



Faithful Stewards of God's Grace

Lay Pastoral Ministers in the Church in Australia

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

– 1 Peter 4:10

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

The Portuguese captain and explorer, de Queirós, in 1606 while sailing in waters that surround our continent, named it, 'Land of the Holy Spirit.'

This Land of the Holy Spirit had been the home of the first inhabitants for many thousands of years. In the eighteenth century, they were joined by its first European settlers and their arrival brought lay Catholics who planted the Catholic faith in Australian soil. Their need for pastoral and sacramental care ensured that the faith was kept alive as they gathered together and prayed and cared for one another and waited for a priest to celebrate the sacraments. Throughout this land, our Catholic people prepared the young for the sacraments and supported their brothers and sisters in faith. In the early days of the colony, they foresaw and lived the vision of Vatican II as the people of God building up the Church. Our people were supported by the religious sisters who taught their young and gathered their families in the towns and the remote communities of the west. An early bishop of this land, upon appointing a priest to a new parish, reminded him that his task was to build the Church and build up the Church in co-responsibility with the people of God.

Our leaders in the faith, priests, religious and laity called forth many people to follow them as priests, religious and lay fulfilling the missionary work of the Church.

This document, *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace*, recounts the early growth of the Church here in Australia and the invaluable contribution of the lay women and men and the religious sisters and brothers who with their priests built the Church and built up the Church. *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace* anchors itself in the call of Pope Francis to the whole of the Church in its mission of the Risen Christ in passing on the Gospels, 'The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who follow Jesus.' (EG 1)

The mission of the Church is to invite our people to encounter the Risen Christ.

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace outlines the ministries and the mission of the Church and invites all of us to share our gifts with the Catholic Community. As St Paul reflects, 'and his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of service, for building up the body of Christ.' (Eph 4:11-15)

The document, as it quotes Pope Francis, describes 'the role of the lay pastoral minister as the one who accompanies other disciples, with mercy and patience.' (Evangelii Gaudium 44)

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace has been prepared by the members of the Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry for the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry and it provides a solid theological and pastoral underpinning for lay pastoral ministry. It is presented as a working e-document, so it may be updated with support documentation on a regular basis and be an ongoing support to the lay pastoral ministries of the Church.

As the Church prepares for the Plenary Council in 2020, I commend this document to dioceses and their communities and parishes. May we, together, continue to build the Church and build up the Church in this Land of the Holy Spirit.



Bishop Michael McCarthy

Chair, Bishops Commission for Church Ministry
Feast of the Holy Trinity 2018



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Preface

Since the arrival of the first Catholics in Australia in 1788, lay people have exercised significant roles in the fundamental task of Christian discipleship - proclaiming the Kingdom of God and being an initial budding forth of that Kingdom.¹ By bearing witness to their Christian faith, they have passed on its treasures to their families and communities. In partnership with clergy and religious, they have contributed to the building up of the Church and the transformation of society according to the plan of God.

Lay people fulfil God's plan in the ordinary circumstances of their familial, social, and professional lives.² They contribute to Australian society in the spheres of health, education, welfare, and politics.

Some also dedicate themselves to work within the Church community, placing themselves at the service of their fellow disciples. Since the middle of the twentieth century, prompted by the teachings of Vatican II, the number of lay women and men active in pastoral ministry within parishes, dioceses, Church agencies and institutions, such as schools and hospitals, has flourished.

This participation of the laity in the mission and ministry of the Church 'derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it.'³

Background to the National Resource

In 2012, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference established the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry to foster collaboration amongst dioceses and to facilitate a national approach to aspects of pastoral ministry. The Council conducted a qualitative survey among Catholic dioceses in Australia to obtain a general understanding of the national landscape of lay pastoral ministry. This was followed by a more in-depth study, involving case studies from diverse pastoral settings across Australia⁴ by the Christian Research Association in 2015.

¹ Vatican II Council. *Lumen Gentium* (hereafter LG), Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press; 1975. nn. 5, 10.

² LG 34, 35. Pope John Paul II. *Christifideles Laici* (hereafter CL), The lay members of Christ's faithful people. Boston: Pauline Books & Media; 1988. n.15.

³ Vatican II Council. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (hereafter AA), Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press; 2014. n.1.

⁴ Hughes P, Reid S. *Exploring Lay Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church*. Melbourne.: Pastoral Research Office; 2016.

Introduction

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace affirms the common vocation of the lay faithful, rooted in the sacrament of Baptism, to participate in the ministry of Christ.⁵ It expresses a deep appreciation for the 'unique and irrepeatable' contribution of each member of the lay faithful, on behalf of and for the good of the whole body of the faithful.⁶

Within this common Christian vocation, *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace* promotes the vocation of those lay people called to the pastoral ministry of service. The Australian Catholic Bishops support and encourage⁷ those who are called to serve Christ's disciples in this way and acknowledge the theology of communion which underpins ministerial relationships of equality, mutuality and reciprocity.

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace recognises the place of lay pastoral ministry within the common vocation of discipleship in relation to other forms of ministry. The vocations and ministries in the Catholic Church in Australia are diverse and complementary. The body of Bishops together with

the Pope, priests, deacons, consecrated religious priests, brothers, sisters and lay people, work together in the Church and in the world.

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace promotes and enables attitudes and practices of collegiality in order to best serve the pastoral needs of the Catholic Church in Australia.

Chapter one provides an overview of the development of lay pastoral ministry in Australia from 1788 to the present day. Chapter two seeks to identify the complexities involved in lay pastoral ministry. Chapter three seeks to understand the place of lay pastoral ministry within the common vocation of discipleship, and how it relates to other forms of ministry. Chapter four offers a practical description of lay pastoral ministry and outlines a process of authorisation, from certification to commissioning. Chapter five proposes recommendations that will enable a shared vision to be fulfilled in practice.

⁵ LG 10; CL 23.

⁶ CL 20, 28.

⁷ LG 20.

1. Past & Present Reality

1.1 Lay involvement in the mission of the Church

From the beginning of time the Holy Spirit has been in this land of Australia, communicating the goodness and beauty of God and awakening a desire for the Sacred in the hearts of its people. For thousands of years the Aboriginal people have listened to the mystery of God in and through their culture, their Dreaming and their land.⁸

For many years before English settlement in Australia, Europeans speculated about the existence of an enigmatic southern continent. In 1606, de Queirós, a Portuguese captain, used the title 'Land of the Holy Spirit' for an island which he took to be part of the mysterious continent. Eventually the east coast of Australia was claimed for England by Captain James Cook in 1770.

Almost 1,500 convicts, marines, seamen, civil officers as well as some of their wives and children arrived in the colony of New South Wales in 1788 on the First Fleet. There is no way of knowing exactly how many were Catholics but the estimate is one hundred and fifty. Some of them, mostly convicts and marines, 'diligently and courageously kept their faith alive'⁹ despite the Church of England being the official and enforced religion of the new settlement.

The colony continued to grow with further arrivals of convicts and finally in 1793, the arrival of free settlers. There were no Catholic priests for the first twelve years of the settlement and only limited access to convict priests and to an unauthorised chaplain, Fr O'Flynn, for a further twenty years.¹⁰ There is evidence of Catholic settlers petitioning the Governor for a Catholic Chaplain and of families faithfully educating their children in Catholic practices and beliefs. When a French ship visited Sydney Harbour in 1819, its chaplain was 'run off his feet by importunate colonial Catholics who sought sacraments, spiritual direction and direction from him.'¹¹

In the absence of priests, there are examples of how lay people kept the flame of faith alive: a convict who was a former seminarian acted as catechist on Norfolk Island; in Sydney, a man named James Dempsey read prayers with those who were sentenced to hang. The Dempsey household was a centre for prayer particularly in the years following the sudden and forced departure of Fr O'Flynn in 1818. The

Blessed Sacrament, left behind by Fr O'Flynn, seems to have been safeguarded and venerated in the houses of James Dempsey and William Davis.¹² Francis Kenny led sung Vespers each Sunday evening at the Dempsey home. Mrs Fitzpatrick, who had been a school mistress in Dublin, taught her sons catechism and how to serve Mass. With Mr McGuire she taught boys and girls to sing hymns.¹³

Although the formal establishment of the Catholic Church in Australia is marked as 1820 when Fathers John Therry and Phillip Conolly arrived in Sydney, the Catholic faith had already taken root. Around the colony, Catholics formed themselves into committees for prayer and support, each with a lay leader at Parramatta, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Appin.¹⁴

The Colony of New South Wales expanded along the coast and inland. Van Diemen's Land was established as a colony in its own right in 1825 and the foundation of Brisbane took place in the same year. Western Australia was established when a small English settlement was made at King George's Sound in 1827. In 1836 the British province of South Australia was founded. New Zealand was separated from New South Wales in 1841. Gradually Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory were instituted as separate colonies and territories.

The Catholic Church responded to the rapid growth of European settlement in the land that would be known as Australia by sending Fr William Ullathorne, an English Benedictine, as the first Vicar General of the Church in New South Wales. Arriving in 1833, his writings about the conditions in the Colony led to the abolition of transportation to the Sydney region in August 1840. Ullathorne was influential in bringing the Sisters of Charity the first religious sisters to come to Australia from Ireland, in 1838.¹⁵

On 12th May, 1834, the Vicariate Apostolic of New Holland was erected and Dr John Bede Polding, also an English Benedictine, was appointed Vicar Apostolic with jurisdiction over what is now Australia. In 1842, the Archdiocese of Sydney was erected with Archbishop John Bede Polding as Archbishop. Polding ministered especially to the convicts for forty-two years, travelling largely on horseback and by sea.

⁸ Pope John Paul II. Address to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Alice Springs. Sydney: Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.; 1986.

⁹ Dixon R, Hughes P. The Catholic community in Australia. Adelaide: Openbook Publishers; 2005. p 1

¹⁰ Dixon R, Hughes P. The Catholic community in Australia. Adelaide: Openbook Publishers; 2005. p. 1

¹¹ Campion E. Great Australian Catholics. Richmond, Vic.: Aurora; 1997. p. 3

¹² See Chandler P, James Dempsey and John Butler. Melbourne: Carmelite Communications; 2002. p.14-18; Hosie J. Davis, Dempsey and the Leaving of the Blessed Sacrament: The Controversy and a Possible Solution. Australasian Catholic Record. 1990;67:81-86.

¹³ Campion E. Australian Catholics. Ringwood, Vic., Australia: Penguin; 1988. p. 5, 6

¹⁴ Campion E. Australian Catholics. Ringwood, Vic., Australia: Penguin; 1988. p. 6

¹⁵ Southerwood W. A Timeline of Catholic Australia. Hobart: Stella Maris; 1993. p. 10



Hyde Park Barracks and the first St Mary's Catholic Church 1835.

The first Catholic Bishop of Hobart Town was Bishop Robert Willson, appointed in 1844, in Van Diemen's Land, later known as Tasmania. He too was influential as a social reformer and contributed to the ending of transportation to Tasmania and Norfolk Island in 1852.

Following the 1829 Emancipation Act which opened civil office to Catholics in British Domains, a number of educated Catholic laymen arrived in Australia.¹⁶ A prominent example was John Plunkett, a Catholic lawyer, appointed Solicitor-General of the Colony of New South Wales in 1831. As Solicitor-General, he established equality before the law for emancipists, convicts and assigned servants. He worked towards legal protection for Aborigines, and through the Church Act of 1836 established legal equality between Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians and later Methodists. He went on to a political career serving Church and society in roles such as Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University and secretary to the provincial council of the Roman Catholic Church.

The first Catholic schools, humble as they were, sprang up in the Sydney region from 1820, with 10 schools in operation by 1833. They were run by lay people whose names in most cases have been lost. Records note that Polding opened a school in Wollongong in 1838 which was run by Mr and Mrs Fowler.¹⁷ The first Catholic school in Victoria, established in Melbourne in 1840 by Fr Patrick Geoghegan, was similarly staffed by lay people. Queensland followed closely with the first Catholic schools being established in the late 1850s and 1860s. In 1860, there were four schools and no religious sisters in Queensland. By 1878 there were 33 schools and 130 religious sisters. This transition from lay to religious staff was a pattern throughout Australia as State Aid was cut and the Catholic Church turned to religious orders for a qualified work force at low cost.

The Catholic Church in the 1800s established many schools, hospitals, churches and other charitable works. Lay missionaries arrived in Australia, along with religious sisters and brothers to offer Catholic education, working alongside the Australian formed orders of the Good Samaritan Sisters, 1857, and Sisters of St Joseph, founded by St Mary MacKillop in 1886. One married woman, Caroline Chisholm, stands out as a lay Catholic in the mid-nineteenth century, assisting with jobs and lodgings for more than ten thousand women coming to Australian shores.

Lay movements emerged, which while primarily involved in the lay apostolate had strong crossovers into ecclesial life. After World War One the Knights of the Southern Cross was established, assisting working Catholics, followed in the 1930s by the Legion of Mary. Post Second World War, the number of parishes increased dramatically, with high levels of Mass attendance. Parish sodalities such as the Holy Name Society were strong. Non-English speaking immigrants, with their own traditions, devotions, and spiritualities, swelled the Catholic population further, and continue to do so to this day.

As the Catholic Church in Australia began building physically and spreading its influence over the whole continent, lay Catholics worked in partnership with clergy as Catholic life became more parochial. While monetary donations were generously given to support the construction of churches, special events were also held to bind the community together and raise funds for the parish.¹⁸

Adult church organisations for men became a prominent feature of parish life in the nineteenth century and this continued through much of the twentieth century. They included the Sacred Heart sodality which promoted monthly confession and reception of communion; 'friendly

¹⁶ Campion E. *Great Australian Catholics*. Richmond, Vic.: Aurora; 1997. p. 5

¹⁷ Southerwood W. *A Timeline of Catholic Australia*. Hobart: Stella Maris; 1993. p. 10.

¹⁸ Campion E. *Great Australian Catholics*. Richmond, Vic.: Aurora; 1997. p. 10

¹⁹ The Children of Mary [Internet]. My Children of Mary. 2018 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: <https://www.mychildrenofmary.com/history/>

societies' such as the Hibernians, the Catenians, and Irish-inspired temperance societies. At this point adult women's participation in Church remained largely unorganised except for altar societies and rosary circles. A sodality for teenage girls called the Children of Mary was prominent in parish life from the 1880s until the 1960s.¹⁹

Less visible were the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Their purpose was simply to serve Christ in the poor. Originally for men only, the society was functioning in Melbourne in the 1850s. Records note the activities of the Society in Perth in 1865, in Sydney in 1881, in Adelaide 1886, Queensland in 1897 and Tasmania 1899. Conferences, the name given to a local parish branch, met each week for spiritual reflection, assessment of local needs, a secret collection and prayer. Members visited those in need and did what they could to assist. Now including women and men, the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul continue to be known for their commitment to the Gospel and their sense of lay responsibility.

Founded in Dublin 1921, the Legion of Mary came to Australia in 1932. By 1944 there were 643 branches and 5470 active members both men and women. Members fulfilled the missionary role of the Legion by door knocking households in their parish to get a 'census-like' picture of faith and practice, as well as hospital visitation and state school catechetics. They organised public meetings to foster interest in the Catholic Church and to answer questions about the Church. The Theresian Club was influential from 1918. Members were young women who worked in city shops or offices and their work was to contact Catholic children in State schools, to get them to Mass and to nourish their spiritual lives.

The various Catholic women's organisations which eventually formed the Catholic Women's League Australia (CWLA) have diverse origins. South Australia's Catholic Women's League, 1914, was modelled on the Catholic Women's League in England. Victoria and the southern area of New South Wales were influenced by The Catholic Women's Social Guild, an ecclesiastical movement founded in 1916 by a small group of visionary young professional women who sought to change the world through prayer and action. The League in Queensland was modelled on the Catholic Daughters of America. From 1928, Catholic women's organisations started to work together at the national level. Finally, at a national conference in Canberra in 1975, the peak representative body was named the Catholic Women's League Australia.

Addressing social justice and ethical questions is one of the primary tasks of CWLA with a particular focus on women and children. The CWLA promotes the role of lay women in the mission of the Church and enables women to participate more effectively in working for and building the Kingdom of God. Though membership is in decline, the League remains an influential women's group in the Australian Church and a platform for ministry for its members.²⁰

Around Australia, a somewhat standard parish structure developed during the twentieth century. Typically, there was at least one resident priest, often a curate, and a community of religious sisters who staffed the local school. Many of the sodalities and societies mentioned above thrived in many parishes and provided a blueprint for lay involvement in the life of the Church.

¹⁹ The Children of Mary [Internet]. My Children of Mary. 2018 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: <https://www.mychildrenofmary.com/history/>

²⁰ Catholic Women's League of Australia. History [Internet]. Catholic Women's League of Australia. 2005 [cited 10 May 2017]. Available from: <http://www.cwla.org.au/index.php/aboutus/history>



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Imagine a sower going out to sow. Some seeds fell on rich soil and produced their crop...

- Matt 13 : 3 & 8

1. Past & Present Reality

1.2 Renewal of ministries



The Second Vatican Council (1962–65), through its vision of the Church as the People of God, stimulated a renewal of ministries for lay people. In the Catholic Church in Australia lay participation developed and continues to occur. Church historian David Shinnick offers five main areas in which lay ministry is being fostered in Australia.²¹

Firstly, most formal lay participation occurs within **Catholic Education**. In 2017 there were 99,370 staff working in the sector.²² Many lay Catholic staff see their employment in Catholic Education as a means to live out their call to ministry.

Secondly, there are many **lay organisations** ranging from prayer and study groups, social justice, special works and task groups which provide avenues for the expression of the apostolate of the laity. Many of these lay organisations also provide formation aligned with the purpose and charism of the group. Some are short term; for example, a scripture reflection group may meet during the six weeks of Lent. Others are long term and members participate on a regular basis over several years, for example, the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Thirdly, there are ministry options which enable lay people to be directly involved in the **building up of the ecclesial**

community, mostly at the parish level, and in the direct transmission of the Gospel. These include in liturgy, catechetics and lay chaplaincies. Indeed, Shinnick is noting the emergence of a more organised and formalised lay pastoral ministry in this area. Significantly, Pope Paul VI in 1972 established the offices of lector and acolyte as lay ministries. One example from 1986 in Queensland, shows that the Our Lady Of Lourdes Parish, Sunnybank had 95 lay readers and 48 extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Further, the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1991 noted that 172 lay pastoral workers were employed across 235 parishes.²³ Diocesan and national lay roles are also a strong feature of the post-Vatican II Church in Australia, along with a robust social welfare arm, in Centacare²⁴, as well as through Caritas and Catholic Mission offices.

The fourth area, the commitment to **adult faith education**, began in the 1950s and flourished from the 1960s. Vatican II reaffirmed the Church's role as teacher, and it urged its members to develop and extend its educational mission, especially among adults. "All men (sic) of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education. ... For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit

²¹ Shinnick D. Journey into justice. Adelaide: Pan Print; 1982. p. 72

²² Pastoral Research Office. Our Work Matters. Canberra: Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; 2017. p. 29

²³ Southerwood W. A Timeline of Catholic Australia. Hobart: Stella Maris; 1993. p. 250

²⁴ Several Dioceses changed the name of their Catholic welfare services from Centacare to CatholicCare from 2009.

of his (sic) ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share."²⁵

The trend in adult faith education was largely scriptural in focus. In liturgy, the use of the vernacular and the involvement of the laity in the Mass stimulated a desire for a better understanding of the experience; and from this need grew a significant opportunity for adult education in parishes and dioceses. Traditional lectures gave way to a variety of informal types of discussions, short courses, and small group activities. Lay retreats became popular as opportunities for reflection and discussion of personal faith in changing times.

Finally, there are numerous Associations of the Faithful or **lay pastoral movements of Catholics** where "clerics, lay persons, or clerics and lay persons together, strive in a common endeavour to foster a more perfect life, to promote public worship or Christian doctrine, or to exercise other works of the apostolate such as initiatives of evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with a Christian spirit."²⁶

Lay movements have a devotional, community or charity focus and may draw on the inspiration of a founder or patron saint. Some operate as independent groups at parish or diocesan level while others have constitutions and governance structures to maintain links to the charism and wider community of followers. All nourish the faith lives of their members, provide formation and a context for ministry and service. Many Catholic men and women belong to lay movements.

Groupings of lay people, sometimes including ordained members, have waxed and waned and new ones emerge constantly. Some familiar titles besides those mentioned earlier include Antioch, Apostleship of the Sea, Charismatic Catholic Renewal, Couples for Christ, Cursillo, Disciples of Jesus, Emmanuel Community, Focolare, L'Arche, NET Ministries, The Neo-Catechumenal Way, Opus Dei, Passionist Family Groups, Serra, The Catholic Guy Ministry, Third Orders, Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Young Christian Students, Young Christian Workers, and Youth Mission Teams.



²⁵ Vatican II Council. *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education. Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press; 1975. n.1

²⁶ Pontifical Council for the Laity. *International Associations of the faithful*. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; 2006. p.11.

1. Past & Present Reality

1.3 Present diversity

As this brief history of lay involvement in the mission of the Church in Australia demonstrates, there has been diversity within the lay sphere of ministry and action. This continues today. Grounded in the Sacraments of Initiation, lay people continue to be called to exercise their proper part in the mission and ministry of Christ, each in their own way, according to their own gifts.²⁷ While most do this through active discipleship there are some who devote much, or all, of their energies to the service of the Church community, all of which leads both directly and indirectly to the building of the Kingdom of God.²⁸

Today, lay people undertake a variety of ministries in parishes, schools, and Church institutions and agencies as diverse as Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Catholic Earthcare, Catholic Mission, Marriage Tribunals, Catholic Development Funds, Caritas Australia and Catholic media offices. Lay people serve in mission and pastoral care roles with migrants and refugees, Catholic hospitals, aged care facilities, correctional services, and with the military. Many ministries are occasional and usually unpaid: for example, the various ministries associated with liturgy, including acolytes, ministers of the word, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, cantors and music ministers, altar servers and sacristans, and other parish-based roles such as membership of parish pastoral councils, finance committees, visitation teams, sacramental preparation teams, youth and family groups and social justice groups. Lay people give their time and gifts freely for the good of the Church community and the wider community in the name of Jesus Christ, and are authorised and commissioned in the name of the local Bishop.

Whilst remuneration is not always associated with all these roles, certain professional expectations are inherent in each of them, such as agreed responsibilities and the number of working hours needed to fulfil such responsibilities. The actions or duties required may also differ according to the needs of the parish, diocese, school, hospital, prison, and

so forth, and the expertise of the lay person. Day-to-day ministry activities thus vary immensely between and within individual roles.²⁹

The overall policies for and models of engaging lay people in formal, public ministry are shaped by the local context. Each place, institution, and agency has its own history. Each setting has its own needs, and the resources, gifts, and personnel that are available in each are distinct. The way in which lay people are appointed or employed to work independently or collaboratively varies accordingly. In some places, there are many individuals willing and with time, energy and skills to become involved in lay leadership, and some may be in a position to do so without payment. Other places may struggle to find individuals who are either willing or financially able to take on such commitments.³⁰

Research undertaken by the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry indicates that the pathways by which lay people enter these ministries varies significantly across dioceses. In some places, individuals undergo rigorous selection and training processes, and are required to have professional qualifications, previous experience and accreditation. In other places, lay people who are active in occasional ministries are identified as exhibiting potential and aptitude for leadership, and are assigned roles without formal training or preparation. Sometimes, minimal formation, induction, and mentoring is offered and the individual is encouraged to subsequently pursue theological education.³¹

Finally, in the context of parishes, there is another form of lay pastoral ministry, which differs in kind from the others because it exists as a means of addressing the shortage of priests.³² In this context, lay leaders may be appointed by the local Bishop to act on behalf of or in the absence of a parish priest or moderator.³³ It may also mean organising for priestly visits to support the sacramental and liturgical life of the community.³⁴

²⁷ LG 12, 31.

²⁸ Pope John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio* (hereafter RM), Mission of the Redeemer. Sydney: Pauline Books & Media; 1990. n. 59.

²⁹ McGrath A, Hughes P, Dixon R. *Exploring Lay Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church*. Melbourne: Pastoral Research Office; 2016. p. 56-57.

³⁰ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 57-58.

³¹ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 53-55, 58.

³² Coriden J, Green T, Heintschel D. *The code of canon law: A text and commentary*. London: Geoffrey Chapman; 1985. 230:3, 517:2; C.L.23.

³³ McGrath et al. 2016. pp. 11-12.

³⁴ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 57-58.

The reality of lay ministry is therefore quite diverse: temporary and permanent, part-time and full-time, unpaid and paid, occasional and permanent or contracted. There are different paths in the spiritual life and in the apostolate exercised by individual members of the lay faithful.³⁵ Their commitment to ministry should take a shape and form that remains in harmony with their particular life commitments and circumstances.³⁶ Lay people have adapted to new ministries in openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and in a dynamic movement towards others, which is a fundamental feature of a life lived in holiness.³⁷ At its best, there is a commonality shared by all these variants: lay people have generously responded to the call of their Baptism³⁸, accepted the tasks and offices for which they were made fit and ready and played their part for the good of the whole body of the faithful.³⁹

³⁵ CL 56.

³⁶ RM 72.

³⁷ RM 65.

³⁸ AA 16.

³⁹ CL 28; LG 12.

2. A Complex Landscape

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace recognises the diverse reality and complex settings of lay pastoral ministry. To understand lay pastoral ministry and to address its challenges it is opportune to explore the current landscape.

2.1 Understanding the terminology

2.1.1 Understanding 'Lay' and 'Laity'

The first area of complexity is one of language. There are several notable difficulties with language in any account or discussion of lay pastoral ministry. The first is that the use of the terms 'lay', 'laity', and 'lay people' can be a source of confusion in today's society. In popular secular parlance, to be lay is to be someone not of a specific occupation, someone outside of a particular profession, someone not having expert knowledge or professional qualifications. Such definitions are counter to the understanding that lay people in an ecclesial setting can be appointed to formal, public ministries within the Church, and that they can be theologically competent, have pastoral expertise, and be professionally adept. Such lay people serve in and with the Church in a complementary manner with those who have received the sacrament of holy orders.

The terms 'baptised' and 'faithful' are sometimes used as synonyms for 'laity.' The proper use of these terms also includes ordained and consecrated religious members of the Church. Through Baptism, all are called to proclaim the Good News.

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace affirms the increasing numbers of experienced, educated, and trained lay people who are visibly active in the common vocation of Christian discipleship, both in the Church and in the world.

**Lay pastoral ministries provide
'a special complementary capacity for service,'
in partnership with the teaching, sanctifying,
and governing functions of ordained ministry.**

”

2.1.2 Understanding 'Pastoral Ministry'

The term 'pastoral ministry' is also subject to various interpretations. 'Pastoral ministry' on behalf of the Catholic community can be seen to include:

- liturgical ministries;
- sacramental preparation;
- church management or administration;
- pastoral care provided in the contexts of schools, hospitals, and prisons.

The above list is broad, and often lay and ordained ministers may be engaged alongside each other, or in each other's stead to a certain degree, in any of these areas. This has led to one extreme response contending that 'pastoral' be reserved solely to the ordained ministry. Another extreme is to equate the functions of lay pastoral ministry as inseparable from ordained ministry. It is clear that holding either of these views would make advancing an understanding of lay pastoral ministry problematic at best.

There is also concern that, if providing 'pastoral care' is reserved for people with particular set[s] of qualifications, or is associated only with specialised (or paid) roles, then other people may not feel welcome to exercise this form of care in the course of their church-related activity or work: e.g. in their contact with the faithful while working in a school or in parish management. The pastoral component of these roles may not receive sufficient recognition or support.

Conversely, if 'pastoral care' became an expected element of such positions as parish secretaries or sacristans, some may feel unworthy, underprepared, or under-qualified to exercise this function.⁴⁰

This resource does not seek to prescribe what roles should be encompassed by the term 'lay pastoral ministry.' Yet it does seek to be an aid/guide in the development of a shared vision, a common understanding, and recognition of lay pastoral ministry at national and local levels.

Therefore, this resource recognises:

- a. the pastoral ministerial functions exercised by lay people, according to the lay vocation arising from sacramental initiation; and
- b. ministry exercised by lay people in collaboration with the ministry of the ordained, according to deputation given by ordained pastors, supplying in situations of necessity and emergency.⁴¹

Both of these forms of lay pastoral ministries provide 'a special complementary capacity for service,' in partnership with the teaching, sanctifying, and governing functions of ordained ministry.⁴²

⁴⁰ McGrath, A, Hughes, P. & Reid, S p. 47-48.

⁴¹ CL 23.

⁴² CL 20; Pope John Paul II. Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; 1997. n. 2.

2.1.3 Understanding 'Lay Pastoral Ministry'

The designation 'lay pastoral ministry' is not unanimously used or accepted in the Catholic Church in Australia: 'lay ministry', 'non-ordained ministry', 'lay ecclesial ministry', and 'lay apostolate' are all terms used to describe this function. Some feel that the language is only meaningful in the Church context, for others a liturgical ministry could be considered pastoral.⁴³ To avoid the negative connotations sometimes associated with 'lay' and 'non-ordained', some theologians have proposed the use of alternative terms such as 'installed ministries' and 'commissioned ministries'.⁴⁴

Furthermore, within the sphere of lay pastoral ministry, various nomenclatures are used to refer to specific ministry roles. Across Catholic dioceses in Australia, terms such as the following are used: lay ecclesial ministers, lay leaders, pastoral leaders, pastoral coordinators, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, senior pastoral associates, pastoral assistants, pastoral workers, sacramental coordinators, lay ministers, youth workers and lay chaplains.⁴⁵

Paradoxically, there is both considerable overlap and inconsistency in how these designations or titles are used: the types of tasks assigned to these roles may be similar, or even identical, but the degree of responsibility prescribed, the freedom and capacity granted for activity, and the classification of relationships with other ministers, especially parish priests, can be widely disparate.⁴⁶

Similarly, expectations of what constitutes suitable candidacy can be inconsistent between comparable lay pastoral ministry descriptions, for example, expectations of certain levels of education, experience, accreditation and authorisation are not uniform across the Australian landscape. Neither are there cohesive defined roles and responsibilities, or remuneration.⁴⁷

One of the aims of this resource is to contribute to the development of a common language about such position titles and to suggest standardised training, employment policies, and uniform practices of commissioning, accreditation, and accountability.⁴⁸

2.1.4 Consecrated religious persons

The language of 'lay pastoral ministry' is further complicated if the word 'lay' is understood as being synonymous with 'non-ordained'. Consecrated religious persons who are 'non-ordained' can also be identified as 'lay persons'.⁴⁹ This resource recognises the distinctive character of the religious state of life, which gives special witness, transforming the world according to the spirit of the beatitudes.⁵⁰

In accordance with the teachings of Vatican II, this resource acknowledges that some members of the ordained and lay faithful are called by God to the religious life, 'so that they might enjoy this particular gift in the life of the Church and thus each in one's own way, may be of some advantage to the salvific mission of the Church'.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in specific pastoral contexts, certain titles are used to designate both lay and religious ministry roles. In such cases, ministry responsibilities and activities may be common to both lay and religious persons, yet their embodiment will be unique according to the diverse gifts and charisms of each.⁵²

⁴³ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 47

⁴⁴ Wood S, Downey M. Ordering the baptismal priesthood. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press; 2005. p. 44-47.

⁴⁵ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 9-12.

⁴⁶ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 58,

⁴⁷ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 12.

⁴⁸ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 74.

⁴⁹ McGrath et al. 2016. p. 46.

⁵⁰ LG 13, 31.

⁵¹ L.G 43.

⁵² See Chapter Three.

2. A Complex Landscape

2.2 Understanding complementarity of ministries of lay pastoral ministry and of priests

The Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry research revealed a number of concerns surrounding public ministry roles. The first apprehension is that lay pastoral ministry seeks to replace ordained ministry and that lay people are contesting the priest's responsibility of pastoral care. Some see increased lay involvement as a response to an ageing demographic in ordained priests and a decline in vocations to the ordained priesthood. The development of recognised lay pastoral ministry roles consequently has become, in the eyes of some, just one pastoral strategy to address the 'shortage of priests', alongside the ordination of deacons, the incardination of international priests, and the clustering of parishes.

While the introduction of priests from other countries and cultures and the restoration of the permanent diaconate can be described as direct measures to 'provide regions, where there is a shortage of clergy, with sacred ministers'⁵³ the diaconate as a separate order, has a specific ministry but is not to replace the priest nor the lay ministry.

Following Vatican II the permanent diaconate was restored.⁵⁴ Neither the permanent diaconate nor lay pastoral ministry seeks to 'prejudice the meaning, role or flourishing of the ministerial priesthood, which must always be fostered because of its indispensability.'⁵⁵

Priests, deacons, religious and lay people are each in their own way, sharers in the ministry of Christ, and carry out for their own part the Christian mission in the Church and in the world.⁵⁶

2.2.1 Diversity and complementarity

Research conducted by the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry has raised another concern that the increased number of international priests and the restoration of the permanent diaconate could diminish the role of the lay faithful, and limit the growth of lay pastoral ministry. Priests from other countries and permanent deacons are sometimes viewed as being in competition with lay people involved in pastoral ministry.

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace contends that 'constructive and patient collaboration between international priests, deacons and others involved in the pastoral ministry should be promoted with generosity and conviction.'⁵⁷ The Church is an 'organic' communion, 'characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities.'⁵⁸ Thus lay people, international priests and permanent deacons should work in collaboration with priests and religious, in communion with the diocesan bishop, to exercise pastoral care for the good of the community.

⁵³ Congregation for the Clergy, Basic norms for the formation of permanent deacons. Strathfield, N.S.W.: St. Pauls Publications; 1998. n.2.

⁵⁴ LG 29.

⁵⁵ Congregation for the Clergy n. 2.

⁵⁶ LG 31, 41.

⁵⁷ Congregation for the Clergy n. 41.

⁵⁸ CL 20.

2.2.2 Avoiding clericalisation of lay people

Church authority is essential to good order. An obstacle to collaboration in building up the Church is one of the 'clericalisation' of lay persons. This can happen in different ways. For example, clericalisation is understood to occur when it is 'not service but power that shapes every form of government in the Church, either in the clergy or in the laity.'⁵⁹ In such a case, clericalisation of the laity occurs when the commitment of lay persons becomes 'absorbed by the exercise of "power" within the Church'.⁶⁰ Thus, longevity in a single pastoral location, or within a particular ministry position, can become corrupted; the occupation of multiple, central roles of responsibility by one lay person can become monopolisation and, the appointment to leadership and paid positions can become a means to 'career advancement' or 'promotion'.

Clericalisation may also occur when pastoral ministers lead alone, without recourse to representatives of the faith community, concerning pastoral ministry and financial affairs.⁶¹ This leads the pastoral leader to become a conduit for everything, rather than enabling the faithful, giving them freedom and room to live out their vocations as Christian disciples.⁶² A further concern for lay pastoral ministers is when they are not enabled to undertake tasks on their own initiative, nor are they strengthened in their sense of responsibility.⁶³ As a consequence, pastoral leadership can become, 'concerned with fixing holes in the road', or maintenance, rather than on missionary discipleship.⁶⁴

Clericalisation of lay pastoral ministry may result in one person becoming the focus of parish life, limiting the opportunities for others to contribute and having a reactive, insular approach to ministry. Clericalisation of lay pastoral ministry can also place a greater value on ministry *within the Church* to the detriment of the lay vocation in the world.⁶⁵

Another feature of clericalisation is the 'clerical spirit', which leads some people to expect that lay people, who are gifted and active in the service of their communities, should pursue the permanent diaconate, or ordained priesthood. Pope Francis spoke against such clericalisation, stating that it 'only hampers things [lay vocations] from developing correctly.'⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II. Address to the Bishops of the Antilles on their Ad Limina Visit [Internet]. The Holy See. 2002 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020507_antille-ad-limina.html n.2

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Pope Francis. Address to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) [Internet]. The Holy See. 2016 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/may/documents/papa-francesco_20160512_uisg.html

⁶² McGrath et al. 2016. p. 49.

⁶³ LG 37.

⁶⁴ Pope Francis. Address to the Leadership of the Episcopal Conferences of Latin America during the General Coordination Meeting [Internet]. The Holy See. 2013 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-celam-rio.html n.4.2.

⁶⁵ Pope John Paul II, 2002. n. 2, LG 31.

⁶⁶ Pope Francis, 2016.

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2.3 Lay pastoral ministry and working life

There are other concerns surrounding a variety of matters which are particularly significant from the perspective of the lay person and his/her working life:

- Uncertainty attached to moving from working in the secular sphere to the ecclesial sphere;
- Instability of pastoral roles, and insecurity of employment arrangements specifically, brought about by the movements of priests;
- Inadequate or no remuneration, inhibiting the individual's contribution to the ministry because of financial uncertainty;
- Expectation of availability and flexibility in ministry which may conflict with responsibilities to spouses, family, and personal well-being;
- Necessity of engaging in continued inter-personal, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral training programs to sustain effective ministry practice;
- Responsibility of being a public representative of the Church, and the associated obligation of maintaining a morally upright life, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the values of the Gospel;
- Diverse range of responsibilities and the never ending nature of the demands of ministry.

Pope John Paul II observes: 'The four Gospels bear witness to a certain pluralism within the fundamental unity of the same mission... the result of the driving force of the Spirit; it encourages us to pay heed to the variety of missionary charisms and to the diversity of circumstances and peoples.'⁶⁷

Challenges can arise when men and women, young and old, people from different ethnic backgrounds and people with varying capacities and experiences work together in ministry. Matters of justice and equity in the ministerial environment, respecting the dignity of all persons, need to be upheld by policies which enhance best practice.



⁶⁷ RM 23.

2. A Complex Landscape

2.4 Professionalisation and Attitudinal Change

2.4.1 Professionalisation

The Catholic Church in Australia has developed professional standards and practices which meet the current Australian and State and Territory laws. In doing this, it has responded to the needs of the growing number of lay Catholics who are employed by, or who volunteer in the service of the Church. These sets of standards and practices not only give people confidence in their interactions with Church personnel, but ensure the people of God are entrusted to the care of suitable individuals who are publicly accountable for their ministerial performance. In the Australian ecclesial context, the National Committee for Professional Standards is responsible for developing professional standards among clergy and religious. As a joint committee of Catholic Religious Australia and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, it was established in 2016 to oversee the development of these standards in response to Church-related abuse complaints. It assists in their efforts to prevent violations of professional standards.⁶⁸

Professionalisation has also occurred in a number of other areas including:

- Codes of conduct, such as *Integrity in Ministry*⁶⁹ and *Integrity in the Service of the Church*;⁷⁰
- Accreditation regulation such as the *Accreditation of Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Coordinators Policy*⁷¹ in the Archdiocese of Adelaide and the *Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Accreditation Standards* in the Archdiocese of Melbourne;⁷²
- Working With Children Checks and Police Checks becoming standardised practice during employment screening for ministry roles.

For some being 'professional' is deemed incompatible with ministry. Others argue that professional standards 'foster authentic ministry' and engender trust by making explicit the characteristics and competencies that are expected from pastoral ministers. Candidates are screened according to a defined set of criteria, and standards of practice serve as a check against the misuse of position and power.⁷³

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace recognises that it is the responsibility of the Bishop, as chief shepherd and teacher in a diocese, to strengthen the quality of ministry and ensure lay pastoral ministers are 'well prepared and competent to carry out their ministerial roles and functions.'⁷⁴ Therefore, setting professional standards for the training, selection, and ongoing development of pastoral ministers is necessary to ensure quality pastoral care⁷⁵ and to protect the vulnerable.

2.4.2 Attitudinal change

The future growth of lay pastoral ministry requires seeing that 'all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need.'⁷⁶

⁶⁸ The National Committee for Professional Standards. Home [Internet]. The National Committee for Professional Standards. 2017 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: <http://ncps.org.au/>

⁶⁹ National Committee for Professional Standards. *Integrity in ministry*. Bondi Junction, N.S.W.: National Committee for Professional Standards; 2004.

⁷⁰ National Committee for Professional Standards. *Integrity in the service of the church*. Bondi Junction, N.S.W.: National Committee for Professional Standards; 2011.

⁷¹ Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide. *Accreditation of Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Coordinators Policy* [Internet]. Adelaide: Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide; 2014 [cited 18 May 2018]. Available from: http://www.adelaide.catholic.org.au/_files/f/15417/PA%20Policy%202014.pdf

⁷² Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. *Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Accreditation Standards* [Internet]. Melbourne: Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne; 2016 [cited 18 May 2018]. Available from: <https://www.cam.org.au/Portals/7/Programs/LEM/LEM%20Accreditation%20Standards%20-%20JAN2016.pdf>

⁷³ Gula R. *The way of goodness and holiness*. Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press; 2011. p. 39-40.

⁷⁴ Committee on the Laity. *Co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord*. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; 2005. n. 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, n. 56.

⁷⁶ LG 32



The challenge of attitudinal change is therefore a complexity which must be faced to increase the participation rate of the laity in lay pastoral ministry and the concurrent growth of lay pastoral ministry. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of this same issue when he acknowledged the need for a 'change in mentality' with respect to the role of the laity: such a change in mentality meant recognising lay people as truly co-responsible and not merely collaborators with the clergy; and meant enabling lay people to make their specific contribution to the Church's mission 'in accordance with the ministries and tasks each one has in the life of the Church, and always in cordial communion with the bishops.'⁷⁷

This change of mentality is consistent with the Vatican II vision of a mature and committed laity, strengthened in personal responsibility and gifted with a renewed enthusiasm to continue Christ's mission of witness and service.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Pope Benedict XVI. Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action [Internet]. The Holy See. 2012 [cited 16 May 2018]. Available from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120810_fiac.html

⁷⁸ LG 37, 34.

3. Theology of Lay Pastoral Ministry

All forms of ministry find their place within the communion of the Church, in the one mission of Christ.⁷⁹ The aim of *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace* is to understand the place of lay pastoral ministry within the common vocation of discipleship, and how it relates to other forms of ministry. To do this, it is important to look at the foundations of this form of ministry in theology and Church teaching. They are 'a participation in Jesus Christ's own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all (cf. Mk 10:45).'⁸⁰ The following traces the roots of lay pastoral ministry in Christ's call to participate in the communion and mission of the Church.

3.1 Communion and mission

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.⁸¹ It is Jesus who takes the initiative and calls people to follow him.⁸² He calls each person by name, just as the Shepherd 'calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.'⁸³ By imitating Christ, by sharing in his life, and responding in faith to his call, Christ's followers become 'disciples of God.'⁸⁴ To follow Jesus is not just to learn about him, but also to be remade according to his likeness, the likeness of God.⁸⁵ Christ is the servant who, out of great love, 'lay down his life for his friends'.⁸⁶ Showing love for one another is the true sign of discipleship.⁸⁷ Christ's disciples 'serve each other unto salvation,' and carry out the truth in love.⁸⁸

Although disciples are called individually by name, all share in this life with Christ and with one another. As a result, 'we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.'⁸⁹ These words of St Paul echo the teaching of Jesus himself, who prayed for the unity of God's people, for the unity of disciples with each other, as an image and extension of the unity that binds Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ All who are baptised into the Christian faith are inseparably joined together 'as members of Christ and members of the body of the Church.'⁹¹ It is within this context, of the unity or communion of Christ's disciples, that discipleship and ministry in the Church, can be understood.⁹²

⁷⁹ Committee on the Laity 2005, n.17; AA 2.

⁸⁰ CL 21.

⁸¹ Pope Francis. *Evangelii gaudium: The joy of the Gospel*. Sydney: St Pauls Publishing; 2013. n. 1.

⁸² Mt. 9:9.

⁸³ Jn. 10:3; CL 58.

⁸⁴ Jn. 14:7; Pope John Paul II. *Veritatis Splendor* (hereafter VS), *The Splendour of Truth*. Sydney: Pauline Books & Media; 1993. n.19.

⁸⁵ Eph. 4:22-24; CL 12.

⁸⁶ Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:15; Jn 15:13; V.S. 20-21.

⁸⁷ Jn. 13:34-35.

⁸⁸ LG 7; Eph. 4: 15-16.

⁸⁹ Rom. 12:5.

⁹⁰ Jn. 17: 20-23; CL 12, 18.

⁹¹ CL 12.

⁹² Committee on the Laity 2015, n. 17.



3.1.1 The source of mission

Christians are baptised 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' that is, in the name of the one God, the most Holy Trinity.⁹³ The mystery of the Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith, the mystery of the belief that God's very being is relationship.⁹⁴ Although in the Trinity there is a distinction of persons, everything in them is one.

In Baptism, those who are 'born of water and Spirit' are called to 'relive the very *communio* of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history.'⁹⁵ Disciples reflect this life if they live in 'the spirit of communion and collaboration and if ... relationships are characterised by equality, mutuality and reciprocity.'⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II emphasised the importance of promoting a 'spirituality of communion,' of cultivating and extending communion at every level of the Church's life: between the ordained – bishops, priests, and deacons – consecrated persons, pastoral workers, and the entire People of God. All of these relations must be clearly characterised by communion.⁹⁷ In such a 'spirituality of communion' disciples think of their brothers and sisters in faith as 'those who are part of me'. This spirituality implies the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God, not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me'. It means, getting to know how to 'make room' for others, bearing 'each other's burdens'⁹⁸ and resisting the temptations which provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.⁹⁹

A spirituality of communion is realised when all members of Christ's body offer each other mutual respect, trust, and recognition, prize the gifts each has been given, and build up partnership and solidarity in genuine friendship. 'From the communion that Christians experience in Christ there immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another: all are branches of a single vine, namely, Christ.'¹⁰⁰

This characteristic communion is what distinguishes Christ's body: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ.'¹⁰¹ Therefore, 'communion means that unity can be found within diversity and that differences can be respected, and accepted as enriching and not divisive.'¹⁰² Just as there is distinction and oneness in the most Holy Trinity, so there is diversity and unity in the body of the faithful.

⁹³ Mt 28:19; Catholic Church. Compendium of the catechism of the Catholic Church. Strathfield, N.S.W.: St. Pauls; 2008. nn. 232-233.

⁹⁴ The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *The sign we give*. Chelmsford: Matthew James; 1995. p. 19.

⁹⁵ Jn. 3:5; CL 8.

⁹⁶ The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 1995, p. 20.

⁹⁷ Pope John Paul II. *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (hereafter NMI), *The New Millennium*, Strathfield, N.S.W.: St Pauls Publications; 2001. n.45.

⁹⁸ Gal. 6:2.

⁹⁹ NMI 43.

¹⁰⁰ CL 18.

¹⁰¹ Gal. 3:28.

¹⁰² The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales p. 26.

3.1.2 Diversity and complementarity

The unity in diversity of Christ's body means that the Church can be 'likened to an "organic" communion', or 'a living and functioning body.' This body is characterised by 'a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities.'¹⁰³ Such diversity and complementarity enriches the life of the Church, whereby each member is enabled to make a valuable contribution, according to the gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit. 'In the building up of Christ's Body various members and functions have their part to play. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church.'¹⁰⁴ Every member of the body thus 'offers a totally unique contribution on behalf of the whole body.'¹⁰⁵

This unique contribution calls for active participation by each member of the faithful: 'No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as the life of the body.'¹⁰⁶ Each disciple is therefore called to make a special contribution on behalf of the whole body. Disciples have gifts that differ according to the grace given to each.¹⁰⁷ But 'no talent, no matter how small, is to be hidden or left unused.'¹⁰⁸ Looking at the example of the first disciples, Pope Francis recalls that 'anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus.'¹⁰⁹ Pope Francis challenges each and every Christian to be actively engaged in carrying on the work of Christ, to be personally involved as 'missionary disciples', rather than leaving the work 'to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.'¹¹⁰

It is the mission of the Church, then, to live the communion of God, to manifest it within the Church between all members of Christ's body, and extend it to wider society. It is also the Church's mission to communicate the message of communion to the whole world, and 'serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ.'¹¹¹

¹⁰³ CL 20.

¹⁰⁴ LG 7; Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 791.

¹⁰⁵ CL 20.

¹⁰⁶ AA 2.

¹⁰⁷ Rom. 12:6.

¹⁰⁸ Mt 25:24-27; CL 56.

¹⁰⁹ EG 120.

¹¹⁰ EG 120.

¹¹¹ CL 17.

3. Theology of Lay Pastoral Ministry

3.2 Christian Vocation of Discipleship

When Christ called his followers to take up a particular mission, he said: 'go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'.¹¹² He thus mandated his followers to be his witnesses and to spread his message of communion, the kingdom of God, 'to the ends of the earth'.¹¹³ Christ's disciples are therefore called, through their communal relationship with each other, to be 'the initial budding forth of that kingdom', to serve 'as a leaven' in the world, transforming it into God's family.¹¹⁴

Christ instituted baptism as the gateway to this life of Christian discipleship: to the way of following Jesus' example, to being remade in his likeness, to carrying out the truth in love, and to spreading God's kingdom throughout the world. Thus the Christian way of life begins in baptism and it is the fundamental vocation in which the Church's mission and ministry finds full meaning.¹¹⁵

Through these sacraments of initiation, all members of the faithful are thus 'established in a personal relationship with Christ and in a network of relationships within the communion of the People of God,' and this 'personal discipleship of each individual makes possible a community of disciples formed by and for the mission of Christ'.¹¹⁶

Within this community of disciples, all share in the responsibility of Christian discipleship for the Church's mission.¹¹⁷ All disciples are, each in their own way, 'made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ,' so that they can 'carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world'.¹¹⁸ Thus, the fulfillment of the mission of the Church is a responsibility for 'every disciple of Christ,' each according to their own state – ordained, consecrated religious, or lay.¹¹⁹ Each of these 'in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ'.¹²⁰



The Second Vatican Council asserted that the Spirit offers special graces to 'the faithful of every rank,' by which they are 'made fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the church'.¹²¹ Thus, the Church is directed and guided by the Holy Spirit, who lavishes diverse gifts on all the faithful 'calling them to be, each in an individual way, active and co-responsible'.¹²²

Pope Benedict XVI recommended a 'change in mentality' to recognise the co-responsibility of the faithful and to enable lay people to make their specific contribution to the Church's mission.¹²³ Pope Francis remarks on the need for further awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church:

We can count on many lay persons... who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places.¹²⁴

Pope Francis promotes the 'missionary dynamism' of all the faithful, by which the contribution of lay disciples can properly be understood as 'a joyful response to God's love' which summons them 'to mission and makes' them 'fulfilled and productive'.¹²⁵

¹¹² Mt. 28:19-20; Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 767.

¹¹³ Acts 1:8; AA 1, 2; LG 17, 31.

¹¹⁴ LG 5; AA 40.

¹¹⁵ Committee on the Laity 2015, n. 19.

¹¹⁶ Committee on the Laity 2015, n. 21.

¹¹⁷ CL 15.

¹¹⁸ LG 31.

¹¹⁹ LG 17.

¹²⁰ LG 10.

¹²¹ LG 12, 7.

¹²² CL 21.

¹²³ Pope Benedict XVI, 2012.

¹²⁴ EG 102.

¹²⁵ EG 81.

3. Theology of Lay Pastoral Ministry

3.3 Vocation to Ministry



By the diversity of gifts which the Holy Spirit distributes among the faithful, some are called 'to assume different ministries and forms of service.'¹²⁶ What distinguishes these ministries from discipleship, or different forms of ministry from others, 'is *not an increase in dignity, but a special and complementary capacity for service.*'¹²⁷ Since they are 'brought about by the Spirit,' they 'need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities' in making their own contribution.¹²⁸ Rather, they become 'integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all.'¹²⁹ The tasks of ministry and discipleship thus 'do not favour the superiority of one over the other, nor do they provide an excuse for jealousy. The only better gift, which can and must be desired is love (cf. 1 Cor 12-13).'¹³⁰

The texts of the New Testament attest to the diversity of ministries, gifts, and ecclesial tasks in the early Christian communities. 'But the grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ... And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of service, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'¹³¹

There are some members of the faithful called to equip other disciples for the work of discipleship and to dedicate themselves to the work of building up the body of the faithful; these are given gifts that pertain to a public leadership of service.¹³² There are lay people who serve the Church by bringing to the Church 'people who perhaps are far removed from it,' 'presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction,' and offering 'their special skills to make the care of souls ... more efficient and effective.'¹³³

'Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock.'¹³⁴ This personal experience of the lay pastoral ministers who have been, and are still, accompanied and assisted by others, teaches them to be patient and compassionate with the disciples they are called to accompany, 'to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.'¹³⁵

Lay pastoral ministers empathise with others and offer 'an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord' because they understand that Christ, despite our imperfections, 'offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives.'¹³⁶

¹²⁶ CL 20.

¹²⁷ CL 20.

¹²⁸ EG 130.

¹²⁹ EG 130.

¹³⁰ Pope Paul VI. *Inter Insigniores*, Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood [Internet]. The Holy See. 1976 [cited 17 May 2018].

Available from: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html n.6, quoted in CL note 190 and EG, 104.

¹³¹ cf Rom 12:4-8. Eph 4:7, 11-13.

¹³² EG 103.

¹³³ AA 10.

¹³⁴ EG 171.

¹³⁵ EG 172.

¹³⁶ EG 121.

3.3.1 Distinction of ministries

While all ministries are necessarily a participation in and expression of Christ's ministry, distinctions between different forms of ministry must be recognised, according to particular states within the Christian life, and graces given in the sacraments.¹³⁷ This illustrates the nature of the Church, not only as an organic communion with diversity of gifts and participation, but as an 'ordered communion'.¹³⁸

There is a primary distinction to be made between ministries that have their basis in the sacraments of initiation, and those that have their basis in the sacrament of holy orders.

Both are rooted in sacramental initiation, but the pastoral ministry of the ordained is empowered in a unique way by the sacrament of holy orders. Through it the ministry of the apostles is extended. As successors to the apostles, bishops "with priests and deacons as helpers" shepherd their dioceses as "teachers of doctrine, priests for sacred worship and ministers of government." The work of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the faithful constitutes the essence of apostolic ministry.¹³⁹

Due to the sacramental character given by the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of holy orders, the ordained priesthood, is different 'in essence and not only in degree' from the participation in the ministry of Christ given in sacramental initiation.¹⁴⁰ Based on his reception of the fullness of the sacrament of holy orders, the Bishop has the primary responsibility for ensuring communion within his diocese, with the universal Church, with the Church's apostolic tradition, and with the successor of St Peter, the Bishop of Rome.¹⁴¹ It is the Bishop's role to give oversight to all ministerial relationships in a given diocese, and to confirm and guide the gifts of the faithful 'not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.'¹⁴²

Pastoral ministers, both lay and consecrated religious, share in the common priesthood of all the baptised. Their vocation to ministry is rooted in the sacraments of initiation and has several distinguishable characteristics. First, as intentional followers of Christ, their lives make visible an explicit faith commitment to love God and neighbour. Second, through their relationships with others, the world around them, and with God, they enter the path of true growth and yearn for the Christian ideal, seeking a level of mature disposition where they can be truly free and responsible. Third, they have recognisable and discerned gifts for leadership, which make them ready to accompany others on the way of Christian discipleship. Fourth, they engage in suitable preparation and formation, and receive appropriate ecclesial authorisation, to serve publicly in the Church. Fifth, through a process of commissioning or appointment, they enter into a new and distinctive relationship within the rest of the community. Finally, as participators in the one ministry of Christ, they have an explicit and intentional relationship of mutual collaboration with those in ordained ministry.¹⁴³

It is important to acknowledge that the pastoral ministry of consecrated religious ministers is further distinguished from other forms of ministry because it is 'imbued with the grace of their consecration'; therefore, men and women religious also bear witness to the charism and tradition of their religious institute.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ LG 10, 43-45; CL 22-23.

¹³⁸ Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 20.

¹³⁹ Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 20.

¹⁴⁰ LG 10; Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 24.

¹⁴¹ Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 21-22.

¹⁴² 1 Thess. 5:19-22; LG 12.

¹⁴³ Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 25; EG 171; Wood, p. 36-38.

¹⁴⁴ Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 13.

3. Theology of Lay Pastoral Ministry

3.4 Lay Pastoral Ministry

Lay pastoral ministry, like all forms of ministry in the Church, is a participation in the ministry of Christ. Thus, while all disciples 'should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are,' this is especially true for lay pastoral ministers.¹⁴⁵ These have the task of spreading Christ's message of communion, of witnessing to Christ, and initiating others into the way of Christian discipleship, through their work within the life of the Church. They are also tasked with maintaining a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society.¹⁴⁶ Their pastoral activity needs to consistently embody and promote a meaningful relationship with Christ. This relationship 'heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds' with members of the community of the faithful, and with God.¹⁴⁷

Lay pastoral ministers, in their leadership responsibility within the community, assist other disciples to 'remain steadfast in [their] intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships and to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2).'¹⁴⁸ By accompanying and assisting others in this way, lay pastoral ministers enable and encourage the transformation of the world.

Differences between lay pastoral ministers and other ministers, or between ministers and disciples, 'can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things. ... Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity.'¹⁴⁹

Although lay pastoral ministers accompany other disciples in a joyful response to the love of God that they have experienced in their own lives, they do not always see the fruits of their labours. They trust, with an interior certainty, that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks.

Pope Francis notes: 'Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but ... we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms



of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.'¹⁵⁰

Lay pastoral ministers thus accompany other disciples, with mercy and patience, through the stages of personal growth as these occur.¹⁵¹ They maintain an attitude of 'approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental.'¹⁵²

Lay pastoral ministry finds its source in the sacrament of baptism. Lay pastoral ministers received the special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread the faith and offer witness to Christ in the sacrament of confirmation.¹⁵³ Through the sacrament of the Eucharist, the unity of lay pastoral ministers with Christ and with one another 'is both expressed and brought about,' and charity towards God and humanity, 'is communicated and nourished' in them.¹⁵⁴

Lay pastoral ministers are called to be the Church, to be spirit-filled, to co-create the Kingdom of God by transforming the world.

¹⁴⁵ EG 121.

¹⁴⁶ EG 102; Committee on the Laity 2015 n. 8; CL 15.

¹⁴⁷ EG 67.

¹⁴⁸ EG 67.

¹⁴⁹ EG 131.

¹⁵⁰ EG 279.

¹⁵¹ EG 44.

¹⁵² EG 165.

¹⁵³ LG 11.

¹⁵⁴ LG 3, 7, 33.



Pope Francis 2015

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Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but... we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results.

4. The Practice of Lay Pastoral Ministry

Cognisant of the many complexities that are prevalent regarding lay pastoral ministry, this chapter offers a description of this form of ministry. The intention here is to contribute to the development of a shared vision or a common understanding and recognition of lay pastoral ministry at national and local levels. The following draws on the theological insights already outlined.

4.1 Seeking a common vision

Lay pastoral ministry is 'ministry' because it is a sharing and participation in the threefold ministry of Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king. It expresses the work by which lay pastoral ministers continue the mission and ministry of Christ within the Church, focusing on the pastoral accompaniment of disciples and the building of ecclesial communion, sustaining and supporting the Christian discipleship that seeks the transformation of the world.

The primary responsibility of lay pastoral ministers is to 'supply what is lacking,'¹⁵⁵ within their given setting, so that disciples may grow as Christians, building their capacity to become better witnesses of the faith and instruments of the Gospel. The term 'ministry' is thereby applied in this instance, with constant reference to the one source, the ministry of Christ, apart from whom we can do nothing.¹⁵⁶

'Lay pastoral ministry' is a general term for the service offered by some authorised women and men in the Church. It refers not to one position or context, but to a wide range of possible roles across a multitude of pastoral settings.

It is distinctive within the Christian call to discipleship for a number of reasons:

1. It pertains to lay persons whose identity and vocation spring from the dignity conferred by the sacrament of Baptism.
2. It adds a leadership responsibility whereby lay ministers take on a new relationship to the community of faithful and the mission of the Church.
3. It requires authorisation from the competent authority, which discerns and recognises prior charisms for ministry, and formally calls¹⁵⁷ individuals, on behalf of the entire community, to serve publicly in the local Church. A self-discerned call is not sufficient. The individual's call must be discerned within the Church and authenticated

by the Bishop, or his delegate. Those who exercise this call to lay pastoral ministry are acting:

- as authorised representatives of the Catholic faith,
 - in a formal and public way,
 - on behalf of the given community,
 - formed through education and practice,
 - on the basis of gifts received in faith and the sacraments of the Church,
 - acknowledged and sustained in rituals of commissioning.
4. It necessitates a special level of professional competence, for which individuals undertake appropriate formation, both initial and ongoing.
 5. It relies on a pastoral aptitude that is cultivated by individuals so that they can exercise the requisite pastoral responsibilities. These include providing formation for other disciples, leading approved liturgy and community prayer, being a pastoral presence to the community, discerning gifts and nurturing the baptismal call of all the faithful, and being a theological resource for people by helping them make connections between their everyday life experiences and the stories, rituals, symbols, and traditions of the Christian faith.
 6. It has a dynamic character whereby individuals exercise their ministry in harmony with their familial and social lives – whereby they transform the world according to God's plan – that is embodied in and through their particular life commitments and circumstances.
 7. It is not necessarily a lifelong or fulltime commitment, though for some it is a permanent or fulltime call to service, which can take many forms over the course of the minister's lifetime.
 8. It requires a complete openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and an openness and movement towards others.

¹⁵⁵ AA 10.

¹⁵⁶ Jn 15:1-5.

¹⁵⁷ Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service. Certification Handbook. USCCB Publishing; 2012. n. 33.



While the lay person's primary identity remains his or her Christian discipleship derived from Baptism, a lay disciple becomes a lay pastoral minister when:

- i. his or her vocation for formal public ministry in the Church is adequately discerned;
- ii. his or her gifts are identified and formed through education and practice;
- iii. he or she is authorised by the competent authority to a role or office appropriate to his or her gifts for service.

Lay pastoral ministers serve in close mutual collaboration with the ministry of bishops, priests, deacons, and consecrated persons.

Consecrated persons or members of religious institutes who are dedicated to the work of pastoral ministry may be appointed to positions, or come to have titles. Their exercise of pastoral ministry is based in the grace of their consecration. Significantly, they have exercised an indispensable role in

gathering recognition for, and fostering the growth of, lay pastoral ministry. They mentor and work in partnership with lay pastoral ministers while bearing witness to the charism and tradition of their religious institute.

There are many settings in which lay pastoral ministry is exercised: The following offers some examples:

- In parish contexts there are lay pastoral associates, and lay leaders in family ministry, sacramental preparation programmes, catechetics, music ministry, and youth ministry;
- In dioceses there are lay faith educators, mission and evangelisation teams, support services, and agencies;
- There are lay chaplains in ethnic communities, hospitals, prisons, schools, and universities;
- There are lay principals, mission and youth coordinators and religious educators in Catholic schools and universities, and special religious educators in state schools.

4. The Practice of Lay Pastoral Ministry

4.2 Discernment and formation

In Baptism, God calls each person by name to serve the growth of ecclesial communion. Disciples are commissioned by Christ to share in his mission and ministry and they are anointed by the Holy Spirit to perform their unique and specific tasks for the realisation of God's kingdom. On all of Christ's disciples the Spirit bestows the gifts that make them fit and ready for their various tasks and offices. In generous response to this Christian vocation of discipleship, lay people make the Church present and active in those places and circumstances of life in which they find themselves, so that as Church they reach out to all.

Some disciples are further called to a pastoral ministry of service for the growth of Christian discipleship. This desire can manifest in any number of ways, each as unique as the individual minister – for example, through a felt personal call, a growing inclination to serve beyond occasional ministries, a change in circumstances that provides freedom to serve the Church in a fuller way, or through the recognition of prior gifts and an individual invitation by those in pastoral leadership.

Discernment of a vocation to lay pastoral ministry is a process that is personal, communal, and ecclesial. It involves dialogue between lay pastoral ministry candidates and their families (including spouses and children where applicable) and friends, pastors and mentors, lay ecclesial ministers and fellow disciples, among others. Educators, spiritual directors, formators, and pastoral supervisors also play an important role in the discernment process. Such relationships provide a supportive environment in which the individual's gifts are identified, their knowledge and proficiency examined, and their aptitude strengthened.

When assessing the candidate suitability for public, authorised pastoral ministry, the Church should consider the individual's human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral readiness. These four areas provide a framework for the formation of all ministers – priests and deacons, consecrated religious, and lay pastoral ministers.¹⁵⁸ It is also important that agreed basic criteria to determine the suitability of a candidate be determined. For example, certain qualities or dispositions are evident in suitable lay pastoral ministers:

- A strong personal prayer life and participation in communal worship;
- Emotional maturity in personal and professional relationships;

- Ongoing participation in Church community life;
- Commitment to the Christian way of life and the values of the Gospel;
- Knowledge and appreciation for Tradition and the traditions of the Catholic Church;
- Capacity for service in pastoral leadership, including the ability to sustain and support the growth of Christian discipleship;
- Willingness and ability to engage in disciplined study and formation, including academic preparation for specific forms of ministry;
- Freedom from personal agenda and respect for all forms of ministry within the Church;
- Ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle and a reasonable balance among the legitimate claims of family, community, personal relationships, and ministry.

Such criteria should be adapted to local conditions by the relevant authorities, who are the ones best able to judge the needs and possibilities of the community.

Various screening instruments are also indispensable for determining the suitability of a candidate. For example, procedures for those employed in Church ministry necessarily adhere to statutory requirements, such as police checks, verified references from previous employers, and induction processes.

Once a candidate's suitability for ministry has been determined, and there are no impediments to the candidacy evident in the screening processes, he or she should begin a formal process of preparation. Some colleges, universities, seminaries, and schools of theology offer ministry formation programmes that may supplement what dioceses are able to provide for ministry candidates. Any unnecessary duplication of ministry formation services should be avoided.

Prior to a candidate assuming the responsibilities associated with lay pastoral ministry, discernment and formation should occur. They should also become the habit of a lifetime, whereby the lay pastoral minister discerns their ongoing suitability for ministry and deepens their process of learning and growth throughout their time of service.

¹⁵⁸ See Pope John Paul II. *Pastores Dabo Vobis, I Will Give You Shepherds*. Sydney: Pauline Books & Media; 1992. Congregation for the Clergy. *Basic norms for the formation of permanent deacons*. Strathfield, N.S.W.: St. Pauls Publications; 1998; Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. *Directives on formation in religious institutes*. Homebush, N.S.W.: St Paul Publications; 1990.

4. The Practice of Lay Pastoral Ministry

4.3 Authorisation: Certification and Appointment

Authorisation is the process by which lay men and women are given particular responsibilities for pastoral ministry by a competent Church authority. One of the important elements necessary for the granting of this authorisation is the verification that lay pastoral ministers, having received the appropriate level of formation, are deemed competent to minister in the area of specialisation for which they are prepared. This verification is provided by means of certification.

This certification is granted by means of a formal process, whereby an authorised committee in a diocese or organisation evaluates a candidate's competency in a specialised ministry. If the candidate is judged to have adequately demonstrated that he or she has met the specified certification standards, the candidate is granted formal recognition of achieving certification. This certification is usually valid for a stipulated period of time before renewal of certification is due.¹⁵⁹

Certification recognises the specific vocation of lay pastoral ministers, as well as their achievements in professional competency – including their theoretical knowledge and practical experience – in their respective areas of ministry. There are many benefits to the development of consistent certification standards and procedures, including the following:

- Communities, institutions, and agencies can have confidence that certified lay pastoral ministers are responsible ministers of the Church, and are adequately qualified and suitable to serve in the specialised ministry for which they were prepared;
- Certified lay pastoral ministers are enabled to provide a higher quality of service to the community, institution, or agency in which they serve;
- It challenges lay pastoral ministers to achieve greater authenticity and integrity by providing them with the opportunity to reflect on their ministries, engage in self-analysis, and benefit from assessment by their peers;
- Certification reinforces higher expectations on the part of all for the quality of service and sustained excellence in ministry;
- It becomes possible for lay pastoral ministers to transfer from one parish, region or diocese to another with the approval of the sending and receiving bishops.¹⁶⁰



- Certification enables employers to fulfil their legal responsibilities under employment-related legislation and generally relates to remuneration and benefits.

Upon receiving confirmation of a candidate's certification, the competent Church authority may appoint an individual to a specific position, providing details of duties and responsibilities, authority of the position, and terms of employment (where applicable). Formal, public confirmation of the appointment can take the form of an announcement to the community that will be served by the newly appointed lay pastoral minister. The significance of the appointment is highlighted when accompanied by a ritual of commissioning or installation. While it is not the rite itself that confers the appointment, a public prayer ritual or liturgy for the conferral of an office serves the purpose of:

1. presenting the lay pastoral minister to the community;
2. emphasises the importance of the role in the life of the community;
3. provides an opportunity for ministers and community to pray together;
4. instructs the community in the nature and character of the role;
5. spiritually strengthens the lay pastoral minister.¹⁶¹

The foregoing authorisation process, from certification to commissioning, ensures that those who are appointed to lay pastoral ministry roles have appropriate education, formation, experience, as well as ecclesial recognition and the support of diocesan structures. This process is valuable whether the lay pastoral minister's position is paid or unpaid.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life 1990, n.33.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 1-5; Committee on the Laity 2005, n. 57.

¹⁶¹ Committee on the Laity 2015, n. 59.

¹⁶² Ibid, n. 56.

5. Recommendations

Faithful Stewards of God's Grace proposes several recommendations that will enable a shared vision to be fulfilled in practice.

1. Affirming and Celebrating Lay Pastoral Ministry

- 1.1. Catholics in Australia, lay and clergy, are invited to affirm and celebrate the work of lay pastoral ministers, past and present. Such affirmation occurs alongside and with recognition of our ordained ministers.
- 1.2. Affirmation is expressed in many ways, as detailed in the recommendations that follow. The Church affirms the welcome, significant and ongoing contribution of lay pastoral ministry to its life.
- 1.3. Lay pastoral ministry is supported by conferences which are held both nationally and regionally. Such conferences may be enhanced by the inclusion of ordained ministers.
- 1.4. Education about the role of lay pastoral ministry is encouraged in all formation programs including those in seminary and diaconal studies, enculturation programs for international clergy, and for adult formation of religious and parish communities.
- 1.5. Dioceses and parishes may wish to explore ways of celebrating the contribution of lay pastoral ministers through:
 - 1.5.1 Adoption of this resource as a key guideline
 - 1.5.2 Liturgical life e.g. commissioning, prayers of intercession, thanksgiving
 - 1.5.3 Recognition of achievements such as significant anniversaries of service
 - 1.5.4 Media articles featuring the work of lay pastoral ministers.

2. Developing Formal Structures to Support the Work of Lay Pastoral Ministers

- 2.1. At a national level, lay pastoral ministry continues to be recognised and supported via the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry and the National Office for Lay Pastoral Ministry, both established by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.
- 2.2. It is envisaged that lay pastoral ministry has a significant place in Provincial and national Gatherings of the Church in Australia including the 2020 Plenary Council.
- 2.3. Structures for lay pastoral ministers at a diocesan level ensure appropriate support and integration within the life of the Church. Dioceses may wish to explore structures such as:
 - 2.3.1 A diocesan representative or council responsible for lay pastoral ministry, including the pastoral care and ongoing formation of those in ministry
 - 2.3.2 Regular gatherings of lay pastoral ministers, both separately, and together with ordained ministers, including at deanery or regional level
 - 2.3.3 Pastoral Planning, including consideration of how to foster and integrate lay pastoral ministry
 - 2.3.4 Regular communications with lay pastoral ministers through the diocesan office
 - 2.3.5 Inclusion of lay pastoral ministers on diocesan contact lists.

3. Implementing Best Practices in relation to lay pastoral ministers and Volunteer Workers

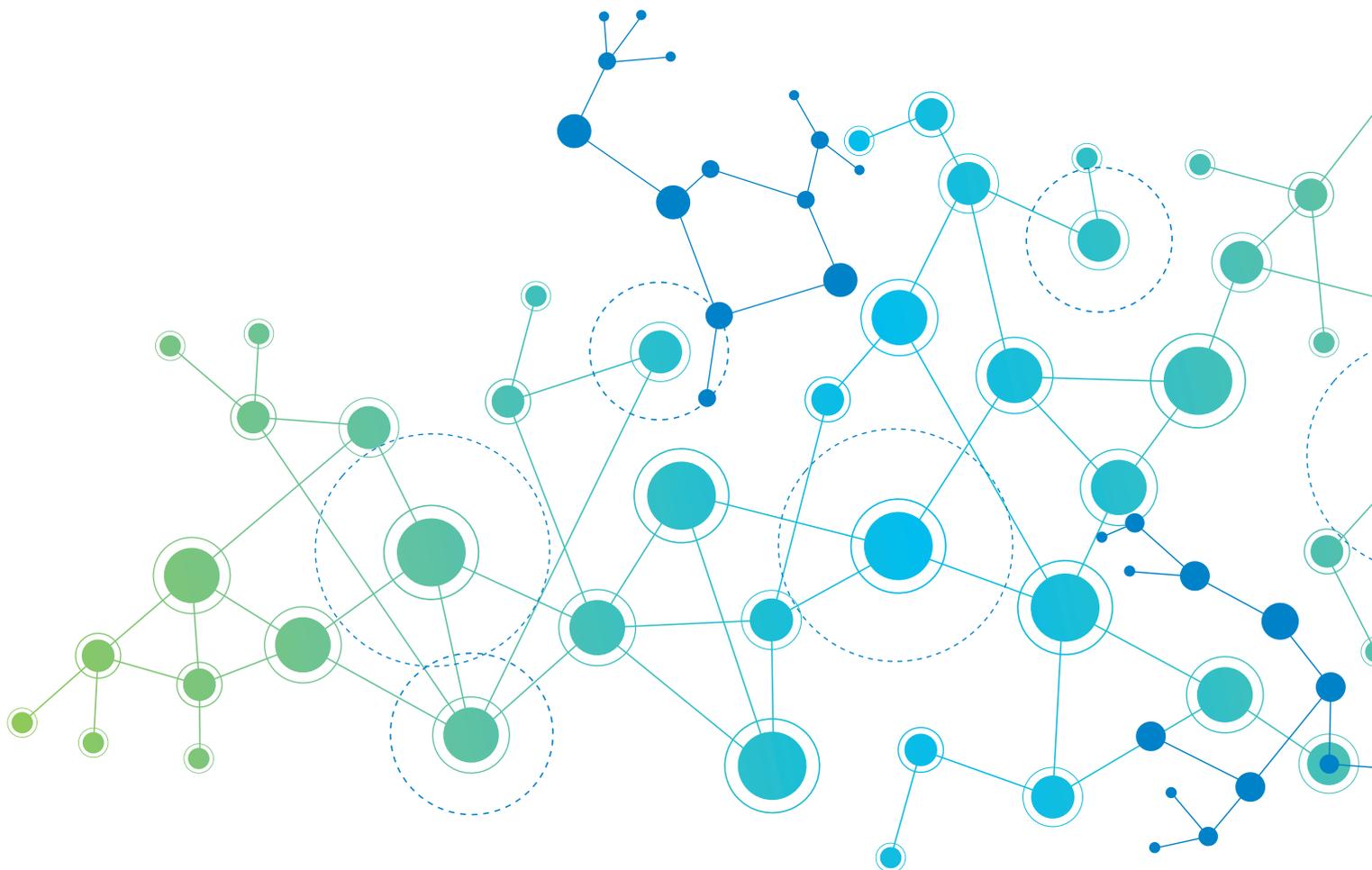
- 3.1. In accordance with National Professional Standards and the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations, dioceses are encouraged to cooperate in developing:
 - 3.1.1 high standards of ethical practice
 - 3.1.2 a common language for roles
 - 3.1.3 human resources policies, contracts and procedures for paid and unpaid lay pastoral ministers including grievance procedures
 - 3.1.4 pathways towards just remuneration and conditions for lay pastoral ministers
 - 3.1.5 processes of authorisation, commissioning, ongoing formation and review.

4 Strengthening Formation and Training for Lay Pastoral Ministry

- 4.1. In collaboration with universities and other institutes, dioceses are encouraged to develop appropriate formation and training for lay pastoral ministry, recognising the diversity of roles and needs.
- 4.2. Consideration needs to be given to ensure access to spiritual directors and professional supervisors to assist lay pastoral ministers in their roles.
- 4.3. Theological institutions and associations support the ongoing development of the theology of lay pastoral ministry, particularly as a ministry co-responsible with ordained ministry.

5. Building Networks and Sharing Resources

- 5.1 At diocesan, regional and national levels to:
 - 5.1.1 foster networks of lay pastoral ministry, and
 - 5.1.2 explore channels for the sharing of resources.



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