

Committee Presents Report On Lay/Religious Hearings

INTRODUCTION: The question of ministry and ministers in the Church today and the Church of the future is basic. The Church universal as well as the diocesan Church have raised questions and concerns regarding roles, relationships and directions.

In our diocese, Bishop Matthew H. Clark has presented his reflections on ministry to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Priests' Council and the diocesan Sisters' Council. He has asked them to discuss this with their constituent groups. The Diocesan Pastoral Council has a Task Force on Laity which is addressing the role of all baptized persons in the Church. In addition to his reflection paper and this task force, Bishop Clark has appointed a committee of his staff to examine the question of lay and religious ministers.

The committee has been meeting for approximately two and one-half years and has directed its research and study to paid, professional, full-time ministers. Last winter, a survey was sent to all of those serving in that capacity. The survey indicated a clear need for ongoing formation and orientation for ministry both in theology and skills. It indicated a strong trend for lay/religious ministers to be involved in decision making and giving direction within the Church.

As a follow-up to this survey, three simultaneous hearings were held in different areas of the diocese on May 21. The following is a report summarizing the testimony given at those hearings. Lay and religious ministers currently serving the Church in administrative and supervisory roles were invited to express their concerns and questions based upon experience. The committee recognizes that it was exclusive of some others who serve in Church ministry by targeting this direct audience. As a committee, it was believed that it was important to focus on this particular group at this time.

REPORT: There are many ways to define ministry. The hearings reflected the variety of ministerial experiences, the personal experiences of ministers and the reality of the people living, working and serving the Church in a transitional period. The areas that surfaced from the presentation and at the hearings are categorized as follows: a) ministerial interaction — growth; b) affirmation; c) equity of education; d) salary and benefits; and e) job security. The problem of clericalism was strongly presented. Rather than treat it separately, it permeates the report.

a) Ministerial Interaction — Growth: Concerns about communications surfaced in many different ways. For example, communication between parishioners and staff, staff members and each other, parishioners and pastors, and parishioners and priests. Because of a lack of understanding about the validity of lay ministry, many parishioners demonstrate a tendency to relate and communicate primarily with the ordained people on staff. The same tendency results in limited acceptance of decisions made by lay ministers.

The value and validity of lay ministry is not understood by the baptized. Not only does this hamper the functioning of professional lay ministers, it also hampers true empowerment of lay people in general.

Ordained clergy need to be reminded of the need for dialogue and the value of the experience of professional lay ministers. The gifts of all the staff need to be recognized and used for the good of the whole parish community; one minister's gifts complementing another's gifts.

The need for more interparish communication was expressed. Many parishes are very parochial and not open to seeking ways of combining services. This limits the effective utilization of the talents of staff. Regionalism has made some inroads in this area, but much more needs to be done. Communication between clergy and women lay ministers needs to be strengthened. Issues of sexuality, apprehension and lack of skill in communication prevent staff from functioning effectively.

b) Affirmation: Many lay ministers who spoke raised the issue of a lack of affirmation from staff, parishioners and significant others (e.g. the bishop). At times, when a person fulfills his/her responsibility in a competent manner, that person is asked to take on more responsibilities, yet little recognition is given. Clergy need to realize the importance of thanking people who have accomplished projects and to help the parish recognize the valid ministry of the lay staff.

Several people commented on occasions when tokens of appreciation or special invitation are given to clergy and at times to religious, but not to the lay ministers. This was cited as a definite example of clericalism.

Letters from the Pastoral Office usually go to priests. Many times, information does not reach the lay/religious staff. There are anniversary Masses for priests and religious at which the bishop presides; there is nothing similar for lay persons. Many times, when the bishop comes to a parish for confirmation, he is invited to dinner with the priests, but parishes do not include lay/religious staff at this meal.

The problem of a lack of affirmation is also true on the regional level. Coordinators communicate with the pastors and expect them to pass on information. Lay and religious ministers feel "second-class." Lack of recognition was cited as a cause for burn-out.

c) Equity of Education: Lay ministers voiced the strong conviction that little was being offered in the way of education to them. What little is offered is presented in an inconsistent manner. It was pointed out that large sums of money are set aside for the education of seminarians. It was also indicated that Becket Hall consumes a good deal of time and money for those men discerning about priesthood.

Is there comparable funding for the laity? Do women religious have the same opportunity for education? Is there a possibility for a discernment house for those seeking lay ministry? Is it possible to open the deaconal training courses to anyone interested in ministry?

The issue of clericalism was raised again. The diocese is making a statement about who is important by the significant amount of money set aside for priests and deacons, and the lack of money for lay and religious education.

Continuing education was acknowledged as a beginning in so far as it offers lay ministers educational opportunities. However, these courses do not lead to degrees.

A strong point made by many is that education is key to an active, involved lay-ministry program within the diocese. Without educational opportunities, the lay person is a quasi-volunteer.

If parishioners know that the lay/religious ministers have had extensive educational preparation, they are more inclined to recognize and to accept them. Concern was also expressed about the difficulty in continuing education and formation for family people, particularly in regard to time schedules and expenses.

d) Salary: Many people spoke of the need for just and equitable salaries. The first draft of the bishops' pastoral letter on the economy was sighted frequently as justification for such a request. Often, the lay minister has a status little more than that of a volunteer because of inadequate salary. It was indicated that family needs are significant factors in deciding whether to accept or to remain in Church ministry.

There is a clear call for review of the current salary guidelines. Consideration needs to be given to changes not only in salary, but also in benefits. There was a strong call for review of the current pension system. It does not realistically deal with the economic situation of married and retired people today.

e) Job Security: Priests have certain job security. They are assigned to a specific ministry for a certain period of time. Then, they are transferred to another leadership position. There is little question of job security.

The lay person is in a very different position from that of the priest or religious. There is little freedom to investigate other positions because of an attitude on the part of many priests that equates looking elsewhere with personal disloyalty.

There is also a problem with the fact that lay/religious staff are at times terminated by a pastor for a variety of reasons that may not include inadequate job performance. The lay/religious staff have virtually no recourse in calling for accountability of pastor/priest performance at the parish level.

At times, when a lay person transfers to another position in another parish, he or she loses some of the benefits for experience in working within the Church. There is not a policy for personnel for the diocese that is consistent for all ministers, e.g. priests, religious, lay ministers and deacons.

CONCLUSION: The information contained in this report is being studied by the Lay/Religious Ministry Committee. It will be integrated with the discussions about the reflection paper presented by Bishop Clark and with research gathered as part of ministerial planning for the diocese. Recommendations will then be made to Bishop Clark.

Along the Way with Bishop Matthew H. Clark



As I told in this space two weeks ago, I took the first week of July for a time of prayer and quiet and reading. I hoped that it would be a time I could offer as a gift to the Lord and during which I could pray for the grace to be faithful and loving in my own ministry. Here are some notes about that week:

It was a quiet time. I had one visitor who came for dinner on Thursday. We sat by the water and talked for a few hours. I spoke aloud only a few other times — to a neighbor, to a young friend whom I met while I was running, to some of you whom I met in the market and who recognized me through the two-day beard, the beach clothes and the Yankee cap.

Because I speak a lot, I appreciated the silence. In it, I remembered much that I needed to remember; laid aside some things that long since should have been forgotten; and, in as peaceful a manner as I could, tried to commend all things to the care of a loving and gracious God — most especially those concerns I am inclined to hold to myself.

It was a time for reading. I relished biographies of Theresa of Avila and Pope John XXIII and "The Long Loneliness", the autobiography of Dorothy Day. I found them attractive reminders of the wonderful things God continues to do in the freedom of his daughters and sons.

The three were fired with deep faith and burning desire to do God's Holy Will, but each did it in his or her own way according to God's gifts of nature and grace.

I think of the three of them now and name the qualities in them that make me more aware of the beauty and saving power of Jesus:

Theresa — courage and wit, sensitivity and intelligence, constancy in her search for God's ways in human affairs.

John — a daring and optimism, and a contagious spirit of joy; a childlike spirit and the wonderful vision of the Church to which he called all of us.

Dorothy — her commitment to voluntary poverty and her willingness to suffer for her faith; her indomitable opposition to violence in any form as an acceptable solution to the problems confronting humanity.

It was a joy to think about the people I meet every day in the Diocese of Rochester — people just like yourself whose persons and lives mirror some dimension or aspect of the wondrous beauty of the Risen Lord.

During these days of summer you may find it helpful to your own life and prayer to ask the Lord for an ever-greater capacity to find Him and His life-giving care in your family, neighbors, co-workers and fellow parishioners.

It might be a good thing gently and peacefully to ask the Lord for such a knowledge and appreciation of yourself.

You have named me, and you know me Lord. Help me please to know, accept and use the good gifts you have given me for the care of your Holy people.

Peace to all.

Bishop Clark Ordains Alexander Bradshaw

The Rev. Mr. Alexander H. Bradshaw was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Matthew H. Clark on Saturday, June 22, at 11 a.m. in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Brockport.

A native of Great Britain who has become a U.S. citizen, Father Bradshaw is the eldest son of John and Joan Bradshaw of Wimbledon, England, and the father of two daughters, Caroline and Laura, by a marriage that ended in annulment.

Father Bradshaw attended Ampleforth College, York and Oriol College, Oxford before being called to be English Bar in 1965 as a barrister of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, London. In 1975, after 10 years of legal practice in England, he came to Rochester where he joined the law firm of Nixon, Hargrave, Devans & Doyle, being admitted to the Bar of the State of New York the following year. For five years, Father Bradshaw practiced law in Rochester. He was a resident of Brighton and a parishioner of St. Thomas More Church, where he was a member of the parish council.

From St. Bernard's Seminary, where he studied from 1980 to 1981, Father Bradshaw transferred to the North American College, Rome, attending the Gregorian University, from which he received his S.T.B. *summa cum laude* in June, 1983. During his four years of priestly formation, he spent the summer of 1982 in a C.P.E. program at St. Peter's Hospital, Albany, and the summer of 1983 with the missions in the Diocese of Kakamega, Kenya, East Africa.

During the year prior to his ordination to the priesthood, Father Bradshaw served as a deacon at Nativity parish. In the fall, he will return to Rome to complete his studies for an S.T.L. in biblical theology at the Gregorian University, which he started in October, 1983.

Father Bradshaw celebrated Masses of Thanksgiving at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sunday, June 23, and at St. Thomas More Church on Sunday, June 30.



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