



Pastoral Recommendations Project
By the baptized - For the baptized

Developing Servant Leadership

Introduction

The 'Developing Servant Leadership' recommendations are presented in three parts.

1. Part I - Education of Lay Ministers and Parish Leaders
2. Part II - Formation and Education of Priests
3. Part III - Continuing Education of Priests

Part I - Education of Lay Ministers and Parish Leaders

The people's concern:

Our vision is that lay men and women, professionally trained and certified, will be employed in parishes to partner with pastors in supporting parishioners' spiritual lives and apostolic work in the mission of the Church. In addition to lay staff support, lay leaders will be invited and nurtured to take a role in parish and diocesan life. To make this vision materialize, the role of the lay ministers and leaders must be valued by the pastor and the parishioners. The cultural change required to inculcate value for the role of lay people in the church must be modeled by Archdiocesan leadership and taught explicitly in the training of pastors. Lay staff and parish leaders to be most effective need continuing formation in prayer, ecclesiology, liturgy, and moral theology.

In recent years in this Archdiocese, the role of lay minister has been undervalued with the result that when well-trained ministers retire, the parish may hire untrained people to replace them, some pastors preempt the work of the lay ministers, and some parishioners believe the work can be done by well-intentioned volunteers. In those cases in which the pastor, the people, and trained lay ministers are not working together, the life of the parish is reduced in energy and the parish may take on customs and practices that are not consistent with theology developed following Vatican II.

Recommendations:

We recommend the establishment of a Task Force of professional lay ministers working in the Archdiocese to make a coherent plan for the development of professionally trained and certified lay ministers and for the support of lay parish leaders. Actions the Task Force should consider:

- Establish staff liaisons between the Archbishop and the independent professional associations of lay ministers, providing support and guidance while respecting the freedom and equality of the associations in their own governance; assist with development of associations.
- Train Archdiocesan staff/pastors in the vocation and role of lay ministers.
- Provide financial assistance in initial education, continuing education, retreats, sabbaticals, and professional counseling in both English and Spanish.
- Provide equal support for the formation of lay and ordained ministers, for example, through the Catholic Services Appeal Foundation.
- Mandate just compensation, health and retirement benefits in parishes.
- Establish standards of certification and or re-introduce standards already formulated for specific lay ministries, e.g. those formulated by the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership, 1996.
- Re-introduce the Archdiocesan Religion Standards already formulated in the early 2000's for directors of religious education; where appropriate establish goals for other lay ministries.
- Establish and enforce a code of ethics for all lay ministers.
- Encourage local associations to affiliate with national organizations of lay ministers.
- Sponsor periodic all-ministries conferences.
- Determine procedures for parishes in screening and hiring lay ministers.
- Discern what new ministries are required for the benefit of parishes, e.g. technology, aging, cultural and ecumenical outreach.
- Provide training opportunities for volunteer lay leaders like trustees, parish council members, financial council members, youth leaders, etc.
- Establish programs for continuing development and education in the areas of prayer, liturgy, ecclesiology, and moral theology for parish leaders who have not had formal training in these fields.

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Part II - Formation and Education of Priests

The people's concerns:

Catholics of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese have expressed concern with the selection, education, and formation of seminarians who are to be their future priests. Many of these concerns surfaced in the Listening Sessions held in the archdiocese in October and November 2015, and others emerged from a variety of sources, including interviews with priests, religious, and lay people.

The decades-long scandal of sexual abuse of minors and the related bishop cover-up revealed that many priests are simply not prepared for lives of integrity as celibate priests. The recent scandals force all responsible Catholics to seriously question not just the training received by our seminarians, but also the selection process. Unfortunately, the scandals also demonstrate that clergy who have blessed us with many years of service are often unwilling, and perhaps fearful, to speak out in defense of victims.

In his recent instruction *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, Pope Francis encourages the responsible meeting of pastors and the faithful to address problems and seek solutions suited to various domestic cultures and traditions. In light of this, and after research including interviews with individuals who have first-hand knowledge of and/or responsibility for the two archdiocesan seminaries (St. John Vianney and St. Paul Seminary), we believe concerns have risen to the level that reforms are needed at both seminaries.

The focus on priestly identity, emphasized in recent decades in seminary formation, too often nourishes a culture of separation from women and other lay persons, and works against developing psychosexual maturity. It can also result in an attitude of clerical superiority, if not arrogance.

Although John Paul II repeatedly called for servant leaders in his 1992 exhortation on priestly formation, lay parish ministers and other lay Catholics describe a different experience with many younger priests. Moreover, sociological research indicates that younger priests are more likely to embrace a cultic model of priesthood, while older priests continue to see themselves as servant leaders. We are concerned that some priests, viewing themselves as ontologically different, are not collaborating effectively with parish staff and lay leaders.

In addition, as the composition and attitudes of the Catholic population have changed, the Church has not always met the needs of young people, especially those who are single or LGBT, and of immigrant families. This has led to the exodus of millions of Catholics, who either join other faiths or lose faith in all religion.

The recommendations that follow are made in light of what we think is possible at this time. The papacy of Francis gives us hope that our seminary will strive to form "Francis priests" committed to the further implementation of the Church renewal envisioned by Vatican II, extending God's mercy to all and promoting social justice everywhere.

We recognize that some problems related to recruitment of suitable candidates and formation within the seminary are related to mandatory celibacy. While change in this practice is beyond the scope of our recommendations, we urge the U.S. Catholic bishops to commission a study of mandatory celibacy, in union with other bishops throughout the world.

Recommendations:

1. Approach human and spiritual formation in a more realistic and holistic way.
 - Encourage formation of a mature conscience that is able to integrate Church teachings with lived experience.
 - Balance the spiritual motivations for celibacy with the realities and difficulties of living as a celibate priest.
 - Offer specialized training for Formation Directors and Spiritual Directors.
 - Advocate for changing the requirement that only priests may serve as Spiritual Director or Formation Director, thus returning to an earlier practice.
 - Be open to consideration of celibate gay candidates and invite open discussion of homosexuality, integrating current scientific knowledge.
2. Counteract clericalism by stressing collaborative and servant leadership as the model for the 21st century priesthood.
 - Open all seminary theology courses to female and male lay graduate students.
 - Recruit seminarians who come from/espouse various theological orientations and who represent a diversity of parishes.
 - Involve lay women and men in recruitment and screening of candidates.
 - Actively seek lay men and women who represent a variety of theological approaches for positions in formation programs.
 - Expand community involvement experiences, possibly arranging occasional residence in a parish as complement to the semi-monastic experience of seminary life.
 - In pastoral formation, instill the principles and practice of effective leadership.
 - Continue development after ordination by strengthening the mentor program.

3. Deliberately foster the involvement of women in the formation of seminarians.
 - Intentionally seek out women professors of Scripture and theology, as well as in other courses, to foster appreciation for the expertise of women.
 - Encourage women to pursue degrees at the seminary and to take graduate theology classes with seminarians and work collaboratively with them.
 - Incorporate more pastoral experiences in situations where women have a supervisory role, e.g., hospitals, nursing and assisted living facilities, parish pastoral care.
4. Educate seminarians for ministry to 21st century Catholics.
 - Strive to create an outstanding and scholarly faculty that represents the range of theological views, recognizing that a true appreciation of theological diversity, and an ability to find common ground, is critical to a healthy and vibrant Church.
 - Insure that the focus of courses is theological studies rather than catechetics/apologetics, and that future priests will be knowledgeable enough to preach effectively to well-educated parishioners and to relate theological thinking to new cultural situations.
 - Provide balanced readings and case studies for discussion on controversial topics, e.g., sexual and reproductive ethics, the ordination of women, mandatory celibacy, loss of the younger generation, social justice issues, etc.
 - Implement the conclusions of the committee that is currently engaged in a thorough revision of the curriculum in order to insure that seminarians are prepared for ministry.
 - Provide opportunities, both at the seminary and within the Teaching Parish Program, for seminarians to discuss topics of current interest and controversy with lay people.
 - Nourish a well-informed and positive attitude to the teaching of Vatican II.
 - Convey that the *Church is in the modern world* and not set against it. Teach respectful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of modern culture.
 - Continue to prepare seminarians for ministry in a multicultural church, stressing immersion experiences in Hispanic/Latino and other cultures represented in the local church.
 - Expect seminarians to acquire fluency in Spanish or another second language more appropriate to the individual's diocese.

- Nourish a spirituality focused on the liturgy and the community of believers, complemented but not replaced by personal and devotional spirituality.
 - Recognize generally accepted qualifications for rector of the St. Paul Seminary: an academic Ph.D. or S.T.D.; pastoral experience in a parish; prior experience in a theological school; familiarity with accepted academic standards for faculty hiring, promotion, and tenure; understanding of the culture of this archdiocese; commitment to the ideals of Vatican II.
5. Reconsider the value of the college seminary program and review the curriculum pursued by the students.
- Research indicates that the college seminary may too soon segregate students from their peers, may not foster psychosexual development, and may not prepare candidates well enough to collaborate with laity, especially women.
 - The Program of Priestly Formation expresses concern that the college education of some seminarians has too narrow a focus.
 - The PPF does not require that college seminarians major in philosophy, but it is a requirement at St. John Vianney. College seminarians could benefit from degrees in psychology, social work, literature, history, Spanish, etc.
 - Over 90% of SJV seminarians choose a second major in Catholic Studies, an emphasis and focus that deserves review.

ADDENDUM FOR THE FUTURE: Because we believe, along with John Henry Cardinal Newman, that doctrine develops, and with Avery Robert Cardinal Dulles, that reform has always been part of the Christian tradition, we pray that in the future the priesthood will be extended to married priests and to women, and that celibacy will become optional. We also pray that the role of the priest will be more equitably shared with all baptized women and men.

Part III - Continuing Education of Priests

The people's concerns:

While conducting research on the preparation of future priests, we encountered concerns about the continuing education of ordained priests. Although we did not have time for adequate study of this topic, we believe that the concerns deserve attention.

Priest interviewees noted that priests often obtain essentially no theological education beyond their seminary days. While opportunities for continuing education are provided, they may not be taken advantage of. Whether the reason is time, interest, or the appeal of the offerings, a lack of continued updating in theology diminishes the ability of priests to minister and preach effectively.

Others cited the absence of opportunities for priests to process their experiences in the areas of counseling, spiritual direction, and as confessors. In professions such as social work and therapy, peers gather for self-reflection, self-care, and processing dilemmas. A similar type of structure could be made available to priests. It would also provide an opportunity for peer support of priests who are courageous in playing a prophetic role in the Church and civil society.

A third concern is the need for continuing evaluation of priests. The 360 type of evaluation was described, where a person is evaluated by supervisors, peers, and those under his or her leadership (in this case, parish staff and parishioners). One priest we interviewed said he had been asked by a previous archbishop to develop a tool for evaluating parish priests, but the project was not completed at the time.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a task force of experienced pastors to review current opportunities for continuing theological education and to propose ways to update the program, broaden its scope, and perhaps make it more appealing.
2. Provide incentives to parish priests to pursue continuing education in theology.
3. Encourage priests who are capable to pursue graduate study beyond the M.Div. degree, perhaps earning an academic Master's degree. (A previous archbishop once asked all priests of the archdiocese to do this.)
4. Provide materials and support for groups of priests to organize as "peer supervisors" to help each other in processing situations they encounter in ministry.

5. Commission the development of an instrument for evaluation of pastors, associate pastors, and chaplains.
6. Delay appointment of new priests to pastorates for at least five years, during which time they would participate in a structured program of continuing education and mentoring.

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