ROMAN CATHOLIC POLITY AND LEADERSHIP
SHARON HENDERSON CALLAHAN
JAMES EBLEN

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council has been calling forth new leaders for an increasingly varied local church. New people accepted the challenge to assist in accomplishing the three pastoral leadership functions, leadership, teaching, and pastoral care, as the supply of ordained ministers decreased and new theologies of lay ecclesial ministry emerged. While these new pastoral leaders, mostly lay and primarily women have served communities well, their presence also created tension.

A full exploration of the theological implications of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article. Here, we will reflect more specifically on the evolving polity and leadership in the United States context of the Roman Catholic Church. To this end, this article first briefly summarizes key issues regarding the nature of ordained and lay leadership within the context of Vatican II documents and subsequent theological developments. Next, consideration is given to some characteristics of emerging leader-follower roles in various local contexts. Finally, implications of these developments are noted, especially as they apply to the biblical and theological foundations for the formation and education of both ordained and lay pastoral leaders for the Roman Catholic Church in the United States.

Sharon Henderson Callahan is Associate Professor for Pastoral Leadership, School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, Seattle, WA

James Eblen is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Priest of the Archdiocese of Seattle, School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, Seattle, WA

Polity Issues in a Changing Environment

Two scenarios are offered below to help frame the context of pastoral leadership that is now emerging in a changing church. Subsequently, an analysis reviews the multiple models of leadership that have emerged since the changes initiated after the Second Vatican Council. This analysis includes three parts. The first examines the environment of change through an historical consideration of ministry as leadership from post-World War II through the present. The second part looks at the demographic shift in leadership since the 1960s and presents statistical data to demonstrate the shift from a *sole-proprietor* type of leadership toward collaborative leadership involving both ordained and lay ecclesial ministers. The third part considers some of the resistance to change and the tension that change necessarily creates in defining Roman Catholic leadership.

Context of Change: Two Scenarios

Scenario one: A small rural parish thrives under the leadership of an ordained minister who suddenly dies. At the time, no other priest is available to replace the deceased. The bishop, having consulted the priest dean of the region, asks the "pastoral assistant for faith formation" to step forward as an interim "pastoral life coordinator." She accepts and the laywoman becomes the primary leader of the parish. Immediately, the face and make-up of leadership for the whole faith community shifts. Questions arise: Will she be received as one who is effective because she is competent? Will her gifts be recognized as leadership? How will she exercise leadership in a congregation that needs sacraments, something she is not eligible to celebrate?

Scenario two: A parish pastor oversees the pastoral needs of a large suburban parish (3,000 families or over 9,000 people). In response to his call and duty to educate in the faith, to heal through presence and reconciliation, and to sanctify through Sacraments and prayer, he hires a

staff to help. According to patterns identified in the United States,[1] his staff is eighty percent female and consists of a variety of leaders including: Pastoral Associate, Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation, Youth Minister, Parish Administrator, Music or Liturgy Coordinator and Outreach Minister. Each person is responsible for developing his or her own team to plan and implement programs. Each nurtures community in subsections of the parish according to their job descriptions. Each serves as leader of those subsections or smaller communities. Together their expertise and competence call forth hundreds of volunteers to assist in the tasks of educating, healing, and sanctifying. Questions arise: Do these laypersons exercise leadership in their faith communities? What competencies, characteristics or sensibilities related to leadership do they demonstrate? Are there any shared competencies, characteristics, or sensibilities expected of both the ordained pastor and these other lay leaders?

An Analysis of Changing Leadership Models

What follows is divided into three parts. First, we highlight the complexity of change in the evolution of ministry practice and theology. Next we consider some statistical data indicating demographic shifts. Third, this section names some of the tensions that accompany the shifts in pastoral context. Finally, we summarize the

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[1] Several studies in the past twenty years have documented the patterns of new parish ministries and ministers. Some of these include: Zenobia Fox, 1986, *A Post-Vatican II Phenomenon: Lay Ministries: A Three-Dimensional Study*, Dissertation completed at Fordham University; Louise Bond, 1990; *An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Lay Ministry Training in the Roman Catholic Church of the United States*, Dissertation completed at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC; Barbara Fleischer, 1993; *Minister of the Future: A Study of Graduate Ministry Students in Catholic Colleges and Universities*, Loyola Institute for Ministry; as well as three studies by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, the first of which was published in 1977; and three studies by Philip Murnion and the National Pastoral Life Center the first of which was published in 1992 and the third of which is to be published in November, 2005. Together these studies document the growth and impact of lay ministries interacting with ordained leadership.

context toward examining the leadership/followership implications.

Pastoral Leadership from Vatican II to the Present

The documents of the Second Vatican Council clearly articulate a vision of the future church. At the same time, the documents hold in tension past definitions and practices. The documents themselves, therefore, reflect the differing viewpoints and practices one can find today in the local church, as illustrated in the two scenarios that opened this section.

Lumen Gentium, the Vatican II dogmatic constitution on the Church, launched the current changes in understanding the church, mission, and roles of leadership. The assembled bishops of the Council fluctuated between understanding laity strictly in negative terms, or as non-ordained, and more radically in positive terms, or as persons with baptismal responsibilities for ecclesial mission. Thus, the first descriptor defined the laity in the negative way of differentiating laypersons as non-ordained persons.[2] The second descriptor introduced the notion of lay people as the faithful who, incorporated into Christ by baptism, established in the People of God, and made in their own way sharers in the priestly, prophetical, and kingly office of Christ, exercise their own role in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.[3]

According to Robert Kinast, a pastoral theologian, this definition and vision provided the turning point in the phenomenon known as lay ministry. Kinast further contends that the council took a decidedly positive approach to the laity, established the relative autonomy of the laity from the hierarchy, and affirmed the role of the laity in the Church as well as in the world.[4] He

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[2] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* trans. N.D. Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 106.

[3] Walter M. Abbott, SJ, ed., *Lumen Gentium* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 31.

[4] Robert Kinast, "How Much Is Lay Ministry Worth?" *Origins* 23 (1992): 289.

suggested that through *Lumen Gentium*, the Council admitted that lay people participated in the mission of the Church because of their baptism. This understanding encouraged lay people to share in leadership and service by virtue of their baptism, rather than because of responsibilities and authority delegated to them by the ordained.

Subsequent reflections expanded these affirmations. Kenon Osborne, historian and theologian, traced the impact of *The Decree on the Lay Apostolate,* which further endorsed the laity's role as one based in the Sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, rather than in juridical delegations by hierarchy. He noted that the image of church as "People of God" called forth and produced new lay leadership. In addition, he elucidated the tensions between various understandings of definitions of "lay ministry." He built upon the theological work put forward by Schillebeeckx, who suggested that this new understanding allows the Church to experiment with the flowering of lay ministries while the theological explanation for the reality comes later. In this compromise, the layperson remains a non-office bearer but participates in the tasks of the Church. Thus it can be said that *Lumen Gentium* had no intention of providing an ontological definition of layperson, but rather, a typological description that avoids theological questions.[5] Kenan Osborne agreed with this assessment and finds it in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* as well. Suggesting that the typological description allows people to merely describe what clerics and lay people presently do, Osborne submitted that any "attempt to turn the typological description into an ontological one goes beyond the intent of the revised code."[6]

These differentiations help describe the impasse, but they do not address the problem as James Coriden, canon lawyer, considered it. Coriden stated, "ministry is in

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[5] Schillebeeckx, *Mission of Church*, 100.
[6] Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church, Its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 945.

disarray. In the Roman Catholic Church today the traditional structures of ministry are disordered and woefully inadequate. The situation is confused to the point of embarrassment, but it has also become pastorally critical because of the frustration and alienation it causes."[7] Coriden worried that the vacillation observed in Pope John Paul II prevented the Church from fully embracing the transformation opened by the Vatican II documents. He particularly noted the limited resistance placed on the encouragement and recognition of lay ministries, the full participation of women in ministry, the ecumenical problem, the shortage of priests which limits Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations, and the quality of ministry which emerges with the shortage of ordained priests.[8] Edward Kilmartin, a sacramental theologian, concurred with this assessment, suggesting that the struggle lies in the Church's inability to produce an acceptable explanation of the relationship between power and jurisdiction.[9]

The tension between differing understandings of what a layperson is and what a priest is, remains unresolved. Volumes have been written debating essentially the same arguments as were raised before, during and after Vatican II. David Power, shed light on the dilemma from the standpoint of a systematic theologian. He noted that ordination in the Church begins with the recognition of the ability to lead the people in Word and Spirit given through charism. When these gifts and services are recognized by the community and aggregated into the life of the Body through the Sacrament of ordination, the person ordained is given a formal authority within the community. The legitimacy of this process includes those procedures that have to do with acceptance by the

[7] James A. Coriden, "Options for the Organization of Ministry." *The Jurist* 41(1981): 480.

[8] Ibid., 481.

[9] Edward J. Kilmartin, "Lay Participation in the Apostolate of the Hierarchy." *The Jurist* 41 (1981): 346.

particular community from which or to which one is ordained.[10]

Power situated the role of leader in the hands of the ordained as he connected the presidency of community to Eucharist "such that all charism, power and authority finds ultimate meaning and purpose in the mystery of the unity of the Spirit, the Lord's Body and Blood."[11] Thus, Power described the conferral of the charism of leadership as transferred through "orders." He further observed that the Spirit, through the bishop to the one ordained gives the charism. This charism equips the ordained to fulfill the leadership function. The remaining question lingers: what equips the layperson to fulfill leadership functions?

Power cautioned against misuse of the sacramental efficacy of orders, observing that overestimation of the grace of ordination leads to unreal expectations regarding the holiness, gifts and perseverance of the ordained.[12] He further stipulated that the Spirit gives gifts freely and these gifts constitute the power on which the Church depends for existence. Power acknowledged that presiding at Eucharist in the midst of community constitutes a central function of leadership in the faith community. As the numbers of lay people presiding at worship celebrations increases, Power raised the question concerning the power of lay leadership to fully function under current restrictions in the distribution of the power of the Spirit. In other words, Power questioned the exclusion of the non-ordained presider from participation in orders. He further challenged the laying on of hands as the only way to transmit the call of the Spirit.[13] Thus Power called for the development of a theology of ministry based on the practice of the Church in the thirty years [at the time of his article] since Vatican II.

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[10] David N. Power, "The Basis for Official Ministry in the Church," *The Jurist* 41 (1981): 336.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 334.
[13] Ibid.

Virtually all analysts of the documents of Vatican II agreed that the theology of ministry issue remains unsettled. Referring to Schillebeeckx contribution to the Vatican II documents, Osborne suggested that once the bishops endorsed the term "priesthood of all believers" to denote the common matrix of gospel discipleship, they initiated a major questioning of self-identity. He suggested that the blurring of roles leads to the question: "If all disciples in virtue of their baptism- confirmation- Eucharist are priests, then why do we have ordained priests and what is their specific identity?"[14] Similarly, Leonard Doohan, theologian and leadership educator, acknowledged that by the mid-seventies, both laity and scholars began to experience serious dissatisfaction and frustration regarding the specifics of the lay role and the theological underpinning for that role.

During this time period, the United States Bishops commissioned and published a study of the priesthood in the United States. They concluded in 1977 that:

A generation ago the image of the Church that dominated our theology texts was that of the Mystical Body of Christ. While Vatican II reaffirmed this contribution to the developing understanding of the Church, it proposed the image of the People of God as speaking more directly and more clearly to the needs and hopes of our times. In this image the Church is seen as related to the people of the Old Covenant and yet a new reality in Christ. It is a community involved in history and yet also in pilgrimage looking to the full realization of the Kingdom, as a community with strengths and weaknesses and always standing in need of God's mercy, as stressing a response in faith to Christ by keeping distinct the Church and Christ. This image also helps to situate two basic perspectives of the Church applicable to priestly ministry today: the

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[14] Osborne, *Ministry*, 536.

example of Christ, and the Church as both servant and pilgrim.[15]

Having acknowledged the shift in emphasis within the theology of church, the bishops' conference clarified other terms useful in considering leadership and polity.

First, the bishops defined "ministry" or *diakonia* as the word for service through the New Testament. They reiterated that all baptized share with priests in the one ministry of the Church, the one priesthood of Christ. Then they defined priesthood in its specific vocation. "For us, however, 'priesthood' refers mostly to the ordained priesthood. The use of 'ministry' brings out better the common servanthood of all the baptized and allows for the distinctiveness of priests to be expressed in 'priestly ministry.'"[16] They sought to further articulate specific charisms associated with the function or office of priesthood, those "concerned with providing for the continued presence of the community are generally termed administrative ministries." The Bishops also reaffirmed that the office of ordering the community of faith is essential to the authenticity of the Church.

Thus, to this end, "the holder of an office in the Church would be a person: (1) endowed by the Spirit, (2) with personal gifts (charisms), and (3) called to a public and permanent ministry and this call is formally recognized by the Church."[17] Further they confirmed that this office is conferred by the bishop in a public and formal commissioning of the priest for service. Indeed, it is by this act that "the relationship between the People of God and the priest is constituted."[18] In addition, the

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[15] Priestly Life and Ministry Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *As One Who Serves: Reflections of the Pastoral Ministry on Priests in the United States.* Washington, DC. United States Catholic Conference, 1977, p. 10. A second study confirmed the tensions, Bishop's Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. *A Shepherd's Care: Reflections on the Changing Role of Pastor.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops. 1987. A third study is in process and scheduled to be published soon.

[16] Bishops, *As One Who Serves*, 19.

[17] Ibid., 23.

[18] Ibid., 22.

bishops redefined specific entities requiring the office of oversight. First, a "diocese is a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop."[19] Next they noted that the parish is "the basic and essential unit of the local, diocesan Church. Through its experience of faith and life, the parish contributes to the perception and articulation of the mission of the local Church. At the same time, it is through the parish that the mission and ministry of the local Church is experienced and expressed."[20]

Thus, the overall organization of the church includes dioceses, which are regional areas governed by the bishop. Each diocese is further divided geographically into parishes, or the local church, which are governed by the priest pastor. In their second study, published in 1987, the bishops reported that pastors still lacked a coherent conceptual framework for their self-definition. The bishops' report noted that as pastors became agents of change they changed their own function and identity as well. As the scenarios that opened this section demonstrate, teams of ordained and lay pastoral leaders may perform the functions of leadership, yet the polity clearly assigns canonical responsibility to the priest pastor.

Demographic Realities Push Boundaries of Polity Limits

The two scenarios that opened this section demonstrate that lay people exercise leadership in Roman Catholic parishes through their baptismal call. As the church received the documents of Vatican II, the people embraced the opportunity to serve out of their baptismal call. Post Vatican II, the ordained priesthood, which had clearly served as the leadership model in the church prior to Vatican II, suffered significant loss in numbers. At the same time laymen and women sought to prepare themselves to lead parishes in collaboration with the ordained. This new configuration of personnel challenged

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[19] Ibid., 23.
[20] Ibid., 26.

Table One: Vocation Data[21]

Category	2002	2000	1998	1997	1995	1992	1985	1975	1965
Diocesan Priests	28,375	30,607			32,349		35,052	36,005	35,952
Religious Priests	14,528	15,092			16,705		22,265	22,904	22,707
Total Priests	**44,874**	**45,699**			**49,054**		**57,317**	**58,909**	**58,632**
Graduate Level Sem	3,308	3,474			3,172		4,063	5,279	8,325
Permanent Deacons	14,574	12,378	12,247	11,788	10,932		7,204	898	—
Religious Brothers	5,617	5,662	6,115	6,293	6,535		7,544	8,625	12,271
Religious Sisters	74,177	79,814	85,412	87,644	90,809		115,386	135,225	179,954
Lay Ministers	**33,500**			**29,145**		**21,500**			—
Lay Min in Form	25,964	34,414	29,137	23,333	21,800+		10,500		—
Lay Form program	289	314	295	287	281		206		
Parishes	18,891	19,236			19,331		19,244	18,515	17,637
Without Res Priest	3,251	2,843			2,161		1,051	702	549
Catholic Population	62.2m	59.9m			57.4m		52.3m	48.7m	45.6m

[21] These figures are collated from a number of sources including: CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate), Georgetown University, Washington DC, at www.cara.georgetown.edu; other studies cited throughout this article, especially Murnion, Fleischer, Bond, and Fox.

theologians, bishops, and seminary educators to re-imagine the local church and its leadership. Perhaps the numbers offer the most telling evidence of the birth of a new era. Repeated studies of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States demonstrate that the numbers of ordained ministers have declined while the numbers of people who identify themselves as Roman Catholic have increased. Table one demonstrates this clearly. The data reveals that in 1965 close to fifty-nine thousand priests served a total Roman Catholic population of 45,600,000 distributed among close to eighteen thousand parishes.

This distribution translates to approximately one priest for every seven hundred seventy-eight people or three and one third priests to serve each parish. In stark contrast the figures for the 2005 calendar year reveal that each priest now serves over one thousand three hundred eighty people or each parish could have access to two and three eighths priests. The data does not reflect the number of priests currently retired, or on sick or study leave, nor do they reflect the distribution of priests who teach in Catholic seminaries, colleges, universities, and high schools. Thus the number of those parishes without a resident priest has grown six-fold.

As table one also shows, the numbers of lay people serving parishes is growing in direct proportion to the numbers of ordained leaders' decline. Barbara Fleischer, social researcher, reported that the numbers in her ministry study represented an unprecedented shift occurring in the staffing patterns of professional pastoral positions both in the Catholic Church of the United States and in other western industrialized nations. Due largely to the changing demographics in the clergy, religious, and lay populations and an explosive interest in ministry among the laity, leadership positions once filled by priests are now increasingly occupied by lay women and men. Some hail this change as a welcomed empowerment of the lay faithful while others continue to view the situation as a crisis of vocations. Whatever the perspective, the phenomenon raises crucial questions and requires a careful examination of implications and

policies, particularly those related to supporting and educating new ministers for their roles in the Church.[22]

The two scenarios at the beginning of the chapter image the shift. The numbers reflected in table one illustrate the depth of the leadership shift.

Table two demonstrates that by 2005 sixty-six percent of all parishes in the United States hired lay leaders who worked twenty hours or more. Studies conducted by Murnion, Fleischer, Bond, Fox, and Callahan[23] reveal that these lay leaders consider themselves called to ecclesial ministry. Volunteers, deacons, and ministers who serve less than half time are not included in the numbers.

Table Two: Lay Ministry Growth

Numbers/percent	1990	1997	2005
Lay ministers*	21,569	29,146	30,632
Vowed religious	41%	28%	16%
Women	44%	54%	64%
Men	15%	18%	20%
Parishes Served	54%	60%	66%

The numerical shift motivated several researchers to examine the newly emerging forms of pastoral leadership. Thus, in 1992, Murnion observed that the local church experienced a "virtual revolution in pastoral ministry" and an "explosion of new ministries assumed by lay persons."[24]

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[22] Barbara Fleischer, *Minister of the Future: A Study of Graduate Ministry Students in Catholic Colleges and Universities* (New Orleans: Loyola Institute for Ministry, 1993), 6.

[23] Sharon Henderson Callahan, *A Delphi Study of Competencies Needed by Leaders of Roman Catholic Faith Communities in Western Washington Through the Year 2000.* Diss. Seattle University, 1996. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996. 9716963. Also Fox, Bond, Fleischer and Murnion as previously cited.

[24] Murnion, *New Parish Ministers*, 10-11.

Transition Creates Tension

The forty years since the Second Vatican Council have been marked by one key word—"change."[25] Because the nature of the documents of the Second Vatican Council reflected the tensions of theologians prior to Vatican II, the Council both affirmed theologies and images of historical experience and invited renewal by encouraging further reflection, discussion and experimentation. As has been shown, the response to the invitation exerted profound influence upon the leadership of the Church. The ongoing theological dialogue reflects the changing nature of understanding ministry within the church. As leaders know, transition takes a long time. William Bridges, organizational change expert, writes: "It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions. Change is not the same as transition. Change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, or the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal."[26] Clearly, the United States Roman Catholic Church is undergoing both change and transition.

Murnion highlighted the cost of the transition when he quoted one priest respondent who mused that the existence of lay ministry creates tensions, "the lines are becoming blurred between the role of the priest and that of the lay minister."[27] Starting with the rethinking reflected in the documents of Vatican II, theologians have spent forty years reworking theological understanding of ministry in all its forms.

In the midst of the shifting landscape, Pope John Paul II and many bishops worried about fidelity to the tradition. Peter Hebblethwaite, long-time Vatican observer and author, evaluated Pope John Paul II's stance. According to Hebblethwaite, Pope John Paul II

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[25] Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy, "New Parish Ministers: Theological, Pastoral and Canonical Reflections." *Church* (1993): 25.

[26] William Bridges, *Managing Transitions* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 3.

[27] Murnion, New Parish, 63.

distinguished sharply the ordained ministry proper to priests from other *services* that may sometimes be rendered by lay people. In fact, Hebblethwaite suggested that Pope John Paul II tried to impose his personal theological opinion on the Church by refusing to talk about "lay ministries" and preferring the language "lay apostolate."[28] The use of the term "lay apostolate" implies that lay people do ministry only because they are "sent" or "delegated" that ministry. In a speech to the Congregation for the Clergy, the Pope himself noted that this language about the ministry might be "booby-trapped."[29] In this speech, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed his belief that the need for lay ministers will recede as soon as the Church is successful in recruiting more priestly vocations. At the same time, he spoke with some enthusiasm of the contributions lay leaders made to the life of the Church stating that "certainly the apostolate of the laity [sic] must be expanded in every way possible since it is a right and duty based on their baptismal dignity."[30] Reflecting the growing global awareness of the shift in leadership, Pope John Paul II called for quality experiences in parish life.

Holding the tension, Pope John Paul II reminded all that only the priest can act as shepherd to the flock, and thus, even when lay people are serving in ways similar to priests they are never "properly speaking, pastoral."[31] He further clarified that only in virtue of sacred ordination does the word ministry obtain the full meaning that tradition confers. He called for attention to the "urgent pastoral need to clarify and purify terminology, because behind it there can lurk dangers far more treacherous than one may think. It is a short step from current language to conceptualization."[32] Finally, he affirmed his

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[28] Peter Hebblethwaite, "Pope Draws Sharp Distinction Between Priests, Lay Ministers." *National Catholic Reporter* (6 May 1994): 5.

[29] Pope John Paul II. "Do Laity Share in the Priest's Pastoral Ministry?" *Origins* 24 (1994): 42.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

commitment to the hierarchical structure as that which is given by the Holy Spirit and called for more response to ordained service while offering new possibilities in lay service and leadership "which must be correctly applied so as not to fall into the ambiguity of considering as ordinary and normal solutions that were meant for extraordinary situations in which priests were lacking or in short supply."[33] Thus, as the major Roman Catholic leader, Pope John Paul II both congratulated lay people for accepting the challenge to assist the Church in ministry and leadership and warned that this is not the right order of the Church but a temporary arrangement to meet a crisis.

Similarly, in an instruction promulgated by eight Vatican offices on November 13, 1997, the Pope and high ranking cardinals affirmed both the mission of the church as *People of God*, and the notion of hierarchical ordering of charism to serve the church. Like other statements and documents, this instruction held in tension the complementarity of gifts. While it focuses primarily on preserving the special character of the ordered in ecclesial life, its delineation of gifts continues the multiple interpretations fostered since Vatican II.

John Shea, theologian and storyteller, summarized the tension of change in leadership when he stated the following:

> The Catholic Church in general and the local parish in particular are in transition from a hierarchical to a community model. This means not that one model replaces the other, but that the values of both models are held in tension so that the mission of the Church can be carried on more effectively. Ideally, the values of the Pauline vision—recognition of diversity of gifts, service, mutuality, cooperation, emphasis on the local Church—interact with the values of the hierarchical model—direction, authority, correction, emphasis on the universal Church--to

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[33] Ibid., 41.

create a new embodiment of the Church in history.[34]

Paul Dietterich, founder of the Center for Parish Development, agreed with Shea, stating that the Church has clearly been challenged; "to transform its basic identity and its vocation – to go to its very roots. …The old paradigms and models are insufficient for the faithful and effective realization of the Church's divine purpose."[35]

Just as the organizational culture in other sectors such as business, industry, and health care, moved from a hierarchical model of leadership through the stage of team leadership to perhaps a stage of mutual leadership, so it seems that the North American Roman Catholic Church is moving toward the image of itself as a *People of God.* This movement demands new forms of leadership and followership.

The United States Bishops in 1987 clearly defined the major tasks or functions of leadership and charted the tension of change from a hierarchical model to a more communal model of Church.[36] They stressed the learning curve imposed on the pastoring styles of many priests who were trained for one model of church and who found themselves ministering and leading in another. They observed that priests found themselves needing to know something about team work, collaboration, counseling, listening, and calling forth gifts of people in their communities.[37]

From 1992 through 2005, Philip Murnion, David DeLambo a sociologist, and the National Pastoral Life Center conducted longitudinal studies concerning lay ecclesial ministries. The first published report, *National Parish Ministers*, noted that ministry is not inevitably

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[34] John Shea, "Foreward in Thomas Sweetser and Carol Holden, *Leadership in a Successful Parish* (Kansas City: Sheed, 1992), ix.

[35] Inagrace and Paul Dietterich, "Going to the Roots" in *Transformation: A Newsletter of the Center for Parish Development* (1994): 1

[36] Bishops, *A Shepherd's Care*, 19-22.

[37] Ibid., 22-23.

linked to one's state of life (vowed or ordained vs. lay) nor to one's professional certification, but that it is a category of its own, combining skills and relationships.[38] In this same report, Murnion explained that, before Vatican II, "formal ministry had become mostly clerical or religious, generally restricted to the clergy and those in vows. Ministry belonged to those who occupied these stable statuses in the Church. This is no longer true."[39] In this context, Murnion named the feminization of lay ministry, at that time reaching eighty five percent of all lay ministries, profound and complete.[40] Table two confirms that the pattern remains true, even though the 2005 report indicates that lay men have increased from fifteen to twenty percent of the total lay ministers documented by these successive studies.

The typological experience of lay ministry has pushed theological understandings. In other words, people have become leader ministers such as those in the two scenarios, which opened this paper. To date no adequate or universal theology has been defined and embraced by the universal Church. After forty years, the tension remains. At the November, 2005 annual meeting, the United States Bishops hope to affirm a document that they spent six years writing and researching. It will address the tension but will not resolve it.

Summary of Environment of Change

The two scenarios, which opened this section, depict the reality of changing leadership in the Church. The role and sometimes the person of the parish leader have changed. The longitudinal demographics suggest that lay leaders are a phenomenon the Roman Catholic Church must embrace if it is to survive. The 1983 the new *Code of Canon Law* reflects the organizational principle of *Lumen Gentium*. Starting, as does the Vatican II document on the church. The new code confirmed the right and duty of

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[38] Murnion, *New Parish*, 14.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 27.

laity to hold ecclesial offices. Canon 204 establishes that all the baptized share in the threefold mission of Jesus and his church: to proclaim God's word to others, to sanctify others by his gifts of Sacrament and sacrifice, and to lead others actively to his promise of eternal life.[41] These tasks involve sharing the very roles previously reserved for the ordained.

Thus, as the two scenarios that opened this paper suggested, the ordained leaders have hired and recruited laity to assist them in fulfilling their pastoral leadership roles. These lay people have subsequently participated in many of the functions previously reserved to the priest: teaching, preaching, and healing. In many parishes lay people preside at quasi-liturgies designed to assist parishes in praying together in the absence of a priest. In addition, the new *Code of Canon Law* invited lay participation in a variety of ministries all of which have some connection to leadership positions. Sharon Euart, canon lawyer, outlined the breadth of these positions citing the codes that endorse lay participation:

> Under certain circumstances, for example, a layperson may preach in a Church or oratory (c. 766) and serve as a catechist (c. 767), extraordinary minister of baptism (c. 86162), official witness at weddings (c. 1112), or administrator of sacramentals (c. 1168). At the parish level, a layperson may be appointed a parish coordinator (c. 51762) and/or parish staff member (c.519). Additional ecclesiastical offices that may be held by lay persons include chancellor (c. 483), financial manager (c. 494), tribunal judge (c. 141§2), assessor (c. 1424), auditor (c. 1428§2), defender of the bond and promoter of justice (c. 1435), as well as procurator and advocate (c. 1483).[42]

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[41] *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law.* Edited by John P. Beal, James A. Coriden and Thomas J. Green (New York: Paulist, 2000).

[42] Sharon A Euart, "New Parish Ministers: Theological, Pastoral & Canonical Reflections – Responsible Leadership." *Church.* (1993): 29.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops continues to reflect on the implications of developing a full theology and practice of lay ecclesial ministry. Several publications demonstrate their struggle to ensure that both the tradition of ordered ministry and the notion of the church as the people of God sent into mission through shared baptism collaborate in ways consistent with church teaching.[43] The title of their last publication communicates the tension of change and transition: *Lay Ecclesial Ministry, the State of the Questions.*

Pre-Vatican II forms of leadership tended toward a hierarchical model, with all authority and power placed in the hands of ordained leaders. The documents promulgated by the Second Vatican Council demonstrated a tension between this traditional dynamic with a new dynamic imaged in the words "People of God." These words opened the image of the leader/follower relationship to new realities—all of which embraced more shared responsibility and leadership. In what seemed like the *blinking of an eye* (only forty years), the Roman Catholic Church launched a new era rooted in a philosophy and theology of community. As the Church experienced new ministries, it was transformed by these ministries and discovered new ways to be church.

Emerging Leadership

The scenarios that opened the first section describe two ways in which the practice of parish leadership is changing. That section also acknowledged the theological implications of the change in ministerial leadership in the

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[43] Subcommittee on the Laity. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), 20. The bishops have also refined their theological and ordering understanding of lay ecclesial ministry in two other documents. *Together in God's Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, a working document to be reviewed by the bishops in November, 2005, and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry.* All three documents benefited from significant consultation among seminaries and colleges and universities preparing people for lay ecclesial ministry.

Roman Catholic Church in the United States and the impact on understanding our ordering or polity. This section examines some leadership competencies required to navigate the emerging organizational dynamic.

The tensions of transition affect leadership styles, values, and preparation. Thus, seminaries, dioceses, and theological schools examined curriculum toward developing ministers equipped in theology, scripture, spiritual and ministerial formation and pastoral skills. At the same time, lay ministers formed national associations and regulated themselves through producing competency standards. The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops approved these formulations of competency standards, and a process for review and renewal is in place. Multiple documents delineate expectations.[44] Other literature, wisdom, and scripture offer grounding for naming pastoral leadership qualities and skills, as well.

This section considers the competencies, leadership characteristics, and styles most named in the various studies and documents. Pastoral leaders must evidence these if they are to be excellent leaders. Some are canonically reserved to the pastor, who is always a priest, but who may not be the actual pastoral leader of the parish. This article proposes that all the competencies can be discussed under the umbrella of three broad categories:

1. The Pastoral Leader is a Spiritually Mature Person,
2. The Pastoral Leader is Grounded in Theology and Scripture, and
3. The Pastoral Nurtures Communities of Faith and Action.

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[44] These competency statements would include: National Certification Standards for Pastoral Ministers and National Certification Standards for Ecclesial Lay Ministers. Both of these, published by the National Association of Lay Ministry, include standards for lay ministers aspiring to youth ministry, catechetical or faith formation ministry, adult ministry, pastoral associate, and pastoral parish coordinator. Other standards have been approved by the USCC for music ministers and parish administrators. Together, the standards provide for shared preparation with some attention to specificity in ministry focus.

The remainder of this section is divided into these three subsections. Each subsection will briefly reflect on one of these categories.

The Pastoral Leader is a Spiritually Mature Person

Fundamentally, the pastoral leader is a person of faith called to serve the people of God. As a disciple of Christ united to God through the Holy Spirit, the pastoral leader hears a call to serve. Responding to the call of Jesus to "come, follow me," the pastoral leader acts out of the initiation to Christian life through baptism. As Paul writes to the community at Ephesus, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him before the foundations of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him" (Eph. 1:3-4).[45] Later in this same letter, Paul reaffirms the call to holiness for all members of the church, "Brothers and sisters: You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).[46] The pastoral leader embraces the call and gift of baptism, the call to be holy, in such a way that the person co-creatively with God builds the church.

Without exception, all national research studies and lists of competencies included a mandate that the pastoral leader be a person of prayer and reflection. Organized around a theology of baptism that reflects the fundamental shift found in *Lumen Gentium*, the new 1983 *Code of Canon Law* confirmed the connection for Catholics. First, the *Code* lists some qualities as essential

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[45] *The Catholic Study Bible*, Edited by Donald Senior, Mary Ann Getty, Carroll Stuhlmueller and John Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[46] *New American Bible with Revised New Testament and Revised Psalms* (Washington, DC: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1991).

to all members of the Church: a common dignity, the same vocation to holiness, and fundamental equality arising from baptism in Christ (c. 208- 210).[47] Built on this foundation, the *Code* recognizes that lay persons can assist in ecclesiastical offices and encourages lay persons to acquire the knowledge in sacred sciences that would prepare them for those offices (c. 228-230). Next the *Code* considers the formation and function of clerics or sacred ministers. Throughout the section concerning calling and preparing men for this state of life, the codes stipulated that the person must encourage a spirit of the Gospel and a close relationship with Christ. All people of God are called to lead a holy life (c. 210) so as to contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ (c. 208). The *Code*, therefore, states what members of parishes, bishops, and all people of God expect from their pastoral leaders: that they live in a way that unites them to the God who calls them through baptism and works with them in their ministries.

A secondary aspect of this major attribute or quality is that of self-knowledge and understanding. Helen Doohan affirmed this connection, maintaining that pastoral leaders must be models of health and wholeness, expressing a unity with self, others, and God. Several ministerial competency lists supported this connection of personal wholeness to spiritual depth. Fleischer's study defined this simply as "balance [of] work and leisure activities,"[48] while others define this wholeness as the "facility in utilizing the inter- and intra-personal skills needed for one's own holistic growth in ministry and for fostering the holistic growth of others, and empowering others to do this as well."[49] It is clear that the bishops, seminaries, lay ministry associations, and many authors consider the pastoral leader as a spiritually mature person

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[47] *Code*, 204.
[48] Fleischer, *Ministers*, 56.
[49] *Common Formation Goals for Ministry*, Edited by Joseph T. Merkt, STD (Spalding University,Louisville, 2000), 219,229, 245.

one of the most important gift one offers as a pastoral leader to a community of faith.

The Pastoral Leader is Grounded in Theology and Scripture

Traditional seminaries excel in preparing pastoral leaders theologically. Doctrine, sacramental theology and liturgical practice, homiletics, and scripture dominate the curriculum. The church expects its pastoral leaders-ordained and lay- to know the tradition.

The USCC (United States Catholic Conference) stated simply "break open the Tradition as expressed in teachings of Bishops, Popes, Councils, history, theology."[50] Others list a more comprehensive catalogue of subject matter: catechetics/religious education, Scripture, systematics and doctrine, liturgy and sacraments, and ecumenism, evangelization, and pastoral theology.[51] When Murnion asked ministers to rate the theological competencies for their importance to work, over eighty-eight percent of the responding ministers rated the knowledge of Scripture as the most important theological competency, placing it first in importance in Murnion's study.[52] *Canon Law* addressed specific areas for priestly formation to include: the whole of catholic teaching, divine Revelation, Scripture, dogmatic theology, moral and pastoral theology, canon law, liturgy, ecclesiastical history, and other special disciplines (c. 252 §1§2 §3). It also extended an invitation to lay people who wish to investigate the "sacred sciences" (c. 229§1§2).

Emphasizing the importance of these competencies, Shea claimed the theological competencies to be the most important minister exercises. He challenged ministers to learn to hear the religious dimension of the human story and to handle questions, surface religious, theological, and ecclesiological assumptions and relate concrete, everyday life to the Christian story. Thus, he characterized the task of the minister, relying on theology

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[50] Bishops, *As One Who Serves*, 33-34.
[51] Bond, *An Evaluation,* 252.
[52] Murnion, *New Parish Ministers*, 33.

and Scripture, as the "gathering of the folks, breaking the bread, telling the story."[53]

The Pastoral Leader Nurtures Communities of Faith and Action

While this area seems to be most important in daily life, it often receives the least attention in seminary curriculum. All pastoral leaders discover the need to work collaboratively with boards, councils, staff, other pastors, and the bishop. Indeed, most studies since 1977 document that pastoral leaders consider themselves to be working as part of a team of leaders. These relationships demand listening skills, conflict negotiation, mediation, organizational dynamics, visioning change, and care for social justice, ecumenical interaction in the community, and embracing cultural diversity.

This broad category includes questions such as what do congregations contribute to the commons or the public? It also embraces competencies that govern how parishes negotiate action, mission, evangelization, justice, community life, and worship. Within the context of the congregation, studies also document the importance of effectiveness in organization, decision-making, negotiating conflict and pastoral care. National studies also considered the qualities related to compassion. Several suggested other descriptors: "ability to be natural, relaxed with people"[54]; receptivity, openness, recognition of others, giftedness and pastoral love[55]; "building community" and "loving the people of God."[56]

Virtually all national research competency lists named interpersonal skills as necessary for effective leadership.[57] As early as 1977, the USCCB named team ministry as a

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[53] Shea, "The Religious Mission of the Parish," *The Parish in Community and Ministry*, Ed. Evelyn Eaton Whitehead. (New York: Paulist, 1978), 69.

[54] Bond, *Evaluation of the Effectiveness*, 258.

[55] Bishops, *A Shepherd's Care*, 23.

[56] Callahan, *Delphi Study*, 107.

[57] Note specifically Bishops, *As One* and *A Shepherd's Care*; Bond, *Evaluation*; Fleischer, *Ministers*; Murnion, *National Pastoral Ministers*; NALM, *Common Competency Goals*; Callahan, *Delphi Study*.

"given" for pastoral ministry.[58] Confirming that pastoral leadership seems to be moving toward team or collaborative ministry, Jackson W. Carroll, director of the Pulpit and Pew research on pastoral leadership at Duke University, described this phenomenon as a "sea change." The scope of this movement involves lay and ordained ministers in more collaborative efforts. Applying an insight offered by Donald Cozzens concerning the paradigm shift for Catholic priests, Carroll further suggested that substituting the word pastor for priest makes clear the shift of leadership from cultic to servant, pedestal to participation, solitary leader to companion with the people, preacher to leader, lone ranger to collaborator, from saving souls to liberating God's people to live fully.[59]

In a similar way, Thomas Sweetser and Carol Holden, co-directors of the Parish Evaluation Project, suggested that; "every new pastor should be required to participate in a yearlong process of team building. Along with the staff he should learn the skills of information gathering, decision making, community building, conflict management, and evaluation."[60] They situated the call for this kind of training in their urging of team ministry as the model. They noted that a leader of a team needs to be a facilitator, "someone who allows team members to function as equals, encourages mutual support and growth, and manages conflicts between team members."[61] This stance reflected that expressed in the *Lumen Gentium*:

> Pastors also know that Christ did not mean that they themselves should shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the church toward the world. On the contrary, they understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their

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[58] Bishops, *As One Who,* 46.

[59] Jackson W. Carroll, "Reflections of a Clergy-Watcher," retirement lecture at Duke Divinity School (April 18, 2001), 14. website, http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu

[60] Thomas Sweetser, S.J., and Carol M. Holden*, Leadership in a Successful Parish* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1992), 26.

[61] Ibid., 59

services and charismatic gifts that all according to
their proper roles may cooperate in this common
undertaking with one heart.[62]

Likewise Paul Wilkes, project director for the Parish/
Congregation Study, listed the involvement of laity and
ministers in joint decision-making, practicing forgiveness
and reconciliation, and operating out of common mission
as key indicators of excellence in both Protestant and
Catholic congregations.

Philip Murnion in 1993 connected the call for
collaboration with the emergence of women on ministry
teams. He alerted the Catholic world to the phenomenal
emergence of women lay leaders who now comprise
eighty-five percent of all lay leaders.[63] These findings in
the church confirmed James MacGregor Burns's
prediction. In his work on transformational leadership, he
alerted the leadership world to the potential contribution
of women in national organizations. He foresaw that the
gifts of women would include team building, shared
decision making and care for the people in the
organization. He contended that the conception of
leadership through the 1970s as "mere command or
control" reflected a male bias in leadership. He called that
perception false and prophesied that "as leadership
comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders
engaging and mobilizing the human needs and aspirations
of followers, women will be more readily recognized as
leaders, and men will change their own leadership
styles."[64]

Within this theme, others focused on organizational
skills such as vision, mission, and leading organizational
change. Claiming that effectiveness results from
ownership by the community, Kevin Treston called for
the exercise of vision in leadership. As an international
consultant in leadership for dioceses, schools and
parishes, he included within his definition of vision, the

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[62] Abbott, ed. *The Documents of Vatican II*. LG 30.

[63] Murnion, *New Parish*, 9.

[64] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper, 1978), 50.

challenge of conversion or *metanoia*. The *Career Minister Policy Project* of the Seattle Archdiocese clearly called for cultural and linguistic sensitivity training for all ministers. Later, Archbishop Murphy addressed the need for training and education in terms of the faith communities that the ministers face now and increasingly in the future. He stated that in a church:

> …whose face mirrors that of a multicultural community, with richness of diversity in culture, race, ethnicity, and language, there is a special challenge to seek ministers who serve the church from all parts of that community. The church must find ways to identify, support, and encourage vocations to lay, religious and ordained ministry from within the multicultural community, while helping such candidates retain their own cultural identity.[65]

Canon Law picks "love and know" wording when it directs the pastor to "know the faithful entrusted to his care" and to share their cares and anxieties and comfort them (c. 529§ 1). Similarly, Cardinal Bernardin called ministers to both welcome growth and include all peoples, and he urged ministers to develop competencies in inclusion and hospitality.

Clearly, the sheer number of gifts and tasks in the midst of diverse populations within parish communities suggests that the reliance on teams of pastoral leaders serves the people of God most effectively at this time in history. While the numbers of ordained pastors decreases as numbers of congregants increase, these pastors increasingly turn to prepared lay ecclesial ministers to collaborate with them in caring for the threefold ministry of the church: teaching, sanctifying, and healing. Studies reveal that students in seminaries do not receive adequate education in these skills and competencies, while studies concerning university preparation for lay ministries demonstrate that these programs excel in teaching skills related to this area: listening, conflict negotiation, team

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[65] Murphy, "New Parish Ministers," 27.

building, calling forth gifts of volunteers, and other key gifts.[66] These studies confirm the need for demonstrating ability in each of the three areas considered in this section: spiritual depth and maturity, knowledge of the Scriptures, Tradition, and Sacramental and liturgical life of the Church, and skills in relating to the people of God toward leading them to embody the mission of Christ. These capacities, in varying degrees, equip all pastoral leaders as pictured in the two scenarios that opened our discussion.

Some Biblical and Theological Foundations

Perhaps an abbreviated history of ministry might serve as a summary of this article. The Apostle Paul insists on the healthy and useful variety of gifts in the community of believers with his metaphor of the body (I Cor. 12). The letter to the Ephesians lists: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. . . " (Eph 4:11-12). This wonderful variety "joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph 4:16).

From the start, leadership gifts were part of the variety. The ministries are all identified as gifts of the Spirit; "charismata" that is, stable forms of "charis," grace. But early on the community has concerns about more exact descriptions of these services. In other words, the charisms are institutionalized which enhances stability and clarifies expectations about what the ministry entails. I Tim. 3 has a whole list of qualifications for "whoever aspires to the office of bishop (overseer)." The gift has become an office and candidates may apply.

In these organizational developments of the early communities, there is a clear *ordering* function at work—

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[66] See especially Bond, *An Evaluation*; Fleischer, *Minister of the Future*; Fox, *Post-Vatican II*; and Murnion, New Parish Ministers.

some are called and gifted to bring that service for the good of the whole body. The unfortunate side effect detailed in Kenan Osborne's study of ministry is the growth of a two-tier community of clerics and laity, the orderers and those who are ordered.

The circle of charisms begins to fade even more in the light of the increasingly prominent pyramid: bishop, presbyter, and deacon. Ministry comes to mean ecclesial office. Charism takes another step back with the language of "grace of office." Thomas O'Meara details these important changes, "the metamorphoses of ministry," and sees the "grace of office" language as "the beginning of a great reversal: symbols and legal positions dispensed grace rather than grace begetting life through charisms realized in office and service."[67]

An important factor shaping these changes all the way along was the presence of threat to the community from outside. Roman persecutions of the early church gave added importance to the quest for order, knowing who is in charge and where one might safely turn for help. The exact ordering of life within the monastery walls stood as a bulwark against the darkness and chaos outside. The "Protestants" in the sixteenth century calling for reform energized the Roman church at the Council of Trent to insist on a clearer ordering of the Church from the Sacred Congregations in Rome to the seminary system around the world.

Now back to the presenting scenarios at the start of this article. Once again the communities in the Roman church are experiencing threat, but not from outside. This time the ordering function, Holy Orders, seems unable to provide for the Eucharistic needs of the people. Quite simply, there are not enough candidates for priestly office and the numbers of the faithful continue to grow.

This new crisis of ecclesial ordering has sparked a new emphasis on charism. The church has discovered in

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[67] Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (Revised ed; New York: Paulist, 1999): 102.

her midst lay people called and gifted for ecclesial ministry. That is, they are competent for and serving in the traditional institutional roles of "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11), but without benefit of Holy Orders. These "lay ecclesial ministers" are an increasingly vital part of the ordering of the Church, but they are serving without the traditional recognition and authorization that comes with the sacrament of Orders.

In a hopeful note about issues at this level, the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Walter Cardinal Kasper, has brought out a series of essays discussing how traditional roles can serve the Christian community today, titled *Leadership in the Church*. [68] The book begins with treatments of the diaconate, priestly office and episcopal office, but moves on to include "The Apostolic Succession: an ecumenical problem" and "Ecumenical perspectives on the future." In a visit to Seattle University where he received an honorary doctorate in the fall of 2004, Cardinal Kasper began his remarks by insisting: "It's wonderful to be involved in the work of ecumenism. I get to see the Holy Spirit at work every day, outside the Church."[69] Surely this broader range of perspective on issues of leadership and ecclesiology marks a new stage for Roman Catholics in the history of ministry.

In conclusion, this article does not advocate a particular resolution of the current crisis in ministry by demands on those responsible for Holy Orders, the ordering function in the Roman Church. Rather, from the underside, but with the clear recognition by the church hierarchy of emerging lay leadership, we have tried to clarify what leadership means and what competent leadership looks like whether lay or ordained.

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[68] New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2003.
[69] The authors of this article were present for the event.