

WORKING IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD

A NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY
JULY 31 TO AUGUST 3, 2007
COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA



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August 24, 2007

TO: Most Reverend David A. Zubik

FROM: Jeffrey Kaster,
Chair, National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry

RE: Report on National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry for
Sept. 9th Consultation on *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*

Paulo Freire suggested that when dialogue unites reflection and action transformation and humanization can occur. Two hundred Catholic leaders experienced this type of dialogue at the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry. Reflection and action were woven into the symposium goals:

- To amplify the national will to advance lay ecclesial ministry in the United States.
- To foster theological and pastoral insight into authorizing, certifying, forming and sustaining lay ecclesial ministry.
- To create national recommendations for formation, authorization, pathways, and workplace issues that seek to foster excellence in lay ecclesial ministry.
- To generate organizational and personal commitments for implementing symposium recommendations.

Capstone speaker Most Reverend Gregory Aymond said of the symposium, "*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* is being rewritten by this conversation. The Spirit is helping us put flesh on the bones."

1. *Theological Insights*

- "The emergence of lay ecclesial ministry over the past forty years stands out as one of the top three or four most important ministerial shifts of the past two-thousand years," Dr. Edward Hahnenberg.
- "The principle behind authorization is that there's no such thing as a freelance lay ecclesial minister. A person might assume a ministry; they might be lay, but it's authorization that puts the ecclesial in lay ecclesial ministry," Sr. Susan Wood.

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2. Recommendations (Appendix 1 contains a summary of the recommendations)
- Pathway recommendations emphasized ways for Catholic leaders to invite persons to lay ecclesial ministry.
 - Formation recommendations focused on 1) formation for a culturally diverse church; 2) funding; 3) allowance for alternative modes of formation; and 4) availability and accessibility.
 - Authorization recommendations called for further dialogue and study to clarify the meaning of authorization.
 - Workplace recommendations called for dioceses and parishes to establish personnel policies that were just.

3. Key Learnings

- There is a need for ongoing theological study of vocation and authorization in lay ecclesial ministry.
- Issues of inclusion were significant throughout the symposium process. The sixty participants from Hispanic, African American, and Asian Pacific ministries were appreciative of the invitation to participate, but also challenged the group to be more inclusive.
- Two models for certification were explored. The Minnesota model of six dioceses collaborating on a common process for lay ecclesial ministry certification and the movement towards a national certification model proposed by the “alliance” of the NFCYM, NCCL, NALM, and NPM. This appears to be another significant issue for ongoing study, particularly the connection of the bishop to the formation agents or certifying body.

4. Organizational Commitments

Perhaps the highlight of the symposium was the organizational commitment ceremony on the final day of the symposium. Representatives from the following ministry organizations made commitments to advance symposium recommendations within the next twelve months:

- 1) Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry; 2) *Federación de Institutos Pastorales*; 3) Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions; 4) Institute in Pastoral Ministries: Saint Mary University of Minnesota; 5) Minnesota Catholic Education Association; 6) National Asian Pacific Catholic Organization; 7) National Association for Lay Ministry; 8) National Association of Black Catholic Administrators; 9) National Association of Catholic Chaplains; 10) National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers; 11) National Association of Pastoral Musicians; 12) National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors for Hispanic Ministry; 13) National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry; 14) National Catholic Educational Association; 15) The National Catholic Network de Pastoral *Juvenil Hispana*; 16) National Conference for Catechetical Leadership; 17) National Federation of Priests' Councils; 18) National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry; 19) National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management; 20) Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary; 21) USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation; and 22) Washington Theological Union.

In a spirit of Benedictine hospitality Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary commits to serve as conveners of ongoing conversation at the national level, pursue funding to make it possible, and contribute to the development of a theology of vocation and a theology of authorization. The organizational commitments, recommendations, papers, and keynote talks can all be viewed at the symposium website at: www.lensymposium.org.

“Ultimately this is the work of the Spirit,” Sr. Ana Maria Pineda, Symposium Capstone talk.

PATHWAYS DIALOGUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The symposium opened by exploring the various pathways that had brought participants to lay ecclesial ministry. A pre-symposium exercise invited participants to “map out” their journey with particular focus on three areas:

- Identify significant moments of personal discernment.
- Identify significant moments of discernment through your program of formation.
- Identify significant moments of discernment by an ecclesial body or agent.

Table dialogue in groups of six to eight lay and ordained ministers was animated by stories of vocation and call. Participants demonstrated affection for, perseverance in, and hope for our Catholic faith. Thus, the symposium opened with the morning prayer of the Church as well as the lived faith experiences of participants. Subsequent recommendations on pathways to ministry centered around three themes.

Practical Resources for Pathways to Ministry: Creation of programmatic and practical pathways to lay ecclesial ministry should occur, emphasizing ways for Catholic leaders to invite persons to lay ecclesial ministry and for persons to discern God’s call to collaborative ministries. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Incorporation of resources and tools that effectively advertise and market interpersonal experiences of prayer and mentoring, and multi-ethnic perspectives.
- Adequately funded “programs for collaborative ministries” emphasizing pathways to serve Christ in ways that appeal to both ordained and lay persons.
- Sponsorship of annual diocesan “vocations/ministry summit” for its ordained and lay ministers.

Theology of Vocation: Enhanced conversations and education should occur regarding experiences and theologies of vocation. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Initiatives should occur in families, parishes, and educational organizations.
- Conversations, ideas, and practices should strive to develop the enhanced understandings of vocation that are expected in *Co-Workers* and emphasize the practice of mentoring.
- Coordination, perhaps by USCCB of a National Week of Lay Ministry, incorporating both prayer and vocational storytelling.

Culturally Diverse Pathways: Culturally diverse pathways into ministry should be understood and developed. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Development of culturally appropriate strategies to assist recruitment and discernment into lay ecclesial ministry.
- Intentional incorporation of the unique aspects of language, ethnicity, personal invitation, and life experience.
- Collaboration by perhaps the *Instituto Fe y Vida*, National Association of Black Catholic Administrators, National Association for Lay Ministry and other national organizations to produce culturally appropriate guidelines for recruitment and discernment into lay ecclesial ministry.

FORMATION DIALOGUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reflection and dialogue on area of formation began with a panel presentation:

- Todd Graff (Diocese of Winona) noted that the context of LEM formation is shaped by life commitments as well as by ministry and formation. The content ought to reflect the local church while being anchored in the universal church.
- Alejandro Siller-González (MACC) focused on the Hispanic cultures and encouraged awareness of the social constructs, “Who is diverse?” “Who are foreigners?”
- Bill Cahoy, Ph.D. (Dean, SJU) referred to Canon 231 in his presentation on how lay ministers need and deserve adequate education if there is to be sustained excellence. “We should not demand what we do not support.” Support includes money and mutual accountability. LEM positions are leadership roles that require knowledge, skill, and personal formation.

The dialogues in part focused on the tension experienced between the desire for adequate formation based on national or regional standards and the need for broad availability and accessibility of formation programs. Subsequent recommendations related to formation focused on the following four themes.

Formation of LEMs for a Culturally Diverse Church: Recommendations related to diversity received the strongest endorsement. At the same time, the need for national certification standards was expressed. LEM formation programs should take into consideration both the personal and contextual diversity of persons called to lay ecclesial ministry and the diversity of the local churches for which they are being prepared. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Awareness of family systems, cultural perspectives and worldviews, intercultural skills for ministerial relationships, and language proficiency appropriate to the local church.
- Encouragement of dioceses to partner with educational institutions, ministry formation, and certification programs to provide alternate formation pathways.
- Identification of common competencies in seminary and LEM formation programs in order to bring students together in order to enhance future working relationships.
- Urgency regarding the need for dioceses and parishes to provide the best possible LEM formation, according to their means.

Financial Support: Financial support for LEM formation was identified as a critical issue across the table discussions. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Creation of strategies for dioceses and parishes regarding the sharing of the cost of adequate and appropriate formation, which are essential for sustained excellence in ministry.
- Development of strategies to provide funding for lay ministry formation in ways similar to the financial support systems available for ordained formation.
- Continuing formation for LEMs on intellectual, spiritual, personal and pastoral levels was also identified as an important aspect of formation to be addressed by parishes, dioceses, and Catholic institutions, with some voicing the need to develop sabbatical policies for LEMs.

Alternative Forms of Formation: Dialogue on LEM formation focused on the need to recognize different levels of preparedness for education and formation, as well as consider life experience as part of formation. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Revision of the USCCB accreditation processes and standards was endorsed strongly.
- Encouragement of formation programs to consider the family dynamics of their lay students in program design, cost, and time requirements.
- Examination of best practices was recommended for all types of formation.

Availability and Accessibility: Availability and accessibility of LEM formation programs through various modalities and a variety of contexts was a focal point of the dialogue. Additionally, the need for accessible formation resources, shared financial support, and the use of technology were frequently mentioned as means to expand availability to more people, especially those in rural areas and communities with limited financial resources. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Opportunities for formation in ministry should be affordable and flexible in order to respond to the cultural, economic, and geographic realities in the U.S. Catholic Church.
- Development of strategies for regular feedback by parishes/dioceses within the formation process.

AUTHORIZATION DIALOGUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A critical aspect of the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry was the exploration of the authorization of lay ecclesial ministers. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* defines authorization as “the process by which properly prepared lay men and women are given responsibilities for ecclesial ministry by competent church authority (p. 54).” A thorough examination of the process of authorization presented in the Co-Workers document was explored in three symposium papers. The papers presented for consideration by symposium participants included papers written and presented by:

- Susan K. Wood, SCL, Ph.D. on a *Theology of Authorization*;
- Rev. Paul Golden, CM, JCD on *Canon Law and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministers*;
- Charlotte McCorquodale, Ph.D. and Sean Reynolds, M.A. on *Current Models of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Authorization*.

Discussion groups examine the issue of certification of lay ecclesial ministers from the perspectives of 1) diocesan certification administrators within the Minnesota Catholic Education Association (MCEA) Certification process, 2) certified lay ecclesial ministers and, 3) national organizations who certify or who are considering certification for their members. Finally, a Bishop’s Panel explored the issue of authorization. Panel participants included:

- Bishop Richard E. Pates, Archdiocese of St. Paul,
- Bishop Gregory M. Aymond, Diocese of Austin,
- Very Rev. Michael J. Hoepfner, Vicar General, Diocese of Winona.

Symposium participants reached consensus on the need for additional theological reflection, study and dialogue on the action of authorizing lay ecclesial ministers. Theological reflection on

the issue needs to include how the call to ministry is rooted in baptism and the role of the Bishop as authorizing agent. It was concluded by participants that our current theologies of ministry and vocation should be expanded to be inclusive of authorized lay ecclesial ministers. Subsequent recommendations related to authorization focused on the following three themes.

Theological Reflection: These national leaders identified the need at all levels of the Church, to engage in a systematic process of dialogue and study that clarifies the meaning of authorization and effective practices. This should take into account Canon Law, the lived reality of the Church, and the theology and concepts within *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Development of graduated certification standards which allow for local variations and access by diverse populations,
- Clarification of the relationship between certification and authorization,
- Definitions of terminology related to the action of authorization,
- Exploration of canonical implications of authorizing lay ecclesial ministers,
- Classification of ministries which require authorization,
- Identification of proper agent(s) of authorization by clarifying the role of parish community, pastor, and bishop, and
- Identification of best practices related to certification at diocesan, regional, and national levels.

Additional Dialogue on Authorization: In over 20 recommendations made by symposium participants, the need for further dialogue on this issue became evident. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Engagement of the USCCB, theologians, canon lawyers, ordained ministers, lay ecclesial ministers, and national organizations in the dialogue to develop structures that support the consistent authorization of lay ecclesial ministers with sensitivity to diversity.
- Encouragement of national organizations to work together in certification processes. Encouragement of state and regional conferences of Bishops to consider joint certification efforts such as the MCEA model.

Official Ritual(s) Related to Authorization of LEMS: Finally, the participants expressed a desire for an official ritual for use in the dioceses of the United States for public commissioning and authorization of lay ecclesial ministers. Complementary rites of sending and announcement for use in parishes should also be developed.

SUMMARY OF WORKPLACE ISSUES DIALOGUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final presentation of the symposium dealt with the Ministerial Workplace. Michael Brough, Director of Planning and Member Services with the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, presented a workshop entitled “Raising Expectations in the Ministerial Workplace.” From *Co-Workers* Michael outlined the following as the context of that document for the Ministerial Workplace:

- theology and ecclesiology of communion,
- integration of gospel values and best organizational practices,
- ongoing process of development and dialogue,

- significant degree of preparation, formation, and professional competence,
- mutual and fruitful collaboration
- and comprehensive personnel systems.

In terms of best organizational practices, he proposed that the context of *Co-Workers* translates into: strong leadership and collaboration, open dialogue, planning processes, audits of ministerial workplaces, evaluation processes, and the fostering of employee engagement. The presentation then proceeded to delineate how the six human resource areas listed in *Co-Workers* needed to be developed to meet the standards of best organizational practices in light of Catholic Social Teaching.

Dialogue at the tables surfaced many issues focusing on parish and diocesan human resource policies and practices. Lay ecclesial ministers were exhorted to speak on their own behalf and to raise the expectations necessary for ensuring a just ministerial workplace. Some recommendations named specific issues while others called for complete policies around all issues. Subsequent recommendations related to formation focused on the following three themes.

Personnel Policies: The establishment of personnel policies was a significant area of dialogue by participants. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Establishment of personnel policies by parishes and dioceses that were just in areas of job descriptions, compensation, ongoing formation, benefits, evaluation, and retreats.
- Establishment of clear guidelines for policies during transition times.
- Development of a policy to be developed to assure portability of benefits across diocesan boundaries.

Resources and Programs: Emphasis was also placed on developing resources, training programs and setting up human resource offices in dioceses where they do not presently exist in order to help guide those in supervisory roles. Recognizing that resources are tight all around, suggestions were made for sharing resources, i.e. neighboring dioceses share a centralized human resource department. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Development of resources by the USCCB and national organizations that could be used by all to assure justice and compatibility among dioceses and parishes.
- Sponsorship of training workshops on human resource issues for seminarians and pastors.
- Education of parishioners regarding the role of lay ecclesial ministers within a parish and the need for just stewardship on the part of all.

Need for Assessment: Recommendations were made that diocesan and parish personnel assess present practices and make the necessary adjustments to assure that they were in keeping with the spirit of *Co-Workers* and in line with Catholic Social teaching. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Recognition and increased consciousness of the diverse cultures that are the Church and to make every effort to reflect that reality in our hiring practices.
- Establishment of a national task force to look at the issue of undocumented workers who are called to lay ecclesial ministry.