

# Lay involvement

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Master said: "I think that the bishop hit on the core of how most people felt. He identified the opportunity we had, but he also identified the challenges."

Sister Agnes Catherine Battersby, SSJ, noted that the letter had a definite effect at St. James Parish, Waverly, where she serves as pastoral associate.

"It made us more aware of the centrality of the Eucharist," she said. "It is part of the reason that some of the people we approached about becoming lectors and Communion ministers have been more open."

## Lay presiders

When she started to review the parishes' emergency plans for Sundays without priests, Workmaster was pleased.

"The one thing I was pleasantly surprised about was in almost every instance the parishes are saying the Eucharist is central to our lives, and we're doing everything to make sure that it happens," she said.

Most of the plans call for bringing in retired priests or priests from nearby parishes as the first choice. But the plans also point to the possible necessity of Sunday Communion services in some cases, she noted.

Last fall, she offered the first training for lay presiders to conduct these services. She estimates nearly half of the parishes in the diocese sent at least one person to be trained. Those sessions discussed the history and theology of the Eucharist. Follow-up sessions later this spring will allow participants to practice presiding at services.

Rather than conducting Sunday Communion services immediately at their parishes, though, many of the presiders will lead other kinds of services such as Liturgy of the Hours or weekday services, Workmaster noted. Some may eventually conduct funeral services as well.

At St. James Parish, the people have already begun to experience lay presiders weekdays. Sister Battersby last fall recruited and trained two regular daily-Mass participants to preside at these weekday Communion services. The trio rotates presiding duties at one such service a week.

"I thought it was good for the people to have a lay person being able to do that," Sister Battersby said. "It was a bridge to accepting more lay leadership."

One of those presiders, Marge Caporiccio, acknowledged that she was surprised when Sister Battersby asked her, and initially tried to beg off.

"It wasn't that I didn't want to," she said. "I just didn't feel worthy."

But Sister Battersby persisted, and after consulting her husband, Caporiccio agreed to do it. She's glad she did.

"It's an honor, I'll tell you that," Caporiccio said. "That's the Body and Blood of Christ. It's a privilege. I always did have an appreciation for (the Eucharist) but I'm sure (presiding) deepened it."

Although she in the past had been hesitant about lay people assuming more leadership roles, she has found her views changing in light of seeing lay people in action — and the growing awareness that the number of priests is decreasing.

"I think you get accustomed to the idea that this is what it's going to be," she said. "This is going to be our role."

Sue Reed, pastoral minister for liturgy and visitation at Church of the Good Shepherd, Henrietta, said that developing the emergency plans has helped parishes to think about the future.

"The emergency plans have really pushed parishes. I know that it has pushed us," Reed said. "You know you have to have something in place."

## The future is now

Tragically, two Livingston County parishes have already had to confront painful situations — twice.

On Oct. 1, 1996, Father William Trott, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish, Livonia, and its mission parish, St. William's, Conesus, died suddenly following a short illness. The parishes were without a pastor until December 1996 when Father Robert Collins was assigned to them. But in the fall of 1997, he became ill, and he died Feb. 19.

Currently, the parishes are under the care of a temporary administrator, Father Sean Garrity.

When it came to training lay ministers, "we started right after Father Trott died," noted Peg Hynes, the parish's pastoral minister intern.

The deaths helped to open people to greater lay involvement, she observed, noting, "(People) are much more accepting now. They've gotten used to seeing people (other than priests) on the altar."

As part of efforts at the parish, Hynes has led training sessions for new eucharistic ministers and lectors. The training involves not only practical discussions of technique, but also the theology behind the ministries. The reaction has been positive, she reported.

"They like to know why it's happening," Hynes said.

Church of the Resurrection also has been training ministers, most recently on Feb. 7. Parish life administrator Cathy Allard, who also serves as religious education administrator and a youth minister at the parish, observed that people have responded well to the added training.

"What I heard from people is they want to do hands-on stuff," Allard said. "There seems to be a hunger to really live their ministries more than they did before."

She is also phasing in youth involvement, having youth help with present the children's Liturgy of the Word on Sundays. The teens involved find it a safe place to start out, and the children enjoy having the teens help to present the Scriptures and lead them in prayers, she noted.

St. James Parish has also enjoyed an in-

crease in liturgical ministers, thanks to active recruiting and training by Sister Battersby. She has also already trained one teen lector and is considering several teen candidates for eucharistic ministers. In addition, four teens regularly participate in music ministry at the parish.

The overall thrust of efforts to involve more lay people in liturgical ministry is prompted by more than meeting diocesan directives, she acknowledged.

"We want people to understand we have a deeper understanding of baptism and what that calls us to do," Sister Battersby declared. "We need more lay leaders in all of these areas and that they be trained."

On a practical level, she added, "While we may be able to get along without them now, we will need them in the future."

The diocesan training manual has been a big help with such training efforts at Good Shepherd, according to Reed.

"It's basically helped me to supplement what I'm already doing with the ministers," she observed.

In particular, it's useful because Reed delegates the training duties to people actually involved in the ministries, and the manual helps guide them.

The diocesan documents and her own training efforts focus on more than just technique, Reed noted, pointing specifically to the ministry of lectors.

"It's more than just getting up and reading Scripture," she said. "It's actually proclaiming the word. It's proclaiming the Scripture so that people get drawn into it and make it a part of their lives."

"It's understanding the spirituality behind it," Reed added. "You have to have a strong prayer life to be an effective lector."

Overall, properly trained and spiritually aware lay ministers can affect the liturgical experience for the congregation, Reed observed.

"I think it helps people to pray better," she concluded. "It helps people to be more invested in the celebration."

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- Lacordaire

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

## April, 1998

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Revs.	1 T. Paul Broadhurst, CSB	2 Joseph W. Dailey	3 John A. Firpo	4 Bishop Matthew Clark
5 Pope John Paul II	6 Inactive Priests	7 Donald J. Haycock, CSC	8 Stanley G. Kacprzak	9 Richard C. Kinsky, CSB	10 Bernard J. Nowak	11 Msgr. Joseph J. Sullivan
12 Joseph V. Versage	13 Charles F. Mulligan	14 Robert J. Kennedy	15 John A. Lynch	16 Richard Wahl, CSB	17 Timothy Keating, CSSR	18 Andrew Grzela
19 Robert Gaudio	20 Eugene P. Sweeney	21 Albert W. Cylwicki, CSB	22 Raymond H. Booth	23 Donald J. Curtiss	24 Ronald P. Frederick	25 Daniel W. Heintz
26 Eugene H. McFarland	27 William C. Michatek	28 James F. Slattery	29 James J. Fischer, S.J.	30 Robert G. Smith	Look for the May MPRP Calendar in the April 30th Courier.	

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