

**POSITION PAPER ON  
EMERGING PATTERNS OF LAY LEADERSHIP  
PDPC MEETING JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2003  
DEPARTMENTS FOR COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY,  
EVANGELISATION AND CATECHESIS, AND LITURGICAL  
FORMATION**

**1 Christian ministry**

- 1.1 The Church teaches us that all Christian ministry, whether lay or ordained, flows from the ministry of Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* # 874) Through our baptism, each one of us is commissioned to be a witness to Jesus Christ every day of our lives and to make the building of the kingdom of God the purpose of our daily life and work - whatever that work happens to be (*Christifideles Laici* 1988 # 59).
- 1.2 Ministry is the service (*diakonia*) based on baptism and confirmation to which every Christian is called. In this sense, it overlaps, with and flows into, mission (*The Sign We Give* 1995 p18).
- 1.3 Every Christian can echo the words of Jesus “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4: 18-19). And so, through “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism & Confirmation, the baptised share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour-Messiah” (*Christifideles Laici* 1988 #13).
- 1.4 All Christians are called to ministry but it is not easy to define ministry. Since Vatican II, as ministries have expanded, there has been much theological reflection on the nature of ministry and ministries but a number of the theological issues remain unresolved. (see *The Sign We Give* 1995 p18-19)

**2 Lay Ministry**

- 2.1 The twentieth century was marked by a developing theology of the particular role of lay people in the life of the Church. This theology was reflected in the teaching of Vatican II that all the faithful share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. So, they are called to sanctify the world of their workplaces, homes and communities by the quality of their lives and relationships, by their natural access to the “unchurched” and by their courageous engagement in public life. This teaching was set in a context of encouragement for all the lay faithful to become ever more fully and actively engaged in the liturgical life of the Church.

**The Church teaches:**

- 2.2 “The laity can be called in different ways to more immediate co-operation in the apostolate of the hierarchy” (*Lumen Gentium* 1964 #33)
- 2.3 “It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. This evangelisation acquires peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.” (*Lumen Gentium* 1964 # 31 & 35)
- 2.4 “The laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for its growth and life, by exercising a variety of gifts and

ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them.”  
(*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975 # 73)

- 2.5 “In addition to the common vocation of the apostolate, some lay people feel called interiorly by God to assume the service of catechist. The Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechise ... At times the catechist can collaborate in the service of catechesis over a limited period or purely on an occasional basis, ... the importance of the ministry of catechesis, however, would suggest that there should be in the diocese a certain number of religious and laity publicly recognised and permanently dedicated to catechesis who, in communion with the priests and the bishop, give to this diocesan service that ecclesial form which is proper to it.” (*General Directory for Catechesis* 1997 #231)

### **A distinctive lay ministry?**

- 2.6 Today we are accustomed to a wide range of lay liturgical ministries in most parishes and many of us would also understand as ministries the roles of school governors, pastoral and finance councillors, welcomers, bereavement counsellors, catechists, teachers, parish secretaries and many more. These kinds of roles are probably what most people think of first when we speak of “lay ministry”.
- 2.7 Lay ministry seems to include both specific ecclesial ministries and daily life lived out consciously as a vocation to holiness. But the greatest emphasis in Church teaching seems to be placed on the role of lay people in transforming and sanctifying the world through their ordinary daily life, lived out to the highest standards of holiness and professional competence.
- 2.8 The question we are wrestling with in the Church today is: what is the specific role and ministry of lay people? What is the particular service we offer to the world? What aspects of Jesus’ ministry are we called to imitate? Could there be some aspects we are not called to imitate?
- 2.9 Can there be a specific lay ministry within the life of the Church? A ministry which is not just a stopgap substitute for ordained ministry? How would it be distinctive?

## **3 Lay Leadership**

### **What kind of leadership are we called to?**

- 3.1 Leadership in the Church is to be a servant leadership see:  
**Jn 13:1-15, Mk 10:43-45. Lk 22:24-27.**
- 3.2 The primary power of leadership is “power to enable, to call out gifts and to inspire mission, not power over people. It also safeguards legitimate diversity and identifies boundaries, so that the whole body can be faithful to its purpose. Leadership in a Church of communion also needs to be seen in relational terms. It is not just a role or position, or a set of tasks.” (*The Sign We Give* 1995 p22-3)
- 3.3 Servants can also lead e.g. those who serve as readers are not merely channels for God’s word – in a very real sense they can be “*leading* us into God’s word” by the way in which they read.

### **Current leadership roles**

- 3.4 Specific leadership roles currently exercised by lay people: school governors, pastoral and finance councillors, co-ordinators of parish ministry groups, catechetical co-ordinators, catechists, teachers, youth leaders, liturgical leaders and ministers, lay chaplains in hospitals, schools and prisons, leaders in public life, campaigners for justice and peace & many more.

- 3.5 Leadership in collaborative ways of working: membership of parish, deanery and diocesan pastoral councils, of ecumenical groups.
- 3.6 Group facilitation skills, widely used in adult formation.
- 3.7 Parish leadership includes a number of aspects: administrative, pastoral, liturgical, catechetical. We need to ask whether the person who is “leading” the community should be the same person who “administers” it, or who leads it in prayer; the charisms are very different.
- 3.8 In recent years in our diocese, parish communities who found themselves unexpectedly without a resident priest have shown real leadership. In Cosham, Woodley and Bracknell, in collaboration with local clergy, teams of parishioners have taken responsibility for the day-to-day care of the parish; organising finances, arranging for supply priests for Sundays, sorting marriage formalities, taking care of organising weekday liturgies, continuing catechesis and ensuring the pastoral care of the sick at home and in hospital.

#### **4 Some emerging patterns**

- 4.1 The history of the Church is filled with examples of new ministries and charisms being provided to help her deal with new situations: “Christ continually provides in his body, that is, in the Church, for gifts of ministries through which, by his power, we serve each other unto salvation.” (*Lumen Gentium* #7).
- 4.2 Emerging role of small groups in forming small faith communities eg Landings, CaFE, RCIA, groups, neighbourhood, bible study and prayer groups etc.
- 4.3 Most of the ways in which lay people live out their baptismal mission in the Church are voluntary, even though they may involve serious commitments of time, energy and personal resources.
- 4.4 However, there is a growing number of lay people who are paid: lay administrators, curial staff, youth workers, catechetical co-ordinators, parish secretaries, pastoral assistants and others.
- 4.5 Two strands are emerging: paid and voluntary ministry. How do they relate to each other and to ordained ministry? (nb deacons are ordained and yet unpaid). How do they relate to the wider community of the diocese? Accountability? Boundaries?
- 4.6 The danger of a two-tier system. Are all equally valued? Need to keep focussed on teaching of Paul - all gifts are given by God, all equally valuable, all given to build up the community. The role of the paid staff is to enable the ministry of others.
- 4.7 Increasing pool of theologically (very) competent & trained people in the diocese. How can we use their gifts?

#### **Some proposed patterns**

- 4.8 Employed lay leaders at deanery level for specific roles e.g. youth ministry, project development, on renewable short-term contracts.
- 4.9 Volunteer lay leaders of small Christian communities, with responsibility for the pastoral care of that community for a defined period of time. They would lead in faith sharing, preparing for the next Sunday’s Gospel, visiting the sick, bereaved, lonely and anyone in need. All this would be done under the auspices of the wider parish community.
- 4.10 A team of volunteer lay pastoral assistants, parish based, with a clear, fair and limited brief. For defined periods of time closely matched to parish need.

## **5 Formation for Leadership & Ministry**

- 5.1 We **all** need ongoing formation.
- 5.2 Formation & funding for a range of different types of ministry.
- 5.3 What is available in the diocese & elsewhere? The diocesan “Following Christ Today” course, CCRS, Education for Parish Service, Brentwood Formation & Training Course, Heythrop College, Lampeter University and others.
- 5.4 Develop our understanding of Christian leadership.
- 5.5 New roles of pastoral care for smaller, local groups within the parish community. [E.g. who takes care of the dying when there’s no ordained person around? Marriage preparation? ]

## **6 Implications for diocesan, deanery & parish structures**

- 6.1 All structures and relationships within the Church should reflect communion and the fundamental equality of all the baptised.
- 6.2 All structures and relationships within the Church should be transparent.
- 6.3 Every parish will have a canonical pastor or pastors but what are the implications for parishes which are led on a day-to-day basis by a lay person or team of lay people? What happens to the link between the daily life of the community and its eucharistic and liturgical worship? What happens to the bonds of ecclesial communion which ordination symbolises? (*The Sign We Give* 1995 p18)
- 6.4 Diocesan formation for ministry and specifically for leadership roles. Developing a process of discernment for all gifts of ecclesial ministry
- 6.5 Joint Clergy & lay formation.
- 6.6 Accountability & clarity about roles.
- 6.7 Tensions between paid and voluntary workers in parishes, deaneries, the diocese. Tensions between clergy (including deacons) and professionally paid lay people.
- 6.8 New structures may be needed for a developing Church. Organising differently?
- 6.9 How can we fund an increasing number of paid roles? Review of diocesan resources: people, plant and finance.
- 6.10 Organising for much wider range of voluntary ministry
- 6.11 How do our schools fit into all this?

## **7 Using the Position Paper for discussion around the diocese**

- 7.1 Would some discussion questions be useful?
- 7.2 Encourage parish/deanery groups to precede their discussion with scriptural reflection on one of the three Gospel passages cited in 3.1 - particularly John 13: 1-15.