

## Forming Priests for Collaboration and Co-Responsibility with Lay Ministers

Written in light of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2017) on priestly formation, this article focuses on preparing future priests to work in a ministerial context in which collaboration with lay people is both inevitable and desirable. It seeks to bring clarity to their working relationship by first assessing the current state of the theory and practice of collaborative ministry in the Church. It then details five key theological dispositions that, if cultivated in seminarians, can contribute to fostering harmony and collegiality among ordained and lay pastoral ministers.

### Collaborative Ministry Fifty Years after Vatican II

The fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council inspired research projects that evaluated Vatican II's legacy and its continuing reception. As a result, we have a new appreciation of what Karl Rahner said several decades ago: that we are still at the "beginning of the beginning" in terms of receiving the Council's teaching.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Massimo Faggioli, "Response to Cardinal Lehmann Lecture," in *Vaticanum 21: Die bleibenden Aufgaben des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christoph Böttigheimer and René Dausner (2016), 637.

Vatican II remains the most important recent normative event guiding ecclesial renewal and ecclesiastical reform.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there is widespread agreement that the Council left much unfinished business, to some extent inevitably so. This unfinished business includes a coherent theology of ministry adequate to the task of underpinning and guiding ecclesial ministry in the current millennium. As Richard Gaillardetz states, “(The Council) was not able to articulate a complete, internally coherent ecclesiology” and the reality is that what is referred to as lay ministry “has leapt ahead of theological reflection, raising a host of questions regarding the definition of lay ministry, its scope and limits, and its relationship to ordained ministry and to the activities in which all the Christian faithful exercise their baptismal call.”<sup>3</sup>

While the role of the episcopate received considerable attention, the ministry of the ordained priest, or presbyter (the term deliberately chosen over “priest” by the Council), did not. As a result, Walter Kasper reiterated that “in the last few decades, the priestly ministry in virtually all the Western European churches has been in a crisis.” Kasper blames a “superficial and one-sided reception of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, which laid emphasis on the ‘people of God’ and *communio*, and the associated doctrine of the common priesthood of all the baptized,” for the current crisis because it called into question how the *proprium* and *specificum* of priestly ministry are to be defined.<sup>4</sup>

Kenan Osborne, however, holds that the seeds of confusion lay in the Council itself rather than in a subsequent one-sided reception of it. Once the Council Fathers used the term “priesthood of all believers” to refer to “the common matrix of gospel discipleship,” a move Osborne welcomes as a recovery from the tradition, “a major questioning of self-identity swept over many parts of the Roman Catholic Church both as regards one who is only baptized and receives the eucharist, as opposed to the identity of one who is ordained.” As he sees it, the issue is that the Council recognized that the *tria munera* of teacher/preacher, sanctifier (priest) and leader (king) are “given to all” by the sacraments of initiation. “If all disciples in virtue of their baptism-confirmation-eucharist

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<sup>2</sup> Christoph Theobald, “Rezeption und Zukunftspotentiale des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils,” in *Vaticanum 21: Die bleibenden Aufgaben des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christoph Böttigheimer and René Dausner (2016), 48.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today* (New York: Herder, 2003), 45f.

are priests, then why do we have ordained priests and what is their specific identity?”<sup>5</sup> The issue was not satisfactorily resolved by the Council or, to date, by the many post-conciliar magisterial texts relating to priesthood and ministry.<sup>6</sup>

## Recognizing and Resolving Identity Issues

A fragmented postmodern cultural context has only served to accentuate problems regarding the role of identity, both in terms of personal role identity and in terms of the role identity of society in general.<sup>7</sup> Despite post-conciliar attempts to clarify priestly identity by the magisterium, as well as various studies by theologians,<sup>8</sup> formation directors report that identity issues continue to pose a major challenge for seminarians.<sup>9</sup> We know that the same is true for lay ministers, even though their experience of ministry is not as well-researched. This is despite documents emerging from episcopal conferences, including *The Sign we Give* and *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (see below), which legitimize the policy and practice of collaborative ministry. Indeed, the unsatisfactory and ambiguous nature of the nomenclature “lay ministry” is indicative of an enduring theological incoherence.

As I write, I have a request on my desk from a diocese to design and offer an accredited programme for “two new volunteer lay ministries, that of Catechist/Faith development worker and Pastoral Care worker.” The reality is that while there will be cultural variations across different continents with regard to how lay ministry is structured and developed, lay ministry is here to stay. It follows that men in priestly formation, newly ordained priests and those assuming duties as

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<sup>5</sup> Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 536.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to texts referenced below see also the 1997 inter-dicasterial “Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of the priest.” [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/laity/documents/rc\\_con\\_interdic\\_doc\\_15081997\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_con_interdic_doc_15081997_en.html). Accessed 13.06.19.

<sup>7</sup> Eamonn Conway, “‘With Reverence and Love’: Being a Priest in a Detraditionalised Cultural Context,” in *50th International Eucharist Congress: Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology* (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 393-394.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Kerkhofs, *Europe without Priests?* (London: SCM Press, 1995); Gisbert Greshake, *Priestersein in dieser Zeit* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000); Paul Zulehner and Anna Hennesperger, “*Sie gehen und warden nicht matt*” (*Jes 40,31*) *Priester in heutiger Kultur* (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, “Towards a Spirituality of Ecclesial Leadership,” in *Seminary Formation, Recent History, Current Circumstances, Directions*, ed. Katarina Schuth (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 122-123.

pastors, need to be equipped not only to live with this reality, but become leaders in regard to it and welcome it as a gift and a resource. Moreover, they need to come to recognize, as part of their own distinctive ministry, the structuring and ordering of the gifts of the baptized faithful for the service of God's reign.<sup>10</sup> Such a disposition on their part will not develop simply by osmosis, especially if there is ambiguity and confusion in regard to how they understand their own ministry.

Ministry is about bringing people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It follows that emphasis must be on "being" as much as on "doing," on presence more than on productivity, on relationality rather than on a thoughtless activism.<sup>11</sup> However, in an effort to address identity issues there can be an unhelpful tendency, especially in a cultural context in which the technocratic paradigm<sup>12</sup>, of which Pope Francis speaks, is prevalent, to retreat into an instrumentalist and merely functional understanding of ministry. By this I mean to define identity primarily in terms of what some people are permitted to "do" in the Church and what others are not.

The continuing unfolding of a more coherent theology of ministry will require a deepening, rather than a weakening, of our understanding of all ministry as essentially sacramental, founded in baptism, and representative in nature. At a time when there can often be a "feeble grasp of the sacramental reality"<sup>13</sup> we also need to safeguard and deepen our understanding of priesthood as a unique and essential participation and rendering present of Christ's leadership of his Church.

### Key Questions to Consider

We need to take great care, therefore, with regards to how we prepare priests for the reality that they will find themselves working alongside lay ministers. We need to consider the following: What clarity can we bring to their working relationship? What is technically "ministry" and what is simply the exercise of the lay apostolate?<sup>14</sup> How is the shortage of priests, particularly in Churches in the West, "muddying the waters" in terms of the appropriate exercise of ministerial charisms by lay ministers, and indeed also by permanent deacons? In what instances are lay ministers exercising charisms that are properly theirs

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<sup>10</sup> Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Eamonn Conway, "Ministry," in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge (New York & London: Routledge, 2008), 552.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si*, nn 106ff.

<sup>13</sup> P. Wallace Platt, "Sacerdotal Poesis: Beauty and the Priest," *Louvain Studies*, 30 (Spring-Summer 2005): 110.

<sup>14</sup> Conway, "Ministry," 550f.

as baptized faithful with specific gifts? Alternatively, in what instances are lay ministers compensating for the shortage of clergy and thus fulfilling roles that belong to the ordained and that, properly speaking, require the sacrament of ordination?

Put another way, in what instances could we and should we dispense with lay ministers if we had enough clergy and in what instances do we consider their service indispensable, regardless of the number of clergy? For example, recently a leading curial official stated that people living the sacrament of marriage are best placed to prepare others for that sacrament.<sup>15</sup> Does this mean that preparing people for the sacrament of marriage is essentially a lay ministry requiring the sacrament of marriage in addition to the sacraments of initiation? If so, should we institute a special ministry for this purpose?

There are other issues. Given that only men can be validly ordained as priests and deacons, is there a danger that we compensate by “using” lay ministries to ensure the role of women in ecclesial leadership when, in fact, lay men may well be capable of and called to exercise the same charisms but are less welcome because of their gender?

Another key question is why local churches have seldom availed of the provision for the establishment of stable lay ministries in the Church.<sup>16</sup> Why the reluctance and what has it to reveal regarding both our professed and operative theologies of ministry?

## Practical Concerns

In addition to these theoretical considerations it is also important to take account of practical concerns being voiced by lay ministers. Among these they report the following:

- While many clergy are welcoming and supportive, others are experienced as “gate-keepers,” as lacking energy, as being apathetic and blocking; as anti-formation and anti-intellectual. This is particularly serious given that priests have an important enabling role to play in calling forth lay charisms and in providing formation for lay people.

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<sup>15</sup> Kevin Farrell, “Priests do not have experience to prepare people for marriage, says Vatican Cardinal.” <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/priests-do-not-have-experience-to-prepare-people-for-marriage-says-vatican-cardinal-1.3552508>. Accessed 30.07.18.

<sup>16</sup> Pope Paul VI. 1972. *Ministeria quaedam*. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19720815\\_ministeria-quaedam.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19720815_ministeria-quaedam.html). Accessed 30 July 2018.

- That lay people themselves can be hesitant about recognizing and accepting the role of lay people in ministry. This raises the issue of how well God's people are being formed to receive the diversity of charisms available for the building up of God's reign and that there is an important catechetical task to be undertaken in this regard.
- That there is an ongoing failure to shift from a maintenance-oriented Church to a mission-oriented Church. This could be because clergy who would wish to be more engaged in mission are bogged down by an increasing burden of maintenance and administrative tasks with fewer priests available to share it. It could also be that to move from maintenance to mission requires stepping beyond familiar comfort zones into new and unexplored ministerial contexts. Pope Francis' charter for the renewal of the Church hinges on this shift from maintenance to mission.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, in terms of our consideration of lay ministry, Bishop Bestion of Tulle recently expressed concern that lay people who put their gifts at the disposal of the Church are being drawn away from the frontline of the Church's mission and instead find themselves invested in ensuring the survival of inherited ecclesiastical structures that can no longer serve its mission.<sup>18</sup>
- That there is a failure, as many lay ministers see it, to "cash-in" sufficiently on the "Francis effect," a hesitation to "seize the moment" that the mission and ministry of Pope Francis is offering to retrieve the joy of the Gospel; to embrace the invitation to the Church to become a field-hospital characterized by mercy, proximity, nearness and genuine pastoral accompaniment.

The concerns of priests with regards to collaborative ministry need also to be acknowledged. These include the challenges of leading teams when they have often been formed essentially to be "solo" operators; the financial burden that can fall upon priests to fund lay employees in parishes; the inequality of pay and working conditions between ordained and lay; the additional burden associated with administering legal contracts, and so on.

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<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis. 2013. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 34. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html). Accessed 31.05.19.

<sup>18</sup> Francis Bestion, "Se dirige-t-on vers l'ordination d'hommes mariés? Interview avec Clémence Houdaille," in *La Croix*, 09.03.2017. See <https://www.la-croix.com/Se-dirige-vers-lordination-dhommes-maries-2017-03-09-1200830644>. Accessed 20.07.18.

There can be a human price to pay as well as an unfortunate counter-witness to the Gospel when ministers are unable to collaborate well together. Conversely, new energy and focus is brought to the service of God's Kingdom when we get this right. None of the issues mentioned here should hinder the service of God's people in the most generous and professional manner possible making full use of the many gifts being given by the Holy Spirit for renewing the Church.

### **Formation for Collaboration: Five Key Theological Dispositions**

Following Vatican II, Karl Rahner argued that the programme of studies for pastoral ministers, whether ordained or lay, needed to be distinguished from those designed primarily for academic theologians.<sup>19</sup> Both programmes, however, should retain their full academic rigor. He also argued that pastoral (practical) theology should not be seen as a theological "add-on" at the end of academic studies but as *the* discipline the central concern of which is the Church's self-actualization, with the added responsibility of orientating other theological disciplines to this task. As such, therefore, pastoral theology has a right to make demands upon theology as a whole, especially when it comes to the formation of ministers.<sup>20</sup> What follows is intended as a step in orientating core theological considerations to ministerial formation in a collaborative context.

#### 1. Baptism as Foundational for all Ministry

Formation for priesthood must enable candidates to appreciate fully baptismal grace and baptismal faith as foundational for all ministries. As *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, baptism institutes the priesthood of the faithful; ordained priesthood is at the service of the priesthood of the faithful.

While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace – a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit – the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests," in *Theological Investigations* (London: DLT, 1969), 6:124.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Rahner, "Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines," in *Theological Investigations* (London: DLT, 1969), 9: 102, 106.

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), nn. 1546-1547.



The *Ratio Fundamentalis*<sup>22</sup> also states that: “The unity and dignity of the baptismal vocation precede any differentiation in ministry” and “the ministerial priesthood is understood... as a service to the glory of God and to the brothers and sisters in their baptismal priesthood.”

Future priests need to be aware of two key points. The first is that clergy are not a second people apart from the People of God. Baptism remains foundational for priesthood even after ordination.<sup>23</sup> The second is that lay people do not receive their ministerial callings from priests but from Christ through the Holy Spirit. Unity, equality and good working relationships are built upon embedding these principles into priestly formation from the outset.

Priests have, however, responsibility for ensuring that those called by the Holy Spirit to diverse ministries are properly formed and to create the structures enabling them to serve.<sup>24</sup> At the same time this should not create the misleading perception of a “provided for” laity and a “providing” clergy.<sup>25</sup> Lay ministers can greatly enable and enrich the ministry of priests and priests need to be open to this.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the foundational nature of our common baptism means that we share a common spirituality that can and should be nourished in common.

## 2. The Church as Communion; Awakening Co-Responsibility

Another theological disposition to be fostered in priestly formation is the understanding of Church as a community of disciples and as a communion of communities. This concept of Church has found a deep resonance in the past three decades and those not at home with this ecclesial self-understanding will find ministry difficult. The following aspects of Church as communion can helpfully be highlighted in priestly formation: that the priest is uniquely tasked with serving as a visible agent of communion; that communion should characterize all ecclesial relationships; that the basis for such relations is the mystery of Trinitarian communion; that this understanding challenges individualism as well as dynamics of dominance in ministerial settings.

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<sup>22</sup> “The Gift of the Priestly Vocation,” *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (London: CTS, 2017), n.31.

<sup>23</sup> Eamonn Fitzgibbon, “Ordained Ministry – A View from ‘Below,’” in *Priesthood Today: Ministry in a Changing Church*, ed. Eamonn Conway (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 266-268.

<sup>24</sup> Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Maureen Kelly, “The Demands of Collaborative Ministry,” in *Priesthood Today: Ministry in a Changing Church*, ed. Eamonn Conway (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Christifideles Laici, On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the World*, n.61. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jpii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jpii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html) Accessed 30.07.18



Seminarians should be familiar with *Christifideles Laici* with its emphasis on the Church as mystery, communion and mission as well as *Pastores dabo vobis*<sup>27</sup> which speaks of the priest awakening and facilitating co-responsibility among the faithful for the Church's mission of salvation. Acceptance of co-responsibility for mission is considered essential to the proper structuring of lay ministry and Pope Benedict XVI specifically spoke of this in an important address he gave to the diocese of Rome in 2009. In this address he said that there is a change of mentality underway whereby consideration of the laity as collaborators with the clergy is giving way to recognition that they are really co-responsible for the Church's being and action. *The Sign We Give: Report on Collaborative Ministry by the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales*<sup>28</sup> and the USCCB 2005 statement, *Co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord*, are also important texts to be studied in this context.

It is important to note four challenges to a spirit of communion and co-responsibility in ministry. These are: a distorted understanding of power and authority; how the distinctiveness of various ministries is articulated; clericalism; a desire for a false and unattainable uniformity. We will look at each of these in turn.

a. Power and authority

We need to reconsider what a genuinely Christian understanding of power and authority is, and how this can become more fully operative in the life of the Church, in particular among all those who minister. As Howard Yoder says, "the cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute power, determines the meaning of history."<sup>29</sup> The power of ordination is an enabling power, a power authenticated in a life of service, of self-emptying and self-giving, underpinned by a spirituality of kenosis. We need to ensure an attitude among ministers of "truly equal but different."

Ordained priesthood mirrors, enables and calls forth the common priesthood of all the faithful. There is a mutual dependency here and any power inequality is out of place. In order to remain focused on the New Testament portrayal of

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<sup>27</sup> *Pastores dabo vobis, On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, nn. 12, 16, 74. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html) Accessed 30.07.18.

<sup>28</sup> *The Sign We Give: Report on Collaborative Ministry by the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales*, 1995. [http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Publications/The-Sign-We-Give-1995/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Publications/The-Sign-We-Give-1995/(language)/eng-GB). Accessed 31.05.19.

<sup>29</sup> Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 232.

how Jesus exercised power and authority, José Ignacio González Faus speaks of ministers acting *in persona Jesu* rather than *in persona Christi*. He also makes the point that if the Church relationship between priest and community is authoritarian and dominating, the Church is likely to come across as authoritarian and with an inclination towards dominance in its relationship with civil society as well.<sup>30</sup>

Writing in *Geist und Leben* during the 1970s and 1980s Peter Hünemann showed how priesthood understood as *representatio Christi* and as *representatio Ecclesiae* gives rise to different understandings of power and authority in the Church. A secular understanding of power tends towards power in opposition, power “over against” competing interests. Priesthood understood as *representatio Christi*, which emphasizes the priest as representing Christ to the community, if not balanced by recognition of the presence and power of Christ manifest in *koinonia*, can deteriorate into a secular-type exercise of power. In Hünemann’s view we need to hold together both the *potestas* of sacramental ordination, and the energetic power that flows from vibrant Christian communities of faithful disciples.<sup>31</sup>

New Testament Studies for ministerial candidates should therefore include consideration of the exercise of power and authority by Jesus, his disciples and the early Church, and in particular use of the concepts of *exousia* (ἐξουσία) and *dynamis* (δύναμις).<sup>32</sup>

Power imbalances can be built into the language we use in regard to ministry. We need to move beyond the use of terms such as lay/cleric and ordained/non-ordained. Binaries tend by their nature to create an unhelpful dynamic of competitiveness. Ecclesiastical titles and forms of address also reinforce power differentials. We also need to attend to the importance of formal commissioning of ministries and also to justice issues in regard to working conditions. These practical issues witness to the kind of *koinonia* the Church community claims to be.

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<sup>30</sup> José Ignacio González Faus, *Builders of Community: Rethinking Ecclesial Ministry* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Peter Hünemann, “Kirche und Amt-Marginalien zum Amts-verständnis.” *Geist und Leben* 48 (1975), 285-299; “Mit dem Volk Gottes unterwegs: Eine geistliche Besinnung zur Theologie und Praxis des kirchlichen Amtes.” *Geist und Leben* 54 (1981): 178-187.

<sup>32</sup> *Exousia* refers to power in the sense of the right or authority to perform actions that bring about God’s reign whereas *dynamis* can be understood as the inherent capacity to perform such actions.

b. The issue of distinctiveness of ordained and lay ministries.

We have already alluded to Vatican II's unfinished project in terms of providing a coherent and comprehensive theology of ordained priesthood that recognizes fully and serves the common priesthood of all the faithful. The emphasis must be on demonstrating the complementarity of various ministries that cannot be in competition with one another as they serve the one Lord.<sup>33</sup>

A theology of ministry must also articulate what is distinctive of *both* ordained *and* lay ministries. We have already mentioned a number of distinctive features of priestly ministry: its rootedness in the sacrament of orders, its role in enabling and calling forth lay charisms, the priest as a visible agent of communion. Pope Francis is as concerned about the distinct competence and autonomy of the lay faithful's contribution to the Kingdom of God as much as he is concerned about that of the ordained. In a recent Letter to the Pontifical Commission for Latin America he says, It does us good to remember that the Church is not an elite of priests, of consecrated men, of bishops, but that everyone forms the faithful Holy People of God. ... The faithful Holy People of God is anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and thus, as we reflect, think, evaluate, discern, we must be very attentive to this anointing.<sup>34</sup>

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis calls for three things: greater formation of lay people for their distinctive mission, greater scope for them to exercise this mission, and a review, to be conducted by pastors and theologians, of how lay people, and he specifically speaks of women, are to be appropriately integrated into decision-making processes in the Church's life.

c. Clericalism

Another potential threat to communion and co-responsibility in ministry is clericalism. The US Conference of Major Superiors of Men commissioned a detailed report on clericalism as far back as 1983. They described it as "the conscious or unconscious concern to promote the particular interests of the clergy and to protect the privileges and power that have traditionally been conceded to those in the clerical state." Their report highlights the fact that clericalism becomes manifest in the behavior of individuals but that it also can be evident in church structures and reinforced by church procedures and processes. Clericalism is at work when we encounter "an authoritarian style of ministerial

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<sup>33</sup> See 1 Cor 10:17.

<sup>34</sup> Pope Francis, "Letter to the Pontifical Commission for Latin America", 19 March 2016. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160319\\_pont-comm-america-latina.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160319_pont-comm-america-latina.html). Accessed 25.07.18.

leadership, a rigidly hierarchical worldview, and a virtual identification of the holiness and grace of the church with the clerical state and, thereby, with the cleric himself.”

The report goes on to say that “lay people, religious men and women are all liable to the pitfalls of clericalism in certain situations. Generally speaking - exclusive, elitist or dominating behavior can be engaged in by any person or group within the Church. Such behavior is properly termed ‘clericalism’ when it rests on a claim to special religious expertise or ecclesial authority based on role or status in the church.”

Pope Francis has spoken about clericalism in his annual Addresses to the Roman Curia as well as his weekly catecheses and most authoritatively in *Evangelii Gaudium* n.102. It is clear that he considers it the core internal challenge to the mission of the Church because it impedes lay people from appropriating fully their ecclesial identity and from fulfilling their distinctive missionary responsibilities in the social, political and economic sectors of society. He has also noted how not just priests but also lay people themselves can be complicit in clericalism. Speaking to the Catholic media organization *Corallo* he described clericalism as a “two-way” or “double” sin. Priests like the temptation of clericalising the laity and the laity welcome it because it is “more convenient” and gives them a certain status.<sup>35</sup>

There is a value to a healthy fraternity forming among priests and similarly to a good rapport developing lay pastoral ministers. In fact, it is natural. This does not necessarily lead to clericalism. What is needed is honesty, transparency and openness about roles and responsibilities, about how decisions are taken, and the avoidance of “circles within circles” among those working together. Most importantly, those collaborating need to pray together and to remain grounded in a self-emptying spirituality of service.

#### d. Unity, not uniformity

Finally, in terms of potential threats to building communion and co-responsibility we need to avoid requiring or expecting uniformity of vision or of approach. Priests and lay people need to be formed in such a way that they are comfortable with a diversity of approaches to building up the kingdom of God. Unity is a value to protect, but not uniformity.

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<sup>35</sup> Eamonn Conway, “A Church beyond Clericalism,” in *Towards Just Gender Relations: Rethinking the Role of Women in Church and Society*, ed. Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel and Rita Perintfalvi (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2018).

Pope Francis' opponents have done the Church a favor in helping us to realize that we can have unity in diversity and that we can disagree even on some very fundamental matters and still be a Church that is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. Karl Rahner noted that the decline of a homogeneous Christian society would inevitably lead to a plurality of Christian forms.<sup>36</sup> He saw this as positive in that it reminds us that all structural forms in the Church are provisional from an eschatological perspective. This point is also made in *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48: "...the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing."

The enemy is not diversity as such but polarization. Polarization is caused not by the existence of diverse views but by those who hold them thinking ill of one another and to pray and work together; in essence adopting a form of sectarianism that is anything but Catholic. In terms of the future of priesthood and ministry, therefore, priestly candidates need to learn to negotiate a plurality of forms and perspectives while avoiding division and polarization.

### 3. Recognizing and Fostering the Universal Call to Holiness

A third theological disposition to foster in candidates for the priesthood is Vatican II's emphasis on the universal call to holiness. This has brought the Church to a new understanding of the relationship between laity, religious, priests and bishops, of the importance of equality in these relationships, and that the path to holiness lies in interrelatedness and mutual support. The centrality of the universal call to holiness has been beautifully articulated in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate* and needs no further development here. A study of this document and its roots in Conciliar teaching needs to underpin both the academic and personal spiritual formation of all ministerial candidates, ordained and lay.

### 4. The Relationship between Church and World

The theological disposition with which priests approach the secular world will influence how they see lay collaborators. The Jesuit Michael Paul Gallagher, reflecting the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola, as well as that of Pope Francis, always stressed that grace is at work everywhere and in everyone. Jesuit theologian,

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (London: SPCK, 1974).

Jim Corkery urges ministers to approach the world more as “detectives of grace” rather than of sin.<sup>37</sup> Writing in *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis also reminds us:

God’s word is unpredictable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed, which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (Mk 4:26-29). The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking.<sup>38</sup>

A disposition along these lines can lead to an appropriately docile approach to ministry, giving due respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in directing the work of building God’s Kingdom. It also disposes ministers to approach the world in an “invitatory mood” with the intention of “seeking allies in the service of justice, truth and love.”<sup>39</sup> A greater richness is now manifesting itself in ordained ministry with candidates having education and careers in secular professions behind them before entering the seminary. Similarly, lay ministers can bring a richness and diversity of human experience, of marriage and of family life that helps to bridge the sacred and the secular.

## 5. The Pneumatological Dimension

Finally, we need a richer understanding and acceptance of the pneumatological dimension of the Church, and this is key to sustaining and renewing both priesthood and ministry. George Tavad recognizes the need for this when he writes:

The action of the Spirit and the believers’ forward-looking anticipation of divine gifts to be received in the future have taken second place, being subordinated to the church’s memory of Christ and to its preservation of the deposit of faith.... a domination of ministerium by magisterium.<sup>40</sup>

Careful discernment is needed, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to determine what true fidelity to structures and practices of ministry means. We need to distinguish fidelity to the Church’s mission from fidelity to particular forms that once served that mission but may no longer be able to do so in a new missionary context.

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<sup>37</sup> James Corkery, “Detectives of Grace in the Adventures of Scholarship,” in *Cultivating Sacramental Imagination and Actions in College Classrooms*, ed. Karen E. Eifler and Thomas M. Landy (Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2014), 18f.

<sup>38</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 22,

<sup>39</sup> Dermot McCarthy, “The Priesthood and Contemporary Society,” in *Priesthood Today: Ministry in a Changing Church*, ed. Eamonn Conway (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 51-52.

<sup>40</sup> George Tavad, *The Church, Community of Salvation: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 52.



## Conclusion

In light of all that has been said here it is evident that priests cannot be formed for collaboration with lay people merely by way of an “add-on” to their academic studies. Steps must be taken to foster communion and co-responsibility between priests and lay ministers from the outset of formation.

While providing seminarians with a distinctive spirituality, one that will sustain them in their priestly ministry, and with a clear understanding and appreciation of their own vocation, it seems difficult to justify separate theological formation programmes for seminarians and lay people. In fact, separate formation programmes are a missed opportunity for active learning that can only be mutually enriching, cultivating respect for the variety of gifts being given for the building up of God’s Kingdom from the beginning. Future priests and lay ministers need to be provided with such a rich and maturing classroom experience along with shared experiential learning in parish communities throughout their formation. Thought also needs to be given to such formation continuing after ordination and commissioning.

We can expect that the topic of ministry will eventually be addressed through the process of synodality, which, under Pope Francis, has become the key vehicle for dealing with the unfinished business of the Second Vatican Council. In the meantime, good practice in our seminaries, centers of formation and parish communities will continue to be vital and will, in turn, contribute to greater clarity in our theology of collaborative ministry.

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