

Communiqué of Conference on ‘To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry’

Conference Co-Chairs

Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and Department of Theology hosted a conference Jan. 2-3 on the 2018 document, "To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry," which was published in *Origins*, Vol. 48, No. 31. The document, composed by a faculty seminar over a two-year period begin-

"The church's convictions around priestly vocations have to be grounded in a renewed awareness of the baptismal vocation."

ning in 2016, sought to spark conversation on renewing the formation and practice of lay and ordained ministries. Forty-two participants attended the January conference, including Cardinals Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey; and Blase J. Cupich of Chicago. A communiqué issued by the conference co-chairs — Richard Gaillardetz, Thomas Groome and Father Richard Lennan — stated several "theological convictions," opening with the statement: "All consideration of priesthood and ministry must flow from the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the church's living tradition as it has been received and developed by Pope Francis." Ten pastoral recommendations for priestly formation were listed in the Jan. 6 communiqué, among them recommendations that "human formation within seminaries must foster authentic psychosexual maturity and integration" and that "women be included at every stage of the formation process — as peers in class, as teachers and formators, and as collaborators in ministry." The names of all the participants are listed at the end of the following communiqué.

Theological Convictions

All consideration of priesthood and ministry must flow from the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the church's living tradition as it has been received and developed by Pope Francis. He has called

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"The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ," St. John Paul II wrote in "Pastores Dabo Vobis" (I Will Give You Shepherds), his 1992 postsynodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests.

The theme of the October 1990 Synod of Bishops was "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day."

In his exhortation, the pope said that "reference to Christ is ... the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of priesthood."

At the same time, "priestly ministry acquires its genuine meaning ... in fostering the growth of the Christian community."

The pope wrote that the priestly vocation "is essentially a call to holiness." He spoke of a scarcity of priestly vocations in parts of the world and called for direct preaching on the mystery of vocation.

St. John Paul analyzed factors within society that hinder vocations, while also pointing to factors that "offer favorable conditions for embarking" on a vocation.

Reaffirming the value of priestly celibacy in the Latin rite church, the pope urged that celibacy be considered part of a positive approach to being a priest. Attention should be given to the preparation of future priests for the celibate life, the pope wrote.

He discussed major and minor seminaries, cooperation with the laity, how movements and lay associations foster vocations, affective maturity among priests, loneliness, ongoing formation, older priesthood candidates, roles of laity in priestly formation, and other topics.

The exhortation appeared in Origins, Vol. 21, No. 45, the edition dated April 16, 1992.

The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation in 2019 released an agreed statement on the vocation and mission of the people

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the church to missionary discipleship that goes to "the peripheries" and is responsive to the gifts and challenges of contemporary cultures.

The priesthood has its source in the life-giving mission of the triune God; more specifically, it has its context in the life of the church. Through the action of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit the church comes into being as a community of faith called to witness to the world the hope that has its foundation in God's unconditional love for all creatures.

Ordained priests are ministers of this good news, proclaiming it in word, celebrating it in the church's sacramental life and expressing it in pastoral service.

Pastoral Recommendations

1. The church's convictions around priestly vocations have to be grounded in a renewed awareness of the baptismal vocation, which calls all members of the church to mission.

2. The entire process of vocational recruitment, priestly formation and the assessment of suitability for ordination must be continually reimagined. The aim is to bring into relief the ecclesial identity of ordained ministry and give a much greater role to the whole church community in this endeavor.

3. It is important that seminarians be exposed regularly to the rich diversity of the people of God. Where possible, this broadening should occur in the classroom (where seminarians study alongside lay peers), among their instructors and formators (which should include lay women and men) and in multiple pastoral contexts where seminarians are called to collaborate with a range of other ecclesial ministers.

4. Ecclesial discernment of a candidate's possible admission to the seminary must identify a basic human capacity for healthy relationships, compassion, vulnerability, generosity and other human qualities necessary for ministry.

5. Human formation within seminaries must foster authentic psychosexual maturity

and integration.

6. In the U.S. church today, 80% of ecclesial ministers are women. This ecclesial reality demands that ordained ministers and candidates work constructively and positively with women. To facilitate this, it is desirable that women be included at every stage of the formation process — as peers in class, as teachers and formators, and as collaborators in ministry.

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7. Cultural and racial diversity within the U.S. church manifests its catholicity. This ecclesial reality demands greater intentionality in cultivating and forming ministerial vocations from diverse communities. In addition, formation for ministry must prepare candidates to serve in diverse intercultural settings.

8. Seminaries must be free to evaluate candidates honestly, without a concern to "maintain numbers" by persevering with unsuitable candidates.

9. To meet the needs of the church for pastoral and sacramental ministry, we must creatively expand existing ecclesial ministries and explore new models for ordained ministry.

10. Ongoing priestly formation is an urgent necessity. Without it, the church cannot respond to the changing needs of the times and is out of step with the expectations placed on parallel professions. Priestly formation has yet to realize the vision for ongoing formation articulated in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992) and the new ratio "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation" (2017).

This communiqué reflects discussions

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within the conference but final responsibility for its content rests with the co-chairs of the event, not with the participants (see listing below). Co-chairs: Richard Gaillardetz, Thomas Groome, Richard Lennan.

Participants in Boston College Conference on Priesthood and Ministry, Jan. 2-3, 2020:

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, archbishop of Munich and Freising, Germany

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, archbishop of Newark, New Jersey

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago

Archbishop John C. Wester, archbishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico

Bishop Edward Weisenburger, bishop of Tucson, Arizona

Bishop John Eric Stowe, OFM Conv, bishop of Lexington, Kentucky

Bishop Robert McElroy, bishop of San Diego

Bishop Timothy Senior, rector of St. Charles Borromeo, Philadelphia

Bishop Mark O'Connell, auxiliary bishop of Boston

Msgr. Chester Borski, St. Mary's Seminary, Houston

Father John Kartje, rector of Mundelein Seminary, Chicago

Father Philip J. Brown, rector of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore

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Julie Rubio, professor of social ethics, Santa Clara University

Catherine E. Clifford, professor of systematic and historical theology, St. Paul University, Ottawa

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Thomas P. Brown, chair of the Mundelein Seminary Board

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Debra Hintz, parish director of St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish, Milwaukee

Carlos De La Rosa, grant manager, Porticus North America

Diane Vella, pastoral associate, St. Bernard's Parish, Levittown, NY

From the Boston College Seminar on A Contemporary Theology of Priesthood and Ministry:

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Boyd Taylor Coolman, professor of theology, Boston College

Richard Gaillardetz, Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology, Boston College

Thomas Groome, professor of theology and religious education, Boston College

Megan Hopkins, doctoral student in theology, Boston College

Emily Jendzejec, doctoral candidate in theology and education, Boston College

Karen Kiefer, director of the Church in 21st Century Center, Boston College

Richard Lennan, professor *ordinarius*, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

Elyse Raby, doctoral candidate in Theology, Boston College

Jacqueline Regan, associate dean for student affairs and career services, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry ■

'To Serve the People of God': Ministry in the Life of the Church

Father Lennan

"Ecosystems are wonderfully catholic: The differences within them enhance the well-being of the whole, without threatening its unity," Father Richard Lennan, professor of systematic theology and professor "ordinarius" at Boston College, said in a presentation during a conference on the 2018 document "To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry." Hosted by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and Department of Theology, the Jan. 2-3 confer-

of God.

The document said the members of the consultation "want first to affirm the vocation and ministry of each member of the church: a vocation and a ministry rooted in Christ's call, first given through baptism and chrismation, and lived out through the relationships, responsibilities and obligations each of us encounters in daily life, in family, church and society."

A news release from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said that "instead of addressing together an issue that has prevented full communion between the churches, here the Catholic and Orthodox theologians examine together challenges that affect both churches, in this case the role of the laity in the two traditions and the problem of clericalism."

The document said, "In both our churches in recent decades there have been continuing discussions about the proper role of the laity in worship, administration and witness."

It added, "We recognize that both of our churches have often been affected by a strong emphasis on the vocation and ministry of the clergy, even to the neglect of the ministry of the laity." The consultation is co-chaired by Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, and Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Methodios of Boston.

"The Vocation and Mission of the People of God: 'A Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation'" appeared in Origins, Vol. 49, No. 16, the edition dated Sept. 12, 2019.

At the 2019 meeting of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests in St. Louis, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago discussed the relationship between baptismal priesthood and ordained priesthood.

"It is when the ordained ministry becomes separated from the baptismal foundation it shares with all the faithful

that the holy orders needed for church life are replaced by some unholy disorders," Cardinal Cupich said June 26.

Referencing the renewed clerical sex abuse crisis, the cardinal said the church "has been corrupted by a culture of clericalism, which lies at the root of the present crisis the church is facing."

He tied clericalism to other forms of elitism in society, "where some have convinced themselves that they can play by different rules, where entitlement has replaced accountability."

Cardinal Cupich said that institutional reforms are necessary to rid the church of clericalism, but "it is the conversion of men and women walking together as a synodal church — parents and priests, catechists and religious, parish leaders and bishops — and the conversion of ecclesial cultures on every continent that we must seek."

He emphasized that synodality can help priests rejuvenate what led them to accept their vocation and it will also lead the church "to avoid the trap of responding to clericalism by becoming anticlerical or devaluing the unique contribution of holy orders in the life of the church."

"Ordination Does Not Annihilate Our Baptism" appeared in *Origins*, Vol. 49, No. 11, the edition dated July 18, 2019.

One strength of the U.S. bishops' resource document on lay ecclesial ministry, "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," is the way it "integrates lay ecclesial ministry within a broader theology of church and ministry," said Richard Gaillardetz in 2006.

Gaillardetz examined how the bishops' document "provides a coherent theology of ministry built on two basic theological concepts, communion and mission."

In the document's "relational theology of ministry both the

ence sought to build on that document, published in *Origins* Vol. 48, No. 31, and spark conversation on renewing the formation and practice of lay and ordained ministries. Three animators, including Father Lennan, gave brief presentations to encourage conversation among 42 participants. Father Lennan's presentation focused on Part 1 of the document, "Ministry in the Life of the Church." Like an ecosystem, Father Lennan said, the document "To Serve the People of God" develops a "similarly catholic portrait of the ordained priesthood, one that locates the specificity of its subject within various forms of relationship." He outlined the document's approach using the "scaffolding" of three ecosystems: the Trinity, the church and ecclesial ministry. "All efforts to clarify and enhance the priesthood must begin with the ecosystems that form and shape the ordained ministry," Father Lennan said. The text of his presentation follows.

"Climate emergency" is the Oxford dictionary's term of the year for 2019. Since the warming of the planet does not respect national boundaries, constructive responses to this emergency require all nations to move from a stance of competition to one of interdependence.

Pope Francis' appreciation of this imperative resounds through *Laudato Si'*, in which he links the global perspective of climate science with insights from the creation stories in Genesis. In the latter, as Francis illustrates, God, the author of life, unites all creatures "by unseen bonds" that produce "a kind of universal family, a sublime communion" (*Laudato Si'*, 89). For God, in short, life is an ecosystem.

Ecosystems depend on relationships, on the interweaving of their various elements. Ecosystems are wonderfully catholic: The differences within them enhance the well-being of the whole, without threatening its unity. "To Serve the People of God" develops a similarly catholic portrait of the ordained priesthood, one that locates the specificity of its subject within various forms of relationship. To provide the scaffolding for this approach, the first part of the text sketches three ecosystems: the Trinity, the church and ecclesial ministry.

One of the Second Vatican Council's great legacies is its portrayal of God's revelation. For Vatican II, revelation is creative because it is the self-expression of the Trinity in history. When the community of mutual love, the primordial ecosystem that is the Trinity, communicates itself, life comes about. The life-giving mission of the Trinity binds all

creatures to each other in shared "joys and hopes ... grief and anguish" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1), directing them together to the God who alone is their fulfillment.

The Trinitarian dynamics of creation, the Incarnation and the working of grace in the world, all signal that authentic responses to God will involve life-giving relationships. So too they indicate that definitions of holiness must extend beyond interiority to encompass social action reflective of God's creative love. Such relationships and embodied holiness are to be hallmarks of the church, whose existence derives from God's action in history.

The church, then, is the second ecosystem that provides context for the priesthood. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the church, the people of God, comes into being as a community called to discipleship, to living the gospel of Jesus Christ. This community is both "sacrament" and "pilgrim," two metaphors central to Vatican II's ecclesiology.

As sacrament, the community's mission is to live in ways that embody its hope in the risen Christ. As pilgrim, the community is to value the reign of God above all else. Both designations require the ongoing conversion of all who form the church and of all the structures that mediate the life of the community. Our openness to conversion, which is a principal manifestation of grace, ensures that we do not mistake ourselves for the creator God.

The baptism that marks the beginning of the Christian pilgrimage for every member of the church also initiates each Christian into the universal mode of the priesthood: the priesthood of the faithful. This priestly people is called to worship that leads inexorably to service of God in the world. This priestly people is one, yet diverse: It is catholic.

An element of this catholicity is the ordained ministry, which does not supplant the wider community of the priestly faithful but has a particular relationship to it, for the sake of the church's one mission. This mission furnishes the rationale for all ministry in the church.

Ministry is the third ecosystem that "To Serve the People of God" profiles. Ministry nests in the church's mission, just as the church nests in the mission of the Trinitarian God. Through word, sacrament and pastoral presence all ministry in the church serves the Spirit's reconciling and empowering grace, and so the mission of the church in the world. By embodying mercy and compassion, ministers are to support and encourage

the priestly people as individuals and communities in lives of faith, hope and love.

"To Serve the People of God" emphasizes that the fundamental identity of all ministers, lay and ordained, is as baptized believers. When reflections on the ordained priesthood are inattentive to this designation, when they begin with the effects of ordination, they obscure the identity of the priest as a member of the one pilgrim people, called to the one fulfillment in the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

Vatican II's recovery of the primacy of baptism reshaped the landscape of ministry — indeed, it did so beyond anything that the bishops at the council could have anticipated. The primary expression of this reshaping is the emergence of lay ecclesial ministers, who work alongside ordained priests to form disciples for mission.

The cohort of ministers in today's Catholic Church encompasses women and men, single, married and divorced, as well as gay and straight. The current demographics of ministry are startling compared to what prevailed before Vatican II, but they resemble the dynamics of communities of faith in the apostolic period of the church. This echo is emblematic of the council's retrieval of the neglected richness in the church's history.

The developments in ministry in recent decades have certainly raised a range of questions about the particularity of ordained ministry. Answers to these questions often prioritize what makes the ordained priest "different" or "unique."

Likewise, the answers may home in on what "only the priest can do," sometimes implying that the priest has an exclusive relationship to Jesus Christ. Such accounts sever the priesthood from the ministerial and ecclesial ecosystems, thereby impoverishing even its connection to the mission of the Trinitarian community.

As an alternative to such strategies, "To Serve the People of God" concentrates on the ecclesial identity of the ordained. The text depicts the priest not as an autonomous figure but as a member of the community of faith, a baptized disciple among baptized disciples and a minister among ministers.

Just as a focus on the Trinity does not diminish what is particular to each of the three persons who constitute it, so beginning with the ecclesial community, its shared mission and its range of ministries, does not lessen the priesthood nor deny its specificity. It does underscore, however, that all efforts to clarify and enhance the priesthood must begin with the ecosystems that form and

shape the ordained ministry.

The many issues constellating around the ordained priesthood today may make it tempting to bypass the opening section of "To Serve the People of God," to head immediately to the material on the theology and practice of the priesthood. Doing so would narrow unduly the base on which to construct a contemporary understanding of priestly ministry.

For the sake of those broader possibilities, this session directs us to the three ecosystems — the Trinity, the church and ecclesial ministry — that help to situate the priesthood. How might a deeper appropriation of these foundations contribute to the future of the church's ordained priesthood? ■

'To Serve the People of God': A Profile of a Well-Formed Priest

Richard Gaillardetz

*A "more relational articulation of the Christological dimension of the priesthood should encourage a reimagination of the priest as preacher, liturgical presider, public representative and practitioner of pastoral charity and the work for justice," Richard Gaillardetz, professor of systematic theology and theology department chair at Boston College, said in a presentation during a conference on the 2018 document "To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry." Hosted by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and Department of Theology, the Jan. 2-3 conference sought to build on that document, published in *Origins* Vol. 48, No. 31, and spark conversation on renewing the formation and practice of lay and ordained ministries. Three animators, including Gaillardetz, gave brief presentations to encourage conversation among 42 participants. Gaillardetz's presentation focused on Part 2 of the document, "A Profile of the Well-Formed Priest." He outlined some theological presuppositions in this priestly profile and stated that central to the profile is a commitment to "the relational dimension of the priesthood." The Second Vatican Council first displayed this relational theology of the priesthood in its theology of baptism, Gaillardetz noted. By their baptism, all Christians "act in the person of Christ,"*

ordained and those called to exercise the gifts given to them at baptism play vital and complementary roles in the life of the church," he said.

Gaillardetz also discussed the relationship of lay ecclesial ministers with "a new generation of priests and bishops." He said, "What our church needs now is not some ideological war but rather the careful cultivation of the practice of dialogue or conversation."

*"The Theology Underlying Lay Ecclesial Ministry" appeared in *Origins*, Vol. 36, No. 9, the edition dated July 20, 2006.*

"Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord" appeared in Vol. 35, No. 25, the edition dated Dec. 1, 2005.

The document was approved 190-49, with five abstentions, by the U.S. bishops after some debate over the application of the terms "minister" and "ministry" to laypeople serving the church.

During discussions of the document on the floor of the bishops' meeting, several bishops questioned the use of the term "lay ecclesial minister," suggesting that Catholics may not then understand clearly the difference between lay ministry and ministry proper only to those who are ordained. A view was expressed that the term "ministry" should be restricted to the ordained.

The debate concluded after Cardinal Avery Dulles, a leading U.S. Catholic theologian, said that the text's drafters had been "very careful to see that the terminology is in accord with the documents of the Holy See and with a whole series of documents previously published by this conference."

Cardinal Dulles said, "I don't think the term 'ministry' is only used in the Catholic Church for the ordained, unless it's qualified — like 'sacred ministry' or 'Petrine ministry' or something like that."

though ordained priests act "in the person of Christ the head." He said, "The priest's ministry is always active in service of Christ's body." The text of his presentation follows.

Good morning. During this session we will be considering the second section of our document, "To Serve the People of God." I would like to outline some of the theological presuppositions supporting this priestly profile. Central to this profile is a commitment to "the relational dimension of the priesthood."

The document considers this relational dimension under five aspects: 1) the priest as preacher, 2) the priest as leader of worship and prayer, 3) the priest as collaborative leader, 4) the priest as public representative of the church, 5) the priest as practitioner of pastoral charity and the work for justice.

This relational theology of the priesthood has an essential, Christological dimension, one first displayed in the council's theology of baptism. All Christians, by their baptism, can be said to "act in the person of Christ" as priest, prophet and king. Of course, the council also specified that in a distinctive manner the ordained priest acts "in the person of Christ the head" (*in persona Christi capitis*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2).

Yet what might be missed here is the council's choice of the *in persona Christi capitis* formulation in preference of the theological formulation describing the priest as *alter Christus*, a formulation more common in baroque Catholicism. The *alter Christus* formulation presumed a more static conception of the priesthood, one defined by the conferral of sacramental power and which relied on an overly individualistic, nonrelational account of the sacramental change effected at ordination.

It is this static *alter Christus* language, which so often presented the priest as objectively superior to the laity in holiness and as therefore meriting deference and privilege that in many ways has underwritten a pernicious clerical culture.

The theologian and ecumenist James Puglisi has helpfully teased out the theological implication of the council's preferred Christological for-

mulation. Central to this is the employment of the Latin verb *agere*: The priest acts in the person of Christ. The priest's ministry is always active in service of Christ's body. This formulation was further expanded by Pope St. John Paul II, for whom the priest acts "in the person of Christ as head and shepherd."

This formulation, not without its own shortcomings, at least has the merit of foregrounding the essential ecclesiality of the priesthood. There can be no priest acting "as head" without the engagement of the ecclesial body; there can be no priest acting "as shepherd" without an ecclesial flock.

This more relational articulation of the Christological dimension of the priesthood should encourage a reimagination of the priest as preacher, liturgical presider, public representative and practitioner of pastoral charity and the work for justice; these are all aspects of a ministry that manifests itself not as dominating power and privilege but now as a service to the people of God.

It is not only the priesthood's Christological character but also its pneumatological character that underscores the essential ecclesiality of the ministerial priesthood. Here again it was Vatican II that offered us a fruitful theological trajectory.

Even though the results were uneven, the council's renewed pneumatology challenged a kind of competitive ecclesial framework, too often encountered in the parochial life of the church, wherein ecclesial ministry can devolve into an unproductive "turf warfare": The newly ordained parochial vicar claims his presbyteral privilege over against that of the permanent deacon; the deacon in turn claims his clerical privilege over against the lay director of adult formation who claims privilege over the lay volunteer.

The council's portrait of the work of the Spirit in the life of the church draws us into a noncompetitive account of the church's ministry. Within this renewed ecclesial vision, the ministry of the ordained and the gifts and ministries of the baptized are freed from turf-fighting in the recollection of their common grounding in the work of the Spirit.

According to the council, the Spirit "guides the church in the way of all truth and, uniting it in fellowship and

ministry, bestows upon it different hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs it and adorns it with his fruits" (*Lumen Gentium*, 4). In this passage "hierarchic gifts" refers to stable church office and "charismatic gifts" refers to those many charisms that the Spirit distributes among all the faithful.

In council teaching, baptismal charism and ordained ministry are not opposed to one another since both have the Spirit as their origin. As Yves Congar pointed out, the council was effectively acknowledging that the Holy Spirit was co-instituting with Christ both institutional and charismatic elements in the church. Church office could not function properly unless it was empowered by the Holy Spirit and charisms could not survive unless they submitted to an ordering which sought the good of the whole church.

The council at least formally, at the theological level, transcended any competition between charism, lay ecclesial ministry and clerical office by stressing their mutual dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.

This noncompetitive, pneumatological framework helps illuminate our understanding of the priest as collaborative leader, the third aspect of the priesthood explored in our profile. According to the council, the priest is to recognize, order and enable the charisms and ministries of all the baptized.

The council taught that it falls to pastors "not to extinguish the Spirit" but rather "to make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts" of the baptized (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3). In the Decree on Priestly Ministry and Life, the council notes that priests are to "uncover with a sense of faith, acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 9).

This shift to a more relational and ecclesial priesthood, considered in light of both its Christological and pneumatological dimensions, does not deny the distinctive sacramental reconfiguration established at ordination. It does challenge, however, any theology of holy orders that relies on a more individualistic, interiorized understanding of sacramental character, one that

would focus on the distinctive powers conferred upon the *ordinand* and, therefore, on the *ordinand's* distinctive ecclesial status.

Our document's emphasis on the fundamental ecclesiality of presbyteral ministry is rooted in ancient liturgical custom and practice. The ordination rituals found in the third-century *Apostolic Tradition* often associated with Hippolytus, for example, affirmed that when gathered for liturgical prayer, "all celebrated but one presided."

We do well to remember that in both ancient and modern eucharistic anaphoras the priest prays in the first person plural in all but the words of institution. Ignorance of this ancient liturgical insight has given rise to problematic popular references to "Father's Mass."

To conclude, in the second section of our document, we find an account of the well-formed priest that exhibits a relational and ecclesial theology of the priesthood; through the anointing of the Spirit the priest acts in the person of Christ as head and shepherd in service of God's people, particularly in preaching the word of God, presiding over the corporate worship of the local church, representing the church before the world, and in the exercise of pastoral charity and the work for justice.

The work of the Holy Spirit liberates the priest from a competitive ministerial framework, encouraging him to collaborate with all the baptized by identifying, empowering and ordering a "symphony of charisms" in service of the church's mission.

Now, as we move into our small groups, we will want to test the adequacy of these theological presuppositions and to consider in more detail what pastoral changes might be required in priestly formation were such a relational theology of the priesthood to become the norm. What new forms might the priest's parish ministry take were this theology to be more fully realized? ■

'To Serve the People of God': Shaping the Future

Father Bergin

The 1992 apostolic exhortation "Pastores Dabo Vobis" on the formation of priests was the "magna carta of formation," and it suggested that "it did not particularly matter if a candidate was liberal or conservative, a prodigy or a plodder, introvert or extravert, but what truly mattered was that he would develop those qualities that would allow him to treat people" with dignity and respect with the heart of a shepherd, Father Liam Bergin said. The professor of theology at Boston College spoke in a presentation during a conference on the 2018 document "To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry." Hosted by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and Department of Theology, the Jan. 2-3 conference sought to build on that document, published in Origins Vol. 48, No. 31, and spark conversation on renewing the formation and practice of lay and ordained ministries. Three animators, including Father Bergin, gave brief presentations to encourage conversation among 42 participants. Father Bergin's presentation focused on Part 3 of the document, which looks to the future and discusses strategies for effective ministry. Something changed about 15 years ago, Father Bergin said, a different, more "old-fashioned" reading of "Pastores Dabo Vobis." "There was a marked retreat from the street to the sacristy, from what was a broader pastoral ministry to a narrower cultic service," he said. Today, the choice of candidates is crucial, amid falling numbers, Father Bergin said. "The link between the seminary and the wider Christian community is crucial," he added. And the ongoing formation of ordained priests must involve a wider group of women and men who collaborate in pastoral ministry, Father Bergin continued. The text of his presentation follows.

Good morning.

I have spent 37 years living in semi-

naries. In fact, from the age of 12 to the age of 51 there were only two years when I did not live in a seminary. I attended minor seminary, in the shape of a diocesan boarding school, for five years; college seminary for four; major seminary for five.

Then I was successively faculty member, formation director, vice-rector and, finally, rector of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome for 10 years. I got parole in 2011 and you will be happy to learn that I have been in regular contact with both my spiritual director and with my therapist ever since!

I don't regret any of it. I met wonderful people, generous and sincere. I worked with young people who were discerning God's will for them and how they might best serve the church. So many were open and honest, genuinely seeking to do what was right and true. One was martyred in Mosul, Iraq, in 2007 and the cause for his beatification is moving apace.

I had fine faculty colleagues that allowed us to function effectively as a formation team and I had the privilege of collaborating with others beyond: Sister Katarina Schuth gave us workshops; the then-Father Joe Tobin conducted retreats and recollection days.

From 1992, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* was the *magna carta* of formation. Its focus on the four pillars of human, spiritual, academic and pastoral formation provided some structure for the seminary endeavor and it marquee'd pastoral charity as the goal of the process.

That suggested that it did not particularly matter if a candidate was liberal or conservative, a prodigy or a plodder, introvert or extravert, but what truly mattered was that he would develop those qualities that would allow him to treat people — women and men, young and old, poor and rich — with dignity and respect and that he would love and serve them with the heart of a shepherd.

But something changed. I am inclined to think it was about 15 years ago. There was a marked retreat from the street to the sacristy, from what was a broader pastoral ministry to a narrower cultic service. I believe that it represented a more "old-fashioned" reading of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

This change found expression in the documents that were issued during

the Year of Priesthood in 2008. These underlined the personal dignity that the gift of priesthood bestows on the individual and emphasized what distinguishes the priesthood of the ordained from that of the baptized. There was a growing ambiguity not only around the articulation of a theology of priesthood but also around the practical dynamics of formation.

Two documents from the Congregation for Catholic Education, which then had responsibility for seminaries and formation, added to the equivocation and confusion.

The 2005 "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations With Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders" declared that persons who "practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture'" cannot be admitted to the seminary or to holy orders. The outcome was a "don't ask, don't tell" culture where an open and honest discussion around issues of affective and psychosexual maturity was rendered very difficult.

The second document, promulgated in 2008, presented "Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood." It acknowledges that the "priestly vocation involves an extraordinary and demanding synergy of human and spiritual dynamics" (2). Yet, there was a hesitancy around the mandatory psychological screening of applicants or seminarians.

In 2017, the Congregation for the Clergy published "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation," the new *ratio fundamentalis* for priestly formation. Reflecting the teaching and personal example of Pope Francis, it reminds us that priests never stop being disciples of Jesus Christ in the ecclesial community.

Much of the ambiguity of recent years has been resolved. That is why the reception of this document by national episcopal conferences and by each seminary is critical. The pastoral reception of the magisterium of Pope Francis in the United States has recently been questioned by significant commentators. Our presence here today is an indication of commitment to partici-

pate in this process of reception.

During the ceremony of ordination to the priesthood, there is an important dialogue between the ordaining bishop and a priest designated by the bishop, generally the seminary rector. The priest requests: "Most Reverend Father, holy mother church asks you to ordain these, our brothers, to the responsibility of the priesthood." The bishop asks in reply: "Do you know them to be worthy?" The priest responds: "After inquiry among the Christian people and upon the recommendation of those responsible, I testify that they have been found worthy."

This "inquiry among the Christian people" is a manifestation of those undergirding ecclesiological principles of our BC document, "To Serve the People of God," that are essential at every stage of the process, discernment before seminary, formation during seminary and ongoing formation after ordination.

Part 3 looks to the future and suggests concrete strategies for formation at these three stages for effective ministry. It makes the case that the multifaceted and multistaged formation of effective priests must be a priority for the whole church, not only for bishops and priests.

First, the choice of candidates for formation is critical, particularly as the numbers presenting themselves fall. The damage that unsuitable candidates can inflict on seminary life is painfully documented. The community of faith must seek out and encourage from their midst candidates for priesthood who have shown themselves to be dedicated to the service of God and of others. A broad canvas of those who know the individual is indispensable to form a comprehensive picture of the candidate.

Does this candidate possess the basic human qualities to become "a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43)? Does this person manifest a sincere desire to love God and to love others? Do candidates indicate a willingness to collaborate with their baptized sisters and brothers and to give of themselves, to follow Jesus Christ and to imitate his life and passion so as to witness to God's saving presence among us?

Second, the link between the seminary and the wider Christian community is crucial. Certainly, there are times when vocational discernment is enhanced by silence and retreat, but this must not lead to isolationism. "To Serve the People of God" encourages shared learning between candidates for diocesan priesthood and lay and religious candidates for ministry.

Not only would this benefit the intellectual and pastoral programs that the seminary offers but it would also offer verification and challenge to the human and spiritual formation of the candidates. A formation that is collaborative, inclusive and open to the contemporary reality of cultural diversity is thereby facilitated.

Third, the ongoing formation of ordained priests has been undertaken with limited success since its importance was first promoted by *Pastores Dabo Vobis* in 1992. While many priests engage individually in spiritual direction and counselling, there is little enthusiasm for the group programs offered by dioceses, generally to those in the first years of priesthood.

Among the reasons cited are formation fatigue, a lack of time due to other commitments and the irrelevance of subjects treated. Here again the involvement of a wider group of women and men who collaborate in pastoral ministry would provide incentive and foster responsibility in this life-long process.

Now, as we move into our small groups, think about discernment before seminary, formation during seminary and ongoing formation after ordination. Talk about the future and suggest concrete strategies for formation for effective ministry as we imagine how to move forward into a horizon for priesthood to serve well the needs of our time.

Thank you. ■