

# “Liturgy, Ministry and Church Mission”

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Late in his life, the great nineteenth century English Catholic theologian, John Henry Newman was supposedly asked why he had visited Rome so seldom in his long and distinguished career. Newman responded that he always found it best to heed the advice of his father who once told him, “queasy travelers ought not visit the engine room!” For many of us, recent events in our church have offered an unsettling view of the ecclesiastical engine room. The crisis that has recently wracked the church is not, in the end, a crisis occasioned by clerical sexual abuse, though instances of clerical sexual abuse indirectly instigated the crisis. No, the real crisis that we are struggling with is not so much a moral as an ecclesiological crisis. What we have discovered is that, in spite of all of the pro-Vatican II rhetoric, significant segments of our church still operate out of an ecclesial vision uninformed by the vision of the council. We have seen the soft underbelly of our church’s decision-making processes, and it hasn’t been pretty.

Crises are always unsettling for those who are affected by them, but it is worth remembering that, as Catholics, we are at home in crisis. As Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, former master general of the Dominican Order recently remarked, for Catholics crises “are our *specialité de la maison*.”<sup>1</sup> One way of reading the history of our church is to see it moving from one crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Radcliffe, “Priests and the Crisis of Hope within the Church,” *Origins* 34 (May 27, 2004): 23.

to the next. Indeed, as Fr. Radcliffe observed, crises often provide the occasions for church reform and renewal. So how must our church respond to this crisis?

I want to suggest that returning to the teaching of Vatican II is a good place to start. This does not mean that Vatican II has all the answers we need for moving beyond this crisis. Our church certainly needs to work harder to fulfill the still bracing vision of the council, but there are some limits to this kind of project. It is important to recognize that in some ways we have already gone beyond the council. Our church today is facing new challenges and questions that the council bishops never really anticipated. One of these new challenges is the totally unanticipated flourishing of lay ministries in the four decades since the council. This new development has raised important new questions about how we understand lay ministry theologically. It has raised questions about whether pre-conciliar and even conciliar understandings of ordained ministry are still adequate to the situation the church is facing today. I do not think the council documents offer clear and obvious solutions for these issues, but I do think there are still resources in the conciliar teaching that can help us as we address our present situation.

When people invoke the teaching of the council on ministry in the church they generally turn to either *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, The Decree on the Laity, or *Presbyterorum ordinis*, The Decree on Priestly Ministry and Life. However, I would like to turn to a different document for our reflections today. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, was the first document to be considered by the council bishops and though the document is explicitly concerned with the liturgy, I believe its most enduring contributions lie in what it says about the

church. Embedded in this document is the outline of a liturgical ecclesiology that might help us think about ministry in the church today.

In article 2 of *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the council asserted boldly that the eucharist “is supremely effective in enabling the faithful to express in their lives and portray to others the mystery of Christ and *the real nature of the true church*.” It is in the liturgy that the deepest reality of the church is manifested. Consequently, while the church is not church solely when it gathers in the eucharistic *synaxis*, the council understood that “the liturgy is the summit *toward which* the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source *from which* all its power flows (SC # 10).” This suggests that a renewed vision of the church could, and should, be read off of the corporate worship of the whole people of God.

## **I. Ministry within a Liturgical Vision of the Church**

The substance of my presentation will consist in drawing out five features of this liturgical vision of the church and then suggesting its implications for our understanding of church ministry.

### **A. Re-Thinking Hierarchy: The Church as an Ordered Communion**

In the first chapter of the liturgy constitution, under the “The Reform of the Liturgy,” we find a sub-section entitled, “Norms Drawn from the Hierarchic and Communal Nature of the Liturgy.” Though it does not appear in the text itself, this title introduces a formulation that will appear in later conciliar texts,<sup>2</sup> namely the assertion of the importance of being in *communio hierarchica*, “hierarchical communion,” with the pope and bishops. I believe the liturgy document offers us the key to how this term might be understood. The difficulty with this

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<sup>2</sup> LG # 21, 22; CD # 4, 5; PO # 7. It appears a sixth time in #2 of the *Nota Praevia Explicativa* attached at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour to *Lumen gentium*, without conciliar approval, “by higher authority.”

expression is that, by describing the church communion as a *hierarchical*, you end up returning to the hierocratic, pyramidal view of the church that developed in the thirteenth century. That view, quite foreign to the church of the first thousand years, presented the church as a pyramidal structure in which the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*) and truth was given to the pope and shared in diminishing degrees with the lower levels of church life.<sup>3</sup> One might think of this as a spiritualized, medieval precursor to “Reagonomics” or “trickle-down theory”! This descending chain-of-command view of hierarchy has persisted in certain sectors of the church, in spite of the council’s reforms, up to the present.

Feminist theologians have rightly challenged this pyramidal understanding of “hierarchy” as one of the many concepts employed in the church to subordinate the laity in general and women in particular. Yet perhaps the term “hierarchical” can be retained if we purge it of those pyramidal and patriarchal conceptions.<sup>4</sup> I contend that when the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy refers to the “hierarchic and communal nature of the liturgy” it does not have in mind a return to a pyramidal ecclesiology. The liturgy can be said to be hierarchical, not in the sense of a chain of command or a pyramidal structure, but in the sense that the liturgy manifests the church as an *ordered* communion with a great diversity of ministries and Christian activities that together build up the life of the church.<sup>5</sup> The church of Jesus Christ, animated by the Spirit, is

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<sup>3</sup> See Jean Leclercq, “Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages,” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 31; Yves Congar *L’Église de Saint Augustin à l’époque moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 229-30.

<sup>4</sup> For an attempt to retrieve the notion of “hierarchy” by distinguishing between “command hierarchy” and “participatory hierarchy” see Terence L. Nichols, *That All May Be One: Hierarchy and Participation in the Church* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> This view of the church as an ordered communion parallels in some ways Ghislain Lafont’s presentation of the post-conciliar church as a “structured communion.” See his *Imagining the Catholic Church: Structured Communion in the Spirit* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000).

now and has always been subject to church ordering as it receives its life from the God who, in Christian faith, is ordered in eternal self-giving as a triune communion of persons.

## **B. The Threefold Ordering of Our Baptism**

The most fundamental ordering of the church occurs in Christian initiation. This conviction is reflected in the council's call for a fundamental reform of its initiatory rites, including the restoration of the catechumenate for adults, the revision of the baptismal rite for infants and the reconsideration of the rites of confirmation. These calls for ritual reform were in keeping with the larger agenda of the council often captured in the French term, *ressourcement*, a "return to the sources." In this case the council was reaching back to a more biblical vision of Christian initiation. Indeed, the early church's theology of baptism might be thought of as the first Christian ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup>

From a biblical perspective, Christian initiation "orders," or if you prefer, "configures" the believer to Christ *within* the community of faith, Christ's body. Christian initiation does not just make one a different kind of individual, it draws the believer into a profound ecclesial relationship, one's ecclesial "*ordo*" within the life of the church. The distinctive character of this baptismally ordered relationship unfolds in three dimensions. Vertically, if you will, we are baptized into communion with God, in Christ, by the power of the Spirit. Yet this relation is inseparable from our horizontal relationship with all our brothers and sisters in baptism who constitute together a communion of believers. These two dimensions of the baptismal ordering must, in turn, be conjoined to a third dimension, the movement outward toward the world in mission. This three-dimensional ecclesial relation established by Christian initiation offers us

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<sup>6</sup> Gerard Austin, "Restoring Equilibrium after the Struggle with Heresy," in *Source and Summit: Commemorating Josef A. Jungmann, S.J.*, edited by Joanne M. Pierce and Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999): 35-47 at 37.

our primal identity as Christian believers and it can never be abandoned. It constitutes the very essence of Christian discipleship.

*Sacrosanctum concilium* reminded us, not only in its call for the reform of the rites of initiation but in its focus on the whole worshipping assembly, that our primary identity as Christians is not as lay or cleric but as a member of the baptized called to participate in the life and worship of the church. Article 14 of the constitution speaks of full participation of the baptized in the liturgy as both a right *and an obligation*. Baptism is an ecclesial event that lays claim on our identity as Christians and demands much of us. Perhaps in all of our discussion of the rights of the baptized we have not said enough about the real communal obligations that our baptism places upon us.

One of the biggest mistakes often made in interpreting the teaching of the council is the tendency to focus on the council's theology of the laity while failing to place its view of the laity in the framework of its understanding of baptism. If one reads the council documents closely, however, one discovers that at the heart of the council's efforts to articulate a positive theology of the laity is a focus on our common baptism, a baptism that configures all believers, including the ordained, as disciples of Christ.<sup>7</sup> This was the import of the well known decision to move the chapter on the people of God in front of the chapter on the hierarchy in *Lumen gentium*. It was a symbolic expression of a profound ecclesiological principle; we must begin with what unites us—faith and baptism—before we can consider what distinguishes us (ordination). This does not deny, of course, that Christians may be further “ordered” in service of the church by sacramental ordination. It does mean, as Bishop Franjo Seper of Zagreb noted at the council, that the

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<sup>7</sup> See Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction.” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (1999): 115-39.

ordained do not cease being members of the people of God after ordination; the obligations that are theirs by virtue of baptism and confirmation still remain.<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine knew this when he said:

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.<sup>9</sup>

Similar convictions regarding the priority of baptism led the late Cardinal Leon Suenens to remark that “a pope’s finest moment is not that of his election or consecration, but that of his baptism.”<sup>10</sup>

An adequate liturgical ecclesiology begins with initiation into the community of faith that gathers on the Day of the Resurrection to celebrate the eucharist. It is the whole community of the baptized, Christ’s body, that is the subject of the eucharist celebration. We remind ourselves of our baptism when we dip our hands into the baptismal waters and sing ourselves upon taking our place in the eucharistic assembly. If the liturgy is a ritual enactment of what the church truly is, then we can say that all God’s people are subjects in the life of the church and not merely passive recipients of clerical directives. This means that all the baptized must share in the corporate discernment of God’s will undertaken in collaboration with and under the leadership of the bishops of the church. This right and obligation to participation in church life does not mean lay usurpation of episcopal responsibilities, but rather an appropriation of the baptized’s legitimate concern for the welfare of the church. This cannot be said strongly enough. The consultation and collaboration of all God’s people is not an abdication of episcopal leadership,

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<sup>8</sup> *Acta Synodalia* II/3, 202.

<sup>9</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon*, 340, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 105.

but rather a condition for its responsible and faithful exercise. To further establish this point, I would like to turn to a second feature of the liturgy document's ordering of the church, the ministry of the bishop.

### **C. The Liturgical Ministry of the Ordained**

If baptism constitutes the most fundamental ordering of the people of God, in the Catholic church we believe that some among the baptized are further ordered or re-configured for leadership in the sacrament of holy orders. And according to the council, the fullness of orders is conferred on the bishop.

One of the most overlooked contributions of the liturgy constitution is its placement of the bishop at the center of the liturgical life of the diocese. The council asserted, moreover, that the most profound manifestation of the local church was encountered at diocesan liturgies presided over by the bishop (# 41).

Regrettably, the council did not explore the full implications of defining the ministry of the bishop in terms of his eucharistic presidency. In the liturgy the bishop is placed in a relationship of reciprocity with the gathered assembly.<sup>11</sup> As presider the bishop gathers the people of God together for corporate worship, proclaims the scriptures, receives the gifts of bread and wine from the people, offers them up to God for and with the people and then returns these gifts to the people, now transformed into the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation. At no point in the liturgy does the eucharist ever become the bishop's own private work; even as he engages in his unique presidential ministry, the bishop remains in vital communion with his

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<sup>11</sup> For a development of this liturgical view of the bishop see the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church's document, "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity," in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue* (Washington D.C.: USCC, 1996), 59.

people Moreover, we might note that in his eucharistic presidency the mutual exchange of gifts includes not only bread and wine, but also the very faith of the church. In other words, along with bread and wine the very faith of the people are offered by the people to the bishop, and that faith, articulated in the ongoing tradition of the church, is returned by the bishop to the people in his teaching and preaching. This new gift exchange reminds us that the faith which the bishop is ordained to safeguard is nothing other than the faith he has received from the people. The reciprocal relationship between bishop and people enacted in the liturgy opens up an understanding of not only the bishop's sacramental ministry but his ministries of teaching and governance as well. It presents the bishop not as a dispenser of truth and grace, but as the one who offers to God not only the eucharistic elements but the faith and life of those he serves. The ministry of the bishop cannot be understood in isolation; it is only fully apprehended in the context of the church at prayer.

According to Vatican II the priest shares and collaborates in the bishop's ministry of apostolic oversight or *episkope*. This is why the presbyter presides over any eucharist in which the bishop is not present. As has often been said, the council chose not to define the bishop in terms of the priest, as had been the custom for much of the second millennium; rather the council defined the ministry of the presbyter in terms of the bishop. The presbyter collaborates and extends the ministry of apostolic oversight entrusted to the bishop. Consequently, I would argue that the fullest theology of the presbyterate is also developed in terms of the presbyter's eucharistic presidency. In the eucharist the presbyter's role as liturgical president is a ritual enactment of his pastoral ministry of apostolic oversight.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> I realize, that this raises questions regarding those priests who are professed religious and for diocesan priests who are not engaged in parish ministry. This is a complicated issue that can not be fully addressed here. Let me simply say that I think these developments in the theology of the priesthood emerged as historical accommodations to

I would also make the case, though this cannot be developed here, that the ministry of the deacon as well must be defined in terms of the ministry of the bishop. I would argue that a careful reading of the diaconate in the early church suggests that what defined the deacon was not what he represented as public icon, nor a particular set of ministries or tasks, but his close alignment with the bishop as one who served, but did not himself exercise, the bishop's ministry of apostolic oversight.

#### **D. A Diversity of Ministries**

Let us turn now to another teaching of the constitution on the liturgy. In a passage that now seems so tame and obvious, the council also wrote that “servers, readers, commentators, and members of the choir also *exercise a genuine liturgical ministry* (emphasis is mine, SC # 29).” This passage would not even merit comment were it not for a consistent trend in recent Vatican pronouncements to obsess over the distinctiveness of the sacred ministry of the ordained. I have in mind not only the revised GIRM and its preoccupation with the predicate “sacred,” nor the recent document on liturgical abuses, *Redemptionis sacramentum*, but also the 1997 inter-dicasterial document, “Certain Questions Regarding Collaboration of the Lay Faithful in Ministry of Priests”<sup>13</sup> The sense one gets in documents such as these is that the only way to enhance the dignity of the ordained is to build an ontological wall between the ordained and all other ministers of the church.

How far removed this seems from the intention of the council fathers! What the constitution says of liturgical ministries is true for all ministries in the church. There is no

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pressing pastoral needs and therefore constitute legitimate exceptions. But one does not, generally speaking, theologize from the exception but rather from the norm.

<sup>13</sup> “Some Questions Regarding Collaboration of Nonordained Faithful in Priests’ Sacred Ministry,” *Origins* 27 (November 27, 1997): 397-410.

competition in the life of public service on behalf of the church. Lectors, eucharistic ministers, ministers of hospitality, deacons, priests and bishops—these ministries do not compete with one another in the liturgy but cooperate in a wonderful way to build up the body of Christ at worship. This sense of liturgical cooperation must extend as well to our understanding of all ecclesial ministries. What distinguishes the bishop from the priest from the deacon from the lector, is not, as it used to be thought, the question of power. A liturgical ecclesiology does not begin with what unique powers the bishop has but the priest doesn't, or what power the priest has that the deacon doesn't. Liturgical ecclesiology begins with the unique ministerial relationship of the bishop that cannot be replaced by the deacon or lector, but is not for that reason intrinsically superior to the deacon or lector. The liturgy establishes ministries according to a diversity of ministerial relations, not according to a descending hierarchy of ministerial powers. Anyone familiar with the conduct of relationships within your typical diocesan chancery, or parish pastoral team, can assure you that we are far from realizing the respectful mutuality of ministerial relationships enacted in each liturgical celebration.

### **E. Liturgy of the Church, Liturgy of the World**

The final, and perhaps most important reason for situating a theology of ministry within the liturgy is that the celebration of the liturgy is always in view of the church's mission in the world. As Christians we are baptized into mission. This mission is no mere extrinsic task imposed upon the church from without, it is the very *raison d'être* of the church. Indeed the church's mission derives from its Trinitarian origins. Salvation history reveals to us a God who sends forth the Word and Spirit in mission as the very expression and fulfillment of God's love for the world. God's Word, spoken into human history from the beginning of creation and made effective by the power of the Spirit, in the fullness of time became incarnate as Jesus of

Nazareth. The origins of the church, in turn, are inextricably linked to Jesus' gathering a community of followers whom, after his death and resurrection, were empowered by his Spirit to continue his mission to serve, proclaim and realize the coming reign of God. In its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World it is the whole church which "is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God" (GS # 40). Later in that same article the council members spoke of the mission of the church to heal and elevate the dignity of the human person, to strengthen human society and to help humanity discover the deeper meaning of their daily lives. "The church, then, believes that *through each of its members and its community as a whole* it can help to make the human family and its history still more human" (GS # 40, emphasis is mine).

This firm orientation of all the baptized as those bound together in a common mission is a most necessary foundation for any consideration of church ministry. It serves as a vital corrective against any tendency to allow practical distinctions between the church *ad intra* and the church *ad extra* to turn into a dichotomizing separation. All church ministry is fundamentally oriented toward the church's mission to the world in the service of God's reign.

It is only from a liturgical framework which sees the entire community of the baptized entering, in ritual in symbol, into the dynamism of the trinitarian missions of Word and Spirit, sending forth the entire people of God in service of God's reign, that we can properly grasp the missionary orientation of *all* church ministry. This sending forth from the eucharistic liturgy to undertake the liturgy of the world sees *all* ministry, ordained and non-ordained, as oriented toward the coming reign of God. As the Late Fr. Robert Hovda was so fond of saying, in every liturgy we "play the kingdom." It is in the liturgy that we "act out the reign of God, the reign of

justice and peace, for it is toward that end that we must move ourselves and our world.”<sup>14</sup> we enact, if only for an hour, a world transformed by God’s shalom. When the baptized gather at the eucharistic *synaxis*, it is to celebrate this Christian vocation to mission. The great Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann wrote that the liturgy “is not an escape from the world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.”<sup>15</sup> Consequently, as another Orthodox theologian put it, we are sent forth from the Eucharist to celebrate “the liturgy after the liturgy.”<sup>16</sup> Karl Rahner had much the same thing in mind when he wrote of the “liturgy of the world.”<sup>17</sup> What we celebrate in word and sacrament effects the transformation of our eucharistic gifts, and the community itself. The liturgical transformation impels us into the world where we are to serve the reign of God in the world’s ongoing transformation.

## **II. Some Modest Proposals for the Church**

In the light of this liturgical framing of the question of ministry in the church, I would like to make two concrete proposals for church reform:

### **A. Re-configuration of the discernment and formation processes associated with ordination to the presbyterate and episcopate**

Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy made an important ecclesiological contribution when it grounded the ministry of the bishop in his liturgical presidency of the

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Hovda, *The Amen Corner*, edited by John F. Baldovin (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1973), 27.

<sup>16</sup> Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, “On the Theology of Worship,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 19 (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 141-49; idem, “Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976), 161-84. See also Michael Skelley, *The Liturgy of the World: Karl Rahner’s Theology of Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).

church at worship. This liturgical foundation reminds us that the bishop, and the presbyters who share in his ministry, engage preeminently in the ministry of *episkope* or pastoral oversight which takes its ritual form in the presidency at the eucharist.

This pastoral oversight represents but one form of leadership within the church, and it is the only form that ordinarily must be exercised by a bishop or presbyter. I believe it is crucial that our church begin configuring vocational discernment and seminary formation programs in view of this emphasis on the presbyter as pastoral leader responsible for apostolic oversight of a eucharistic community. Such a vision would demand a dramatic shift in what the church looked for in its candidates for presbyteral ministry. It would mean seeking out candidates for presbyteral ordination who demonstrate the ability to recognize, discern and empower the many charisms of the community of the baptized. We should not underestimate the significance of this shift. In our current ecclesiastical context, and I say this with ten years experience teaching in a seminary, those who engage in vocations work and those responsible for seminary formation are placed in a situation in which, often against their own instincts, instead of discerning whether a seminarian possesses a charism for pastoral leadership, they find themselves discerning only whether there is a clear impediment to priestly ministry. What we see, in other words, is not the positive discernment of charisms, but the negative discernment of impediments.

Let me put the matter bluntly. If a particular seminarian shows up regularly for community prayer and meetings, dispatches his community responsibilities without complaint, passes his seminary courses and does not commit some egregious moral offense, this candidate, if he so desires, will be ordained to the priesthood. This will happen even if there is no discernible evidence of a charism for pastoral leadership, preaching, teaching or pastoral counseling.

This same commitment to linking episcopal and presbyteral ministry to the ministry of *episkope* or apostolic oversight, has clear implications for the process by which bishops are selected. In a recent note correspondence with NCR's Vatican correspondent, John Allen, I proposed what appeared to me to be the ideal résumé if one desired an episcopal appointment today. That ideal résumé would offer the following five ideal qualifications: a) the candidate would be a protégé of an influential cardinal, b) the candidate would have received a pontifical degree from a Roman university, c) the candidate would have done a "tour of duty" in a curial post, d) the candidate would have taught at or served as rector of a seminary, e) the candidate would have never written or said anything that might be construed as critical of official magisterial pronouncements or church policies.

Notably absent from this list is a demonstrated ability as pastoral leader. Presumably, at present this qualification is viewed as ecclesiastical gravy!

**B. The development and implementation of guidelines/standards for lay ministries that would include rituals of installation and commissioning**

So called "lay ecclesial ministries" have matured sufficiently to justify a standardization and formalization of such ministries, accompanied by a commensurate ritualization. An important development in this regard is the recently approved *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* produced collaboratively by the National Association for Lay Ministry, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership in conjunction with the USCCB's commission on certification and accreditation.

The results of this process was a set of certification standards applicable for four different lay ministries: 1) the pastoral associate, 2) the parish life coordinator, 3) the parish catechetical leader and 4) the youth ministry leader.

When Pope Paul VI suppressed minor orders and created the installed ministries of lector and acolyte he also invited bishops' conferences to propose other stable ministries that might become installed ministries. These installed ministries were envisioned as significant stable ministries requiring extended ministerial formation. It was also assumed that such ministers would participate in a formal ritual of installation. I now believe the time is ripe to create formal installed ministries along the lines of the four ministries mentioned above. Movement in this direction would encourage a view of "lay ministries" as significant public ministries in service of the church defined by the ritual act by which they are called in to service (installation) rather than by the designation "lay" which too often suggests a definition of the minister by what he or she is not, namely, ordained.

Beyond those ministries that demand significant ministerial formation and a high degree of stability (ordained and installed ministries) there are still other ordered ministries, the undertaking of which does still place one in a new ecclesial relationship. These might include parish catechists, liturgical ministries for proclaiming God's Word (lector), leading the community in sung prayer (cantor), distributing communion to those present at the eucharistic assembly and those absent due to infirmity (extraordinary ministers of communion), providing for liturgical hospitality and order (ushers, greeters). These ministries imply a new degree of accountability, a specialized formation and a demand for some formal authorization that distinguishes them from the exercise of other baptismal charisms evident for example in parenting or daily Christian witness. At the same time these ministries will generally be

governed at a more local level. The determination of the specific requirements for formation, the particular form the ritualization of their ministry will take (liturgical commissioning) and so on will generally occur at the level of the parish or the diocese.

This proposal, though institutional in its orientation, would, I believe, go a long way toward moving our vision of ministry from our current preoccupation with the lay vs. ordained question to a vision of a church built up by the many charisms of the whole people of God and by the many ordered ministries of the church, some of which are ordered through sacramental ordination, others by installation, and still others by diocesan or parish commissioning.

These proposals are by no means “cure-alls.” But they do orient us toward the need to make incremental, pragmatic steps in church structures that can help reinforce an emerging theology of ministry adequate to the new ministerial reality our church is facing today. Without such concrete steps our church risks squandering an enormous opportunity to take advantage of the passion of so many eager to serve the church today. We do not suffer from a shortage of laborers for the harvest; what we suffer from is a lack of vision regarding how to best honor their gifts and how to most effectively make use of these many laborers in service of the church and its mission.