

# Lay Ministry Update

Vol.10, No.5 Newsletter for US Bishops from the USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry Nov/Dec '05

This newsletter is developed by the USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry. The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight lay ministry trends, resources, models, and other key information that may be helpful to the U.S. Bishops. Please forward suggestions and comments to:

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## Eleven Catholic Colleges and Universities Receive Lilly Grants for Theological Exploration of Vocation

Eleven Catholic colleges and universities were among the 37 church-related liberal arts colleges and universities who received \$500,000 grants from the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation. They were Boston College, College of the Holy Cross, Fairfield University, Loyola University (Chicago), Marquette University, St. John's University (Collegeville) St. Louis University, St. Norbert College, University of Dayton, University of Notre Dame, and University of St. Thomas (St. Paul).

According to Craig Dykstra, senior vice-president for religion at the Lilly Endowment, "these schools have integrated programs and projects that encourage young people to explore Christian ministry as their possible life's work, help all students draw on their faith traditions in making vocational choices, and enhance the capacity of the school's faculty and staff to teach and mentor students effectively in these areas."

Programs and projects have included lecture series, class retreats, travel experiences, internships with faith-based organizations, chapel programming, fellowships to explore ministry, collegewide convocations, and summer theology institutes.

"The schools are noting significant increases in the number of their graduates enrolling in seminaries," according to Dykstra. "They describe how their vocational exploration activities are working as catalysts in helping the schools reclaim their fundamental educational mission. They say their programs are leading them to build fresh connections with congregational and denominational bodies."

## Subcommittee Completes Work with Approval of *Co-workers in the Vineyard*

When the USCCB voted 190 to 49 with 5 abstentions to approve *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, the work of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry came to an end. The vote concluded what CNS referred to as "a lively debate" during which issues of theology, terminology, and consultation were considered. Immediately before the vote was taken, Bishop Kicanas, chair of the Subcommittee, thanked the bishops who had worked on the Subcommittee, Bishop Dale Melczek and the members of the Laity Committee, the staff, the theologians who had helped the Subcommittee and all the bishops and members of ministerial associations who had participated in the many consultations held by the subcommittee.

Immediate follow-up to the approval of the document includes publication of the text on the USCCB website and publication in *Origins* (December 1, 2005). Publication by the USCCB Office of Publications is expected by December 19. The price will be \$6.95. The book can be ordered from the website <http://www.usccbpublishing.org> or calling 800-235-8722.

## 2005-2008 Committee on Laity to Continue Focus on Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The new Committee on the Laity will continue to give attention to lay ecclesial ministry. Bishop David A. Zubik of Green Bay, chair of the committee, participated in the work of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry during the past year in his role as chair-elect. Two members of the new committee, Bishop Gregory Aymond of Austin and Bishop John Wester of San Francisco, served on the past subcommittee from 2002-2005. Other members of the new committee are Bishop Martin Holley of Washington, Bishop Richard Malone of Portland, Bishop William Skurla of the Byzantine Eparchy of Van Nuys, and Bishop Jaime Soto of Orange.

The new committee has scheduled its meeting for March 13, 2006 in Washington.

## The Lay Leader's Gift and Task Is Preparing the Way....

"The lay leader of the parish is poised between two places: 1) the place which is the parish and 2) those other worldly places of the "new Areopagus" wherein the Christian is engaged in the struggle for justice, promoting solidarity, supporting the hopes and aspirations of youth, using the ever-expanding worlds of communication for the good of Christ's Gospel.

"The lay leader brings the life of the world and its noblest concerns to the heart of the parish and in turn directs the lifeblood of the parish – strengthened and sustained by celebration in word and sacrament – so that the world is more fully infused with holiness, truth, justice, love and peace.

"It is from the position of being in the world, in these worldly 'places,' attentive to 'the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anguish of the people of this age' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1), that the lay leader must give shape to a vision of the reign of God, inviting others in the parish to live from and for this vision of a world transformed by holiness, truth, justice, love, and peace.

"The lay leader, above all the lay leader of the parish, is not someone whose ministry is to be understood as filling in the gaps, doing the seemingly incalculable tasks that the priest once did but does no longer so that he can be 'freed up' to celebrate Mass and hear confessions. 'Without a vision, the people perish.'

"There is an abundance of gifts flourishing in the body. And the one who is designated to be the leader of the parish community is above all the one who holds fast to the vision of the reign of God central to the meaning and message of Jesus, and then calls others to be faithful to that vision through the charism of leadership.

"Much more is called for from a leader than being an effective administrator. Or a 'human resources manager.' And more still if one is to spell out the vision of the reign of God – shaped through and through by immersion in the 'worldly places' of the new Areopagus – in a way that is both respectful in dialogue and persuasive in the face of doubt and ambiguity....

"This is the lay leader's gift and task, preparing the way for the next generation and the next to find new ways of serving the life of the church and its mission from which will emerge new leaders to carry forward the vision in their own time and place."

*Cardinal Roger Mahony, "As One Who Serves," Origins (October 13, 2005) 301-302.*

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### From the Editor...

This issue of Lay Ministry Update is the final one – at least for the time being. Preparing it has been one of the many enjoyable parts of my own ministry as Lay Ministry Project Coordinator. Designed as one way of keeping the bishops informed about the work of the Subcommittee, this modest newsletter was also distributed to others who were interested in the topic. Hearing from readers, both formally and informally, has been affirming.

The approval of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* coincides with the completion of this phase of my own ministry. I leave it with deep gratitude for the blessings it has brought. I think particularly of the wonderful bishops, consultants, advisors, and colleagues with whom I have worked. (I am convinced that Bishops Delaney and Hoffman and Monsignor Murnion are rejoicing with us at the approval of the document!) The lay ecclesial ministers I have come to know over the last ten years will continue to be an inspiration to me.

In a certain sense, *Co-workers* is both an end and a beginning. In the words of T.S. Eliot, "to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from." May this end, which is also a most promising beginning, be filled with God's best blessings.

Sister Amy Hoey, RSM

### From the Executive Director...

Ten years has passed so quickly! Sr. Amy Hoey, RSM, joined our staff in 1996 to coordinate a project on lay ecclesial ministry that was funded by the Lilly Endowment for an initial period of three years. Bishop Philip F. Straling, who was Subcommittee chairman at the time, said: "This project will explore major issues in order to assist the bishops and other pastoral leaders to give careful, creative attention to lay ecclesial ministry now and into the future."

Under Sister Amy's gentle but energetic leadership we set out on a road into the future, without a complete map and not exactly sure what twists, turns, detours, obstacles and opportunities we might find. It was a marvelous journey – one that has influenced my life deeply. Many others will say the same thing.

Ten years of work has produced publications, studies, consultations, presentations, and much more. Ten years of work has drawn hundreds, maybe thousands, of people into a significant conversation about community, mission, and ministry in our Church. Ten years of work has begun to build a road into the future while not losing sight of our history and tradition. Ten years of work bears the imprint and influence of many hands, and hearts, and minds – beginning with our friend and co-worker in the vineyard, Sister Amy Hoey.

Thank you, Amy. God bless you!

H. Richard McCord