ordained and lay ministers who, in distinct but complementary ways, continue in the Church the saving mission of Christ for the world, his vineyard.”

“In parishes especially, but also in other Church institutions and communities, laywomen and men generously and extensively “cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community.” This is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s movement in the lives of our sisters and brothers. We are very grateful for all who undertake various roles in Church ministry. Many do so on a limited and voluntary basis: for example, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, readers, cantors and choir members, catechists, pastoral council members, visitors to the sick and needy, and those who serve in programs such as sacramental preparation, youth ministry, including ministry with people with disabilities, and charity and justice.”

“We are blessed indeed to have such gifted and generous co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord to which we have all been called. Let us continue to work together as a ‘community of people united in Christ and guided by the holy Spirit in (our) pilgrimage toward the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message for all humanity.’”

As One Who Serves

BY CARDINAL ROGER MAHONY

Emerging Gifts

We are living amidst enormous changes in the world and in the Church. Our situation in the Archdiocese is in many ways so very different from what it was when I came to this Archdiocese as Archbishop twenty years ago.

As men and women who are neither ordained nor vowed Religious have continued to put their gifts to the direct service of the Church, we have grown in the realization that some of them have been blessed with a share in the gift of leadership. We recognize that they have been given a charism to lead the Christian community, responding to the needs of the Church and the wider world at this time.

within the context of a more broadly-based understanding of ministry. The distinctive charisms of the various Religious communities of women and men in the Archdiocese, which have enriched the life of our Local Church for generations in ministries of education, healthcare, social service and leadership, have been given ever greater attention since the Second Vatican Council called vowed Religious to a deeper appreciation of the charism of their founder or foundress. As laypersons assume new ministries in the life of the Church, some assuming leadership of the life of the parish, it is time to clarify the distinctive contours of the charism of lay leadership in the Church.

Of the World for the Life of the World

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the

or sociological terms, but as a theological and ecclesiological reality. It is a positive reality, not to be understood in negative terms such as "non-ordained" in contrast to "ordained" (CL, no. 9). It is the lay faithful who, in seeking the Reign of God by engaging in everyday, ordinary affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God, are the presence of God's Reign in the world (CL, no. 15).

But as in the time of Saint Paul our understanding of the Reign of God, and what is entailed in living for God's Reign, must be formulated afresh in light of changing circumstances and in view of the shifting perceptions of different cultures and diverse communities.

One such shift involves the realization that the Church-world divide is not as neat and clean as we once thought. The Second Vatican Council brought us to a deeper realization that the Church is a sacrament not only to the world but in the world.

In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* John Paul II, with an eye to the Reign of God, articulates the mission of Christ entrusted to the Church in light of an "overall view of the human race" maintaining that "this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 1. *Encyclical on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*. December 7, 1990; hereafter RM). He looks to a changed and changing world. It is here and now that the Good News of the Reign of God is to take root. The vast array of cultures are both challenged and enriched by the Gospel. Of vital importance is his treatment of "the modern equivalents of the Areopagus" (RM, no. 37).

The Areopagus in Athens represented the cultural center for dialogue and exchange of ideas (cf. Acts 17: 22-31). Pope John Paul employs the Areopagus as a symbol of the new "places" in which the Good News must be proclaimed, and to which the mission of Christ is to be directed (RM, no. 37). Of these various "places," John Paul singles out the world of communications, of culture, scientific research, and international relations which promote dialogue and

open up new possibilities. Solutions to the world's pressing problems are to be studied, discussed and worked out precisely in these and other "places," problems and concerns such as: urbanization; the poor; the young; migration of non-Christians to traditionally Christian countries; peace and justice; the development and the liberation of peoples; the rights of individuals and peoples, especially those of minorities; the advancement of women and children; safeguarding the created world (RM, no. 37).

John Paul also takes stock of the desperate search for meaning, the need for an inner life, and a desire to learn new forms and methods of meditation and prayer (RM, no. 37). The mission is to take up these and the other pressing concerns precisely here, in these new "places" in the world in which we live, bringing the Gospel of Christ to bear even and especially there. In so doing, the Christian community is at the service of "furthering human freedom by proclaiming Jesus Christ" (RM, no. 39).

In all these "worldly places" the Reign of God is coming into being. And this is precisely where the laity, particularly lay leaders, have a crucial role to play. But what of the parish? What is it that the lay leader brings to the role of leadership of a parish community?

The parish, too, is a "place" very much part of this world. Like the Areopagus of old, it is a center of encounter and exchange. But here, the encounter is with God in Christ through the gift of the Spirit given to us in Word and Sacrament. And the exchange is based on an economy of gift, in which all in the parish community know themselves to be given the gift of God's love in the sending of the Son and in the pouring out of the Spirit in our hearts.

The lay leader of the parish is poised between two places:

- 1) the place which is the parish and
- 2) those other worldly places of the "new Areopagus" wherein the Christian is engaged in the struggle for justice, promoting solidarity, supporting the hopes and aspirations of youth, using the ever-expanding worlds of communication for the good of Christ's Gospel.

As laypersons assume new ministries in the life of the Church, some assuming leadership of the life of the parish, it is time to clarify the distinctive contours of the charism of lay leadership in the Church.

As lay persons assume positions of parish leadership, perhaps nothing is more important than cultivating, nurturing, and sustaining collaboration between and among priests, deacons, vowed Religious and lay leaders. Such collaboration is more readily assured as each one has a clear sense of the distinctiveness and particularity of his or her vocation, recognizing the importance of bringing different gifts to bear in the common mission of the Church.

In the Pastoral Letter on Ministry, *As I Have Done for You, I*, together with the priests of the Archdiocese, provided a description of the specific ministry of bishop, priest and deacon

Church and in the World, *Christifideles Laici*, baptism is the source for the participation of everyone in the Church --- whether lay, Religious, and ordained --- in the mission of Christ (John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici: Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*. December 30, 1988, no. 15; hereafter CL).

John Paul II looks to the particular role of the layperson in the realization of Christ's mission, emphasizing that the distinctive character of lay life is to be a sign of the Reign of God in the world. (CL, no. 23 citing Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 70) He understands the lay state not just in human

The lay leader brings the life of the world and its noblest concerns to the heart of the parish and, in turn directs the lifeblood of the parish — strengthened and sustained by celebration in Word and Sacrament — so that the world is more fully infused with holiness, truth, justice, love, and peace.

It is from the position of being in the world, in these worldly "places," attentive to "the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anguish of the people of this age" (*Gaudium et Spes*, [The Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World] no. 1), that the lay leader must give shape to a vision of the Reign of God, inviting others in the parish to live from and for this vision of a world transformed by holiness, truth, justice, love, and peace.

The lay leader, above all the lay leader of the parish, is not someone whose ministry is to be understood as filling in the gaps, doing the many seemingly incalculable tasks that the priest once did, but does no longer, so that he can be "freed up" to celebrate Mass and hear confessions. "Without a vision, the people perish." There is an abundance of gifts flourishing in the Body. And the one who is designated to be the leader of the parish community is above all the one who holds fast to the vision of the Reign of God central to the meaning and message of Jesus. And then calls others to be faithful to that vision through the charism of leadership.

Much more is called for from a leader than being an effective administrator. Or a "human resources manager." And more still if one is to spell out the vision of the Reign of God --- shaped through and through by immersion in the "worldly places" of the new Areopagus — in a way that is both respectful in dialogue and persuasive in the face of doubt and ambiguity.

Gifts for the Task

How, precisely is the lay leader to do this?

First, the lay leader must have competence in the enterprise at hand. In parish leadership, this competence entails not only a thorough knowledge of the workings of the parish but also — and even more importantly — a measure of competence in theology, scripture, ethics, spirituality, Church history and canon law. Second, the life

of the parish leader is to be marked by a deep passion for parish ministry, for the persons served by it, as well as for those — priests, deacons, Religious and other lay ministers — who, together with the leader, serve the parish. Third, the parish leader must have an ability for communication of the vision of the parish — and the vision of the Reign of God which is at its heart — to one's colleagues and collaborators, as well as to those well beyond the world of the parish.

It is the lay leader who, precisely as a sign of the Reign of God in the world, must be attentive to the heartbeat of God in the new Areopagus, alert to the undertow of the Spirit's draw upon every human heart, even and especially in those who live in very different "worlds" of meaning, purpose and value than those who bear the name Christian.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council and of its final document, *Gaudium et Spes*, lay leaders must redouble their commitment to be a sign, indeed a sacrament, of the Reign of God in the world, calling us to see that "the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anguish of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1), the One who, even now, remains among us "as one who serves."

This is the lay leader's gift and task, preparing the way for the next generation, and the next, to find new ways of serving the life of the Church and its mission from which will emerge new leaders to carry forward the vision in their own time and place.

September 4, 2005 Feast of Our Lady of the Angels.

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In a cover letter to his statement, Cardinal Mahony said, "From one point of view we are facing a crisis. But the diminishing number of priestly and religious vocations has brought with it a deeper realization that it is in the nature of the church to be given diverse gifts, ministries and offices."

"At this time we are being called to discern new modes of parish leadership and a more participatory exercise of ministry in which lay, religious and ordained together seek to build up the body Christ through the charism of leadership," he said.

Executive Summary from the forthcoming survey: Lay Parish Ministers

A Study of Emerging Leadership

BY DAVID DELAMBO

Demographics

Extrapolating from our 2005 data, there are now 30,632 lay parish ministers working at least 20 hours per week in paid positions, an increase of 5 percent since 1997. The ratio of lay parish ministers to parishes is 1.61 to 1. Add in unpaid ministers, and the ratio rises to 1.72 lay ministers per parish.

Two-thirds of all parishes (66 percent) have paid lay ministers working at least 20 hours per week, up from 54 percent in 1990 and 60 percent in 1997. Add in unpaid ministers working 20 hours per week and the percent of parishes with lay ministers on staff increases to 68 percent.

Work Status The overwhelming majority of lay parish ministers are paid: 93.4 percent. Only 6.6 percent are not paid.

Among salaried lay ministers, 74 percent are full-time; 26 percent part-time.

Ecclesial Status The decline of women religious in parish ministry continues. In 1990, four in 10 lay parish ministers (41 percent) were women religious. By 1997, the percentage had dropped to 28 percent, and by 2005, to 16 percent.

Conversely, the proportion of laywoman (who are not vowed religious) in parish ministry has grown steadily from 44 percent in 1990, to 43 percent in 1997, and 64 percent in 2005.

The percentage of men in parish ministry has gone up, from 15 percent in 1990, to 18 percent in 1997, to 20 percent in 2005.

Nearly a quarter of the laymen have explored or pursued a vocation in religious or priestly life.

Age In 2005, the median age of religious in parish ministry was 64,

versus 61 in 1997 and 58 in 1990. The median age of laypersons (not including religious) in 2005 was 52, compared with 47 in 1997, and 45 in 1990.

Race and Ethnicity Of lay ministers 88.5 percent are white; other ethnic groups comprise a mere 11.5 percent. Still, these figures show much greater diversity than the 6.4 percent in 1997. However, such groups constitute 25.7 percent of unpaid parish ministers working at least twenty hours a week.

The “one parish, one pastor” model remain the most prevalent (72.0) percent). Still, more than one-fourth of the parishes in this country are not organized according to this model.

Education The percentage of lay parish ministers with a master’s degree or better dropped to 48.1 percent in 2005—below the 52.8 percent in 1990.

In Relation to Parish Locale

The percentage of parishes employing a lay parish minister is growing in every locale, but particularly in the inner city, urban business districts, and in small towns, where percentages have increased from 50, 54, and 59 percent to 76, 89, and 68 percent, respectively.

Structure of Parish Leadership

Different models The declining number of priests has profoundly influenced the structure of parish leadership, resulting in the merging twinning, and clustering of parishes. The “one parish, one pastor” model remain the most prevalent (72.0 percent). Still, more than one-fourth of the parishes in this country are not organized according to this model. The percentage of parishes with a pastor responsible for two or more parishes (21.9 percent) is substantial and will only grow in coming years if trend continue.

In our 2005 study, 10 percent of the parishes report that the pastor or priest with the powers and faculties of a pastor (Canon 517.2) for the parish in non-resident.

The percentage of parishes under the care of parish life coordinator (i.e., deacons, vowed religious, or laypersons appointed by the bishop or his delegate) has more than doubled (from 1.4 percent to 3.6 percent) since 1990. There are approximately 700 parishes under the care of someone who is not a priest.

The reality of someone other than a priest overseeing the daily pastoral care of a parish is more prevalent in actual practice, however. Non-resident pastors often hire lay parish ministers to oversee the day-to-day pastoral care of parishes. Add these to the number of parishes entrusted to parish life coordinators, and the percentage of parishes where the day-to-day pastoral care of the parish is performed by someone other than a priest rises to approximately 6 percent of all parishes.

Entering Parish Ministry Call to a Lifetime in Ministry

Almost three-quarters of all lay parish ministers (73.1 percent) believe they are pursuing a lifetime of service in the church.

More than half of these laypersons

pursuing a lifetime of ministry in the church (54.2 percent) say a “call by God” was the factor that most influenced their decision.

Perhaps the best indicator or satisfaction is the high percentage of parish ministers who would encourage others to enter parish ministry: 87.1 percent.

Ministry Preparation and Formation Years of Catholic Education

Three-quarters of lay parish ministers (77.3 percent) have attended Catholic schools at some point in their lives. These figures are nearly identical to those from 1997 (75.6 percent). Add in “attended CCD or religious education,” and nearly all (89.1 percent) have had some form of religious education.

Ministry Formation Programs

More than half (56.8 percent) have completed a ministry formation program. Of this group, nearly two-thirds (64.3 percent) said the formation program was sponsored by the dioceses. About a quarter (24.1 percent) said it was sponsored by a university, college, or seminary.

Characterization of Work Relationships

The way lay parish ministers characterize their working relationship with the pastor has become

1990	1997	2005
Number of paid lay parish ministers		
21,569	29,146	30,632
Number of parishes employing them		
54%	60%	66%
Percentage of women/men		
85/15	82/18	80/20
Percentage of women religious in total		
41%	28.9%	16%
Average age of women religious in parish ministry		
58	61	64
Percentage religious with Master's Degree or better		
80.3%	83%	82.1%
Percentage of laity with Master's Degree or better		
33.2%	41.6%	41.3%
Average age of laity in parish ministry		
45	47	52
Percentage of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian paid lay ministers		
<5%	6.4%	11.5%
Percent unpaid		
NA	NA	NA
Percent religious educators (DRE, CRE, adult ed, catechumenate)		
34.4%	34%	41.5%
Average full-time salaries, not including benefits (\$ thousand)		
\$13-20	\$21-28	See forthcoming survey

progressively more professional. The percentage applying terms like “team member,” “staff member,” and colleagues have increased substantially. Characterizations that imply subordinate status (“employee,” “helper”) and casual relations (“friends”) have all declined.

Pastors most frequently characterize their work relationship with lay parish ministers as “team,” which implies an informal collaborative relationship. Lay parish ministers choose the term “staff” most formal independent relationship. Still, “team” is the second most frequent descriptor chosen by lay ministers, just as “staff” is second for pastors. It is an issue of emphasis.

Financial Compensation and Benefits

Parish Salaries The increase in salaries since 1990 (in terms of nominal dollars) is striking. In most categories, lay parish ministers have doubled their annual earnings.

The Census Bureau's Current Populations Survey shows that lay parish ministers' salaries are fairly on par with salaries (overall) nationally. The figure does not parse out non-profit or people with similar education levels, but deals with median income levels for full-time work.

Salary Satisfaction Two-thirds either strongly agreed (22.5 percent) or agreed somewhat (45.7 percent) that their annual earnings were adequate for their personal, family, or religious congregational needs.

However, about a third of minis-

	Percentage with Master's Degree or Better		
	1990	1997	2005
Lay	33.2%	41.6%	41.3%
Religious	80.3%	83.0%	82.1%
Overall	52.8%	53.3%	49.1%

Nearly four in ten (37.8 percent) lay parish ministers do not believe that their parishes have the resources to compensate them adequately.

ters (31.8 percent) do not find their annual earnings adequate for their personal, family, or religious congregational needs. Nearly four in ten (37.8 percent) lay parish ministers do not believe that their parishes have the resources to compensate them adequately.

Job Satisfaction

Level of Satisfaction More than 85 percent of ministers describe their work as meaningful, good, providing a sense of accomplishments, satisfying, challenging, spiritually rewarding, creative, respected, life giving, and appreciated—all qualities one longs for in a job.

Perhaps the best indicator or satisfaction is the high percentage of parish ministers who would encourage others to enter parish ministry: 87.1 percent.

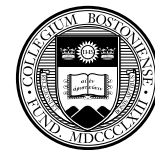
Consideration of Leaving While a third of ministers say they have considered leaving church ministry sometimes or often, only a few have resolved to do it in the immediate future; 5.5 percent said that they planned to leave church ministry within the year. The vast majority (95.5 percent) said they envisioned

serving the church “indefinitely” (49.5 percent) or “for the next few years” (44.9 percent).

David DeLambo is the associate director of pastoral planning for the Diocese of Cleveland. This survey is taken from Ministries: A Parish Guide.

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CHECK OUT THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND WEB ARCHIVE OF THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY



The Church in the 21st Century plans lectures, panel discussions, and other events at Boston College this spring. Keep track of these, and view video and audio recordings of past events by visiting our Web site, www.bc.edu/church21.

Home Alone

One Lay Minister's Story

BY KAREN RUSHEN

It was in Detroit that I first realized a career in lay ministry requires not only plenty of self-care, but other intrepid souls with whom to share the trip. My apartment building sat in the middle of the block on Detroit aging southwest side. I had been living there for two years, and whenever I would come home on a summer evening, the neighborhood children would stop their street games so that I could pull into the driveway.

Sometimes the girls came up as I was getting out of the car and asked if they could water my flowers. Three-year-old Olivia especially life to lug the green plastic watering can from flower to flower, dousing to driveway, half the lawn, and her small red sneakers before drenching each flower and commanding it to be pretty and grow strong.

My small flat was decorated with paintings I had done and with folk art and souvenirs from my travels in Israel and Italy, Guatemala and Japan. With a master's degree and a decent paying job in urban parish ministry, I could have afforded to live in the suburbs but chose to settle in southwest Detroit. I was highly idealistic at that point and had made a personal commitment to live with the poor; a gray and nebulous promise that felt stronger on good days, but pretty wobbly on bad ones. I often wondered how long I would "make it," a little voice inside telling me I was "doing my time," like a stint in the missions, but that I could leave anytime since there was an unwritten escape clause in my contract with myself.

I had kept aside enough money to call a moving van and pack for the suburbs on one day's notice, if need be. I even had the first and last month's rent, not something I was proud of or cared to admit to myself, especially when I thought about the future of the children playing on the street below my window. Life didn't appear to have given them much of an escape clause.

The day I decided to leave was a

day not unlike many others, except that it was so hot I remember to tar sticking to my shoes. The heat seemed to blister off the buildings, rippling across the concrete life waves from a blast furnace. Arriving home, I wanted to take a cold shower, but there was no water pressure. The kids had opened the nearby fire hydrant and were running through a frothy jet of cold water that pooled at the bottom of the street. I was half tempted to join them, but decided to fill the tub several inches with the slow trickle from the tap. I stepped into the bath and sponged myself down, tired and aching from an afternoon filled with problems only partially resolved.

The low point had been the hungry man and his four daughters—all under ten—who had come to the church seeking food. I had sent them next door for a meal at the soup kitchen while I tried to get in touch with the deacon. He was out securing the property of an elderly parishioner whose house had been broken into. The father, irritated because I couldn't locate the deacon, turned irate when I couldn't find the food pantry key. More to be rid of him than out of any sense of charity, I gave him twenty dollars from my purse, hoping he wouldn't drink it all away, but realizing I was creating another problem—he would surely be back another day looking for more. Today, I didn't care: I was scraping the bottom of my inner resources.

Just moments after stepping into the tub, I heard shots ring out. They were rapid, and they were nearby. I tensed and listened, but only silence followed. When I got downstairs, the street was again filled with children. My neighbors told me a teenage gang member had been shot in the legs in a driveby shooting at the convenience store at the end of the block. It was the third time in six months that there had been a shooting at the store.

The owner, Joe, would ring up my purchases and pass them back through a Plexiglas turnstile, commenting on the recent lotto jackpot or asking about my job. More than once when I ran short

of money—I didn't carry much cash, and John wouldn't accept checks—he would bag my groceries and tell me to pay next time. And despite the recent shootings, I hadn't stopped using the stores; I just offered a silent prayer every time I went there, hoping I would emerge safely without being accidentally gunned down, my groceries and blood spilled across the sidewalk.

Since moving to Detroit, prayer had become a well-honed part of my survival skills. Praying "pre-Detroit" had been a well-meaning exercise in attempting to achieve a feeling of union with God and the universe. But in my new neighborhood, prayer had become a daily litany of evils witnessed and offered to God—a God I was beginning to wonder about more and more.

I toyed with the idea of moving back to the suburbs, but knew I would miss the little miracles in my neighborhood: the pheasant that had nested in an abandoned lot nearby; and the wild flowers; and the morning glories, the size of pie plates, winding up the chain link fence next to the decaying school year. and then there were the gorgeous vegetables, sold for a pittance in a vacant lot from the back of a VW van be a wonderful Mexican family. And the children, dancing and squealing in the spray of the fire hydrant on scorching, hazy days. Still, when I walked my little nieces and nephews though the well-manicured lawns of my sister's suburban township, the miracle of plush lawns littered with toys that could be left out without fear of their being stolen rocked my bones.

I perused a discarded-newspaper and its headline about a forty-one-year-old woman who had blown up her house. She had been trying to commit suicide—not the first time, apparently—by gassing herself. A spark ignited and blew up her house instead, landing her relatively unscathed in a neighbor's driveway. You could call it a miracle of sorts, but that evening I had to wonder about a God with such a sense of humor. At thirty-five, and with not even a goldfish to come home to, I didn't need to dwell on the far side too long to understand why a well-fed woman in an affluent suburb in the prime of life might have wanted to end it all. But when I started to cry reading the article, I had to wonder why that was what had brought me to tears.

A few months before, I had discov-

ered a lump on the side of my head. When the doctor concluded, with unsteady hands and voice, that it wasn't a cyst, I got ready to die. My African-American co-workers prayed the tumor into becoming a benign mass of bone, latter confirmed by a CAT scan, or so they claimed at a "Karen's-been-healed" potluck over corn bread, greens, and smoked turkey wings. At the time, I was just happy not to be dying. Now, over my iced latte, I knew I wanted more out of life than simply not dying. I had seen too much death, poverty, and depression, and my heart was crying out for more to come home to than a goldfish. It was screaming out for joy.

The truth is, all the inner-city carnage hadn't touched me at some level. I had never been at the same risk of being shot as my neighbors, although stray bullets have no loyalties. And my work made a difference, at least on some days. No, my tears were both more personal and more prosaic. What I realized that evening was that I was aching for a soul mate, and the fact sucked the breath out of me. I needed to find another place.

As a laywoman, I had come to understand the wisdom of religious sisters and brothers living in community. They form necessary islands of refuge, sanity, and nourishment in a sea of human need. As a single laywoman balancing a life of service among the needy, this long-ranger type ministry was no small feat. If I was to survive and to keep going, I needed to find another place, a different landscape—both interior and exterior.

We laypeople are our own map makers. It is our responsibility—to ourselves and to others—not only to navigate our novel terrain but to chart it. In my case, no one else was going to do it for me. I was not drawn to traditional religious life, and I was too old to join those just out of college who sign up for a year's community service sponsored by a religious order. On the other hand, I was too young to bond with the graying priests and sisters who had served as the mainstay of Detroit's urban parishes. I had to make my own way, and it would probably include many more compromises than I once would have left comfortable with.

My first would be to move to Chicago, but on that particular evening, I didn't know it yet. Year later, it would include finding a good man and soul mate. But at the time all

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An Excellent Catholic Parish

How lay ministry transformed Holy Family

BY PAUL WILKES

As people flocked to the Willowcreek Community church in the gently rolling farmland northwest of Chicago, the Church took notice, for good reason. Not only was Willowcreek a new kind of a religious institution affiliated with none of the mainline denominations, but former Catholics made up 60 to 75 percent of its membership. Something desperately wrong had happened during Catholicism's move from the tightly knit, often ethnic neighborhoods in the heart of Chicago to the suburbs. Too many in the suburban diaspora believed that the Church of their childhood had not met or even acknowledged their needs as adults.

In the archdiocesan offices of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the decision was made in 1984 to take a hard look at Willowcreek's obvious appeal. First, the arch-diocese held a series of meetings in Catholic homes, then services in a local public high school cafeteria. Finally, after a three-year discernment process, the archdiocese purchased 16 acres of farmland and founded a new parish community, Holy Family.

Today, the sprawl of middle- and upper-middle class homes has completely enveloped the Holy Family grounds. The property includes an impressive glass-and-stone structure. Vaguely monastic in its soaring simplicity, the Holy Family buildings comprise a virtually self-contained small community: an 1,800-seat church, a maze of offices to support its 120 ministries and 28-person staff, meeting spaces and classrooms, a nursery, kitchen, chapel, and rectory.

Joe Scaletta, like many at Holy Family, had been "lost and searching." This electrical engineer seriously considered leaving the Catholic faith that had been in his family for generations. He—and many others—found Willowcreek extremely appealing. The local Catholic churches paled by com-

parison, and area Catholics were fed up with uninspiring priests and tired parishes.

Today Holy Family is a huge parish with 3,500 families, about 12,000 people in all. Yet the *Official Catholic Directory*, which lists all parishes and priests, lists only one priest in residence.

Some may consider Holy Family a model of collaboration, that oft-used and misused buzzword in today's priest-poor American Church. Collaboration, in fact, is not a word often used at Holy Family. Instead, its pastor, 52-year-old Father Patrick Brennan, uses the term *lateral min-*

"It was clear to me that a parish had to focus on three things," Brennan said. A slightly built man with thinning, curly auburn hair, Brennan speaks in a voice at once modest in modulation and firm in conviction. He is not the powerhouse personality one might expect to find leading such a large and successful parish. In fact, he has a certain boyish shyness about him.

"First, we had to offer a family-conscious ministry that continually involved all members of the family, not just the kids as they prepared for First Communion or later marriage," Brennan said. "Second, small communities are absolutely crucial

Today, in addition to Brennan's radio and cable television shows, Holy Family bulletins are sent to each home monthly, small faith communities receive specific guidelines for their weekly meetings, homilies are offered on tape for the homebound, and an attractive Internet site provides a gateway to the church's many ministries.

A weekday night visit to Holy Family underscored the range of ministries there. The support group for the separated and divorced hosted a speaker who discussed dating and relationship skills. The "Be Joyful Again" gathering talked of the pain people experience upon the deaths of their spouses. The "Respect Life" group prayed the Rosary in the sanctuary; a men's ministry prayer group gathered in the chapel; and a meditation group met in a nearby house.

Spiritual partnering, Knights of Columbus, support for victims of domestic violence, and a unique group called WESOM (We Saved Our Marriage) also contribute to the Holy Family mix. In one of the original farm buildings is a counseling clinic, open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., a brilliant meeting of need and available resources provides therapists in training.

"I think need is a key word we in church ministry have to constantly address," Brennan said. "We are a church that seeks to discover people's needs they don't even know that they have. And then to meet them in a place that is undergirded by a rich religious tradition and staffed with those not necessarily with religious degrees, but with the appropriate talents."

Sue Werner spoke for many seekers: "My paper life was just as it had been when I was a child. Self-help books were becoming tiresome and priests I had approached were uninterested and unable to help." At Holy Family, Werner and other parishioners encountered a deeper spirituality and found that Brennan treated them as adults. His sermons linked the news of the week with the Good News of the Gospels. A "high intellectual level" is

What make Holy Family different is that, while still in many respects a traditional Catholic parish, it is mission-driven and lay-driven.

istries. this signals that the playing field is level and that anyone expecting or wanting him to carry the ball all the time will be disappointed.

Brennan has repeatedly said he would sooner have a committed, competent, faith-filled lay person than simply another roman collar around the neck of a fellow priest who did not share the vision of a church like Holy Family.

Brennan's path to Holy Family is an interesting pilgrimage in itself. When the archdiocese proposed the new church, he applied for the pastor's position but was passed over in favor of Father Medard Lax, who had greater financial expertise. When Lax wanted to move on in 1993, Brennan, along with twelve others, applied for the job. Once apprised of the breadth and complexity of Holy Family's ministries, eleven dropped out, leaving Brennan to head what is considered one of the jewels in the crown of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

so that people are involved in faith-sharing spirituality rather than the kind of mindless volunteerism that marks too much of what we think of as successful churches. And, third, adult education. We had to address the fact that many Catholics stopped learning and being taught when they walked out of Catholic school or their last CCD class."

After a few years at Holy Family, Brennan added two more crucial elements, one old-fashioned and the other new. "I quickly saw that we had to do much better at basic pastoral work," he said. "Our funerals had to reach and touch the bereaved and their friends. We had to find new ways of counseling so that modern men and women, more used to going to their therapist than to a church, might see that spirituality and mental health really go hand in hand."

"And," he continued, "we had to communicate better. Sunday morning notices just weren't enough."

how one parishioner described it.

Yet, this still-young parish clearly envisions membership as a two-way street. "The atmosphere at Holy Family creates a culture of involvement," said Janet Hauter, a management consultant. "So many people say after attending Holy Family a couple times, 'I found that home, parishioners willingly jump into activities. this is not mindless volunteerism, but meaningful service.

What make Holy Family different is that, while still in many respects a traditional Catholic parish, it is mission-driven and lay-driven. It isn't dogma-driving or hierarchical. Brennan looks upon the eight laypeople who head the major ministering communities (worship, family life, communications, outreach and social justice, evangelization and catechesis, pastoral care, operations, youth) as associate pastors.

Diocese across America have launched program upon program for the purpose of evangelization. At Holy Family it takes place quite naturally: by word of mouth. When Barb Knuth, who runs a construction com-

pany, talks about Brennan's sermons at lunch, she is not just trolling for converts. She has found something wonderful for her life and wants other people to know.

"I feel a surge of faith at this place," said another parishioner. "I used to fulfill my duty, but now I can't wait to get here." Joy Micheletto, a preschool teacher, admitted being a Catholic of the old-school teachings who has found a new faith at Holy Family. "To be part of a caring community, to have a church that helps with my spiritual development. I tell people all the time about our church."

"He keeps on saying he is calling us to a radical union with one another," another parishioner says of Brennan. "Hey, that's tough. I don't like everybody in this church. But this is my family. Am I just going to walk away because we have a fight or a disagreement or two?"

One Sunday morning, having preached about bringing a generous spirit into the week, Brennan pauses at the end of Mass and says, "Think of one way you'll be more hospitable,

kinder to someone you have difficulty with. Stand up and leave when you're ready." In silence, the parishioners ponder his words and his challenge.

There is an ever-present tension between the demands of Catholic orthodoxy and the promises of the Vatican II vision. Holy Family could easily become another popular, feel-good place that reduces religion to social work and Catholicism to hollow ritual. Being a cutting-edge parish means being careful with such an impressive tool; it can slice through your flesh as well as cut through disaffection and religious ennui. Yet something has happened here: The new has indeed been recreated from the ancient wisdom of the Scripture, the promise of forgiveness, the embrace of community.

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Home Alone

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I knew was that I had been in Detroit too long, and that it was time to leave.

When I arrived back at my apartment, Olivia ran up and asked if she could water my flowers. To one side of my apartment, my Hungarian landlord was pruning his acacia tree that, for one month each summer, shimmered with strands of paper-thin silver flowers. On the other side, my neighbor was burying scraps from supper in his garden, where he grew tomatoes the size of grapefruits. Off in the west, the sun was setting and the horizon was glowing, a throbbing fuchsia. It was unlike any ski I'd ever seen prior to coming to southwest Detroit, brilliant from the pollution, I was told. At times, I miss it still.

I finished watering the geranium with Olivia and then went to sit alone in the sunset. I was happy in my decision to seek a new life. I tried not to dwell on the fact that I would be leaving my neighbors, people who had come to depend on my being there, an island in their lives. Across the street, my neighbor turned from pulling weeds in his bed of impatiens. He nodded toward my six window boxes, their blossoms bobbing in the evening breeze, and he smiled and waved. It seemed a blessing.

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