



**2011 Collegetown National Symposium
on Lay Ecclesial Ministry**

August 2-5, 2011

Collegetown, Minnesota

Report to USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

2011 Collegetown National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry

Dr. Jeffrey Kaster, Symposium Chair and Dr. William Cahoy, Dean

Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary

September 12, 2011

Background

The 2011 Collegetown National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry responds to the U.S. bishop's call in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* for expanded study of critical issues facing lay ecclesial ministry. Two hundred and thirty participants engaged in extended dialogue on the theology of vocation and authorization in lay ecclesial ministry from August 2-5, 2011 at Saint John's University in Collegetown Minnesota. Nearly one fourth of the participants were Latino, African American, Asian, Pacific Islanders, or American Indian. Forty-four organizations co-sponsored the symposium including fourteen universities, twenty-five ministry organizations, two dioceses, and three USCCB committees or departments. See website for list of co-sponsors.

In preparation for this symposium seven theologians worked for two years on essays advancing theological understanding of vocation and authorization in lay ecclesial ministry. These essays provided the foundation for the dialogue at the symposium.

- Charles Bobertz, Ph.D., "The Biblical Basis for Understanding Lay Ecclesial Ministry: A Consideration of Spiritual Gifts and the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14)"
- Edward P. Hahnenberg, Ph.D. "Serving in the Name of the Church: The Call to Lay Ecclesial Ministry"
- Graziano Marcheschi, "Rituals Matter: What Diocesan Rites Can Tell Us about the Emerging Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry"
- Hosffman Ospino, Ph.D., "Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Lessons and Insights from Early Conversations about the Identity of the DRE"
- Lynda Robitaille, JCD, "A Canonical Wish-List for the Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministers"
- Susan K. Wood, SCL, Ph.D., "A Theology of Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministers"
- Zeni V. Fox, Ph.D., "Leadership, Ritual and Lay Ecclesial Ministry"

Goals

1. To amplify the voice and strengthen the national will to promote effective ecclesial leadership practices identified within *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

2. To advance the theological understanding and pastoral practice of the vocation and authorization of lay ecclesial ministers.
3. To publish recommendations and organizational commitments that will advance excellence in lay ecclesial ministry.
4. To fund research and projects advancing the symposium recommendations and organizational commitments.

Symposium Highlights

Keynote Presentations

Dr. Nancy Ammerman, “The Religious Landscape and its Implications for Pastoral Leadership.”
Dr. William Cahoy, “Common Theological Themes from Collegeville Ministry Seminar II.”
Francis Cardinal George, OMI, “Understanding the ‘Ecclesial’ in Lay Ecclesial Ministry.”
Bishop Blase Cupich and Diana Macalintal, “Listening to the Movement of the Spirit.”

Theological Points of Convergence

Prior to the symposium Dr. William Cahoy and the authors and created eight points of theological convergence on lay ecclesial ministry. Considerable time was spent at the symposium dialoguing about these points of convergence with tables endorsing, endorsing with modification, or not endorsing each point. After this dialogue, the authors met and revised these points. Each author also shared with participants significant new understandings resulting from the dialogue. The symposium participants endorsed the revised theological points.

1. Lay ecclesial ministry is the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. Baptism is the foundational sacramental source that empowers the lay ecclesial minister to carry out the mission of Christ.
3. Lay ecclesial ministry is a genuine vocation to ministry discerned within the ecclesial community.
4. Lay ecclesial ministers enter into a distinctive set of relationships within the life of the Church. Their ministry is characterized by appropriate formation, the authorization of the hierarchy, leadership in a particular area of ministry, and mutual collaboration with the ordained and other ministers. These characteristics distinguish the ministry of lay ecclesial ministers from other ministries and from the broader participation of the lay faithful in the communion and mission of the church.
5. Lay ecclesial ministers serve in the name of the Church.
6. The bishop or his delegate authorizes the lay ecclesial minister for ministry in the name of the Church.
7. Public rituals provide an opportunity for the ecclesial community to receive, affirm and celebrate the ministry of the lay ecclesial minister.
8. The presence of lay ecclesial ministry calls the Church to provide systems of support and adjust parish, diocesan and national structures and policies to more fully integrate this new reality in the ministerial life of the Church in the United States.

A Rich Experience of Practical Theology

One of the highlights of the symposium was an experience of practical theology at work as participants pondered the issues of lay ecclesial ministry vocation and authorization. The essays and points of convergence were thoroughly discussed by symposium participants. The authors

listened to participant insights and revised their points of theological convergence based on this feedback. Several of the authors indicated that they would be revising their essays based on participant feedback. Many participants commented that this dialogue between theologians and practitioners provided a rich experience of theological reflection. The experience of theologians listening to practitioners seemed to be an especially significant highlight of the symposium.

Lay Ecclesial Ministry Research and National Initiatives

Symposium participants were informed about national lay ecclesial ministry research and initiatives through pre-symposium webinars and workshops at the symposium including:

- Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project - Emerging Models Project
- National Certification for Lay Ecclesial Ministers - Alliance of Ministry Organizations
- Building Intercultural Competency for Ministers - USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity

The impact of the dialogue on intercultural competency and national certification can be seen in a review of the recommendations and commitments made to advance excellence in lay ecclesial ministry.

Recommendations to Advance Excellence in Lay Ecclesial Ministry

Twenty-eight tables of eight participants developed a total of eighty-six recommendations for advancing lay ecclesial ministry. Symposium participants voted on the recommendations in an effort to prioritize the most important recommendations from this symposium.

- The recommendations receiving the highest priority focused on cultural diversity. These recommendations included the recruitment of lay ecclesial ministers from under-represented populations, investing financial resources, and the need for further dialogue with representatives from culturally diverse groups about the cultural implications impacting lay ecclesial ministry formation, certification, and authorization.
- The second category recommendations focused on national certification of lay ecclesial ministers. These recommendations included approval and promotion of national certification standards by the USCCB as integral to determining competency for ministry, the need for colleges and universities to understand and utilize these standards in ministry formation, and a need for cultural sensitivity within the certification process.
- A third set of recommendations focused on the need for fostering understanding of lay ecclesial ministry within seminary formation.
- A fourth group of recommendations related to ongoing research into lay ecclesial ministry including work on defining terms, scriptural foundations of authorization of lay ecclesial ministry, recruitment of young adults into lay ecclesial ministry, and research by the Canon Law Society developing guidelines for governance of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States.
- A final set of recommendations focused on developing a liturgical rite of blessing for lay ecclesial ministers and adding it to the *Book of Blessings*.

Organizational Commitments to Advance Excellence in Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The strength of this symposium rests in the belief that the participants and organizations participating in the symposium are responsible for the change needed to advance excellence in

lay ecclesial ministry. At the conclusion of the symposium organizational representatives made commitments for advancing lay ecclesial ministry. Sample commitments include:

- *Aquinas Institute of Theology* commits to research the feasibility of a regional meeting for lay ecclesial ministers in collaboration with the St. Louis, Belleville, Springfield-IL diocesan offices which would provide the opportunity to build relationship and offer a venue to communicate national initiatives which move forward an understanding of lay ecclesial ministry.
- *University of Dayton* commits to use, once they are approved, the revised national certification standards for lay ecclesial ministry as basis for review of our Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry program.
- *Saint John's University School of Theology and Seminary* commits to provide fifteen full tuition scholarships (5 per year for 3 years) for lay ecclesial ministers pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. We will give preference to applicants endorsed by co-sponsors of symposium, particularly those from underrepresented group.
- *Instituto Fe y Vida* commits to conduct a colloquium on lay ecclesial ministry for the Hispanic community in 2014.
- *Canon Law Society* commits to take to our October national convention, a resolution to survey diocese in the US to learn what is being done with regard to the practical implementation of Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the Diocese. Specifically the survey will study the relationship between the bishop and the lay ecclesial minister and how in practice the lay ecclesial minister is integrated within the parish and diocesan structures. The study will also explore other relevant canonical issues that emerge from the survey. This information will be published as a resource guide.
- *National Catholic Education Association* commits to ask the boards or executive committees of the various agencies of NCEA to consider the topic of lay ecclesial ministry and education as an agenda item for discussion, action and follow-up.

Symposium Website (<http://www1.csbsju.edu/sot/symposium/>)

The symposium website lists all the recommendations and organizational commitments made at the symposium as well as videos of the keynote presentations, webinars, press releases, a blog, and video interviews with participants.

Next Steps

1. The Liturgical Press will be publishing *In the Name of the Church: Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, edited by Bill Cahoy, in early 2012. This book will include the essays prepared for the symposium, the theological consensus points endorsed by symposium participants, and Cardinal George's keynote "Understanding the 'Ecclesial' in Lay Ecclesial Ministry."
2. Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary will award \$30,000 in grant funding (from symposium co-sponsorship fees) to advance excellence in lay ecclesial ministry by December 31, 2011.
3. The School of Theology will explore additional funding to co-sponsor a third symposium in 2015.