CO-WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

At the end of July, I had the privilege of participating in a national symposium on lay ecclesial ministry entitled *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord*. The symposium was sponsored by eleven organizations or institutions with four collaborators, including NPM, and “in cooperation with the USCCB Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth and the Committee on Hispanic Affairs.” Held on the campus of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, it was a wonderful week of prayer, reflection, input, dialogue, and growth in understanding the emerging reality of lay ecclesial ministry. If you’re not familiar with this term, I recommend reading the USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (hereafter CWVL), available online at http://www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/co-workers.pdf. I also recommend reviewing *Pastoral Music* 30:6 (August-September 2006), which focuses on clergy and musicians as “Co-Workers in the Vineyard” and is based on this document.

Lay ecclesial ministers are men and women “of every race and culture who serve in parishes, schools, diocesan agencies, and Church institutions” (CWVL, p. 5) in response to God’s call. Their “ecclesial service is characterized by
• Authorization of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church
• Leadership in a particular area of ministry
• Close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons
• Preparation and formation appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them” (CWVL, p. 10).

These members of the baptismal priesthood of the faithful serve within Church structures in a variety of leadership roles. While a significant number of lay ecclesial ministers are parish life coordinators, others are catechetical leaders, youth ministry leaders, pastoral associates, pastoral ministers, and—last but not least—directors of music ministries.

NPM has been involved with the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), and the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) in the formation of National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers, which were approved by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation in April 2003. In March 2005, that same commission approved the standards and procedures developed by NPM for the Certified Director of Music Ministries, which have been incorporated into the 2006 edition of the National Certification Standards.

GREATER THAN ANY OTHER SHIFT

One of the exciting moments for me in Collegeville came during a presentation by Dr. Edward Hahnenberg, assistant professor of theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, and consultant to the U.S. Bishops’ Subcommittee on Lay Ministry during their preparation of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. Dr. Hahnenberg suggested that the development of lay ecclesial ministers over the past forty years can be viewed as greater than any other shift in the shape of ministry through the whole history of the Church. He compared it to the breakthrough in ministerial possibilities wrought by the new religious families that developed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. That time period and our own have seen a similar expansion in the Church’s understanding of ministry, spirituality, and ecclesial life. That earlier time period and our own also share a corresponding challenge to the ways in which ministry and ecclesial life “have always been done.”

Dr. Hahnenberg argued that in the past forty years we have experienced an explosion of ways to perform ministry on a scale not seen before. The ways in which lay people minister today do not fit the categories with which we lived before Vatican II and during the early years following the Council, when the notion of “ministry” was largely confined to the work of ordained people and, possibly, those women and men in vowed religious communities. Some people have tried to make the ministry of lay people fit into those existing categories, just as authorities in the middle ages tried to make the emerging religious families—many of them
“mendicants” like the Franciscans and the Dominicans, to name but two—fit the categories available at that time. However, because the Spirit is doing something new now (as then), existing categories do not fit the reality of the Church’s life—even those still in use that were created originally to deal with the new situation that arose in the middle ages.

In the middle ages, for example, the new ways of ministering developed around charismatic leaders like St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic de Guzman, and religious families formed around those founders. The rise of lay ecclesial ministers now, however, does not have the same focus on “founders.” Rather, this new understanding of ministry and vocation that is emerging is happening all over the world at the same time, though it may go by different names that correspond to local realities. This change is exciting. This change can also be frightening because it calls for a re-orientation of our understanding of existing ministries like those of the ordained. And yet, whether we minister as members of the baptismal priesthood of the faithful or of the ministerial priesthood of the ordained, our call to ministry is rooted in our common baptism. We are not in competition with one another; we are called to a mutual collaboration with one another.

You might recall reading or hearing about the discussion on the floor of the Bishops' Conference meeting when Co-Workers was accepted.

Some speakers had strong objections to the use of the term “ministry” to describe the work of lay people, but Cardinal Avery Dulles, Sr. made a strong and impassioned case for these lay workers being identified as “ecclesial ministers.” Ministry as service—that is, as diakonia—is rooted in sacramental initiation. Whether lay or ordained, we are called to serve, like Christ who came to serve and not to be served. In the distinction between the ministry of the lay faithful and that of the ordained, “the unique role of the ordained is not a distinction based on merit or rank; rather, it is a distinction based on the sacramental character given by the Holy Spirit that configures the recipient to Christ the Head” (CWVL, p. 21). We are called to collaborate, that is, to labor with one another in the service of God’s people in the Church. Our common identity is our belonging to the Body of Christ and our common call is the call to holiness in service of the Body of Christ.

At the symposium in July, there was a lot of discussion about how to correct the mistaken notion that lay ecclesial ministers are needed only because there are not enough ordained ministers at present. In fact, the issue to focus on is not the clergy shortage but theological developments in ecclesiology. The call to lay ecclesial ministry is a call by God, through the Holy Spirit, “to take on a new relationship to the mission of the Church and to the other ministers who work to accomplish it” (CWVL, p. 25). It is a call to service. The lay ecclesial minister, because of her or his secular character, is “the Church in the heart of the world and brings the world into the heart of the Church” (Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions, 15) as the minister serves the needs of the community today.

**A GREAT NEED FOR DIALOGUE**

While there was a strong representation of laity and vowed religious at the July symposium, we could have benefited from the presence of more ordained members of the Church. Their absence was a weakness in the planning. There is great need for dialogue among bishops, priests, deacons, and lay ministers about the hopes and dreams and fears and challenges entailed in being co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord. Many of us will need to change how we understand one another and ourselves, and change is something that is uncomfortable for most of us (if not all of us). But without change there is no growth, and without growth there is no life. Lay ecclesial ministry calls us to deepen our understanding about who we are as members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and how we are Church together.

Pastoral musicians, especially those who are leaders in music ministry, are lay ecclesial ministers. Ours is a call to musical liturgy, a call to lead the assembly of God’s people in the liturgy that transforms us as individuals and as a community. Our music making serves as spiritual direction for our choirs, our cantors, our Sunday assemblies, and the various communities who make up our parish or pastoral families. We sing the liturgy; we sing the Scriptures. We serve people in their times of transition: birth; baptism; welcome to the table of the Lord; weekly deepening of the identity we put on in baptism, marriage, religious profession, or ordination; and the final transition...
from life through death to eternal life. We sing and celebrate the faith that forms us and that informs how we live in the world. As pastoral musicians we serve the Body of Christ in ways that deepen our identity as Christ and empower us to take Christ to the world. As pastoral musicians we help each other see the glory of God in the world and name where the light of Christ’s healing touch and forgiving love are needed.

Help us all grow in understanding that call by becoming familiar with Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord yourself. It is a document that I found prayerful and exciting reading. Help our people understand that lay leaders are ministers who are formed for ministry, authorized to minister, and charged to collaborate in our parish communities—and that includes directors of music ministries. Who knows what will come of this new identity and this exciting breakthrough in understanding vocation, ministry, collaboration, and service?

CLERGY SECTION REPORT

Father Jim Bessert of the Standing Committee chaired the clergy gathering and committee meeting during the National Convention in Indianapolis. (Father Bob Webster, who chairs the Standing Committee, was unable to be at the convention.) Thirty-nine priests attended the Monday afternoon gathering; participants ranged from those who had been ordained within the month to those who had ministered as priests for fifty years or more. Discussions at this session set some agenda items for the meeting of the committee on the following afternoon. Clearly, judging by the input from the members, the committee has been and remains a viable vehicle for NPM clergy members, particularly for developing programming at the conventions.

Suggestions for future programming included these topics: multicultural and multi-ethnic liturgies; multi-parochial liturgies (for blending or merging parish communities); the new Roman Missal; the effect of the motu proprio Summorum Pontificum; how to hire a pastoral musician; the rite of marriage or the rite of anointing of the sick (collaboration between a priest-presider and pastoral musician); writing parish sacramental guidelines; conflict resolution/communications and collaboration; a conversation with the executive officers of the BCL, NPM, and FDLC on liturgical issues and concerns; a session on the updated document that will replace Music in Catholic Worship.

In addition, the committee discussed ways in which NPM clergy members could be of greater assistance to the association and to the local Church. One suggestion involved “clergy friends” of NPM hosting gatherings of younger clergy (ten years ordained or fewer) and inviting them to become NPM members; another involved clergy members and pastoral musicians inviting seminarians to attend an NPM convention. The possibility of a clergy-seminarian membership was raised, and there were several suggestions for a clergy institute like other NPM summer institutes. Perhaps NPM could collaborate with the Coalition on Preaching to offer a joint institute which could be held separately or integrated into an NPM national convention.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

On October 1, the Vatican announced that Monsignor Guido Marini will replace Archbishop Piero Marini as the pope’s master of ceremonies—the official in charge of how the pope celebrates the Mass and the other rites of the Church. In his daily online column on the same day (http://ncrcafe.org/node/1353), John L. Allen, Jr., wrote that some of his sources suggested that “the timing of Marini’s departure may be linked to the recent decision by Pope Benedict XVI to liberalize permission for the Latin Mass in use prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). Although Marini never took a public position on the move, it’s widely known that he has expressed reservations in private. Since it is taken for granted in Rome that Benedict XVI will himself celebrate a Mass according to the old rite in St. Peter’s Basilica sometime soon, today’s announcement may have been a way to avoid putting Marini in an awkward position when the time comes.”

Though he was often described as the “Vatican’s top liturgical liberal,” Archbishop Marini’s approach to papal liturgies was balance—between the Church’s tradition (which, he acknowledged, was based largely on the cultural view of Mediterranean nations) and inculturation, between dignity and simplicity—a balance, he admitted, that it was sometimes hard to find. In an interview with Archbishop Marini in 2003 (“The Word from Rome,” June 20, 2003), John Allen “asked Marini for his impression of the larger liturgical debates that have divided the church in recent years, over translation and inclusive language, over Roman centralization versus local adaptation.”

“I would say that right now rather extreme solutions are prevailing, on both sides,’ Marini said. ‘We need more tolerance, more respect for the various positions, more understanding, more fraternity, and a truly ecclesial spirit in searching to resolve the problems.’

“Though he did not say so explicitly,” Allen wrote, “Marini left little doubt that he believes the extremes are present at all levels, including within officialdom. In the end, Marini said, the aim is balance.”

“To find the right equilibrium is very difficult, between the personal and the communitarian, between the
silence of personal prayer and those prayers said together, between singing in unison and individual prayer, between words and gestures, ultimately between what is human and what is divine. But when it’s done properly, the liturgy puts you into contact with reality, the reality of the community and the reality of God. That’s something truly beautiful.”

Archbishop Piero Marini was named the new president of the Pontifical Commission for International Eucharistic Congresses. He holds a doctorate in liturgy from the College of Sant’Anselmo in Rome and has written widely on liturgical subjects.

**NOT ALWAYS EASY**

While Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops and clergy were meeting in the first synod they ever held in the western hemisphere (September 26–October 6) in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, the Ukrainian bishops of the Latin Church were meeting with Pope Benedict XVI for their *ad limina* visit to the Holy See (September 24–28). The Pope pointed out that the bishops carry out their pastoral work “in a place where Catholics of the Latin and Greek rites live together . . .” But, he observed, “even collaboration between Catholics is not always easy; it is normal for different sensitivities to emerge, given the diversity of the respective traditions.”