

# **The Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project: The Theological, Sacramental and Ecclesial Context**

**By The Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich, April 21, 2008, Orlando, Florida**

## **Introductory Remarks**

Thank you for your kind introduction. I want to add my own welcome to all of you, and my thanks for taking the time from the busy lives you lead, as bishops, pastors, educators, theologians, scholars and lay leaders to be part of this historic summit. I don't imagine that most Catholics know about our gathering and I suspect that if you told them you attended the Emerging Models of Pastoral Ministry Summit you most likely would get a blank stare.

## **Something new is happening in the life of the Church: How to understand it?**

But even if this summit is not on the radar screen of the majority of Catholics in our country, it is safe to say that most of the faithful are aware that something different is happening in our Church at this moment in history, particularly with the surge in lay involvement and lay leadership. At the same time, it is equally true that the interpretation of what is happening varies widely, depending on one's perspective and level of involvement in the life of the Church.

For instance, some view the greater participation of lay men and women in Church ministry as but an adjustment by an organization lacking a sufficient number of ordained ministers. Lay ministry according to this gauge is the Church's fall-back position to fill in the gaps created by this shortage. Others may view the collaboration between the laity and the ordained in more historical or sociological terms. Lay ministry is a product of the age, a sociological development in which the democratic tendencies in the broader culture have finally been accepted by or have just seeped into the Church. Of course, both approaches are inadequate. Not only do they undervalue lay ministry as belonging to the nature of the Church, but they also reduce all discussions about it to the merely practical.

Happily, however, the conversations we have had through the Emerging Models Project reveal that as people become more fully engaged in the life of the Church, they move beyond the practical, sociological and organizational perspectives. They also exhibit a high degree of theological competence to articulate what is happening in the language of our faith tradition. In a word, they feel very much at home with the bishops' description of the present situation in **Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord**, namely that we have before us the new realities of "lay participation in Christ's ministry."<sup>i</sup>

## **Input from a Lay Minister**

No doubt our own conversations with lay leaders bear this out. I recall one in particular with an elderly grandmother. Mary Alice has been a commissioned lay minister for some years. I was struck by an observation she made, which I want to use to frame my preliminary remarks about why the theological context must remain both our starting point and point of reference as we take up the tasks before us this week.

As Mary Alice described for me what lay ministry means to her, she prefaced her remarks by noting how our belief in the resurrection of the body has been a constant source of comfort to her. The prospect of eternal life heartens her in the face of life's trials. But, now as she reflects on how lay ministry has so enriched the Church, to the point that future generations will benefit from the works she and others are doing, she has come to believe with equal conviction "that something of me," as she put it, "will also continue to live on in the Church after I die, because this is Christ's work and we believe nothing of his is ever lost. In many ways that is even more consoling," Mary Alice continued, "since I can see that lasting reality now."

## **Three Insights**

Her comments are revealing and instructive for us on a number of levels. First, notice her sophistication at being able to connect various theological insights as an organic whole. Ecclesiology, sacramental theology, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology are interrelated and they inform each other. It is within that organic unity that she makes sense of her ministry and all that is involved in the actual day-to-day practice of it. Ministry is not a reality in its own orbit, or understood apart for the Church, but it belongs to the nature of the Church in which Christ exercises his ministry for her salvation and the salvation of the world. It is in this context that Mary Alice can say that her contribution has a lasting impact on the Church because it is Christ's work. The point is simple. During these days a good deal of data will be shared and discussed about best practices, effective organizational structures, leadership models and the like. These are helpful and needed considerations, but they should not drive the discussions we will have this week. Mary Alice's comments remind us that as we review this data and take up the task before us, we do so not as sociologists or even pastoral planners but as believers. Simply put, any discussion of practice must be closely tethered to the organic whole of our faith tradition, since that is ministry's only authentic context.

Secondly, not only does Mary Alice remind us that ministerial practice can only be fully and rightly understood within the context of our faith tradition, but that faith tradition is prior to and gives direction to practice. I suspect Mary Alice would have no problem admitting that were it not for the renewed sense of the nature of the

Church following the Second Vatican Council, in all likelihood she would not be doing what she is doing as a lay minister. In other words, giving ministry a theological context is not an afterthought or **post factum** validation of what has already happened, and surely not a strategy to assuage the fears of those who are suspicious of this new reality in the life of the Church by providing it with a doctrinal patina. Mary Alice's comments remind us that our faith tradition is not just a resource to understand ministry. It is its source, its point of reference for any future development of ministry.

Finally, just as the faith of the Church is Mary Alice's lens for reading what is happening in the Church today, so too it provides insight to help interpret what is happening in her life and what her life means. It is not primarily the quantifiable results and measurable outcomes of an annual end-of-the-year evaluation that give meaning to and enrich Mary Alice's life and ministry. Rather, as she notes, it is the glimpse - in the present reality of her ministry - of Christ's final reign, which she hopes to share for all eternity. Not only do we owe it to the Church to frame our discussions and work theologically, but we also owe it to Mary Alice and everyone involved in the ministry of the Church, as they rely on the teachings of the tradition to enhance their faith life and ministry in the Church.

These three insights from Mary Alice's reflection on lay ministry say much more eloquently than I ever could why we need to begin our discussions this week by theologically contextualizing them. By dealing with the theological context at the beginning of our summit, it will do three things:

- 1) **center** our discussions by tethering practice to the whole of our faith tradition,
- 2) **give direction** to our efforts and serve as a point of reference as we plan creatively to meet the contemporary pastoral needs of our Church, and
- 3) **remind** us that a test of authenticity for what we do here will be how it enhances the faith life and ministry of all who serve in the Church, real people like Mary Alice and all those we have come to love and respect.

### **The Elements of the Theological Framework**

So, what are the key theological elements of this new reality which need to be identified if we are to discuss and plan further developments in a way that is faithful to the tradition and attentive to the contemporary needs of the church? How am I going to organize them in a way that we can make intelligent use of them? I will simply take up the work begun by the bishops in **Co-Workers**. There, they reminded us that the starting point for understanding all ministry is vocation. God calls. We respond. It is a call that invites a response in three interrelated, interdependent and progressive ways:

- 1) The call to holiness for each of us,
- 2) The call to communion as members of Christ's Body, and
- 3) The call to witness as a priestly people, a light to the nations.

I will organize these three calls in a kind of grid, a framework that highlights how they are interrelated and interdependent in a progressive way. By configuring these three calls as progressively interrelated, I hope to show, for instance, that God's call to each of us begins with the call to holiness, but does not end there. It must mature and develop through our response to the subsequent calls to communion and to witness. If this does not happen, then our Christian lives will not bear the fruit God fully intended in calling us to be holy and might even possibly wither. Similarly, for one to respond authentically to the calls to witness and communion, both must be anchored by a faithful response to the call to holiness. I will also show from a sacramental point of view how this progression from one call to the next is expressed as we move from the baptistery to the Eucharistic assembly and out into the world.

My aim in all of this is to define the theological template on which the various questions we will be discussing this week can be placed and examined. The purpose will be to keep us faithful to the tradition and assist us in planning how best to meet the contemporary needs of our faith communities. So let's take up the first call, the call to holiness.

## Call to Holiness

### Preliminary Remarks

I want to make a few preliminary remarks. First, we are used to hearing that we all are called to holiness, but what does that really mean? Holiness is a tricky word to define, especially when we try to apply it to human beings. Is someone holy because of what they wear, what they eat or don't eat, where they live, how they pray?

### Biblical Notion: God's Holiness as "Other"

The biblical notion of holy is a good starting point. The Old Testament applies holiness to God alone. In fact "Holy" is God's own name, as we hear in Psalm 99:3 – "Let them praise your great and glorious name: Holy is God." But there is also a sense that God's holiness is connected to his being **totaliter aliter**, God as Other, a phrase Rudolf Otto used to great effect in his **Idea of the Holy**.

That is why anything or anyone ever associated with the holy is also "other" or set apart, different from the ordinary, the mundane or the **profane**, a word which literally

means ‘outside of the temple,’ apart from the area where worshipers gather to encounter the holy in cultic practices.

## **Holiness Expressed in Self-Renunciation**

I was intrigued by a phrase Pope Benedict XVI uses in **Deus Caritas Est** to describe how God reveals his Otherness. It is in his forgiving love which, as the Pope says, “is so great that it turns God against himself, against his own justice.” “Here,” the Holy Father continues, “Christians can see a dim prefigurement of the mystery of the Cross: so great is God’s love for man that by becoming man he follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love.”<sup>ii</sup> In fact, in the New Testament holiness is ascribed uniquely to Christ, as he most fully reveals the holiness of God who is Other. How? By emptying himself, which he does in imitation of the Father who gives everything over to the Son except the name “Father”. This turning against himself is how we are to understand the holiness of God, who is Other, and the holiness to which we are called, a holiness that is other in that it involves self-renunciation.

## **Complete Self-Renunciation: Entering Christ’s Dying and Rising**

But responding to the call to holiness involves more than self-abnegation or self-abasement, as the full meaning of Baptism reveals. It is true that Jesus’ own baptism was a humiliation, but the early disciples of Jesus did not associate Christian baptism with his baptism in the Jordan or even the baptism that he administered. Some might think that we, followers of Jesus, are just doing what he did. Jesus was baptized and so should we be. Paul tells us, we are not baptized into Jesus’ baptism, but we are baptized into his death, cf., Romans 6. What exactly does that mean?

The **Jerusalem Mystagogical Catecheses** of St. Cyril shed light on the full impact of that statement. Cyril recalls for the neophytes what took place at the Easter Vigil with these riveting words: “You were led down to the font of holy baptism just as Christ was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb, which is before your eyes.”<sup>iii</sup> With that visual of Christ’s very tomb before them, as the catecheses were given in the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, Cyril then quotes for the newly baptized Romans 6: “Do you not know that when we were baptized into Christ Jesus we were by that very action sharing in his death? By baptism **we went with him into the tomb,**”<sup>iv</sup> (emphasis mine). We are used to the translation, “by baptism we were buried with him,” but the translation found in the Liturgy of the Hours for the Easter season takes full advantage of the visual Cyril offers. It helps us to see Paul’s point that in baptism Christ shares not just his risen life, but his death, as we go into the tomb with him.

Thus, baptism is not about our death in itself having value, but it is about Christ’s death, which he shares with us along with his life. The dying, the self-renunciation

involved in baptism, is the acceptance that we are so poor that not only does our life not have value without Christ, neither does our death. We cannot cling to either with any hope of salvation. Neither belongs to us, for “in life and in death we are the Lord’s.” Romans 14:8. Here, the self-renunciation, the de-centering of the ego by which we enter into all that Christ has to offer, is complete. We admit that we have nothing of value to save ourselves. It is all Christ’s initiative, his work and action.

The flip-side of that statement is that all we are is given to us, for the life we live is not our own but Christ’s, who, having shared his death with us, shares too the fullness of his risen life and all that he does in that new life. Holiness is about that radical self-renunciation that allows us to say with Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Galatians 2:20.

### **Utter Poverty, Utter Grace: The Common Bond We Share**

It is out of that common, humbling experience of our utter poverty, realizing all is grace, that we connect with one another as a holy people. We are one in being those who turn against ourselves to the point that we renounce both our life and our death as having any saving significance on their own. We are one in the death and life Christ shares with us. This is the ground of our unity and our common consolation, to which we must always return if the unity among us, no matter the distinctions in office, is to be authentic and life-giving.

St. Augustine offers a compelling witness to this very point, noting how he needs to return to the unity he shares with the baptized as the source of his consolation and to maintain authenticity in his service as bishop. In **Sermon 340** he reveals how the burdens of being a bishop leave him, as he says, “in so much turmoil that I feel as though I were tossed by storms on a great ocean.” But, he continues, “when I remember by whose blood I have been redeemed, this thought brings me peace, as though I were entering into the safety of a harbor; and I am consoled, as I carry out the arduous duties of my own particular office, by the blessings which we all have in common. By finding my chief joy therefore in the redemption, which I share with you, and not in my office, which has placed me over you, I shall the more truly be your servant.”<sup>v</sup>

Pope John Paul II echoes this sentiment in **Pastores Gregis**: “As a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, the Bishop is above all else, like every other Christian, a son and member of the Church.”<sup>vi</sup>

### **Summary Statement**

In sum, we respond to our call to holiness by turning against our self as God does, by renouncing ourselves so completely that we acknowledge our utter poverty to save ourselves either by our life or death. We have to borrow not only our life from the Lord, but also our death. It is through this total self-renunciation, this entering into the tomb with the Lord to share his death, that everything becomes grace for us, especially our sharing in God's ongoing work of saving the world, something we have in common with all the baptized. The only death we proclaim is the death of the Lord. So, too, the only life we have together is the one Christ shares with his Father in mutual self-giving love, which is the Spirit, for the salvation of the whole world. That is the radical unity we share in responding to the call to holiness. The message is clear. The primary ordering in the Church comes in baptism. We start with what we share before what distinguishes us.

## Call to Communion

### **Preliminary Remark: Movement from Baptism to Eucharistic Community through Confirmation**

What was begun in the call to holiness continues and passes on to be deepened in the call to communion. This time our self-renunciation, made complete in the dying and rising with Christ, and the bond, created among us by the common humbling experience of total grace, mature in communion as members of the Body of Christ.

Recent research on the sacrament of Confirmation highlights how this middle sacrament of initiation marks that passing from our personal call to holiness to the ecclesial call to communion, that passing from Baptism to Eucharist.

It has become common to speak about Confirmation as that sacrament which sends us out into the world. But with a more careful review of the origins of the rite of Confirmation, there is strong evidence that Confirmation was initially celebrated as a kind of dismissal rite. Just as the bishop blessed the community at the dismissal of the Eucharist to send them into the world, so too at the end of Baptism he blessed the neophytes with chrism, sending them from the baptistery, not into the world, but into the Eucharistic assembly of the anointed priestly people of God.

This recovery of the origins of Confirmation throws light on the connection between the two calls. All that happens in Baptism, the renunciation completed in becoming one with the dying and rising of Christ and the common bond created as a result, now passes to be repeated in the Eucharist, the only repeatable sacrament of initiation. Let's take a look at that more carefully.

## **Self-Renunciation as Membership in the Body of Christ**

Specifically, the self-renunciation begun in Baptism now becomes a turning away from oneself in order to become a member of the Body of Christ. To see our identity in terms of others challenges our culture's view about the meaning both of the human body and the human person. For the world the body as an isolated entity is but the mere extension of the human person's uniqueness and individuality. Christian conversion, Paul tells us, transfers my basic allegiance from myself in isolation to the Risen Lord and his people. The body is not the metaphor of private individuality because it expresses a mode of belonging. The body is the human person at the point of sharing, of commitment. "Instead of asking "Who am I?" we would be better to ask "To whom do I belong?"<sup>vii</sup>

The self-renunciation in the call to communion is a turning against one's self as an isolated individual and defining who I am in terms of my commitments to others. "Christian conversion, therefore, is invariably social."<sup>viii</sup>

Pope Benedict came at this very same point in a different way when he spoke to the Bishops of the United States during his pastoral visit to Washington. He noted that "In a society which values personal freedom and autonomy, it is easy to lose sight of our dependence on others as well as the responsibilities that we bear towards them. This emphasis on individualism has even affected the Church (cf., Spe Salvi, 13-15)," he noted, "giving rise to a form of piety which sometimes emphasizes our private relationship with God at the expense of our calling to be members of a redeemed community. Yet...if we are truly to gaze upon him who is the source of our joy, we need to do so as members of the people of God (cf., Spe Salvi, 14)."<sup>ix</sup>

## **Complete Self-Renunciation: Christ the Head of the Body**

And as the conversion, the turning against our self for the call to holiness, is more than self-abnegation, so too becoming a member of the body is more than renouncing a life of isolation to become a member of a collective. Christianity is not communism. The Christian community is not the sum total of the human beings who belong to it. Rather, just as the self-renunciation in the call to holiness is about joining ourselves totally to all that Christ is, recognizing that he always takes the initiative, so in becoming a member of Christ's body, we give over to him even our giving. Like our death, it has no value if not joined to his. When we do so, he takes what we have and multiplies it in abundance.

In one of his Lenten sermons, Leo the Great expresses this very thought as he encourages people to be generous without worrying about the cost and their



sufficiency: “In these acts of giving do not fear a lack of means...There can be no shortage of material for generosity where it is Christ who feeds and Christ who is fed. In all this activity there is present the hand of him who multiplies the bread by breaking it, and increases it by giving it away.”<sup>x</sup> Leo reminds us that our self-renunciation begun in Baptism becomes total when we as members of the Body give ourselves totally over to Christ who works through our poverty. Just as those who died with Christ share his life in the baptismal call to holiness, so do the members, who radically give everything over for the good of the Body, receive an abundance of life far beyond their gift, because it is Christ who gives and there is never a shortage. It is all his doing. He takes the initiative, so that all of our giving is joined to his ongoing work of redeeming the world.

Herein lies the need for a distinct ministry, a ministry that is an icon of Christ’s as Head of the Body, taking the initiative. If it were not for the distinctive ministry of the ordained the community itself would not be distinguishable from any other group. “The ministerial priesthood renders tangible the actual work of Christ, the Head, and gives witness to the fact that Christ has not separated himself from his Church, rather he continues to vivify her through his everlasting priesthood.”<sup>xi</sup>

In that rich sacramental and theological context, immediately all questions of self-promotion, competition and rivalry evaporate as having any significance. The ministerial priesthood is a witness within the community of the baptized that Christ takes the initiative, something we discovered in our common baptism when we borrowed from him not just our life but our death.

### **From Common Bond In Baptism to One Body With A Diversity of Gifts**

Similarly, the common bond, born in Baptism, between those who acknowledge their utter poverty to save themselves, matures in the call to communion. Those who serve the building up of the Body as the ordained do so as a way of living out their baptismal calling. Ordination does not erase one’s baptismal character. Rather, the ordained priest so renounces his life that he makes his whole life’s project the building up of the Body. He does so to the point that everything that he does is Christ’s doing. He ministers not on his own, but in the person of Christ the Head, and not for himself but for the Body. And this is important for understanding the sacrifice that is involved in the ordained life. Just as one’s death in the call to holiness means nothing on its own, neither does one’s sacrifice as an ordained servant have meaning if the giving is not about what Christ is doing. All of this is done always in relation to the Body, not for himself.

I like the way Pope John Paul II put it in **Pastores Dabo Vobis**. He spoke of the ordained as those who are at the “forefront”, activating and enabling the members of the Body to do the same, allowing all the giving, the sharing, to be Christ’s in whatever state of life people are in, sharing a diversity of gifts. Their aim is to spur all the members to share their gifts for building up the Body: The full text reads: “The priest is placed not only in the Church but also in the forefront of the Church. The priesthood, along with the Word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church. The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God.”<sup>xii</sup>

The late pope uses similar language in **Pastores Gregis**, when describing the relationship of the bishop to the faithful: “Every sort of differentiation between the faithful, based on the variety of their charisms, functions and ministries, is ordered to the service of the other members of the People of God. The ontological and functional differentiation that sets the Bishop **before** the other faithful, based on his reception of the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders, is a manner of being **for** the other members of the faithful which in no way removes him from being **with** them.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Thus, not only is the greater involvement of the laity through a sharing in their gifts not a threat to the ordained, it is the task of the ordained, who render “tangible the actual work of Christ, the Head,” to encourage and animate the laity to share those gifts for the good of all, including the ordained. In fact, that is why the ministerial priesthood must always be considered a ministry distinct not just in kind but in essence, for it “gives witness to the fact that Christ has not separated himself from his Church, rather he continues to vivify her through his everlasting priesthood.”<sup>xiv</sup>

## Summary Statement

### Promotion of All Charisms for Building Up the Body

All of this raises a number of important issues for our consideration, and I mention two. First, the entire Body must be concerned about the promotion of all the charisms in the Church without rivalry or dissension. The self-renunciation begun in Baptism matures and is nourished in **communio**. If the baptized are not encouraged, facilitated, enabled by the Church to share their gifts, then their basic call to holiness will not reach its full potential. If we are serious about the call to holiness, then fostering the gifts of all the baptized cannot be viewed as an option, a kind of spiritual upgrade for some of the baptized. It also means that those who are involved in lay ministry can never be viewed as the “super baptized”, a new level in a hierarchy of roles.

John Paul II said it well in Pastores Gregis when he spoke of the Church as an ecclesial communion which “presupposes the participation of every category of the faithful, inasmuch as they share responsibility for the good of the particular church which they themselves form.”<sup>xv</sup> We are not short-changed, impoverished by the gifts of others, as though there are a finite number of gifts and we have to protect our own. If we are serious about the call to holiness, the gifts of all the baptized must be encouraged and enabled. It is fundamentally a recognition that all of this is Christ’s doing and “he takes all these gifts, blesses them and makes them holy” in building up the Body.

### **A Spirituality of Communion**

This of course requires an attitude, which John Paul II referred to as a spirituality of communion: “A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other's burdens’ (**Gal 6:2**) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, ‘masks’ of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.”<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Promotion of Ordained Ministry: What Is At Stake?**

Secondly, the initiative of Christ finds expression in a special way through the ordained, not in a way that diminishes the gifts of others, but, as we have seen, in a way that enriches them and orders them to share in Christ’s work of building up the Body. Practically, that means we all share a corporate responsibility for promoting the ordained ministry in the Church. In the Emerging Models Project’s recent publication, **Sharing Catholic Parishes**,<sup>xvii</sup> I noted in the **Forward** that we see a great deal of enthusiasm in the Church for calling lay men and women to share their gifts in Church ministry, and that is admirable. But, that enthusiasm has to be matched by a similar urging of vocations to the ordained ministries. What I am suggesting is that just as we need to promote the sharing of gifts of all the baptized, so do we need to have a sense of corporate responsibility for vocations to the ordained ministry. And the reason we need to do this is not just to increase the number of priests. This is a worthwhile goal, but more is at stake. The church community is whole when Christians exercise their baptismal vocation and priests minister to them, in Christ’s name, through their vocation to the ordained ministry. If a sense is lacking that we all share the task of promoting vocations to ordained ministries, the temptation will be to forget the intrinsic connection that exists between these two vocations, and to forget that Christ is the one who takes the initiative and it is his work we do. Perhaps the very awareness that we all have a stake in the future of the Church, the same awareness

that prompts lay ministers to serve the Church, is the place to start. It is a resource that has to be mined more deeply to avoid one-dimensional responses to the need for more priests, reducing the issue to a matter of merely changing Church discipline.

### Call to Witness

Let us now move to the third call, the call to witness. All that was begun in Baptism and matured in the Eucharistic community shapes and is expressed in the Church's approach as a priestly people to the world. The Church herself becomes the sacrament of salvation for the world, a light to the nations through witness.

### Communal Renunciation: To Be A Light To The Nations

The self-renunciation begun in Baptism and matured in leaving one's individuality to become a member of the Body of Christ, is an attribute that must be present in the Church's approach to the world for her witness to be authentic. What I am suggesting is that a kind of corporate self-renunciation must mark the life of the Church.

Popes in recent history have repeatedly addressed how the Church comes not to dominate or dictate to the world but to serve. Pope Benedict XVI has been especially sensitive to this matter noting that when churches participate in public debate, their interventions must always be "...aimed solely at enlightening consciences, enabling them to act freely and responsibly, according to the true demands of justice, even when this should conflict with situations of power and personal interest."<sup>xviii</sup> These remarks build on a theme the Holy Father introduced in his first encyclical, **Deus Caritas Est**, in which he commented on the place of Catholic social doctrine in public debate: "It has no intention of giving the church power over the state. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just."<sup>xix</sup>

Yet, the global nature and organization of the Church are gifts that can be and are used to contribute to the good of humanity. "Love must be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community," notes Benedict XVI in **Deus Caritas Est**.<sup>xx</sup> This suggests something for each of the baptized as they respond to the call to witness to the Gospel as a member of the priestly people of God. The good of the institutional life of the Church is part of that response. The self-renunciation in witnessing involves keeping before us, no matter our situation or place in the Body, the good of the institutional life of the Church and that we can either enhance or diminish the Church's mission of being a light to the nations by what we do in this regard.

This means two things at the least. First, the Church as an institution should never be instrumentalized for one's personal gain, status, wealth or power. The history of the Church is replete with such violations.

Second, it also means that we should take responsibility and ownership for the good name of the Church as an institution. We are living in an era when institutions suffer from suspicions and distrust, which is due in some part to their own self-inflicted wounds as well as a spirit of hyper-individualism. But, we should be cautious about allowing a similar kind of skepticism or even cynicism to color our vision about the institutional life of the Church. So much is at stake, especially our sense of identity as a priestly people, which has been formed in self-renunciation in order to be a light to the nations. The turning against our self, begun in Baptism and deepened in the Eucharistic assembly, builds up the Body in our own faith communities. But it also must continue as each particular Church sacrifices to enable the Church Universal to effectively serve the world through witness.

There is, of course, a parallel in our lives, the sense of responsibility we feel for the good name of our families or communities. Some years ago, a Jesuit novice on the Pine Ridge Reservation was driving through the Badlands when his car broke down. The sun was just beginning to set and he had heard stories about the dangers of the Badlands at night. Frightened, he began walking to find help, and he noticed off in the distance a light. When he reached the house, a Lakota boy, 10 years old or so, was bouncing a basketball and shooting hoops. He approached the lad and began to explain his plight with noticeable fear in his voice. The boy stopped dribbling the ball and just held it while listening. His only response when the Jesuit had finished his tale of woe was, "Come on in. We're Indians. We help people." Notice his sense of belonging to a people and his respect for their reputation. That is the kind of presence of mind, the sense of responsibility for the greater good of the institutional life of the Church, which I am referring to here. For the Church to be an effective witness to the world, there are institutional aspects that have to be fostered, and the responsibility for that belongs to all.

### **Complete Self-Renunciation Through Evangelization**

The complete self-renunciation in the call to holiness and the call to communion shapes the call to witness, making how Christ taught our point of reference. The first recorded Gospel reference of Jesus using the word **evangelize** occurs in Luke 4, as he quotes Isaiah to describe that he has come to proclaim good news to – evangelize - the poor. This testifies to the belief of the ancient Church that the poor have a priority in the life of the Church because when the poor have good news preached to them, it is a sign of Christ's presence and a sign of the Church's authenticity in making Christ present to the world. Care for the poor will continue to be a litmus test for us

as we develop emerging models of ministries in the church. We will know we are on the right track if what we do helps us better care for the poor, because that is what Christ does.

The self-renunciation of the Church is made complete when the good news we bring to the poor is Christ himself. We bring them to meet Christ, which is the primary objective of evangelization, for he, as we have learned ourselves in answering the call to holiness, is the only one who gives life in abundance. Some today misinterpret our efforts to preach Jesus as the fullness of God's revelation, saying that it reveals an attitude of intolerance or limits human freedom. But this view confuses evangelization with proselytism, that is, "the promotion of a religion by using means, and for motives, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel; that is, which do not safeguard the freedom and dignity of the human person."<sup>xxi</sup> We share Christ with others because we are sharing our life. Paul said it well, "the love of Christ impels us that once we have come to the conviction that one died for all, therefore all have died." II Corinthians 5: 14. All of this suggests that we should not be shy about bringing others to meet Christ, the one who is our life. We should make sure evangelization has a place on the grid as we look at priorities and plans for developing ministries in the Church.

### **Common Bonds Through Inculturation**

The bonds created through the common utter poverty and grace of our baptism, and the diversity of gifts shared in a life of communion are both expressed and expanded in the Church's evangelizing witness and service to the world. The circle of those who share Christ's life in common with us expands.

There is rich tradition of believing that the seeds of faith have been planted before the Word has been proclaimed, with the result that both the given culture and the Church are enhanced. On the one hand the spiritual qualities and gifts proper to each people are brought to fruition in a way that "strengthens these qualities, perfects them and restores them in Christ. On the other hand, the church assimilates these values, when they are compatible with the Gospel, 'to deepen understanding of Christ's message and give it more effective expression in the liturgy and in the many different aspects of the life of the community of believers.' This double movement in the work of inculturation thus expresses one of the component elements of the mystery of the incarnation."<sup>xxii</sup> This does not mean that the Christian revelation is not complete, but that there are at times resources of the Church that have grown latent. Like recessive genes they need some prodding from without to become operative again. John Cavadini reminds us that this is "the sort of thing Augustine had in mind in Book 5 of the City of God when he drew the attention of Christians to the achievements of the

Roman heroes, whose deeds of virtue, while not enough to save them, are enough to shame Christians who may have become smug over their practice of the evangelical counsels.”<sup>xxiii</sup> In the call to witness we come to a full awareness and practice of what was begun in Baptism and nurtured in the Eucharist. Turning against ourselves to the point of joining Christ’s ministry of proclaiming good news, evangelizing the poor, we build a new solidarity, not just among ourselves, but as a light to the nations about what is possible and what God’s will is for all people to the ends of the earth.

## **Conclusion**

My admittedly broad survey of key elements of the theological, ecclesial and sacramental context of our Emerging Models Project has had a specific goal. I simply have aimed at providing a kind of theological template or grid to organize some of the issues we will be discussing this week. Each of the calls involves a self-renunciation which is completed when we enter more fully into the dying and rising of Christ and which creates and deepens bonds among us as God’s holy people. These are three interrelated and interdependent calls, progressively inviting a deeper conversion, a turning away from oneself, uniting one’s life and death to Christ’s and forming common bonds that move towards and make room for the breaking of God’s kingdom into our midst.

## **Reasons for hope**

### **How Far We Have Come**

I hope that in some way I have helped to get our discussions started by drawing your attention to the value of taking up our tasks with an eye to the organic whole of our faith tradition. We owe that to Mary Alice and to all those who minister in this new reality. They are signs of hope for us already, for the theologically integrated approach I am suggesting here is already at work in what they do.

But they are also signs of hope for us in that they reveal how far we have come. Within a relatively short time-frame, the seeds of the Second Vatican Council have taken deep roots and borne fruit to the point that Mary Alice could be so expressive in describing her participation in the life of the Church as a lay minister in terms of sharing in Christ’s work. Her comments are even more remarkable given the fact that when she started her life in the Church, lay men and women were regarded in more diminished terms, as had been the case for centuries. She had to learn a whole new way of thinking about her life as a Catholic and her role in the Church as a lay person. I recently came across a reference to a letter written by Cardinal Wolsey to Pope Clement VII in 1525, which illustrates how far we have come. As the Papal Legate of England he felt compelled to warn the Pope of the evil consequences of the printing

press, noting without a moment's hesitation that this invention would have the sorry result of making scripture and the beliefs of the Church directly available to the laity. Were this to happen, he argued, the laity would be encouraged to begin "praying on their own in their vulgar languages", and if they did that, they might think it possible to make their own way to God and then there would be little use for the clergy.

While the days of Cardinal Wolsey's view have long passed, I imagine some of its remnants held sway during Mary Alice's earlier life. Yet, she speaks with ease and with an assurance that the Church values her contribution as a lay minister, all of which I suspect Cardinal Wolsey would have found baffling.

## **Gospel Wonder**

So we need to come at the work ahead of us with hope, but also the kind of wonder that is a hallmark of the Gospel era. In a recent study day for our priests in Rapid City, Fr. Richard Hamm, who teaches scripture at Creighton University, noted that the Greek word *διστάζω* meaning "doubt" appears only twice in the entire Bible, and both times in the Gospel of Matthew. The first is the scene of Jesus walking on the water and the second occasion is the commissioning of the disciples just before the Ascension. In both instances, the disciples see before them what Jesus is doing and yet they are so overwhelmed that they cannot believe their eyes. Their doubt is not a lack of trust that Jesus is present and acting in their lives. Rather they doubt because they cannot believe what they are seeing take place before their very eyes. It is beyond what they ever imagined. It is a doubt that comes with wonder at what they see.

If we have any doubts, let it not be a lack of trust that the Lord is acting and is with us in this moment of history, but only from recognizing all that is being done as truly wonderful in our eyes.

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<sup>i</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord (Co-Workers)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005), 15.

<sup>ii</sup> Benedict XVI, *God is Love (Deus Caritas Est)* (Vatican City, 2005), no. 10.

<sup>iii</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Mystagogical Catecheses*, cited in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, II (New York, 1976), 596.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid*, 597.

<sup>v</sup> Augustine, Sermon 340 cited in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, IV (New York, 1976), 1414.

<sup>vi</sup> John Paul II, *On the Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World (Pastores Gregis)* (Vatican City, 2003), no. 10.



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vii See William Spohn, SJ, *St. Paul on Apostolic Celibacy and the Body of Christ*, Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits 17, 1 (1985), 5.

viii Ibid, 6.

ix Benedict XVI, Celebration of Vespers and Meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America, April 16, 2008, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080416\\_bishops-usa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080416_bishops-usa_en.html).

x Leo I, Sermon 10 in Lent, cited in The Liturgy of the Hours, II (New York, 1976) 296.

xi Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Directory)* (Vatican City, 1994), no. 1.

xii John Paul II, *I Will Give Your Shepherds (Pastores Dabo Vobis)* (Washington, DC:USCCB-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992) 16.

xiii *Pastores Gregis*, 44.

xiv *Directory*, 1.

xv *Pastores Gregis*, 44.

xvi John Paul II, *At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (Novo Millennio Ineunte)*, 43.

xvii Blase J. Cupich, *Forward* in Carole Ganim, ed., Sharing Catholic Parishes (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006), vii-ix.

xviii Benedict XVI, Address to European Parliamentarians, March 30, 2006 [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060330\\_eu-parliamentarians\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060330_eu-parliamentarians_en.html).

xix *Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

xx Ibid, 20.

xxi Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, (Vatican City, 2007), fnnt 49.

xxii Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Instruction: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy* (Vatican City, 1994), 4.

xxiii John Cavadini, *Afterword: Continuing the Conversation* in Robert Imbelli, ed., Handing on the Faith (New York: Crossroad, 2006) 209.