

FEATURE

Booklet calls for new ways

CHICAGO (CNS) — The National Association for Lay Ministry in Chicago has issued a new document that examines lay ministry in the U.S. church and calls for changes in how lay ministers are formed, supported and recognized.

The document was published in a 58-page booklet, "No Turning Back — A Lay Perspective on Ministry in the Catholic Church in the United States."

It takes its title from an address given by Bishop Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., at the association's 1995 annual conference. At that meeting, he urged lay ministers to remain dedicated, saying that grass-roots renewal of the church "is here to stay."

The new document says that, since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has been "at one of the great transition points in its history." In three main sections, the document:

- Explores the ways in which contemporary Catholic experience differs from the past, including a look at some current beliefs of Catholic lay persons.

- Examines ministry in today's church from a lay perspective, including obstacles and frustrations experienced by lay ministers and shared by them in focus groups sponsored by the association.

- Projects a new, positive model for a more collaborative ministry, including thoughts on ecclesiology, compensation and competence.

The booklet also contains discussion questions, a glossary and a bibliography about ministry.

Copies of "No Turning Back," including a study guide, are available for \$5 by writing to the National Association for Lay Ministry, 5420 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, IL 60615-5604, or by calling (312) 241-6050.

Expert advises don't dilute Gospel

Young Adult

MONTHLY FEATURE



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

To Joan Weber, a veteran of young adult ministry, the church in the 1990s faces a compelling challenge in reaching out to the Catholics who are in their 20s and 30s.

"This is a pragmatic generation," Weber said. "If we can't show them how (Catholicism) is relevant to them in their lives, they'll see no need for it."

Weber serves as a consultant for young adult ministry with the Center for Ministry Development, based in Naugatuc, Conn. A private, not-for-profit network of Catholic young adult ministers, the center's members are scattered throughout dioceses in the United States.

Weber spoke about her work in a phone interview from her office in Omaha, Neb., where she worked for several years in youth and young adult ministry with the archdiocese before joining the center in May 1995.

Contrary to some perceptions that young adults are turned off by rigorous church teaching, Weber said she had found that young adults dislike most when their parishes "water down" the Gospel's sometimes tough message.

"I think that the challenge of living the life that Jesus portrayed is very powerful to young adults," she said.

Weber will be the featured speaker at an informal buffet dinner on Sunday, Nov. 3, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Blessed Sacrament Church, 534 Oxford St., Rochester. Sponsored by the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis, the dinner costs \$10 per person.

Reservations must be made by Oct. 28. Checks should be made payable to the



Diocese of Rochester and sent to Sylvia Mancuso, Dept. of Evangelization and Catechesis, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Registrants should include their names, parishes, phone numbers and addresses.

Weber will address the topic "Building Young Adult Ministry in Your Parish or Region."

To draw young adults to the church, parishes need to be mindful of their concerns, Weber said, listing economic insecurity as one of them. Companies today sometimes don't reward employee loyalty with long-term employment, as they once did in the past, she said. Hence, young adults can be skeptical that a decent financial future awaits them, she noted.

"This is the first generation not promised a better life than their parents since the Civil War," she said.

Young adults also desire intimate relationships but often only hear about the negative, prohibitive side of the church's teachings on sexuality. They rarely hear about the church's celebration of sex within a committed marriage, she said, and parishes need to bring this more positive side of its teaching to young adults.

Many young adults are also interested in forming a more mature relationship with their parents, but seek guidance in how to do so, she said.

Parishes could hold discussion nights on such topics, she said, adding that parishes should also encourage young adult Catholics — even active ones — to participate as observers in such programs as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The RCIA is an ideal way to ground all Catholics in the basics of their faith, she said, noting that many young adults she knows did not receive adequate catechetical instruction as children.

She also said that homilists should occasionally touch on themes relevant to young adults so that young adults — particularly singles — don't feel left out at Mass.

The Mass itself is an ideal way to attract young adults to the church, she said, but liturgies need "singable music," "relevant homilies" and "a welcoming and friendly hospitality." Evangelical churches particularly emphasize the last aspect, she said, a point that shouldn't be lost on Catholic parishes.

"The fundamentalists who don't have the depth of sacramentality that we have do have the marketing," she commented.

She added that young adults respond enthusiastically when welcomed by their parishes to serve in such capacities as lecturers, youth ministers and catechists.

"They don't want token representation, and they don't want token leadership positions," Weber said of young adults.

A need for community is often the overriding concern of many such Catholics, she explained, pointing out that rural Catholics, in particular, who have migrated to the cities often wish to see their parish as their second home.

"To them, the parish has to be more than a dispenser of sacraments," Weber said.

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Next week Bishop Clark issues a Pastoral Letter on the Centrality of Eucharist in Catholic life.