

Leading the Assembly Is Pastoral

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Defining Pastoral

I should begin, I think, by explaining a bit about what I mean by “pastoral” when we speak about leading the assembly. We got a phone call once at the National Association of Pastoral Musicians from a scholar who was researching the folk music of Greek shepherds, and he thought that we might be of some help, since we are also interested in things “pastoral.” That isn’t the “pastoral” that I have in mind! Instead, my vision of pastoral leadership is rooted in the story at the end of John’s gospel where Jesus asks Peter three times, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Each time, when Peter answers in the affirmative, Jesus responds, “Then feed my lambs.... Tend my sheep.... Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17).

Being pastoral in this sense doesn’t mean exploring the folk music of Greek shepherds, nor does it mean to take another erroneous understanding of “pastoral,” compromising one’s standards to the lowest level of religious or artistic mediocrity. What it does mean is a readiness to feed, nourish, and care for the community with life-giving food—great homilies, excellent music, reliable leadership—all appropriate for the particular community and its true and lasting nourishment. Being pastoral as a liturgical leader is not about offering junk food—not junk food music or junk food homilies or even junk food truth. It is about sharing the eucharistic meal, about feeding and being fed with life-giving food that lasts. Pastoral leadership is about nourishment, about giving the assembly energy. It’s about Jesus’ final instruction to Peter in the Gospel of John: “Follow me” (21:19).

It is an honor for me to speak to you at the 2001 Institute of Liturgical Studies. I am honored to share the responsibilities with so many distinguished speakers this year, but I am especially honored to speak from the same place from which Eugene Brand spoke three years ago—a man who has made such significant impact on the liturgy through his contributions to *Lutheran Book of Worship*, and more recently, through his guidance during the dialogue leading to the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement on Justification. Gene is a distinguished scholar, and even more, a wonderful pastoral practitioner. Dr. Brand has spoken of

“our understanding of Lutheranism as a confessional movement with the catholic church.”¹ That insight has been expanded by Mons Teig: “Simply put, we have ties with one another in Christ that we cannot ignore and that we must find expression.”²

It is within this context of our sharing faith in one Lord, sharing one baptism, that I present to you today some reflections from the Roman Catholic tradition on pastoral leadership. We must bring the ecumenical reality of our common call to follow Jesus Christ to fruition through good pastoral leadership. Pastoral leadership is where the rubber hits the road, where doing takes place.

Turning specifically to my topic, pastoral leadership of the assembly, I have to begin by describing some key insights from two liturgical statements written in a Roman Catholic context. In 1972, following the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic bishops in the United States issued guidelines for the place of music in the revised liturgy. This document, entitled *Music in Catholic Worship*, has served Roman Catholic musicians well as a guideline for pastoral implementation of the reforms of the Vatican Council.³ One of its achievements is its inventive and insightful presentation of the threefold judgment required for determining the value of a given musical element in the liturgy. The three aspects of this judgment are

- 1) the musical judgment: is it good music?
- 2) the liturgical judgment: does it properly fulfill its function in the liturgy? And, what is important for our presentation,
- 3) the pastoral judgment: is it appropriate for this specific celebration, for this place and time?

The pastoral judgment considers whether the music is appropriate to this age, this culture, this particular parish situation. After twenty years of reflection, in 1992 a group of musicians and liturgists published a document that commented among other things on this musical-liturgical-pastoral judgment, entitled *The Ten Year Report of the Milwaukee*

¹*A Lutheran Agenda for Worship: Resource Materials for the Churches' Study in the Area of Worship* (Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 1979).

²Mons Teig, “Singing Down Barriers,” *Pastoral Music* 8/5 (June–July 1984): 60.

³Virgil C. Funk, ed., *Music in Catholic Worship: The NPM Commentary*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1983).

*Symposia for Church Composers.*⁴ It encouraged an integrated approach to the three aspects of this one judgment. The authors said:

Acknowledging the need for an integrated judgment requires a balancing of the various facets of the single judgment and not the opposition of one element to another. The process of judgment therefore is not chronological, but dynamic and interactive.⁵

Their point is that one does not use the pastoral judgment as a trump card over the music or liturgical judgment. To claim “the people like it” is not a sufficient argument to set aside the requirements of liturgical appropriateness or musical integrity. But equally true, these scholars go on to say:

The dynamic nature of the worship event also suggests that the musical-liturgical-pastoral evaluation of the worship music must take into account the performance of the music in the liturgy, and not simply evaluate the music in its printed form. A common western bias is that one can separate any judgment about a composition into two parts: an objective evaluation of what is in the score and, when appropriate, a separate judgment about how the composition is performed: the quality of the musicians, or of their musical performance. When considering Christian ritual music, however, that bias goes out the window. Those judgments need to be fused together.⁶

Further, they assert:

Different cultures, language groups, and ethnic communities provide different contexts for worship and raise particular questions when rendering the music-liturgical-pastoral judgment about worship music. This fact entails consciously avoiding the ethnocentrism that judges the music of one particular culture and era—whether it be a secular culture or a religious sub-culture—as superior and the model for all other Christian ritual music.⁷

In other words, no matter how highly one personally values Gregorian chant or J. S. Bach, there are other issues that affect the choice of music

⁴*Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-year Report, July 9, 1992* (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians; Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992). First published in *Pastoral Music* 17/1 (October-November 1992): 18–50.

⁵*Ibid.*, par. 82.

⁶*Ibid.*, par. 85.

⁷*Ibid.*, par. 86.

for worship. The pastoral judgment may require trade-offs and compromises. True pastoral leadership will be aware of all of these issues and will be prepared to deal with them in ways that feed the flock. The point is this: Just as in music the pastoral judgment is integrated into other considerations, viz., music and liturgy, so too, pastoral leadership is one of many aspects which must be integrated. “Pastoral” is not a trump card, nor is it an excuse for mediocrity.

Martin Luther and Pastoral Leadership

Martin Luther provides a model of one who used good pastoral judgment with regard to music. He wrote: “Nor am I of the opinion that the Gospel should destroy and blight all the arts, as some of the pseudo-religious claim. But I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of him who gave and made them.”⁸ When Martin Luther was at Coburg in 1530 while his colleagues were presenting their confessions at Augsburg, he made a list of his five points:

Music is a gift from God.
Music rejoices the soul.
Music turns away Satan.
Music arouses innocent joys.
Music is conducive to peace.⁹

Of all the reformers, Martin Luther alone encouraged the use of music in the worship and praise of God. For Luther music was “a noble, wholesome and joyful creation” and a gift of God. As the “handmaiden to theology,” music, for Luther, was the best means for proclaiming the

⁸Martin Luther, *Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal* in *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 53:316; quoted in “Music: The Marvelous Creation of God,” *Pastoral Music* 8/5 (June–July 1984): 15. In 1984, at my request, Carl Schalk compiled a wonderful series of quotations on music from the writings of Martin Luther for a special issue of *Pastoral Music*, published on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. These quotes of Martin Luther, together with other articles by Victor Gebauer, Eugene Brand, Mark Bangert, Carlos Messerli, John Ferguson, Carl Volz, and Mons Tieg appear in this special issue of *Pastoral Music*, edited under the direction of Mark Bangert.

⁹Quoted in Carl A. Volz, “Music as Preaching,” *Pastoral Music* 8/5 (June–July 1984), 10.

gospel apart from preaching.¹⁰ The scriptures proclaim the message, the homily explains the message, but in the hymn the assembly claims the message.

Mark Bangert comments on the ways in which Martin Luther was an accomplished amateur musician. He wrote a motet and directed the process of setting German texts to chant; Luther worked collaboratively with Johann Walter and Conrad Rupsch to compose the music for his 1526 German Mass.¹¹ Bangert also notes that although Luther did not have the financial means to be a patron of the arts,

yet, the impact of his appearance in music history is monumental. How so? It is necessary to look beyond his musicianship (Zwingli, from all reports, was a more accomplished musician) ... Luther's support of music is traceable to a theology of music that, like a magnet, attracted musicians and composers for generations to come.¹²

Luther was, in short, a pastoral leader.

Models of Pastoral Ministry

I have always been fascinated with models of pastoral practice. The first set of such models that I came across appeared in the 1950s in H. Richard Niebuhr's famous book, *Christ and Culture*.¹³ In naming how the gospel relates to the surrounding culture, Niebuhr proposed five categories or models that had been used in Christian history: Christ against the culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ in paradox with culture, and Christ as transformer of culture. These are still excellent categories to use in dealing with the challenges of inculturation, so much a part of today's pastoral leadership and its compromises.

Just how completely we let go of our traditions and enter into the language and expectations of contemporary culture has been even more of a challenge, of course, for Roman Catholics than for Lutherans. Both of

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Mark P. Bangert, "Martin Luther: Magnet of Musicians," *Pastoral Music* 8/5 (June–July 1984), 24.

¹²Ibid., 24–25.

¹³H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torch, 1951; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

us, in fact, have been challenged by the charge to reform and renew the church and its liturgy expressed by the world's Roman Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council. Overnight, Roman Catholics were challenged to create a vernacular musical repertoire in both text and tune to facilitate assembly song and thereby encourage the priesthood of all the baptized to full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical action. Now, granted, we borrowed freely in that transition from the hymn traditions of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. But, in exchange, we offered a challenge to those traditions to re-examine their own liturgical practice. Together, we explored the unfolding of the divine plan expressed in the liturgy as the heart of church life, what *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* called the “summit” and “fount” of Christian life.¹⁴ We read that plan this way: the *oikonomia*—the economy of salvation—is hidden in the mind of God from all eternity. This plan of salvation has first been revealed in creation, then in the prophets, and finally in the person of Jesus, the anointed One of God. This revelatory activity continues in the transformation that occurs in every Eucharist: under the power of the Spirit, we the church are transformed more fully into what we became through baptism, the living body of Christ. Liturgy, therefore, is not something beautiful we do for God; liturgy is something beautiful that God does for us.

A second set of ecclesiological models identifies how pastoral leadership can help communities recognize and express that mystery of God's working in us. In 1978 Avery Dulles published *Models of the Church*, in which he described five models for understanding the church and its role in salvation: The church as institution, the church as mystical communion, the church as sacrament (that is, as intermediary between human and divine), the church as herald, and finally, the church as servant and community of disciples.¹⁵

¹⁴*The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, I.10 in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

¹⁵Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, exp. ed. (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1987). Nathan Mitchell has recently modified these categories of ecclesiologies, or models of the church, to four: an ecclesiology of ordines—or orders to which one belongs; a Johannine ecclesiology—a “them” and “us” mentality; an ecclesiology based on functional specialites—who does what counts; and a transcendental ecclesiology—the church can not be defined at any moment in time. See Nathan Mitchell, “The Amen Corner,” *Worship* 76 (2002): 370–375.

Five Models of Pastoral Leadership

Niebuhr's theoretical models of relationship between Christ and culture and Dulles' theological models of the church fascinated me. In the 1980s and 1990s it seemed to me that different presiders and different communities developed diverse styles of celebration, models of pastoral leadership in practice. I had the opportunity to travel across the United States to observe these emerging styles of celebration. I found five models developing in different parts of the country, which I named monastic, ritualistic, communication, dramatic and small group.¹⁶ All of them, I discovered, were responses by deeply committed pastoral leaders to the needs they discovered in their communities as well as their reading of what the rites expected of liturgical leaders. While these models are based on Roman Catholic experience, I hope you might find them helpful as you look at your own presidential or musical style of worship. One style is not better than another—they are examples of different approaches.

Monastic

The monastic style came from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota and, based on the celebration of the monks, therefore had a high emphasis on countercultural experiences—Christ against culture. The architectural style—the Broyer church at St. John's has a "Scandinavian clean" approach to it—is dominated by the absence of decoration. The music is ethereal, typified by Gregorian chant striving for other-worldly, transcendental experience. The presider would be characterized by internalization, one whose gestures were minimal and interior, whose voice was quiet and reserved as he prayed. The goal is to engage the assembly by means of the personal, interior holiness of the presider.

Ritualistic

The ritualistic school was promoted at the University of Notre Dame's Center for Pastoral Liturgy. Here there is great emphasis on ritual function of the celebrative model, or "smells and bells," as it is sometimes called. The architecture style is classic Gothic or Romanesque, striving to keep a distance and a discipline between altar and assembly. The music

¹⁶See Virgil C. Funk, "Enculturation, Style and the Sacred-Secular Debate," in *Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman and Janet R. Walton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1992), 314–323.

might be characterized by hymnody—stable, consistent, trustworthy, and predictable, as in “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” The presider’s celebrative style features precise gestures and a firm and precise voice. The liturgy is characterized by formality, proper but ritualistic and repetitive.

Communication

The communication style came from St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore and the Reverend Eugene Walsh. Here there is a strong emphasis on direct, immediate communication. One might say, “what you see is what you get.” There are no smoke and mirrors here. Humanity is sacred; the incarnation has sanctified the human. The architecture might be Edward Sovik’s house church idea, where the furniture is flexible. But equally so, the architecture has John Buscemi’s confrontation seating—where the assembly can see one another. This is similar to Bertolt Brecht’s approach to theater—never allow the participant to “suspend belief” in the reality of the experience. The distance between assembly and presider is deliberately reduced to create a sense of oneness between altar and assembly.

The music is straightforward and has “meaning,” like Suzanne Toolan’s “I am the Bread of Life.” At a funeral the congregation enacts the text “And I will raise him/her up” spontaneously because they know what they are singing. The music can draw heavily from the cultural ear of the assembly, charming the assembly’s ear to provide assembly participation in the singing. The presider looks directly at the people, encouraging their participation by the sound of his voice and by his bodily presence, reaching out to the assembly. The goal is to achieve communication between presider and assembly. Some communities, home masses, and intimate settings drew presiders away from the ritualistic style (so appropriate in a cathedral setting) and led them and the assembly to a different understanding of the ritual activity.¹⁷

Dramatic

The dramatic style came from California, Berkeley School of Worship with Reverend James Empereur. It appeals to the human sense of “delight”—not entertainment in the turned sense of ego satisfaction, although temptingly close, but to the authentic sense of delight. He does

¹⁷For further study of this style, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Reading, Writing, and Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical, and Public Places* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1993).

not start with an appeal to the intellect or the will, or to a sense of discipline, but to the freedom of delight. Bishop's miters, processions, sprinkling with water, are all expanded to dance, theater, lightening to enhance the ritual experience. The architecture is modern—as in the San Francisco Cathedral and new Los Angeles Cathedral—using architectural techniques that defy gravity to the eye. Sweeping parabolic forms, counter-balanced use of steel and glass (certainly the Crystal Cathedral would apply here) are used to appeal to a sense of delight. The music is modern—such as Dave Brubeck's "Forty-seven Alleluias" set to modern jazz rhythms—delighting the musical sense of rhythmic and harmonic contradictions. The presider's style, with full gestures, can be described as almost "theatrical" and is nearly the opposite of the monastic. Instead of internal, it is full of external, public gestures, engaging the assembly by means of the dramatic—to the "delight" of the assembly.

Small Group

The last category, the small group, is controlled by the homogeneity of the assembly. A single ethnic group (e.g., African American), or one language group (e.g., Spanish), or even one political orientation (e.g., a social justice group) creates a style of celebration suited to that group. (Of course, we know that this homogeneity is true of all celebrations, but because we, like fish that cannot recognize that they are in water, don't recognize the homogeneity of our typical parish celebration. It's only when we get outside of our culture that we recognize our culture.) The small group will incorporate specific architectural symbols (e.g., Spanish colors, African-American crucifixes) and music unique to it (e.g., Tom Conry's music for social justice). The presiders will accommodate themselves in prayers, homilies, vestments, and even content—all to relate to these homogeneous assemblies.

Summary of Five Models

Monastic, ritualistic, communication, dramatic and small group—Do you fit in this picture? Which do you use? Which model does your musician use? From which model does the rest of your community work? If the presider and the musician are on different pages, one working out of a ritualistic model, for example, and the other out of small group or a communication model, there will be serious clashes in the pastoral administration of the parish, clashes that often end in the termination of the

musician. Of course, none of these styles is better than the other. Each has a value, and all of them have abuses when carried to an extreme.

Our celebrations should be transcendental, full of ritual, communicative, full of delight and appropriate to the group, but in pastoral practice, we often can't be all those at the same time, equally. We make pastoral judgments. Our pastoral style should always be filled with holiness, pointing to our belief in the other worldliness, and of course, we need to ritualize our celebration in order to give it stability that the assembly can depend upon. Still, without human communication, ritual as other aspects of pastoral ministry can fall deeply into the trap of routine, into repetition with little or no meaning. On the other hand, while it is certain that our liturgies must appeal to the sense of delight—a liturgy composed of all words and no action, all intellect and no heart, all moral imperatives and no comfort will soon become numbingly boring, with no charm in our liturgical celebration—liturgy cannot become mere performance, mere show that delights without offering substance.

At the same time we have an acute awareness of the diversity that exists in every parish—linguistically, culturally, ethically, theologically, as well as in age, gender, and lifestyle. Diversity is what makes church church. When Jesus told Peter to “feed his lambs,” he didn't say anything about not feeding the odd sheep of the family or those whose wool wouldn't be profitable. Sinners, saints, the musically gifted, the musically challenged, those ready for transformation, and those hardened into a religious unconsciousness: pastoral leaders are called to feed them all!

The Price of Pastoral Leadership

I have always believed that there is a profound relationship between how Christianity interacts with the secular culture (as Niehbuhr suggests), the theoretical models of the church (as Dulles and Mitchell and other propose), and the pastoral practice as it actually takes place in the typical parish assembly. As musicians and presiding ministers, I hope you will use this opportunity to adapt my observations about styles of celebration to your pastoral situation, examine your own situation, recognize the balance and the abuses, and make a judgment about what needs to be done to draw you closer to sound pastoral leadership, to “feeding the sheep” you serve.

The price of such pastoral leadership is immense. I have organized my reflections on this point around three observations and a final reflection: 1) A pastoral person nurtures life; 2) a pastoral person is a seeker of truth;

3) a pastoral person is an empowering person, and a final reflection: What happens if I don't choose to be a pastoral person?

Nurturer

First, a pastoral person nurtures, giving life because the pastoral minister has received life. This presumes that your conversion is real—you have had the Pauline experience of being knocked to the ground or the Petrine experience of learning one step at a time what it means when God tells you, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane” (Acts 10:15). Without conversion, it doesn't matter how high you climb if you have your ladder against the wrong wall. Bob Hovda would say the pastoral minister is first of all a worshiper. If you are not yet a worshiper, stop trying to minister until you are convinced of worshiping. If you *are* worshiping, your worship experiences will give you judgment. So the hard questions about pastoral leadership are: Do I believe? In what or in whom? What is it that I can truly affirm? What does it mean to be church?

Everything we do as ministers must lead to the hard questions for all! We know we have found the hard questions when we are uncomfortable. After all, the ultimate pastoral minister answered the rich man's question about what it takes to be saved by saying: “Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor then come, follow me.” And Luke says the rich man went away sad (Luke 18:23). The hard questions will disturb our sense of well being and make us vulnerable as ministers, yet everything we do as servant of the servants must lead to the hard questions.

With a true conversion begun, the pastoral minister now nurtures conversion in others and does so by making room for the stories to be told. The pastoral minister knows the stories, the ancient ones *and* the new ones. Jesus opened up the scroll and told the stories. Every struggling believer in your parish has a story, one that you must know. It is hard work to get people to tell their stories, to get to know their stories, but there is no other way. You must take the time. Pastoral ministry presumes you have a relationship with the assembly, with the choir, with others outside the circle of believers. The scriptural stories are in the marrow of your bones, the church year is the rhythm of your life, and you are seeking the stories of the other disciples of Jesus.

Seeker of Truth

Second, a pastoral minister is a seeker of truth. Like the woman at the well, we approach Jesus with a willingness to have everything about our life be true—no matter how many husbands we have had. Bob Hovda said worship is the coming together over bread and wine, in truth. You must ask with Pilate the unanswerable question: What is truth? Most significantly, you must face the hard truth of the gospel: that death must precede life. There is no other way. All music, all preaching, all ritual action must lead to participation in this truth. Preacher, presider, and musician must all know this for ritual to work. The assembly will not “like” this truth. They will resist this type of nurturing. People will resist the call to conversion, the call to seek the truth. But you must do it anyway, because you have no choice.

And the pastoral minister must touch the truth in all who are present. The woman taken in adultery wasn’t condemned by Jesus, and those who could not forgive her were touched with the truth of their situations: “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). Jesus touched the truth of the situation: all are sinners. Musicians and preachers must be in touch with the community, must know their stories, and must know themselves and others for who and what both are. The pastoral leader challenges, confronts, and requires response. Pastoral ministry is about afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted. There must be a balance of praise, of questioning, of appeal for mercy in what you sing and say.

One Who Empowers

Third, a pastoral person is an empowering person. The disciples went out in pairs—husband and wife, Paul and his disciple Luke—to proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Being pastoral is facilitation. The pastoral leader teaches people, and they teach you. This mutuality empowers ongoing conversation. Scripture and music will be instruments of that ongoing conversion. Once *metanoia* is experienced, there is no turning back. You must act justly, live justly.

To say that the pastoral person is an empowering person contains the basic message: You can’t do it alone. There is one body, but there are many ministries. In spite of the individualism promoted by television and other electronic media, you believe and you know that community is necessary. As a facilitator, you are always seeking new gifts in the community. New insights come back to you about what it means to be church. You never become a stumbling block; you are an open door.

There is constant search. There is a kingdom to come, a vision ahead. The search goes on. We search for the words and the sounds that will reflect and lead the community. The pastoral minister searches for the voice and mind of your community so that you can lead. The ultimate goal of music and Christian ministry is to make manifest and real a new humanity in the risen Jesus Christ. The truth of this new humanity, its worth, and the grace given it are not measured by our capacity to arouse active participation, nor by our ability to stir an aesthetic cultural value, nor by our popular success. Pastoral ministry succeeds when it allows believers to cry out the *Kyrie eleison* of the oppressed, to sing the alleluias of those restored to life, and to uphold the *maranatha* of the faithful in the hope of the coming of the kingdom.

And If We Don't?

What are the consequences if one doesn't choose to be pastoral? People will come to church, and they will go home the same, unchanged. This means the church is dead. "Every worship service has to engage every person."¹⁸ The gospel truth will not be proclaimed, not explained, and not claimed. If we don't confront and embrace the gospel, then this means the gospel is dead. People will come, meet together, and the encounter will be no more than superficial, no better than a club or cocktail party. This means the community is dead. If the church, the gospel, and the community are dead, this means that the pastoral minister dies.

Religious pastoral leadership is different from political or corporate leadership; it is more demanding. It is more demanding because the motive and the model are different. Before Jesus exhorted Peter to serve as a pastoral leader with the directive, "Feed my sheep," he asked a question: "Do you love me?" Peter didn't get it. Jesus was asking about motivation—what was Peter's motivation for serving the people? "You know that I love you, Lord," declared Peter, not once but three times—to echo his threefold denial to be sure—but Jesus' posing of the threefold question takes the matter even deeper than forgiveness of Peter's denial. "Do you love me, Peter? Do you really?" "Oh, sure, Lord, I love you." We say that all the time and about as casually. But Jesus insists on the verb for a reason: Do you know what loving me means? It means loving me the same way I love you.

¹⁸Robert Hovda, "The Relevance of the Liturgy," in *The Amen Corner*, ed. John F. Baldwin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 64.

Love for Jesus cannot be underestimated—not in Peter’s life nor in the life of any disciple of Jesus who chooses to be a pastoral leader. Love means to give yourself to another person through signs. Because we are human we express our love in signs. We are as good a lover as we are a sign maker. People in love make signs of love. The motivation of the pastoral leader—clergy or musician—is found in Jesus’ question and its answer. A pastoral leader is someone who has been asked—more than once—whether that central question is true for you. Are you willing to give yourself through signs to the body of Christ? Every day, and often more than once a day, any one of us, musician or clergy, is asked that question by the body of Christ: Do you love me? Will you show a sign of your willingness to give up yourself for me, the living body of Christ? The choir members ask it, the parish leaders ask it, the pastoral staff asks it, the beggar asks it, the sick ask it. Do you love me? Are you willing to give up yourself in signs for me? Do you love me? And every one of us, here today, answers, “Lord, you know that I do.” And today the Lord turns to you again and says, “Feed my sheep. Be my pastoral leader.”