

# YOU TOO GO...LAITY AT WORK IN GOD'S VINEYARD—THE STUDY



## Growing in the Vineyard

The newsletter for Catholic Lay Ministry Formation Students

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A recent study of seventy Lay Ecclesial Ministers, conducted by Jean Marie Weber PhD, is fascinating and filled with hope. It describes who these laity are, the phenomenal pastoral ministry works in which they are engaged, the impact of a Certificate in Lay Ministry, earned at Cardinal Stritch University and why their inspirational story needs to be told! All seventy of these Lay Ecclesial Ministers earned a Certificate in Lay Ministry at Cardinal Stritch University, Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life, and represent alumni (former students) from 2009-2015. The Certificate in Lay Ministry program is designed according to *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministers promulgated by the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (2005) and subsequently incorporates all four pillars of formation, human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The study researches the impact of this certificate program on seventy alumni who gave witness to the benefits of this formation. Thus, this Certificate in Lay Ministry program serves as a best practice model for the formation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers.

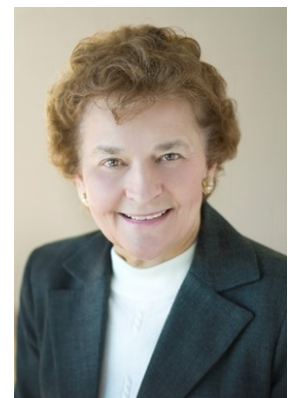
The study, entitled *You too go...Laity at Work in God's*

*Vineyard*, reveals additional key findings which identify and support the need for lay ecclesial ministers in the Catholic Church locally in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and nationally in the U.S. All expressed a call by virtue of their baptism which prompted them to seek further growth in faith and service which is the mission of the Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life. The number of pastoral ministries, parish leadership and outreach networks engaged in by alumni who received a Certificate in Lay Ministry between 2009-2015 is phenomenal. The seventy respondents to the Pastoral Ministry Survey (fifty-six English speaking and fourteen Spanish speaking) logged 522 works in less than two weeks. These statistics demonstrate that these Lay Ministers are clearly needed. However, these same seventy respondents also indicated that the need for employment and funding for higher education is critical since they are primarily ministerial part-time volunteers. At a Synod, conducted in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (2014), twenty-six percent of the Synod Delegates voted for the formation of Lay Leaders as a first priority expressed in the following resolution: "Support, train and form qualified lay

ecclesial ministers (paid church positions) in service to the Church, with an emphasis on developing leadership roles, especially for women". Clearly this resolution affirms the findings of this study and points to these seventy Lay Ecclesial Ministers as examples of who the Church needs today.

Lastly, the study reflects a group of seventy lay ministers whose study, work and prayer point to a new form of religious life. These newly formed Lay Ecclesial Ministers support each other, form networks and groupings that are unique gifts in the Church whose purpose is to minister with, by, to and for the people of God. These Lay Ecclesial Ministers need to be recognized, affirmed and celebrated. Their work in God's Vineyard is visible, inspiring and real!

For more information on the study, contact Dr. Weber at [jmweber@stritch.edu](mailto:jmweber@stritch.edu)



Jean Marie Weber serves at Cardinal Stritch University, as the University Liaison to the Catholic Community and is the former co-founder of the Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life. She is the former Director of Certification for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA). Weber completed a dissertation on Lay Ecclesial Ministry based on her work with alumni from the Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life at Cardinal Stritch University and earned a 2017 Doctorate in Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service in Higher Education. She has given major presentations and workshops across the United States.

# YOU TOO GO...LAITY AT WORK IN GOD'S VINEYARD - ALUMNI RESPONSES

In response to the study by Dr. Weber, the following are selections from the feedback of alumni (former students) in confirmatory focus groups.

## MAJOR LEARNINGS

### Importance of the Role of the Laity with a Certificate in Lay Ministry

- This program has formed approximately three hundred Lay Ecclesial Ministers.
- Many of them have leadership roles in their parishes, whether as volunteers or employees. Thus, training of the laity has an impact on the future of parishes and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

### Support for Lay Ministers

- Lay ministry needs to be documented. We are missing a great opportunity to see all areas of ministry and how they are currently impacting our parishes and the community.
- More power, recognition, and security in [lay ministry] numbers with church backing is needed. Structures can help, e.g. being commissioned.
- There is also a need for statistics on paid employment full/part-time vs. full/part-time volunteers in parish ministry.

### Evangelization

- It is very interesting to see lay ministers who have graduated apply their learning into catechesis, small groups, and faith sharing. These are the evangelizers of our faith. It reflects even further, who are lectors, literally speaking the Word, and Eucharistic ministers, literally showing Christ out in front of their community?

## SURPRISES?

### Hispanic response to the Certificate in Lay Ministry Program

- The Hispanics that graduated from the Certificate are not connected communication-wise due to language/cultural barriers.

### The Ability to Perform Selected Ministries

- The "ability to perform" selected ministries had the lowest average? Are some "doing ministries" by default?

### Societal/ Cultural Ministries

- A need for a better understanding of social justice – how it is connected to the mission of the Church, how relevant is ministering outside the parish because "It's the right thing to do", and are we missing the human/spiritual/pastoral dimensions of Catholic ministry?

### Clarity of Roles, Ordained and Lay, in Parish Administration

- There appears to be a disconnect between alumni roles and parish administrators. Parish administration has the highest clarity, most likely due to well defined roles.
- The "disconnect" between ordained and lay ministry is a big danger that divides the Church. There is wisdom in the history and tradition of the Church, and all need to work together. Not understanding this leads many to the lone ranger mentality.

### New Forms of Religious Communities

- Lay Ecclesial Ministers need to come together periodically to talk/share what we are learning and experiencing!

## AREAS FOR RESEARCH?

- Can financial support for Lay Ecclesial Ministry be part of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Stewardship Appeal?
- Can we determine what is/is not working for Lay Ecclesial Ministers through surveys within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to help both lay and clergy work together as equals?
- The four pillars of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral would be a wonderful framework to use for the formation of youth. This could prepare them for leading, serving and working in the church. We have to plant those seeds early.

In an open-ended question on HOW the Certificate for Lay Ministry program had a positive influence on current pastoral works, one alumni commented that it: 1) focused on each component of *CoWorkers*, 2) built on and reinforced what was already in our faith repertoire, 3) highlighted what is currently being implemented in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and 4) challenged what needs can be beautifully implemented by the laity.

In conclusion, the claim in *Co-Workers* is that, "Continually, the Spirit calls forth new ministries and new ministers to serve evolving needs as the history of the Church shows" (USCCB, 2005, p. 14). The Certificate in Lay Ministry at Cardinal Stritch University provides snapshots of this reality.

## Join NALM

The National Association for Lay Ministry is a professional organization that supports, educates, and advocates for lay ministers and promotes the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church. Join online, email or write our office to become part of the only national organization devoted to Catholic lay ministers! Student membership begins at \$35 annually and receive full benefits including our student newsletter *Growing in the Vineyard*; plus our monthly NALM News and Notes; in addition to discounts on conferences, events, and books.