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Apostolic Religious: Lay Ecclesial Ministers?

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by

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Introduction

It is certain that when Pope St. John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in October 1962, few, if any, could have foreseen the transformation of ministry that has unfolded over the past half-century. At that time, seminaries and novitiates were full and the idea of someone other than priests or religious doing ministry was unimaginable. There was a clear sense of what ministry was and who did it. Indeed, the term “ministry” itself was rarely used in Catholic circles, being more commonly associated with Protestantism.¹

The contemporary Catholic ministerial landscape is profoundly different from that which prevailed at the end of Vatican II. In the West, the population of priests and religious is a fraction of what it was at the time of the Council. Those that remain are older and unlikely to be replaced by subsequent generations. However, in the so-called new churches of Africa and Asia, seminaries and novitiates are overflowing.² Yet throughout the Catholic world a new reality has emerged: the lay ecclesial minister.

The changing face of ministry in the Church has led to confusion about what ministry is and who are ministers. This point is humorously made by Richard Gaillardetz, who quips that in the contemporary situation “virtually anything from gardening to golf is referred to as ‘my ministry.’”³ Such semantic broadening is indicative of the paradigm shift in the perception of ministry in the Church. Now Catholics readily think that lay people outside of religious life have an active role to play in the Church’s ministry. This raises questions about whether lay people

¹ Richard Gaillardetz, “The Theological reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 23.

² CARA, “Sister Statistics: What Is Happening?” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2014/08/sister-statistics-what-is-happening.html>.

³ Gaillardetz, “The Theological reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 23.

can actually be said to do ministry; and if so, by what authority, and how does it relate to traditional expressions of ministry?

Recent statistics provided by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) lend credibility to these questions. In 2017, CARA found that there were 17,722 Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States. This number more than doubles to 39,651 when vowed religious are included in the population of lay ecclesial ministers working in parish settings. The signs of the times reflected in these statistics have been pondered by systematicians, canonists, biblical scholars and Church historians, frequently resulting in even more questions.⁴ One issue raised, which to this point has received little attention, is the relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious.

For centuries, orders of apostolic religious brothers and sisters were founded for and did much of the same work that is done today by married and single lay people. Though the number of lay ecclesial ministers in the United States is waxing as the number of religious wanes, the relationship between them is not simply one of replacement. What is the nature of this relationship? Are non-ordained apostolic religious lay ecclesial ministers? In this paper, I will seek to answer these questions. But first it is necessary to briefly consider the histories of lay ecclesial ministry and apostolic religious life as they have unfolded, often in tandem.⁵

Historical Overview

Throughout much of Christian history, followers of Christ have been classified as either clergy or lay. Etymologically, the term lay is derived from the Greek word *laikos* translated as

⁴ Zeni Fox, "Preface," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed Zeni Fox, ix.

⁵ Lay ecclesial ministry and apostolic religious life are realities throughout the Catholic Church, however, the following historical sketch will focus primarily on their recent histories as experienced in the United States.

“people.”⁶ In practice, lay is contrasted with cleric, from the Greek *kleros*, and frequently translated as “inheritance.”⁷ However, there is nothing intrinsic in the meaning of these terms to suggest that they are mutually exclusive. Rather, the association of *kleros*/cleric with the fact of ordination is based on the later influence of the Latin term *ordo*.⁸ Because of the common perception that lay (*laikos*) is a lesser state than cleric (*kleros*) on the basis of the lack of ordination, the term lay has the connotation of lacking skills, knowledge, and preparation. Nonetheless, from the third century on the structure of the Church rested on the distinction between clergy and laity.⁹ By the fourth century, this neat structural division between lay and clergy was obscured by the advent of monasticism, which introduced a third category: the monk and woman religious.¹⁰ Thus, “the laity [had been] seen in contrast to the clergy on the level of leadership and activity, [and] now they were seen in contrast to the monk on the level of holiness.”¹¹

The origin of apostolic religious life has its roots in the *vita apostolica* and mendicant movements beginning in the thirteenth century.¹² Religious founders, such as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic de Guzman, broke from monasticism with its pursuit of holiness through asceticism in order to pursue sanctity in a life governed by a religious rule and vows, and oriented towards works of the evangelical life.¹³ The mendicant contribution was the movement outwards for itinerant preaching and presence, modeled on Jesus’ sending out of the apostles.

⁶ Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 21.

⁷ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*, 15.

⁸ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*, 38.

⁹ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, 41.

¹⁰ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, 41.

¹¹ Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 6-7.

¹² Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, 346 -347.

¹³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 51.

Apostolic religious life was then, as it is now, neither exclusively lay or clerical. Because of this it is possible to speak of apostolic religious priests, such as the Redemptorists, and of non-ordained, and therefore lay, apostolic religious sisters and brothers, of which there are myriad examples. In spite of the fact that most apostolic religious are not ordained to the diaconate or priesthood, they and other varieties of religious institutes (monastic, contemplative, etc.) are not generally thought of as a lay people. This is due in large part to their consecration according to the evangelical counsels. The perception is reinforced by external practices of common life, ministry and, for some, religious habit.

The schema of clergy, religious, and lay was largely unchallenged until the eighteenth century with the appearance of societies of apostolic life, and later by secular institutes. Societies of apostolic life may be largely indistinguishable from members of religious institutes, who live in community and publicly profess the evangelical counsels. Examples of societies of apostolic life include the Vincentians and Sulpicians, who live in community according to the evangelical counsels, but do not make public vows.¹⁴ Secular institutes, on the other hand, bind themselves by the evangelical counsels but live in the world, as the name suggests.¹⁵ Pope Pius XII formally recognized secular institutes with the Apostolic Constitution, *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (PME), “Concerning Secular Institutes.” Members of societies of apostolic life, like members of religious institutes, are not popularly considered to be lay, whereas members of secular institutes are.

Contemporaneous with the emergence of secular institutes was the birth of Catholic Action, an umbrella term used to describe a variety of organizations, including the *Jeunesse*

¹⁴ *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1983) c. 731.

¹⁵ *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, c. 710.

Ouvrière Chrétienne. This organization was founded near Brussels by Cardinal Cardijn in 1912. By 1967 it had grown to include over two million members in 69 countries.¹⁶ Pope Pius XI described Catholic Action as “the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”¹⁷ The novelty of this statement lay in connecting the laity, here understood as excluding religious, with an apostolate, even though it is not their own. Eventually, Vatican II’s “affirmation of the universal call to holiness and the responsibility of all the people of God to share in the mission of the Church” superseded this notion of lay participation.¹⁸

The Second Vatican Council is unique among all previous councils for the attention it gave to the activity of the laity in the Church. Indeed, the topic of the laity was addressed by several pronouncements of the Council.¹⁹ Upon reflection, it became clear that the council fathers established that by virtue of baptism the laity fully belong to the Body of Christ. The laity therefore share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ of their own right and in a manner different from clergy and religious. Furthermore, this share in the *tria munera* of Christ is in fact the apostolate of the laity, not the laity’s participation in the apostolate of the bishops.²⁰ This is made explicit in *Lumen Gentium* (LG), “The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” which states that “the apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the church’s saving mission. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.”²¹ *Lumen*

¹⁶ "RELIGION: Jocism," *Time*, September 26, 1938, accessed December 08, 2017. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,788809,00.html>.

¹⁷ Jeremy Bonner, Christopher D. Denny, and Mary Beth Fraser Connolly, *Empowering the People of God: Catholic Action before and after Vatican II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 2.

¹⁸ Doris Gottemoeller, “Catholic Institutional Ministries: Their History and Legacy,” in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtel (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 54-55.

¹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 37.

²⁰ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, 540-560.

²¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §33. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the documents of Vatican II come from: Flannery, Austin, ed. *The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II Constitutions Decrees Declarations A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014. PDF.

Gentium continues that “besides this apostolate which belongs to absolutely every Christian, the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”²²

In 1965, a year after the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium, Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA), “The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” taught that “the lay apostolate, in all its many aspects, is exercised both in the church and in the world,” making it clear that the laity have both an *ad extra* mission and *ad intra* apostolates.²³ This statement, along with the assertions that “the laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close cooperation with their priests,” and that “according to their abilities the laity ought to cooperate in all the apostolic and missionary enterprises of their ecclesial family” set the scene for the emergence of lay ecclesial ministry.²⁴ Lest one get the impression that the Council Fathers ignored religious in their articulation of these developments, consider their directive that “religious brothers and sisters will hold lay apostolic works in high regard; and will gladly help in promoting them in accordance with the spirit and rules of their institute.”²⁵

Zeni Fox compares the development of lay ecclesial ministry that took place in the 1960s and 1970s to the experience of the first generation of the Church in Thessalonica. St. Paul wrote to this community, “we ask you... to respect those who are laboring among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, and to show esteem for them with special love on account of their work.”²⁶ The similarity lies in the fact that in both cases ministers without titles were active in Christian communities doing work that had no name.²⁷ During this time lay

²² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §33.

²³ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §9.

²⁴ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §10.

²⁵ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §25.

²⁶ 1 Thess 5:12-13, *NABRE*.

²⁷ Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997), xii.

ecclesial ministry took root through the invitations of local pastors to specific members of the laity to lead areas of ministry in their parishes.²⁸ However, by 1970 the phenomena of these new ministers led to a study by Dolores Gerken, who sought to describe the roles being taken up by the laity.

The growth of lay ecclesial ministry was so significant that it attracted the attention of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which in 1977 began publishing a newsletter for “the many diverse lay individuals and groups who work to further the mission of the Church.”²⁹ Also that year, Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST, convened the first gathering of ministry formation directors in Philadelphia, which would later become the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM).³⁰ NALM has, since its beginning adhered to a model of leadership that is inclusive of religious, clergy, and laity as well as gender.³¹ Meanwhile, the number of religious brothers and sisters fell by 25 percent compared to their largest populations, recorded in 1965.³²

The tremendous growth that lay ministry experienced during the first two decades of its existence attracted great hierarchical attention in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1980 the US Catholic Conference (USCC) published *Called and Gifted* in commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. The document acknowledged that the new phenomenon required “new terminology, new attitudes, and new practices.”³³ Furthermore, *Called and Gifted* also commended religious sisters and brothers for having “shown the way” to the lay people, who

²⁸ Fox, “Preface” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, ix.

²⁹ Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church*, 208.

³⁰ NALM Advocacy Committee, “NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present,” 3, accessed December 8, 2017. <https://nalm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NALM-at-40-History-.pdf>

³¹ NALM Advocacy Committee, “NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present,” 8, accessed December 8, 2017. <https://nalm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NALM-at-40-History-.pdf>

³² CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

³³ USCC, “Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity,” November 1980, 1. http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/upload/called_and_gifted.pdf.

sought to professionally prepare to work in the Church with “initiative and creativity.”³⁴

Similarly, the 1983 Code of Canon Law explicitly addressed the new reality of lay ministry in canons 228-231.

In 1987 a synod of bishops was held in Rome on the topic of “The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and World.” At the synod concerns about the clericalization of laity and the laicization of clergy began to emerge,³⁵ finding echo in the 1988 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (CL).³⁶ These concerns were addressed again in 1997 in *Ecclesiae de Mystero* (EM), “The Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests.” This document stressed the need for appropriate terminology for both the new workers and their work. In 1995 the USCC published *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* and began accrediting ministry formation programs the same year.³⁷ 1995 also provides us the first full set of statistics for both religious and lay ecclesial ministers.³⁸ In that year, according to CARA, there were 90,809 religious sisters, 6,535 religious brothers, and 29,146 lay ecclesial ministers in parish ministry (including vowed religious) in the United States. Additionally, there were 10,674 lay professional ministers (excluding vowed religious) and 21,800 students enrolled in lay ecclesial ministry formation

³⁴ USCC, “Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity,” 5. http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/upload/called_and_gifted.pdf.

³⁵ NALM Advocacy Committee, “NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present,” 3, accessed December 8, 2017. <https://nalm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NALM-at-40-History-.pdf>.

³⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, §23.

³⁷ “Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, accessed December 8, 2017. <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/lay-ecclesial-ministry/index.cfm>.

³⁸ There is some ambiguity in terminology used. For example, CARA provides statistics for “Lay professional ministers (lay persons; excluding vowed religious),” “Lay Ecclesial Ministers in parish ministry (most recent estimates; including vowed religious and other lay persons),” and “Enrollment in Lay Ecclesial Ministry formation programs.” It is unclear whether the statistic provided for enrollment in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs includes vowed religious. It is also unclear what the relationship is between the categories of lay professional ministers and lay ecclesial ministers in parish ministry.

programs.³⁹ These statistics illustrate the rapid growth of lay ministry, the drastic (50%) decline of religious, and the large amount of overlap between the two groups.

The third millennium began with 31,168 individuals enrolled in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs.⁴⁰ Though formation programs for lay ministry have existed since the 1970's, the 2005 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) publication of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry (Co-Workers)* was revolutionary in applying the same pillars of formation established for priestly and diaconal formation to lay ministers. Of equal importance is the fact that though it does not propose new norms or establish particular law,⁴¹ *Co-Workers* officially endorses the term "lay ecclesial ministers."⁴² With regards to religious, the document states:

[W]hen describing lay ecclesial ministry, it is necessary to offer a clarification regarding religious institutes dedicated to the works of the apostolate and other forms of consecrated life. ... Consecrated persons participate in ecclesial ministry by their own title. ... They and the ordained work together with lay ecclesial ministers to carry out the Church's mission."⁴³

Because *Co-Workers* provides a theology of ministry that integrates the primacy of baptism, a differentiation from discipleship, and the mission of the church, Gaillardetz has called it "the most mature and coherent ecclesiastical document ever produced on a theology of ministry."⁴⁴

³⁹ CARA, "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

⁴⁰ CARA, "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

⁴¹ USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 6.

⁴² USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 5.

⁴³ USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 12.

⁴⁴ Gaillardetz, "The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 21.

Finally, in 2011, the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* were revised to conform with *Co-Workers*.

At present the United States is home to 74.3 million individuals that identify as Catholic. Among these are 45,605 religious sisters and 4,007 religious brothers, many of whom are also included among the 39,651 lay ecclesial ministers presently serving the American Church.⁴⁵ CARA estimates that by the year 2043 the population of religious sisters will be less than 1,000.⁴⁶ No one could have predicted this in 1965, just as no one could have imagined the role that non-vowed laity would play in the ministry of the Church. In order to make sense of these signs of the times, it is necessary to clearly articulate what is meant by laity, religious and ministry if we are to understand the relationship that exists among them.

Clarification of terms

The most fundamental (and perhaps most confusing) term necessary for exploring the relationship between laity and non-ordained apostolic religious is “lay.” As noted previously, the term has historically been used to distinguish clergy from the other members of the Church on the basis of the sacrament of ordination. This usage is consistent with c. 207, which reads:

§1. By divine institution, there are among the Christian faithful in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons.

§ 2. There are members of the Christian faithful from both of these groups, who, through the profession of evangelical counsels by means of vows or other sacred bonds recognized and sanctioned by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and contribute to the salvific mission of the Church; although their state does not

⁴⁵ CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

⁴⁶ CARA, “Sister Statistics: What Is Happening?” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2014/08/sister-statistics-what-is-happening.html>.

belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, it nevertheless belongs to its life and holiness.⁴⁷

A certain ambiguity is created by the second paragraph of c. 207, one that is reinforced by *Lumen Gentium*, which states, “The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the church.”⁴⁸

Though I wish to acknowledge the tension and nuances raised by these two definitions of laity, for the purpose of this paper I will utilize the canonical understanding of laity as all of the faithful who have not received the sacrament of ordination. This is essential for the question under consideration since by definition the parties involved, both lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious, are members of the laity.

Moving from their common identity as lay people, let us turn to defining the two groups that are the topic of this study. The first of these, apostolic religious, are those men and women who, as an intensification of their baptismal commitment, have publicly bound themselves by the evangelical counsels for a life marked by a commitment to public ministry. Though there are clerical apostolic religious, we are concerned here only with those who are not ordained. As noted previously, apostolic religious life bears striking similarities to societies of apostolic life and secular institutes. Unless otherwise stated, when speaking of apostolic religious I refer to non-ordained members of apostolic religious institutes, more commonly known as religious sisters and brothers. When using the term “lay ecclesial minister,” I mean the name used by the bishops in *Co-Workers* to refer to those “baptized persons who are professionally prepared and officially authorized to perform a ministry.”⁴⁹ This definition allows for the possibility that

⁴⁷ *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, c. 207.

⁴⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

⁴⁹ Gottemoeller, “Catholic Institutional Ministries: The History and Legacy,” in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtel, 55.

apostolic religious may be labeled as lay ecclesial ministers. Indeed, differentiation between the two on this point has been inconsistent. However, for the sake of clarity I will speak of non-ordained apostolic religious and lay ecclesial ministers as two separate groups, even though both vocations are rooted in the individual's baptismal identity.

Distinctions must also be made between discipleship, apostolate, and ministry. Discipleship is a way of life common to all followers of Christ and lived out within the church. It is closely related to apostolate, which is a share in the mission of Christ. Since Vatican II, Catholic teaching has held that all Christians have a share in this mission of Christ by virtue of their baptism. However, the particulars depend on one's state of life and function in the church as well as one's specific context. Thus, the apostolate specific to a married man living in secular society is different from that of a cloistered contemplative nun.

Some apostolates may properly be considered ministry. However, ministry is more specific. Thomas O'Meara defines ministry as "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve, and realize the kingdom of God."⁵⁰ Kathleen Cahalan describes ministry as "the vocation of leading disciples in the life of discipleship for the sake of God's mission in the world."⁵¹ What these definitions make clear is that ministry implies public responsibility within the church for the furthering of its mission. While all share in the mission, not all are called by God to do so in a publicly responsible way. Clergy do by virtue of the sacrament of ordination; consecrated persons (members of religious institutes, secular institutes and societies of apostolic life) do in accordance with "their own title, according to the nature of

⁵⁰ Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 150.

⁵¹ Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 50.

their institute;” and non-vowed laity engage in ministry by virtue of their deputation by the Church.⁵²

Having explored the intertwined histories of apostolic religious life and lay ecclesial ministry and armed with precise understandings of what is meant by both of these realities, I now seek to investigate the relationship between them. In the first chapter, I will explore the universal call to holiness, with a focus on understanding its impact upon the evolution of the theologies of vocation and holiness. The second chapter will consider how the reception of these conciliar teachings impacted the ministerial life of the Church by transforming religious life and giving birth to lay ecclesial ministry. Additionally, I will draw on the insights of prominent theologians and experience in order to answer these questions: are non-ordained apostolic religious lay ecclesial ministers? If not, what is the relationship between them? Finally, in chapter three, after having described the nature of the relationship between non-ordained apostolic religious life and lay ecclesial ministry, I will suggest what apostolic religious life and lay ecclesial ministry have to offer to each other.

⁵² USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 12.

Chapter 1

The Development of Catholic Teachings on Vocation and Holiness

“Everyone has a vocation!” As contemporary members of the Church we hear this truth proclaimed in season and out through homilies, catechesis, and popular religious literature. What has become cliché for some was unimaginable for older generations, which believed that vocations were only for the *holy* people who were called to the priesthood and religious life. By extension, the vast majority of the members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church did not think of themselves as having a vocation or being particularly holy. Rather, it was far more common for Catholics to think of themselves as passive members of a church composed of the hierarchy and religious.

The fact that these assumptions are so jarring to modern, post-conciliar sensibilities is evidence of the formative influence of Vatican II’s ecclesiology, as presented in *Lumen Gentium*. In this chapter, we will explore the theological foundations of modern Catholic teachings on vocation and holiness. These teachings are essential to both lay ecclesial ministry and religious life, as well as crucial for understanding the relationship between them. Though primarily focused on *Lumen Gentium*’s recovery and proclamation of the primacy of baptism and the universal call to holiness, this chapter will begin with a brief description of pre-conciliar theologies of vocation and holiness, then conclude with a consideration of the Council’s broader developments of these same concepts.

Pre-Conciliar Concepts of Vocation and Holiness

Although Catholic thought on vocation has long been dominated by the traditional states of life, this was not always the case. As the New Testament indicates, the earliest generations of Christians understood vocation as primarily a call by Jesus to discipleship, and secondarily a call to a particular way of living as disciples.⁵³ This understanding of vocation included all the faithful and upheld the holiness of each call. However, by the early Middle Ages vocation was exclusively used to speak of the call to monastic life.⁵⁴ This corresponds to the development of a three-tier hierarchy in which the monk was “the paradigm of sanctity.”⁵⁵ Later, in the twelfth century, Gratian’s *Decretum* speaks of two types of people: men of religion (clerics and monks) and men of the world (laity).⁵⁶ Thus, it became clear that in both operative and formal theologies of vocation a direct relationship existed between one’s state in life, vocation, and holiness. This schema would remain largely unchallenged until the Protestant reformation.

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther revolutionized religious thought on vocation by declaring that every state in life was a calling (*Beruf*) from God and therefore holy. Luther’s teaching was a retrieval of early Christian teaching. Yet the Catholic Church explicitly rejected Luther’s formulation because of its association with anti-Catholic and anti-clerical polemics. Instead, the Catholic Church reasserted a hierarchy of holiness and vocation.⁵⁷ Consequently, ordinary Catholics perceived themselves as a passive and vocationless people whose duties were simply to pray, obey and pay. This ecclesial self-understanding was reinforced by the magisterium until the twentieth century, perhaps most infamously by Pope Pius X’s 1906 encyclical *Vehementer Nos*. In it he called the Church an “unequal society ... comprising two

⁵³ Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 49.

⁵⁴ Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 10.

⁵⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 9.

⁵⁶ Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 234.

⁵⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 26.

categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock.” In this model, the faithful had only one duty, “to allow themselves to be led, and like a docile flock to follow the pastors.”⁵⁸

Despite this, church history has retained the memory of several lay people because of their legacy of holy and active lives. Yves Congar points out that early monastic writings document the lives of lay people engaged in secular occupations, who equaled and even surpassed the holiness of ascetical monks.⁵⁹ Medieval European literature records several royal examples of lay sanctity as well. Remarkably, in both the monastic and later medieval literature, lay people were often depicted as imitating the disciplines of monasticism, particularly celibacy.⁶⁰ As these examples demonstrate, there have been disparate voices regarding holiness and vocation within the Catholic tradition. Two of these, St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus Liguori, both doctors of the Church, warrant special consideration.

St. Francis de Sales, who was born in France shortly after the conclusion of the Council of Trent, is best remembered for his gentle manner of evangelization and his two famous books, *The Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609) and *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616). In both of these works, Francis seeks to supplant the prevailing notion of holiness as monastic asceticism with the idea that holiness is grounded in charity and accessible to all.⁶¹ Called *devotion*, holiness does not consist of “occasional acts of piety but a deep love of God that bursts forth into loving action.” It is multivalent, adorning the soul as grace, and strengthening the individual to do good through charity.⁶² In *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, Francis writes:

⁵⁸ Pope Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, §8. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html

⁵⁹ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for the Theology of Laity* (Maryland: Newman Press, 1965), 86 n 1.

⁶⁰ Mary Skinner, "Lay Sanctity and Church Reform in Early Medieval France," In *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, ed by Ann W. Astell, 1-26 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 37.

⁶¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 32.

⁶² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 29.

God bids Christians – the living trees of His Church – to bring forth fruit of devotion, each one according to his kind and vocation. A different exercise of devotion is required of each – the noble, the artisan, the servant, the prince, the maiden and the wife; and furthermore, such practices must be modified according to the strength, the calling and the duties of each individual.⁶³

Significantly, in this passage and throughout his writings Francis affirms the fact that all Christians have vocations, recognizes the diversity of their expression, and calls all to actively live them. In his later work, *The Treatise on the Love of God*, Francis writes of how devotion culminates in mystical contemplation, an experience that would otherwise be thought unattainable for the laity.

Deeply influenced by the thought of Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori was an eighteenth century Italian bishop, religious founder, and prolific author. The themes of, and inter-relationship between, salvation, holiness, and vocation emerge strongly within his corpus of 111 books. In the *Dignity and Duties of the Priest* (1760), Alphonsus writes:

To enter any state of life, a divine vocation is necessary; for without such a vocation it is, if not impossible, at least most difficult to fulfill the obligations of our states and obtain salvation.⁶⁴

Like Francis, Alphonsus clearly affirms the universality of vocation, sees vocation as having a broad scope, and implies that vocation requires a certain act. Uniquely, Alphonsus implies that vocation precedes a state in life. Therefore, it is not a concession to assert that those not called to the clerical or religious lives have vocations. Alphonsus' connection between vocation and salvation is intimately connected to his dual convictions that "every state of life is compatible with sanctity,"⁶⁵ and of the necessity of recognizing the state of life to which God calls the

⁶³ Francis De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 7.

⁶⁴ Alphonsus Liguori, *Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva* (St. Louis: Redemptorist Fathers, 1927), 185.

⁶⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 81.

individual.⁶⁶ The contributions of both Francis and Alphonsus to contemporary Catholic thought on vocation and holiness are difficult to over-estimate. Their influence can be perceived in the documents of Vatican II.

***Lumen Gentium*'s Teachings on the Primacy of Baptism and the Universal Call to Holiness**

Nearly ninety years after the conclusion of the short-lived First Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII convoked a new council that would be known as the Second Vatican Council. Perhaps encouraged by the similarity of names, some have suggested that Vatican II picked up where the First Vatican Council left off. Leaving aside broader speculation, it is clear that *Lumen Gentium*, often called the “fundamental text of the council,” was initially intended as a continuation of Vatican I’s *Pastor Aeternus* (PA), “*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ*.”⁶⁷ *Pastor Aeternus*, a document of only four chapters, was promulgated on July 18, 1870. At the time eleven chapters remained to be enacted, but the Franco-Prussian War and imminent invasion of the Papal States forced the adjournment of the council weeks later, and those chapters were left aside.⁶⁸

In immediate preparation for Vatican II, a theological commission led by Cardinal Ottaviani resurrected the remaining eleven chapters that were not enacted and re-worked them to become the basis of the first schema of the document now known as *Lumen Gentium*.⁶⁹ This first draft was discarded. It was later described by Msgr. Gérard Philips, *peritus* of Cardinal Suenens,

⁶⁶ The neat distinctions between the married, single, and religious life have long been blurred by the existence of apostolic confraternities, Benedictine oblates, and tertiaries.

⁶⁷ Adrian Hastings, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*. Vol. 1 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), 25.

⁶⁸ Hastings, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*. Vol. 1, 25- 26.

⁶⁹ Aurelie Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994), 39.

as lacking “a clear intrinsic structure.”⁷⁰ The second draft was only four chapters, but it contained the first presentation of the universal call to holiness. The universal call to holiness, one of the most celebrated contributions of *Lumen Gentium*, is largely credited to Philips. However, some felt the second draft denigrated religious life because it was not allotted its own chapter.⁷¹ Thus, it is evident that concerns regarding the privileged place of religious life in the Church, reflective of the pre-conciliar dynamics previously described, were operative in the proceedings surrounding the document. The third draft reached a compromise regarding the concern about religious life. *Lumen Gentium* eventually was approved with the fewest number of dissenting votes of any of the council’s documents.⁷²

The very structure of the *Lumen Gentium* speaks volumes about its theology. By placing the chapter on the People of God before the chapters on the hierarchy, laity, and religious, the council fathers emphasized the baptismal identity that unites the Church, rather than emphasizing the distinctions among its members.⁷³ There is a coherent theology in the unfolding of the document. The first two chapters, “On the Mystery of the Church” and “On the People of God,” speak of the divine origins and historical existence of the Church. Chapters three and four, “On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular the Episcopate” and “The Laity,” concern the different roles in the Church. The pairing and ordering of chapter five, “The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church” and chapter six, “Religious,” preserve the uniqueness of religious life, but situates it within the context of the holiness of the Church as a whole. Finally, chapters seven and eight, “The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and its

⁷⁰ Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, 39.

⁷¹ Edward Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), 49-50.

⁷² Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 186.

⁷³ Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 59.

Union with the Church in Heaven” and “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church,” remind the Church of the end for which it strives and the model of the Christian life, Mary.⁷⁴

Primacy of Baptism

One of the great contributions of *Lumen Gentium* is its reassertion of the primacy of baptism in the life of the church. Though it had been the practice to distinguish between members of the church on the basis of ordination since the third century, in actuality baptism remained the foundational sacrament of the Christian life.⁷⁵ Thus, by reminding the contemporary church of the true priority of baptism, the council fathers caused a paradigm shift in the way Catholics understood their place and role in the Church.⁷⁶ This shift took place in myriad ways; but for the sake of the question at hand three warrant particular focus. These are the reemphasis of baptismal identity, the recovery of the baptismal priesthood and the re-articulation of Church teaching on charisms.

Identity

The first chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, “The Mystery of the Church” states, “[t]hrough Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ...In this way all of us are made members of his body, ‘individually members one of another.’”⁷⁷ Therefore, from the outset of the document it is clear that the sacrament of baptism changes the recipient. First, the sacrament configures an

⁷⁴ Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 42.

⁷⁵ Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 77.

⁷⁶ *Lumen Gentium*’s emphasis on Baptism and Eucharist has ecumenical implications. This articulation helps to establish common theological ground with mainline Protestantism and reinforces theological differences with the Orthodox Churches.

⁷⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §7.

individual to Christ and then places all the baptized in a new relationship with each other, which is characterized by interdependence. According to Richard Gaillardetz, it is being initiated into Christ's body through baptism that allows the baptized to discover themselves and their truest identity in the life of the church.⁷⁸ This makes clear that the fact of baptism precedes any distinction within the Body of Christ. Baptism is also the bedrock from which further distinctions spring.

One's identity as a baptized member of the Body of Christ implies untold dignity. Using one the document's preferred terms for the members of the church, *Lumen Gentium* § 32 declares that "the chosen People of God is, therefore, one: 'one Lord, one faith, one Baptism': there is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ."⁷⁹ Thus, in contrast to long-held hierarchies of holiness, it becomes clear that true dignity is independent of function in the Church. Instead, the text affirms a radical equality of all the faithful based on the common "matrix of baptism."⁸⁰ Furthermore, the same paragraph continues, as members of the People of God the baptized share "a common vocation to perfection."⁸¹ Thus, it becomes clear that vocation is a direct result of baptism.

Significantly, the council fathers chose to use the word perfection to describe the vocation possessed by all the baptized. This stands in opposition to the narrow connotation that associates perfection only with religious life, previously referred to as a state of perfection.⁸² This is important because, without depreciating the states of life earlier perceived as the *true*

⁷⁸ Richard Gaillardetz, "The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 22.

⁷⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §32.

⁸⁰ Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, 38.

⁸¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §32.

⁸² Nancy Bauer, "The State of Consecrated Life: Vita Et Sanctitas Ecclesiae," *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 75 (2015), 74.

vocations and possessing the greatest dignity, *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear that dignity and a vocation oriented towards perfection naturally flow from baptism.

Baptismal Priesthood

In addition to reemphasizing the dignity of the Christian's baptismal identity, *Lumen Gentium* reclaims the traditional teaching of the baptismal priesthood for the Catholic Church. Long ignored, and even denied, because of its association with Protestantism,⁸³ the baptismal priesthood is explicitly upheld by *LG* § 31, which reads in part:

The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the church: all the faithful, that is, who by Baptism ... made sharers in their own way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ and play their part in carrying out the mission of the whole christian people in the Church and in the world.⁸⁴

It is of primary importance that this passage states that all the faithful, particularly the laity, by virtue of their baptism and in their own way share in the priestly functions of Christ. Notably, the baptismal priesthood is listed along with Christ's prophetic and kingly functions as well; thereby making it clear that all the baptized participate in the *tria munera* of Christ. This is momentous because this passage, taken from the chapter on the laity, carefully distinguishes the laity from clerics and religious, about whose share in Christ's priestly roles there had been little popular doubt.⁸⁵ By affirming the roles of those thought to be least likely to share in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly work, the council fathers reinforced the universality of the call to holiness.

⁸³ Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 44.

⁸⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

⁸⁵ This definition has been controversial. Some have dismissed it as an incomplete or negative characterization of the laity. In response to this concern, Bishop Wright stated that "the drafting commission did not intend to provide an ontological description of the layperson, only a typological description." Others have stated that the exclusion of the non-ordained religious from the laity places them in a new third category, explicitly rejected by § 43 and the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The baptismal priesthood is directly ordered to sanctity. If priesthood is understood, at least in part, in the traditional sense of offering sacrifice, then by extension all the faithful are called to imitate Christ's self-sacrifice for the sanctification of the world. This is made possible both by the regeneration and anointing of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism and by the special strength bestowed upon the faithful by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. This is reaffirmed in *LG* §10, which states that the faithful "exercise that [baptismal] priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, self-denial and active charity."⁸⁶ This does not mean that the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood has lost its importance; but rather it suggests that the two expressions of priesthood are ordered towards each other.⁸⁷ This is so because the baptismal and ministerial priesthoods are each, in their own way, participations "in the one priesthood of Christ," though they differ essentially.⁸⁸ Also, on a practical level, the interrelationship between the two expressions of priesthood stems from the fact that those who share in the ministerial/hierarchical priesthood are baptized before they are ordained. Thus, it can be said that "baptism is more fundamental than holy orders."⁸⁹ With regards to the original questions of holiness and vocation, it is clear that by asserting the participation of all of the baptized in the priesthood of Christ, *Lumen Gentium* make clear that all members of the church are invited and given the ability to actively pursue holiness of life.

Charisms

⁸⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §10.

⁸⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §10.

⁸⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1547.

⁸⁹ Michael Himes, "Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers." *C 21 Resources: The Vocations of Religious and the Ordained*, Spring 2011, 21.

It may be difficult to imagine, but at the time of Second Vatican Council it was uncommon, even controversial, to speak about charisms. Some prominent Catholic polemicists taught that the Holy Spirit had exclusively granted charisms to the early apostolic community.⁹⁰ Some of the bishops in attendance at the council took a more moderate stance, but still believed it was unsuitable to speak of the laity as having charisms.⁹¹ Others, informed by the First and Second World Congresses of the Lay Apostolate, held that pre-conciliar lay movements (including Focolare, Communion and Liberation, and Opus Dei) were charismatic movements; and therefore that it is proper to describe the laity as having charisms.⁹² This background explains why it is remarkable that *Lumen Gentium* teaches that, in addition to the priestly, prophetic, and kingly gifts common to all the Christian people, the Holy Spirit confers charism on a variety of people.⁹³

Lumen Gentium § 12 has come to be regarded as the quintessential Vatican II text on charisms. It reads in part:

[A]llotting his gifts ‘at will to each individual’, he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts, he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the church ... These charisms ... are primarily suited to and useful for the needs of the church.⁹⁴

Notably, the passage does not suggest that charisms are received at the moment of baptism, though some suggest that is the case. However, because charisms are distributed to the faithful of every rank, it is clear that baptism is the determining factor. Moreover, charisms are given to the faithful to make them able to contribute to the building up of the church. Therefore, they are

⁹⁰ Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*, 61.

⁹¹ Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church*, 187.

⁹² Margaret Guider, “Spiritual Charisms in the World Church,” in *The Holy Spirit: Setting the World on Fire*, ed. Richard Lennan and Nancy Pineda-Madrid, 134.

⁹³ Hastings, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*. Vol. 1, 39.

⁹⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §12.

related to how all the faithful live out the implications of their baptism, particularly their share in the *tria munera* of Christ. However, *Lumen Gentium* says more than this. In the above passage, the council fathers recognized that the laity have an active role to play in the renewal and building up of the church, and that playing this role is God's will.

Since "ministry generally begins with the manifestation of some charism,"⁹⁵ it is not surprising that later *Lumen Gentium* states that the ordained need to understand "that it is their exalted task to shepherd the faithful and at the same time to acknowledge their ministries and charisms, so that all in their separate ways, but of one mind, may cooperate in common tasks."⁹⁶ Far from the vision of Church expounded by Pope Pius X in *Vehementer Nos*, the council fathers envision the ministerial priesthood shepherding a baptismal priesthood that is actively engaged in the mission of the church. Without intending it explicitly, by extending Church teaching on charisms to include the laity, *Lumen Gentium* opened the door to the possibility of lay ecclesial ministry.⁹⁷ Having developed a theology of baptism for the modern Church, *Lumen Gentium* transcended the narrow theologies of vocation and holiness of the past and set the groundwork for the document's most famous contribution, the universal call to holiness.

The Universal Call to Holiness

Chapter Five, "The Universal Call to Holiness," is among the shortest chapters of *Lumen Gentium* with only four articles. Despite its brevity, the Universal Call to Holiness builds on the robust theologies of baptism, vocation, and holiness described in the preceding chapters, and definitively dismantles any semblance of a hierarchy of holiness. The chapter develops in a

⁹⁵ Gaillardetz, "The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 23.

⁹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §30.

⁹⁷ Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism*, 62.

logical fashion, dedicating one article each to the ecclesial nature of holiness, the universality of the call, differentiation in the unity of holiness, and a definition of holiness as love.⁹⁸ While it is commonly believed that the universal call to holiness is a theological innovation of Vatican II, it is more accurate to present it as a retrieval and rearticulation of the ancient teaching that all the faithful are called to be holy.⁹⁹ Regardless of whether one believes that the chapter is a work of innovation or recovery, it is clear that it has ushered in “a new era of vocational expansion” in the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁰ In this section, we will explore what *Lumen Gentium* envisions as the universal call to holiness, examining each element individually and considering its impact on perceptions of who is holy and who has a vocation.

Call

Any treatment of the universal call to holiness must begin by examining what the authors of *Lumen Gentium* mean by “call.” Generally considered interchangeable with “vocation,” both terms imply a relationship between the caller and recipient of the call. *Lumen Gentium* §40 emphasizes the relational nature of the call, stating that the followers of Christ are “called by God not for what they had done, but by his design and grace.”¹⁰¹ This is precisely what Yuriy Kolasa intends when he states that the modern Catholic use of “the term vocation denotes a personal relation of God to man, a personal call and personal response.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Brian Flanagan, “The Universal Call to Holiness and the Church,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2016), 223.

⁹⁹ De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, xvi.

¹⁰⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 232.

¹⁰¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §40.

¹⁰² Yuriy Kolasa, “How is Marriage to be Understood as a Vocation? How is it Connected to the Clerical State?,” in *The Disciples' Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day*, ed. Christopher Jamison (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 195.

Within the context of relational call, *Lumen Gentium* affirms a multifaceted understanding of vocation. Avoiding the historical tendency to limit vocation to just the members of the clerical and religious states, vocation is presented as including all the faithful in three distinct ways. First, and most fundamentally, all the faithful share in the general call to holiness received at baptism. Second, the baptized are called to specific states in life through which they live out their baptismal calls.¹⁰³ (Significantly, *LG* § 31 states explicitly that the laity have a vocation [*vocatione propria*]). For this reason, Christopher Jamison, suggests that *Lumen Gentium* describes four states in life: priesthood, religious life, marriage, and the dedicated single life.¹⁰⁴) The third expression of vocation is a personal call through which the baptized may make use of the charisms and graces God gives them for the building up of the church.¹⁰⁵ Russell Shaw describes this personal vocation as an “unrepeatable call from God to play a particular role in his redemptive mission of the Church.”¹⁰⁶

As Shaw indicates, all Christians, by virtue of baptism, are called to actively participate in the mission of the church. This mission is “proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom.”¹⁰⁷ Far from Pius XII’s description of the lay apostolate as the “participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy,” *Lumen Gentium* identifies the specific share of bishops (§24), priests (§28), religious (§43), and most notably the laity (§31) in the mission of the church.¹⁰⁸ Of this last group, the laity, the council fathers indicate that they “play their part in carrying out the mission of the

¹⁰³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §40.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Jamison, “A Culture of Vocations,” in *The Disciples' Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day*, ed. Christopher Jamison, 230.

¹⁰⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

¹⁰⁶ Russell Shaw, “What Vocation Shortage?” *C 21 Resources: The Vocations of the Laity*, Fall 2010, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §5.

¹⁰⁸ Alvaro Del Portillo, *Faithful and Laity in the Church: The Bases of Their Legal Studies* (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia Press, 1972), 88.

whole Christian people in the church and in the world.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, *Lumen Gentium* states that “the apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the church’s saving mission” and that all laypeople, through the gifts they have received are at the same time “witnesses and living instruments of the mission of the church itself.”¹¹⁰ Thus, it is clear that all members of the church are called to an active participation in its life and work.

Universality

As the heading of Chapter Five implies, the call to holiness is understood to apply to all the faithful. However, this is not a vague sort of universality. Rather, the council fathers were careful to make sure that the entirety of the document, and this chapter in particular, spoke to the specificity of the universal call. *LG* § 40 makes this clear, stating that “... all Christians in whatever state or walk in life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity...”¹¹¹ This acknowledgement of the existence of rank and status within the Church also serves as an overt statement of inclusion. Thus, no member of the church can believe that they are not called to holiness because they are not a religious or are *only* a lay person.

Lumen Gentium §41 begins with the affirmation that “the forms and tasks of life are many but there is one holiness...”¹¹² It then proceeds to identify the diverse ways of life that exist within the Church, and specifically how each is called by God and oriented towards holiness. The first group addressed are the clerics: bishops, priests, and clerics of lesser rank. These men are reminded that they are called to imitate Christ as a means of sanctification for themselves and for those they shepherd. Significantly, in attending to the ministers of lesser rank,

¹⁰⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

¹¹⁰ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §33.

¹¹¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §40.

¹¹² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

the council fathers write of “lay persons chosen by God who are called by the bishop” who “give themselves fully to apostolic works and who labor very fruitfully in the Lord’s field.”¹¹³ By explicitly addressing this group of laity in this context, *Lumen Gentium* established their legitimacy and unique role in the people of God.

Next, “Christian married couples and parents” are singled out. Remarkably they are told that they should “[follow] their own way” and that through their generous love they “stand as the witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of mother church,” and “are a sign of and a share in that love with which Christ loved his bride.”¹¹⁴ Later in the same paragraph, widows, widowers, and single people are identified for their great contributions toward “the holiness and activity of the Church.”¹¹⁵ Finally, the document addresses the poor, infirm and persecuted, who share in a particular way in the sufferings of Christ. It is significant that religious are not addressed as a unique group within *LG* § 41. This is likely because, according to *LG* § 43, religious are not “a middle way”¹¹⁶ Rather, they belong either to the clergy or the laity and so are incorporated within those descriptions.¹¹⁷ Despite this, it is difficult to imagine a member of the church who could not find within this chapter a description of their part in the call to holiness.

Holiness

In one of the most famous sentences of *Lumen Gentium*, the Council fathers state, “the forms and tasks of life are many, but there is one holiness, which is cultivated by all who are led by God’s Spirit ...”¹¹⁸ However, it is the following article, § 42, that provides a definition of the

¹¹³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

¹¹⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

¹¹⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

¹¹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §43.

¹¹⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §43.

¹¹⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

holiness to which the faithful are called. Departing from notions of holiness rooted in piety, § 42 establishes that holiness is synonymous with charity.¹¹⁹ Charity is described as “the bond of perfection and fullness of the law” as well as the supreme “means of attaining holiness.”¹²⁰ Furthermore, *Lumen Gentium* describes love of God and of neighbor as the mark of the true disciple of Jesus Christ.¹²¹

The ability to experience the love of God and love of neighbor in all walks of life places a life of holiness squarely within the reach of all the faithful, regardless of state in life. This is a point made explicit when it is explained that “all the faithful are invited and obliged to try to achieve holiness and the perfection of their own state of life.”¹²² Lest one get the impression that the striving to which the faithful are invited is strenuous, *Lumen Gentium* stresses that the faithful “will grow constantly in holiness” if they receive the “conditions, duties, and circumstances of their lives” in faith and cooperate with God’s will.¹²³ Additionally, growth in holiness is helped by the reception of the sacraments, participation in liturgy, an active prayer and communal life, and the practice of self-abnegation and the virtues.¹²⁴ This presentation of charity-holiness is remarkably similar to Francis de Sales’ notion of devotion. However, Hahnenberg suggests that Vatican II’s vision is broader and offers “an explicitly world affirming spirituality.”¹²⁵

Though holiness is clearly accessible to all, § 42 singles out two groups of people whose existence is directly ordered to the holiness of the church. The first group, martyrs, are described

¹¹⁹ *Lumen Gentium* clearly states that holiness is synonymous with charity. However, it is worth noting that Mt. 5:48 (“so be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect”) is also a universal call to holiness.

¹²⁰ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

¹²⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, 34.

as made up of individual disciples “who willingly accepted death for the salvation of the world, and through it are made like him by the shedding of blood.”¹²⁶ In doing so, they imitate Christ who “showed his love by laying down his life.”¹²⁷ The second group identified are those bound by the evangelical counsels, particularly religious. Writing of these men and women, the council fathers indicate that “the church’s holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels whose observance the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel.”¹²⁸ This statement is followed by a description of how each of the vows redounds to the holiness of the Church. For example, poverty is said to offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ.¹²⁹ *Lumen Gentium* acknowledges that perfect continence, a hallmark of religious life, “has always been held in high esteem by the church,” but explains that this is because it is “a sign and stimulus of love” and is “a singular source of spiritual fecundity.”¹³⁰ It must be noted that the special mention given to martyrdom and religious life does not imply that they have a greater inherent holiness or potential for holiness; but rather that there is something singular about the way they are configured to Christ.

Broader Teaching of Vatican II

Much has been written over the last half-century about the “inter-textual” readings of the documents of Vatican II. The themes of holiness and vocation are taken up by many of the conciliar documents. Additionally, the related topics of the roles of the laity, religious, and priesthood are treated in individual conciliar decrees. This section will briefly describe some of

¹²⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹²⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

¹³⁰ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §42.

the additional ways that the corpus of Vatican II documents developed these theological affirmations.

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” was promulgated on December 4, 1963, nearly a whole year before *Lumen Gentium*. While many ascribe credit to *Lumen Gentium* as the first document to recover the connection between baptism and active participation in the church, this distinction belongs to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This is clear in § 14, which reads:

It is very much the wish of the church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” have a right and to which they are bound by reason of their Baptism.¹³¹

Here it is evident that baptism not only incorporates the faithful into the holy people of God, but is also the basis for their full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy. This corresponds to *Lumen Gentium*’s teaching on the baptismal priesthood, found in *LG* §§ 9, 10 and 43.

Perfectae Caritatis

The conciliar documents promulgated subsequent to *Lumen Gentium* are often described as being dependent on it. Hahnenberg offers a schema that demonstrates the specific textual dependence of nine documents on *Lumen Gentium*.¹³² Among these are the next two documents to be considered: *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC), “The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of

¹³¹ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §14.

¹³² Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 46.

Religious Life” and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA), “The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.”

Perfectae Caritatis, promulgated on October 28, 1965, expands on many themes found in *Lumen Gentium*, and specifically the material contained in *LG* §§ 43-47. For the sake of discussing the questions of holiness and vocation, two points of overlap merit special consideration. These are the primacy of baptism and role of religious life in the Church. The first, the common teaching on the primacy of baptism, can be found in *PC* §5 and *LG* § 44. *Perfectae Caritatis* affirms that religious “have dedicated their entire lives to God’s service. This constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply rooted in their baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it.”¹³³ For its part, *Lumen Gentium* indicates that religious “draw still more abundant fruit from the grace of their Baptism by the profession of the evangelical counsels.”¹³⁴ With regard to the role of religious in the Church, it is clear that neither document embraces an exalted role of religious over and against the laity. Instead, both *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Lumen Gentium* teach that religious life exists for the edification and holiness of the Church. This is evident in the statement in *Perfectae Caritatis* that religious by their “holiness and its abundant fruits lend luster to God’s people,” who are inspired and enriched by their example.¹³⁵ This is in accord with *LG* § 47, which states:

Let all therefore who have been called to the profession of the counsels make every effort to persevere and excel still more in the vocation to which God has called them, for the increase of the holiness of the church, to the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity, which in Christ and through Christ is the source and origin of all holiness.¹³⁶

Apostolicam Actuositatem

¹³³ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, §5.

¹³⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §44.

¹³⁵ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, §7.

¹³⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §47.

Apostolicam Actuositatem was promulgated on November 18, 1965 as the first document ever to be dedicated exclusively to the apostolic life of the laity. Significantly, the introduction acknowledges its dependence on other conciliar documents, especially *Lumen Gentium*, with regard to the role of the laity in the mission of the church.¹³⁷ Additionally, the first chapter of the document is entitled “The Vocation of the Laity to the Apostolate,” and the first article within this chapter states, “... the christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well. In the organism of a living body no member is purely passive ...”¹³⁸ Thus, from the beginning of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, it is clear that in accord with *Lumen Gentium*, it establishes that all the faithful have a vocation and are called to actively participate in the life of the church.

As was the case with *Perfectae Caritatis*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* asserts that baptism is the foundation of the role that laity play in the mission of the church. This role is referred to as the lay apostolate, a term also employed in *Lumen Gentium*. This is made explicit in *AA* § 3, which states:

Lay people’s right and duty to be apostles derives from their union with Christ their head. Inserted as they are in the mystical body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate.¹³⁹

This is in accord with *LG* §33, which in addition to affirming the existence of a lay apostolate rooted in baptism, speaks of charism and opens the door to the possibility of lay ministry. On the topic of charism, *AA* §3 indicates that by accepting charisms “there follow[s] for all Christian believers the right and duty to use them in the church and in the world for the good of humanity

¹³⁷ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §1.

¹³⁸ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §2.

¹³⁹ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §3.

and the development of the church...¹⁴⁰ While this is fundamentally in accord with *Lumen Gentium*, it uses stronger language, calling the use of the charisms a right and duty.

As noted before, Gaillardetz associated the beginning of ministry with the reception of a charism. However, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* does not apply the term ministry to the activity of the laity.¹⁴¹ Instead, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* describes how the laity participate in the hierarchical ministry. For example, *AA* §10 speaks of the laity supplying what is lacking especially through catechetical instruction and by their expert assistance in order to increase the “efficacy of the care of souls as well as of the administration of the goods of the church.”¹⁴² Later in the text, *AA* § 24 specifies pastoral duties that may be entrusted to the laity by the hierarchy. Again, these descriptions of the share of the laity in the ministry of the hierarchy corresponds to *LG* § 33. Significantly, towards the end of the document, the council fathers describe how priests and religious ought to contribute to the development of the lay apostolate. Of particular interest for the topic of this thesis is the directive that “religious brothers and sisters will hold lay apostolic works in high regard; and will gladly help in promoting them in accordance with the spirit and rules of their institutes...”¹⁴³ The spirit of collaboration envisioned in this passage can only be the fruit of the mutual respect held by each of the faithful for the vocation and holiness of their fellow Christians.

Conclusion

As we have seen, questions of who is holy and who has a vocation have not always elicited simple or consistent responses. Though from the time of its foundation the Catholic

¹⁴⁰ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §3.

¹⁴¹ Gaillardetz, “The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 23.

¹⁴² Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §10.

¹⁴³ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, § 25.

Church possessed broad biblical concepts of holiness and call, succeeding generations adopted narrower interpretations. Consequently, in large measure, only those in the clerical and religious states were seen as holy and having a vocation and the vast majority of the faithful saw themselves as having little role in the church. Fortunately, through the contributions of St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus Liguori, and later Vatican II, the Church recovered the ancient inclusive notions of vocation and holiness. With the earliest Christians, the Catholic Church today affirms that all are called. This vocation to love is rooted in baptism and manifest in active participation in the mission of the church. By divine design there are no passive members of the people of God.

Empowered by such a positive, inclusive and holistic theology, Catholics from all states and walks of life have gained a new ecclesial self-understanding. Consequently, new manners of answering God's call have developed and well-established traditions have been, and continue to be, re-examined and transformed. Among these are the simultaneous emergence of lay ecclesial ministry and the renewal of apostolic religious life. Independently and collectively, these two responses have borne great fruit, changing the face of ministry in the Catholic Church. As realities unfold, new questions are emerging, and further clarity is needed. The following chapter will work towards clarifying the nature of the relationship between lay ecclesial ministry and non-ordained apostolic religious life.

Chapter 2

New Colleagues in Ministry:

Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Non-ordained Apostolic Religious

The Second Vatican Council's broad ecclesiological vision fundamentally altered the way that Catholics of every state of life understood themselves and their place in the Church. Laity outside of religious life, convinced of their own vocation and capacity for holiness, sought ways to actively respond to God's call. Meanwhile, clergy and religious allowed these same conciliar teachings to challenge and transform their traditional ecclesial self-understandings, apostolic efforts, and relationship with the people of God.

These two complementary dynamics radically altered the face of ministry in the Catholic Church. At the same time that thousands left the religious and clerical states and many of those that remained sought new ministries, laity outside of religious life gained confidence and seized opportunities to respond to the ministerial needs of the Church. This new group of lay people doing ministry in the Church found themselves taking up works previously unimagined, such as social action director; as well as assuming roles formerly held by priests and religious, including home visiting.¹⁴⁴ The result was a blurring of traditional ministerial roles and identities.

Today the overwhelming majority of ministry in the Church is done by lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious. However, years of overlapping ministry and confusion about identity have led to an ambiguous relationship between the two groups. This chapter seeks to untangle some of this ambiguity, beginning with an exploration of how and why the ministerial landscape of the Church shifted after Vatican II for members of the religious and

¹⁴⁴ David DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005), 81.

lay states. Next, I will seek to describe the common ministerial reality, shared by religious and lay ecclesial ministers, that gives rise to the question of the relationship between them. Then I will summarize the insights offered by several prominent theologians into the relationship between lay ecclesial ministry and non-ordained apostolic religious life. Finally, informed by these theologians and experience, I will propose an answer to these questions: are non-ordained apostolic religious lay ecclesial ministers? And, if not, what is the nature of the relationship between the religious and lay ecclesial ministers?

The Shifting Landscape of Ministry following Vatican II

By its proclamation of the ecclesiology of the People of God, Vatican II leveled the playing field for all of the baptized. The affirmation that by virtue of baptism and confirmation, all are called to holiness and can actively share in the mission and ministry of the Church has had many effects on ministry. For the purpose of examining the question at hand, two effects stand out.¹⁴⁵ The first is the flourishing of the laity, which has led to many of the faithful outside of the clerical and religious states answering the call to ministry in the Church. The second is an existential crisis within the religious state and its subsequent decline. The diminishment of religious life created a drastic reduction in the traditional ministerial workforce, which in turn augmented the abundance of ministries assumed by the laity outside of religious life. These two dynamics have contributed to the shifting landscape of ministry, and warrant further exploration.

¹⁴⁵ The clerical state was also impacted; however, it is not within the scope of this thesis.

The existential crisis and ensuing diminishment of religious life are manifest in two main ways: the “great exodus” out of religious life from 1965-1975,¹⁴⁶ and a lack of new vocations.¹⁴⁷ Prior to Vatican II, religious brothers and sisters were thought to “inhabit a middle state” between clergy and laity.¹⁴⁸ For brothers in clerical orders, this was particularly important since they were often viewed as lacking what it took to be a priest.¹⁴⁹ *Lumen Gentium* offered mixed messages about the middle state identity of religious, seemingly reinforcing it in *LG* §31, which stated that “the term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the church.”¹⁵⁰ However, *LG* §43 explicitly denied the middle state identity of religious, declaring that “this state of life, from the point of view of the divine and hierarchical nature of the church, is not to be seen as a middle way between the clerical and lay states of life.”¹⁵¹

Traditionally, religious had enjoyed an elevated status in the Church, based on common perceptions and expectations of holiness and exclusive claims to mission. This too was dismantled by the proclamation of the universal call to holiness in *Lumen Gentium*. In effect, Vatican II overturned the theology of religious life that had prevailed for 1500 years.¹⁵² These theological developments caused many to re-evaluate their original motives for entering religious life. Finding that they were attracted to religious life by desires for spiritual growth and ministry,

¹⁴⁶ Sandra Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 608.

¹⁴⁷ It is worth noting from the outset that most of the literature on this topic concerns the experiences of religious women, however these trends may be accurately applied to religious brothers as well.

¹⁴⁸ Lora Ann Quinonez and Mary Daniel Turner, *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 186 n 2.

¹⁴⁹ Quinonez and Turner, *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters*, 186 n 2.

¹⁵⁰ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

¹⁵¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §43.

¹⁵² Elizabeth Carroll, "Reaping the Fruits of Redemption," In *Midwives of the Future: American Sisters Tell Their Story*, ed. by Ann Patrick Ware (Kansas City, MO: Leaven Press, 1985), 61.

which had become possible for all the laity, thousands of religious left their congregations.¹⁵³ In fact, the *1986 Sisters' Survey* indicated that a “new appreciation for the lay role” was one of the most common explanations provided for why sisters left before final vows.¹⁵⁴

The religious who remained wrestled with their ambiguous ecclesial status and often felt “placeless” in the Church.¹⁵⁵ This sense of placelessness increased, as many sisters and brothers chose to leave traditional ministries owned or sponsored by their congregations as part of their response to the renewal mandated by *Perfectae Caritatis*. Often these new ministries were characterized as direct service and as more likely to be oriented towards adults than children.¹⁵⁶ In 1968 Mary Hester Valentine recorded with amazement that “one hears of parishes where sisters and pastor team-teach convert groups, or where sisters’ casual parish visiting serves to alert the priest to specific needs.”¹⁵⁷ This may seem normal to contemporary Catholics, but at the time these were novel ministries.

These new ministries frequently took a toll on community life, replacing the uniformity of corporate ministries with a diversity of works and frequently necessitating new living arrangements. The breakdown of traditional congregational cultures and the overturning of long-held theologies of religious life caused some religious to have difficulty distinguishing their congregation, and even religious life as a whole, from other vocations in the Church. Such uncertainty continues to manifest as a hesitancy on the part of brothers and sisters to encourage

¹⁵³ Sandra Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now: The Past, Present, and Future of Women Religious in the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: Center for Spirituality, Saint Mary's College, 2011), 10-11.

¹⁵⁴ Marie Augusta Neal, *Catholic Sisters in Transition: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1984), 22.

¹⁵⁵ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 26.

¹⁵⁶ Anne Munley, *Threads for the Loom* (Silver Spring, MD: Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 1992), 123.

¹⁵⁷ Mary Hester Valentine, *The Post-Conciliar Nun* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968), 115.

new vocations to the religious life.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, the reluctance to encourage new generations of religious, coupled with the awareness of would-be sisters and brothers that holiness and ministry can be found outside of religious life, have contributed to the precipitous decline of new vocations since the 1960's.¹⁵⁹

In re-examining their original reasons for entering religious life, many sisters and brothers discovered that they were motivated by desires for a deeper spirituality and mysticism. In the pre-conciliar Church, few opportunities existed for these things outside of religious life. But the decades since have witnessed the rapid development of both. With regard to spiritual growth, Bible studies, prayer groups, and opportunities for retreats and spiritual direction have since become significantly more available in parish communities. For those desiring more, ecclesial movements provide an option. Patricia Wittberg notes that those who wanted more extensive commitments than parishes provide have historically joined ecclesial movements or religious orders.¹⁶⁰ Given the shift away from religious life, it should come as no surprise that ecclesial movements, such as Focolare and Communion and Liberation, experienced growth in the second half of the twentieth century, comparable to what religious orders knew during the nineteenth century.¹⁶¹ These ecclesial movements transcend parish boundaries, share common activities, focus on prayer and provide occasions for service.¹⁶² Because ecclesial movements provide opportunities for lay men and women “to develop and exercise talents for religious leadership,” some believe that they are becoming the primary alternative to religious orders.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Sandra Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 243.

¹⁵⁹ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 10-11.

¹⁶⁰ Patricia Wittberg, *Building Strong Church Communities: A Sociological Overview* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 77.

¹⁶¹ Wittberg, *Building Strong Church Communities: A Sociological Overview*, 78.

¹⁶² Wittberg, *Building Strong Church Communities: A Sociological Overview*, 77.

¹⁶³ Wittberg, *Building Strong Church Communities: A Sociological Overview*, 78.

At the same time that ecclesial movements were experiencing unprecedented growth, many lay people outside of religious congregations began taking active roles in the ministry of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* supported this new involvement. Pastors, inspired by these texts, began actively inviting individual parishioners to consider taking on ministerial roles in the parish. For example, *LG* §12 and *AA* § 3 both state that the Holy Spirit has allotted charisms to the faithful for the building up of the Church, and instructs pastors to judge the authenticity of these charisms.¹⁶⁴ Likewise, *LG* §30 directs that pastors acknowledge the ministries and charisms of the faithful so that all “may cooperate in the common task;”¹⁶⁵ and *AA* § 10 indicates that “laity ought to cooperate in all the apostolic and missionary enterprises of their ecclesial family” according to their abilities.¹⁶⁶ Subsequently, lay men and women assumed positions such as youth minister, religious educator, and music director. These ministries became available through a combination of new responses to the increasing needs of the faithful and the ministerial vacancies left by departed priests and religious. These earliest lay ecclesial ministers were often volunteers and not formally prepared for their work.¹⁶⁷ However, as attested to by *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, these men and women are now well prepared professionals working at all levels of the Church.¹⁶⁸ As one of the largest ministerial forces in the American Catholic Church, lay ecclesial ministry has provided many lay Catholics, including former sisters and brothers, with a viable way to participate in the mission and ministry of the Church beyond the parameters of religious life.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §12.

¹⁶⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, § 30.

¹⁶⁶ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, § 10.

¹⁶⁷ David DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 12.

¹⁶⁹ DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, 45-46.

The Contemporary Ministerial Reality

The Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) reported that in 2017 there were 39,651 Lay Ecclesial Ministers in parish ministry and 17,722 Lay Professional Ministers serving the Catholic Church in the United States.¹⁷⁰ This data offers convincing proof of the generous response of the laity to the ministerial needs of the Church since Vatican II. However, closer inspection reveals an inconsistency with regard to who is included in these statistics. For example, the category “Lay Ecclesial Ministers in parish ministry” includes “vowed religious and other lay persons,” whereas “Lay Professional Ministers” excludes vowed religious.

Despite these ambiguities, the statistics do speak eloquently to the ministerial overlap of the non-ordained in and outside of apostolic religious life, as was described by Philip Murnion twenty-five years ago. At that time, the National Pastoral Life Center (NLPCL) found that “slightly more than four out of ten” of the “new parish ministers were members of religious orders, the vast majority being sisters.”¹⁷¹ In the years since Murnion’s study, the number of religious working in parishes has decreased, while their average age has increased. Yet sisters and brothers remain a substantial group within lay parish ministry.¹⁷²

The American bishops have also recognized the intersection of religious and other lay men and women within lay ecclesial ministry in each of their major documents on the topic. Beginning in 1980 with the publication of *Called and Gifted*, the bishops acknowledged the leadership provided by religious brothers and sisters to lay women and men preparing to work in

¹⁷⁰ CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

¹⁷¹ Philip Murnion, *New Parish Ministers: Laity & Religious on Parish Staffs: A Study Conducted for the Committee on Pastoral Practices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops with the Support of Lilly Endowment, Inc.* (New York, NY: National Pastoral Life Center, 1992), v.

¹⁷² CARA, “Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States,” 5. <http://www.usccb.org/upload/lem-summit-2015-cara-research-review-on-lay-ecclesial-ministry-2015.pdf>.

the Church.¹⁷³ This is appropriate given that religious life provided the only model for non-clerical ministry in the Church prior to Vatican II.¹⁷⁴ The bishops' later documents: *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (1995), *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Question* (1999), and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (2005) all indicate that the presence of religious among the ranks of lay ministers is an accepted fact. For example, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* records that "Recent research indicates that at least half of our parishes have lay people or vowed religious in pastoral staff positions."¹⁷⁵ Yet none of these documents makes clear whether non-ordained religious performing the same ministries, often in tandem with single and married people, are also considered lay ecclesial ministers. Nor do these documents attempt to describe the relationship between them.

Given the statistical overlap and similarity of ministry between non-ordained religious and the other lay people doing ecclesial ministry, the status of each remains an important topic for several reasons, as discussed hereafter. The first reason is a need for greater clarity in ecclesial self-understanding, particularly among religious. The second is the positive impact clarity would have on efforts to create and sustain a culture of vocations in the Church. The third reason is its role in furthering the ongoing development of the theologies of vocation and ministry.

With regards to the first reason, the need for clarity, it is unlikely that a single or married lay minister would be unsure about whether they are a member of a religious congregation; but it

¹⁷³ USCC, "Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity," November 1980, 1. http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/upload/called_and_gifted.pdf

¹⁷⁴ Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World*, 18.

¹⁷⁵ USCC, "Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium," November 1995, 6. <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/called-and-gifted-for-the-third-millennium.cfm>

is quite common for members of religious congregations to question whether they are truly lay people. Further complicating this question of identity is the fact that these two groups of non-ordained ministers often do the same work. In the contemporary reality of religious life, sisters and brothers doing ecclesial ministry may have more contact with their ministerial colleagues than they do with members of their own congregations. All of these factors impact how non-ordained apostolic religious understand themselves and their role in the Church.

A description of the relationship between the two groups of lay ministers also serves those ministers who belong to the married and single states of life. Fortunately, these lay men and women are not experiencing the same deep-seated ambiguity as those in religious life, but as a relatively new phenomenon, the Church is still developing its understanding of them. In this way any new clarity gained helps to paint a fuller picture of both the new lay ministers and their ministry in the Church.

A second reason for describing the relationship between the various groups doing lay ministry is the positive impact it could have on efforts to build a culture of vocations in the Church. An authentic culture of vocations seeks to promote the diversity of vocational options, to aid discernment, and to support formation. All of these would be enhanced by a clear explanation of the relationship between religious life and lay ecclesial ministry.¹⁷⁶ For example, some individuals present religious vocations in a way that exclusively emphasizes a response to a call to service in the Church. However, there is no obvious difference between this and how lay ecclesial ministry is presented. One could perhaps wonder if apostolic religious are simply lay ecclesial ministers with vows, or if lay ecclesial ministry is “religious life-lite.” Also, as noted previously, many religious have stopped encouraging new vocations because they have lost a

¹⁷⁶ Christopher Jamison, “A Culture of Vocation,” in *The Disciples' Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day*, ed. Christopher Jamison (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 227-231.

sense of their place in the Church. Clarifying whether or not religious are *simply* lay ecclesial ministers with vows may go a long way to resolving this reluctance.

Likewise, good information is necessary for authentic discernment. People considering vocations to the religious life and/or lay ecclesial ministry are often moved by the same desires for holiness and ministry. For these individuals a clear understanding of what is common to both vocations, but also what distinguishes them, is crucial. Finally, candidates for ordained ministry, religious life, and lay ecclesial ministry participate in formation programs structured according to the same four pillars: human, spiritual, ministerial, and intellectual. However, for formation to be authentic, it needs to correspond to the reality for which the individual is being prepared.¹⁷⁷ Of particular importance is the formation that men and women receive in preparation for the ecclesial repositioning that occurs as they undertake ministry in the Church. However, this requires that the ecclesial status for which the individual is preparing is clear.

The third and final reason that it is important to define and describe the relationship that exists between lay ecclesial ministry and non-ordained apostolic religious is the ongoing development of the theologies of vocation, ministry, and mission. It is said that it takes a century to implement a Church council, and at present the Catholic Church is only fifty years removed from Vatican II.¹⁷⁸ It is logical then that the ongoing reception of the conciliar teachings regarding holiness and vocation continue to bring new issues to the fore. This question regarding the relationship between two of the largest ministerial forces in the Church, with their similar theological basis and inter-twined history, is part of that process. For some answers, we must

¹⁷⁷ In the case of religious brothers and sisters, formation for ministry usually begins before the individual enters the novitiate and is properly considered a religious. However, since the formation religious receive for ministry occurs throughout the duration of one's religious life, proper formation must take into consideration whether or not the individual is already a religious.

¹⁷⁸ Janet K. Ruffing, "Formation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Rooted in a Genuinely Lay and Ecclesial Spirituality," In *Reflections on Renewal: Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*, edited by Donna M. Eschenauer and Harold Daly Horell, 139-50 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 147.

turn to the theologians that have contributed to post-conciliar theologies of ministry, lay ministry, and religious life.

Review of Literature

Over the course of the past half-century, numerous volumes of post-conciliar theologies of ministry have been written by authors seeking to integrate Vatican II's teachings on ecclesiology, mission, and ministry with new dynamics at work in the Church. These men and women, drawn from every state of life, offer diverse perspectives missing in earlier scholarship. Additionally, these authors have honestly addressed new situations as they have arisen in the Church.¹⁷⁹ For example, much has been written on lay ministry and its connection to ordained ministry. But very little has been written on the topic at hand, the relationship between non-ordained apostolic religious life and lay ecclesial ministry. There are perhaps good reasons for this. Conceivably other topics, such as the relationship between lay and clerical ministers, were deemed more urgent. Or maybe other issues appeared less complicated, and so were more readily taken up. Regardless of the reason, there is a noticeable lack of literature on the topic. Nonetheless, valuable insights into the answers to these questions can be gleaned, and they will be presented here.

Before delving into the pertinent insights of scholars and ecclesial documents, it is prudent to make three observations about the sources encountered during the research process. The first is that none of the literature available was written to address the questions at hand. This fact bears repeating. Yet these sources do provide valuable information that can be pieced together to inform answers. Second, what is written inevitably reflects the values, priorities, and

¹⁷⁹ It ought to be noted that the flourishing of lay ecclesial ministry has also created more room for the ministerial aspirations of women in the life of the Church.

background of the author. For example, this means that the literature written by religious sisters tends to be more concerned with the needs and interests specific to religious life than are those works written by married lay theologians. Third, when viewed chronologically, there is a discernable shift in emphasis from a theology of the laity to a theology of ministry within the writings.¹⁸⁰ What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the relevant contributions made by all of the leading theologians. Often times these men and women are fundamentally in agreement on important issues. For the sake of simplicity duplication of ideas has been avoided. Rather, what follows are thematically arranged descriptions of the most helpful insights taken from among the many sources studied.

Ecclesial Sources

The Bishops

From the outset of the discussion of ecclesial sources for understanding the relationship between religious and other lay ministers, it is important to be aware that the Catholic Church has not issued a definitive official position on the topic of lay ministry.¹⁸¹ Because of this, the statements of the US Bishops will provide the most reliable source of information about the way the institutional Church conceives of this relationship. Unfortunately, the bishops do not provide a simple and consistent answer. For example, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Question* explicitly includes religious in its definition of lay ecclesial ministers.¹⁸² However, the later document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* offers a definition broad enough to include religious, but

¹⁸⁰ Edward Hahnenberg, "The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry" (PhD dissertation, Notre Dame University, 2002), 126.

¹⁸¹ Kenan Osborne, *Orders and Ministry* (New York: Orbis, 2006), 172.

¹⁸² USCC, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 7.

without explicitly doing so. The document contains portions dedicated to describing the relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and bishops, priests, deacons and all of the lay faithful. But it does not address the relationship with religious. This omission can reasonably be understood as evidence that the bishops believe that religious are included among lay ecclesial ministers. However, the bishops also take care to address the unique way that religious exercise ecclesial ministry as members of congregations. In this context, the bishops state that “they [religious] and the ordained work together with lay ecclesial ministers to carry out the Church’s mission.”¹⁸³ Thus, it appears that religious are distinct from both lay ecclesial ministers and the ordained.

The same ambiguity found in the corporate statements of bishops can be discerned among the writings of individual bishops. Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago’s pastoral letter, “*In Service to One Another*” (1985), does not make a determination about the status of religious; but he does identify five ways to differentiate between ministers. These are: ecclesial recognition, amount of time devoted to ministry, the specification of their activities, the background required for their particular ministries, and the setting in which the service is carried out.¹⁸⁴ Significantly, some of the most apparent differences between non-ordained apostolic religious and other ministers can be accounted for by these characteristics, raising the possibility that Cardinal Bernadin believed that there was an essential difference between them. On the other hand, Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles’ Pastoral letter, “*As I Have Done for You*” (2000), is in accord with *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Question*. In this pastoral letter, Mahony defined

¹⁸³ USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Joseph Bernadin, “In Service of One Another,” *Origins* 15 (August 1, 1985):137.

lay ecclesial ministers as “professionally trained or otherwise properly prepared women and men, including vowed religious, who are in positions of service and leadership in the Church.”¹⁸⁵

Church Sponsored Research

Like the other sources considered here, the research produced by the NPLC and CARA does not seek to describe the relationship between non-ordained religious and single and married lay ministers. However, the findings of NPLC and CARA’s research do offer models for how to think about the relationship. These documents offer a “both-and” approach. For example, Philip Murnion, the head of the NPLC study, includes the following on the first page of his report:

After considerable discussion, the committee ... determined that there was a need to examine the rapidly expanding practice of hiring lay people and religious for pastoral positions in parishes. Since, canonically, religious are lay as distinct from clergy one could properly use the term 'lay parish ministers' to denote the subjects of the study, but for the sake of clarity we will refer to lay and religious pastoral ministers.¹⁸⁶

This quote references the canonical designation of religious as laity. Yet it recognizes their particularity as well, thus achieving a balance between *LG* §§ 31 and 43. Later in the same document Murnion writes of distinguishing those who are “truly lay” from those in religious vows. He thus recognizes that the so-called truly lay “bring a different set of perspectives and conditions of life to the exercise of ministry” than do priests and religious.¹⁸⁷ In a similar fashion, David DeLambo, a colleague of Murnion’s, wrote years later as part of another NPLC study that the term “lay parish minister” could be used to describe both members of religious communities and “regular laity.” However, his study would “distinguish between lay parish ministers who are

¹⁸⁵ Roger Mahony, “As I Have Done for You: A Pastoral Letter on Ministry,” *Origins* 29 (May 4, 2000), 748.

¹⁸⁶ Murnion, *New Parish Ministers: Laity & Religious on Parish Staffs*, 1.

¹⁸⁷ Murnion, *New Parish Ministers: Laity & Religious on Parish Staffs*, 10.

vowed religious and those who are not.”¹⁸⁸ DeLambo referred to the categories of religious brothers, religious sisters, laywomen and laymen as ecclesial statuses.

Likewise, the authors of the CARA sponsored study, *Global Catholicism: Portrait of a World Church* (2003), lament that “figures on lay Catholics who do not belong to religious institutes and who are engaged in Church ministry ... are mostly unavailable on a consistent worldwide basis.”¹⁸⁹ This statement indicates two significant things: first, that global statistics on lay ministry are not available; and second, that if information regarding the ecclesial status of lay ministers was available, the authors of the study would choose to include it. Also, as noted previously, CARA’s *Frequently Requested Church Statistics* distinguishes between lay ecclesial ministers in parish ministry, which includes vowed religious, and lay professional ministers, which does not.

Zeni Fox

Zeni Fox is one of the more prominent theologians studying lay ministry. She has contributed greatly to the Church’s understanding on the topic. But even she expresses frustration with “the lack of definition and delineation” among the Church’s new ministries. Of particular concern to her is a lack of uniform criteria for deciding who is and is not included in studies, and the varied meanings of the categories used by researchers. One of the inconsistent standards that causes Fox concern is whether or not to include religious, since some studies use membership in a religious community as an exclusionary factor.¹⁹⁰ Fox notes that religious have

¹⁸⁸ DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Bryan Froehle and Mary Gautier, *Global Catholicism: Portrait of a World Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 28.

¹⁹⁰ Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 2.

struggled with a lack of consensus about their status as lay ecclesial ministers. In particular the reluctance to differentiate them from the lay faithful enhances the sense of placelessness, previously described by Schneiders, that religious already experience.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, religious continue to “strengthen their bonds with their fellow laity”¹⁹² and encourage vocational awareness among their lay colleagues.¹⁹³

Kenan Osborne, OFM

Kenan Osborne offers a historical perspective on the contemporary distinctions made among lay ministers. He notes that for the first millennium, the Christian community was marked by four states: clergy, religious, ruler, and laity. At no point during this period of time did Christians view monks and nuns as “ordinary” lay persons, nor did they see them as clerics.¹⁹⁴ For this reason, Osborne believes that attempts to reduce these four groups to two, as is done today, is “simplistic.”¹⁹⁵ He suggests that the fact that there is a popular operative theology that religious constitute a third group (in contrast to the formal theology that deems all non-ordained persons laity) is evidence of the inadequacy of the formal theology. Therefore, Osborne suggests that there “exists *de facto*, if not *de jure*, another group of Catholics ... these are the Catholics we call the religious.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Zeni Fox, “Strengthening Ministerial Leadership: Perspectives from Systems Theory,” in *Lay Ecclesia Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 207.

¹⁹² Fox, “Strengthening Ministerial Leadership: Perspectives from Systems Theory,” in *Lay Ecclesia Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 207.

¹⁹³ Zeni Fox, “Why Did You Choose Your Work? Reflections on Vocation,” in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtel (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 15.

¹⁹⁴ Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 262.

¹⁹⁵ Osborne, *Orders and Min*, 59.

¹⁹⁶ Osborne, *Orders and Min*, 60.

Thomas O'Meara, OP

Thomas O'Meara shares Osborne's conclusion that the juridical definitions of the lay and clerical states are inadequate for the contemporary reality of the Church. Specifically, he takes issue with the status of religious sisters and brothers, writing, that they are not "by any phenomenological standard" lay persons.¹⁹⁷ The very fact that "ministering religious women (and men who are not presbyters) are called laity" is for O'Meara, a reason to question the manner of distinction.¹⁹⁸ Rather, O'Meara insists that there is "a spectrum of different functions and lifestyles ... in which it is not easy to distinguish precisely where one life-style begins and another ends."¹⁹⁹ By way of example, O'Meara asks how the present schema allows the faithful to "understand how a Catholic husband who is a teacher radically differs from a Christian teaching brother."²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, O'Meara affirms with *LG* § 43 that "Religious life does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, but it enters into the life and saving mission of the Church." Instead, it belongs to the charismatic nature of the Church and exists as a "phenomenon within the structure of the Church," having a more fragile quality than the episcopacy, which as a part of the structure of the Church has a permanent quality to it and exists by divine institution.²⁰¹

Sandra Schneiders, IHM

Sandra Schneiders, has the dual distinctions of being the only non-ordained religious included in this survey of literature and of being one of only two of the included theologians to

¹⁹⁷ Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 132.

¹⁹⁸ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 132.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas O'Meara, *Holiness and Radicalism in Religious Life* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 47.

²⁰⁰ O'Meara, *Holiness and Radicalism in Religious Life*, 47.

²⁰¹ O'Meara, *Holiness and Radicalism in Religious Life*, 56.

explicitly address the question of the relationship between religious and lay ecclesial ministers.

In response to this question, Schneiders writes:

Women Religious are not clerics nor are they lay ecclesiastical ministers. They are something for which the Church as an ecclesiastical ministerial structure has, historically, no category. They are ecclesial ministers who are not ordained and women Religious who are not cloistered.²⁰²

According to Schneiders, religious are not lay ecclesial ministers because, by virtue of their consecration, they “appropriate in a distinctive way the mission to the world into which all Christians are inaugurated by baptism.” Furthermore, “for Religious, full-time and universal ecclesial ministry is their characteristic expression of that mission.”²⁰³ This “full-time and universal ecclesial ministry” is ministry done by a “particular lifeform in the ecclesial Body of Christ [for] the Church as the People of God.”²⁰⁴ As noted above, Schneiders does not believe that religious fit into any existing category within the Church; but she does believe that it is possible for religious to “reclaim and re-articulate [their] ministerial identity in contemporary terms,”²⁰⁵ something she terms “Sisters Ministries.”²⁰⁶ “Sisters Ministries,” according to Schneiders, will be the natural outcome of reconfiguring religious congregations through mergers.²⁰⁷ They may exist beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church;²⁰⁸ and will be primarily concerned with social justice, victims of injustice, spiritual development, and the work of “intellectuals, scholars, and artists.”²⁰⁹

²⁰² Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 27.

²⁰³ Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World*, 226.

²⁰⁴ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 27-28.

²⁰⁵ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 20.

²⁰⁶ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 21.

²⁰⁷ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 23.

²⁰⁸ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 28.

²⁰⁹ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 29-31.

Furthermore, Schneiders believes that these ministries will enable religious to become “newly visible in the Church” and attract new vocations.²¹⁰ However, it is not clear from Schneiders’ writings how she envisions “Sisters Ministries” being informed by congregational missions and charisms. It is worth noting that, although Schneiders’ writings are exclusively concerned with religious women, the same principles could be applied to the realities faced by religious brothers, particularly those who belong to non-clerical institutes.

Edward Hahnenberg

Edward Hahnenberg, a married lay theologian, has the distinction of being the other theologian to address the topic of the relationship between religious and other lay ministers. Hahnenberg defined lay ecclesial ministry as “the work of baptized Christians, who are not ordained as bishops, presbyters, or deacons, who have made a vocational commitment to a significant public ministry that is formally recognized as such by the church community and its leadership.”²¹¹ Religious fit within this definition, a fact he makes explicit stating, “Professed members of religious communities working in parishes are included in the definition of lay ecclesial ministry; in fact, over twenty-five percent of these ministers are religious women.”²¹² In opposition to Sandra Schneiders, Hahnenberg holds that “religious profession (*i.e.*, vows) is not primarily a charge to ministry.”²¹³ Even though he includes religious among the ranks of lay ecclesial ministers, Hahnenberg does recognize some of the particularities of their lives. For example, he notes that “entrance into a religious order gives to the sister or brother, monk or nun,

²¹⁰ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 20.

²¹¹ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 2.

²¹² Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 62.

²¹³ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 62.

a certain public identity within the church.”²¹⁴ Consequently, the formal recognition of the Church granted to religious working as lay ecclesial ministers may be different from the type of formal recognition given to married and single lay ministers.

In addition to offering an answer to whether or not non-ordained religious are lay ecclesial ministers, Hahnenberg also provides a useful way for describing the broader relationship that exists between them. Hahnenberg’s model of concentric circles is based on the idea that “ministries exist in relationships within a community that is itself ministerial.”²¹⁵ The concentric circles model allows for the ways in which differing ecclesial relationships and “the minister’s level of participation, the kind and the importance of ministry itself, and the recognition or designation granted to the minister by the church” shape the various ministries.²¹⁶ This is significant because the factors that Hahnenberg names as shaping ministries account for some of the major differences that exist between non-ordained apostolic religious and other lay ministers. For example, religious sisters and brothers, by virtue of their religious profession and congregational membership, possess a different type of recognition and designation from lay ecclesial ministers, who are deputed by the local bishop or his representative. Thus, even if one does not accept Hahnenberg’s decision that religious are lay ecclesial ministers, the concentric circle model provides a possible way to describe the relationship between them.

Aurelie Hagstrom

Aurelie Hagstrom, a lay theologian, has written several times on the topic of the secular character of the laity and its impact on lay ecclesial ministry. Specifically, she asks two

²¹⁴ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 62.

²¹⁵ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 67.

²¹⁶ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 7.

questions. The first is whether “there is a way in which the secular character actually enhances and enriches ecclesial lay ministry, making it distinctive in the life of the Church?”²¹⁷ The second is, whether it is possible to see secular character “as a gift that lay ecclesial ministers bring to their ministry, rather than a hindrance?”²¹⁸

Hagstrom answers these questions, by first defining secular character as a phrase developed at Vatican II in order to “affirm the reality that the life lived in the midst of the world, is an opportunity to seek the kingdom of God.”²¹⁹ However, Hagstrom notes that the same conciliar documents that gave rise to the phrase also provide several possible interpretations of it. The first, the typological/phenomenological, takes a sociological viewpoint found in LG §31.²²⁰ The second description, the theological/ontological, is also based on the teachings of *Lumen Gentium*, and views the laity’s secularity as vocational - not merely sociological.²²¹ Finally, Hagstrom proposes a third interpretation of secular character that is rooted in *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudiam et Spes*, and *Christifideles Laici*. This third description transcends the typological and theological definitions, stating that the secularity of the laity is rooted in the theological view of mission. By this Hagstrom means that “the whole Church has a secular dimension and every member is called to the mission of transforming the world.”²²² Within the Church, the laity have a distinctively secular condition that gives them a particular competence within the common

²¹⁷ Aurelie Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” In *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry*, ed. by Susan Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 152.

²¹⁸ Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 152.

²¹⁹ Aurelie Hagstrom, *The Emerging Laity: Vocation, Mission, and Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2010), Kindle loc 621.

²²⁰ Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 153.

²²¹ Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 153.

²²² Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 153-54.

mission of the Church.²²³ Furthermore, secular character is seen “as a gift which ecclesial lay ministers bring to ministry, rather than a hindrance.”²²⁴

Leonard Doohan

Like Hagstrom, Leonard Doohan rejects the teaching that laity are defined by a typological description of secularity, for two reasons. The first reason is because priests and religious exist “in the world,” even if they live in it a “formally different way.”²²⁵ His second reason is that the lack of clarity about what secularity means makes it an “inadequate basis for vocational and ministerial distinctions.”²²⁶ This lack of clarity is at least partially responsible for what Doohan calls a “crisis in role clarification” that is being experienced by priests and religious, and will persist until the ambiguity is resolved. Doohan believes that the resolution to this crisis lies in establishing the ministry of the baptized. The ministry of the baptized, as Doohan presents it, conforms to the “subjective, personalist approach” built on the principle that the minister is more important than the work done.²²⁷ Adopting this approach means that priests and religious “realize that they are incomplete without the ministry of the laity,” and so are “called to share, collaborate and move forward together.”²²⁸

Collaboration is the key to Doohan’s model of ministry. He describes collaboration as “a way of being Church more authentically,” not as a way to increase efficiency. It is an expression of the priestly, prophetic and servant responsibilities of all the baptized, and “an essential

²²³ Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 165.

²²⁴ Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” 171.

²²⁵ Leonard Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 17.

²²⁶ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 17.

²²⁷ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 17.

²²⁸ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 11.

element in Christian life and ministry.”²²⁹ This holistic approach to ministry “affirms the distinctive qualities of individuals and groups and...[preserves] them for the common good by unifying, serving, and building up the community.”²³⁰ If done well, collaboration will lead all ministers to reevaluate their relationships with each other and develop comprehensive plans for the future. Doohan’s theory of collaborative ministry distinguishes between ministry and the minister and prioritizes the person. This approach focuses on those who do ministry (among whom there are obvious differences) as opposed to the work done (which may be identical). An awareness of the similarities and differences between lay ecclesial ministers and religious sisters and brothers is essential to being able to articulate the relationship between them.

The Relationship between Non-Ordained Apostolic Religious and Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Informed by history, theology, and the insights of several prominent theologians from the post-conciliar era, it is now possible to answer the two-fold question: are non-ordained apostolic religious lay ecclesial ministers; and, if not, what is the relationship between them? It is only fitting that an involved question such as this receive a highly nuanced response. The answer, as I see it, is no, non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers. They are consecrated people that may do lay ecclesial ministry. As such, non-ordained apostolic religious and lay ecclesial ministers are colleagues, and their relationship is one of collaboration.

What follows is a systematic exploration of the conclusions reached in response to the original two-fold question: are non-ordained apostolic religious lay ecclesial ministers; and, if not, what is the relationship between them? We will consider the answer in three distinct parts. First, we will examine the rationale behind the determination that non-ordained apostolic

²²⁹ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 36.

²³⁰ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 37.

religious are not lay ecclesial ministers. Then we will unpack what it means to label apostolic religious as people who may do lay ecclesial ministry. Finally, we will consider the statement that non-ordained apostolic religious and lay ecclesial ministers are colleagues in a collaborative relationship.

Non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers.

The primary reason for rejecting the label of lay ecclesial minister for non-ordained apostolic religious is that it is an inadequate way to describe religious sisters and brothers and the ministry they do in the Church. In truth, it probably is not a sufficient way to speak of the lay men and women doing ecclesial ministry either. Nonetheless, lay ecclesial minister does have a widely accepted definition. It is defined as those “baptized persons who are professionally prepared and officially authorized to perform a ministry.”²³¹ Close inspection reveals four important components: the baptized person, professional preparation, official authorization, and a ministry.²³² In reality, non-ordained apostolic religious are persons that are baptized, prepared, authorized, and who do ministry. Yet, the way that religious are prepared, authorized, and do ministry is intimately connected to their consecration, and so different from other non-ordained ministers.

Baptism is the fundamental fact of a Christian’s identity. It allows the faithful to participate in the mission of the church,²³³ and to discover their truest identity in the life of the church.²³⁴ Baptism is intimately connected with vocation. The Catholic understanding of

²³¹ Doris Gottemoeller, “Catholic Institutional Ministries: The History and Legacy,” in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtel, 55.

²³² Though Gottemoeller’s definition of lay ecclesial ministry indicates that authorization is given to perform a ministry, it also enables the minister to share in the mission of the church in a formally recognized role.

²³³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

²³⁴ Richard Gaillardetz, “The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 22.

vocation contains three different levels: the universal call to holiness, a call to a specific state in life, and a personal call to make use of the charism and graces an individual receives for the good of the Church.²³⁵ It is at this second level that a key difference between religious, married, and single lay people exists.

According to definitive Church teaching, single and married people who are not ordained as deacons are members of the laity. However, when it comes to religious, the Church teaching is not as clear. *Lumen Gentium* §31 defines the laity as “all the faithful except those in holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the church.” According to this definition, religious, regardless of whether they are or are not ordained, are not laity. Later, the same article declares “to be secular is the special characteristic of the laity.”²³⁶ This makes it doubly clear that religious are not laity, since religious are not secular (a point affirmed by *Christifideles Laici* §15).²³⁷ Conversely, *LG* §43 declares that religious life “is not to be seen as a middle way between the clerical and lay states of life.” Instead it is a state of life to which some members of the laity and clergy are called.²³⁸ This creates a sort of limbo for religious who are not ordained and, therefore, not clergy; but they are also not secular and so therefore also not typologically lay. For this reason, one can describe all non-ordained religious as being lay in a different way from their married and single counterparts. The fact of non-ordination makes these sisters and brothers juridically lay. However, their lack of secularity connected to their vows makes them atypical. Lest one get the impression that this is a silly distinction, consider the ways that it has been acknowledged by prominent theologians such as Thomas O’Meara and Kenan Osborne.

²³⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

²³⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

²³⁷ Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), 223.

²³⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §43.

Osborne plainly states that religious are “not ‘ordinary’ lay persons,”²³⁹ and O’Meara says that religious are “phenomenologically not lay.”²⁴⁰

The ambiguous designation of religious as laity is tremendously important to the question at hand. After all, “lay” is the first word in the title “lay ecclesial minister,” and it is a key component of what the term means. Rose McDermott explains that in the case of the term “lay ecclesial minister,” “lay” means that the ministry is “carried on by lay persons and not requiring orders.”²⁴¹ Since, the portion of the original question under consideration here concerns the minister, and not the ministry, the essential part of this explanation is that the person doing the work is lay. The lack of a clear answer regarding whether religious are members of the laity, and the importance of this designation for the term lay ecclesial minister, is the first reason for concluding that non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers.

Returning to the list of characteristics of lay ecclesial ministers, let us turn to their description as professionally prepared. It is true that religious sisters and brothers are generally very well prepared for the ministries they perform. As religious, this preparation is related to the initial and ongoing formation they receive as members of their congregations. Just as is the case with formation of lay ecclesial ministers, formation for religious life is organized around the same four pillars: spiritual, human, ministerial and intellectual. Like their single and married colleagues, religious earn the academic credential necessary for the work they undertake.²⁴² Also like their colleagues, religious are prepared for the ecclesial repositioning that comes with assuming a ministerial role in the Church. However, for religious this is a fundamentally

²³⁹ Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*, 262.

²⁴⁰ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 132.

²⁴¹ Rose McDermott, "Co-Workers in The Vineyard of The Lord: A Canonical Analysis." *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 67, no. 2 (2007): 435.

²⁴² DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, 48-49.

different role, shaped more by their identity as religious than by the specific work they do. Finally, due in large part to the worldview of religious life, sisters and brothers are highly unlikely to regard either their work or preparation for it as professional.²⁴³ The difference in the type of preparation and formation religious receive is the second reason for declaring that non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers.

A third reason for concluding that religious are not lay ecclesial ministers is related to the way that they are “officially authorized” to do ministry. This trait found in the standard definition of lay ecclesial minister is intimately related to the inclusion of the word ecclesial in the title. In this context, ecclesial means “formally assigned by a representative of the Church to a position in ministry.”²⁴⁴ Here again, the experience of religious differs from that of their secular co-workers who are appointed by “the bishop or his representative.”²⁴⁵ While it may be the case that some sisters and brothers are hired by priests or bishops, congregational leadership (under its various titles) always missions the religious, or otherwise affirms the ministerial role he or she fills. This is because religious “derive their primary ecclesial identity from their Congregations.”²⁴⁶ The American bishops acknowledge this, writing in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* that religious “participate in ecclesial ministry by their own title, according to the nature of their institute.”²⁴⁷ This means that religious “minister as a particular lifeform in the Body of Christ,” and not as an employee.²⁴⁸ Bound by a vow of obedience to their religious superiors that is recognized by bishops, religious sisters and brothers do not experience the sort of deputation that is

²⁴³ Sandra Schneiders, *New Wineskins: Re-imagining Religious Life Today* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 261-262.

²⁴⁴ DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, 15.

²⁴⁵ McDermott, "Co-Workers in The Vineyard of The Lord: A Canonical Analysis," 435.

²⁴⁶ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 27.

²⁴⁷ USCCB, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 13.

²⁴⁸ Schneiders, *That Was Then ... This Is Now*, 28.

characteristic of the experience of married and single lay ministers. Rather, their public identity within the Church is determined by their membership in their congregations.²⁴⁹ For all of these reasons it is correct to say that non-ordained apostolic religious are deeply ecclesial. Yet their ecclesiality is fundamentally different from what is implied by the use of “ecclesial” in the title lay ecclesial minister.

The fourth and final component of the definition of lay ecclesial minister is “a ministry.” Using Thomas O’Meara’s definition of ministry, “the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit’s charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve, and realize the kingdom of God,” it is clear that religious and their married and single colleagues do ministry.²⁵⁰ It is because of this that one can conclude that non-ordained apostolic religious may do lay ecclesial ministry, despite the fact that they are not lay ecclesial ministers.

Non-ordained apostolic religious may do lay ecclesial ministry.

The most important thing to notice with respect to the above statement is that the emphasis has shifted from the identity of the minister (as in the first statement “Non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers”) to the ministry itself. To describe ministry as lay means that it does not require orders.²⁵¹ Since religious sisters and brothers are not ordained to the clerical state, by definition all ministry they do is lay. It is worth noting that the statement is indefinite indicating that religious *may* do lay ecclesial ministry. The indefinite nature of the statement reflects the fact that many religious engage in ministry that is not specifically ecclesial,

²⁴⁹ Hahnenberg, “The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” 62.

²⁵⁰ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 150.

²⁵¹ McDermott, “Co-Workers in The Vineyard of The Lord: A Canonical Analysis,” 435.

or “within the Church community.”²⁵² Since Vatican II, many religious have taken on ministries that do not have a formal connection to the Church. For example, one hears of sisters and brothers teaching in public schools or working for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Nonetheless, the vast majority of religious who are actively engaged in ministry do so within the Church, and so can be described as doing lay ecclesial ministry.

Colleagues in a collaborative relationship

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a “colleague” as “an associate or co-worker typically in a profession or in a civil or ecclesiastical office and often of similar rank or state: a fellow worker or professional.”²⁵³ This seems to be the perfect term for describing the role of religious and other lay ministers in relation to each other for several reasons. The first is that the basis of the relationship is the shared experience of doing something together; hence an associate or coworker. One cannot help but notice that the word “co-worker” appears both in this definition and in the title of the USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*. Second, the definition provides that colleagues are frequently found within ecclesiastical positions, as are lay ecclesial ministers and apostolic religious. And finally, colleagues are “often of a similar rank or state.” This is particularly true since baptism, the foundation of all ministry, imparts the “common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ.”²⁵⁴ Since clerical ministers also share the common dignity of the baptized, it is permissible to speak of them as colleagues as well. This possibility of broader use makes the term colleague especially well-suited for use within the life of the church today.

²⁵² McDermott, "Co-Workers in The Vineyard of The Lord: A Canonical Analysis," 435.

²⁵³ “Colleague,” Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colleague>.

²⁵⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §32.

Leonard Doohan suggested that Vatican II “challenged priests and religious to realize that they are incomplete without the ministry of the laity, and called all to share, collaborate and move forward together.”²⁵⁵ Without using the label “colleague,” Doohan lists the various types of ministerial colleagues at work in the Church and indicates that they are to collaborate. Collaboration is “a Christian form of shared responsibility” and is essentially a relationship among colleagues. Within collaborative relationships, colleagues “actively and willingly take responsibility in common ministry.”²⁵⁶ Collaboration, like the term colleague, presumes the equality of persons. But it also affirms and preserves the distinctive qualities of individuals and groups in order to unify, serve, and build up the church.²⁵⁷ The inclusive and dynamic nature of collaboration, its emphasis on the common dignity, and its reverence for the unique experiences of ministers makes it a fitting framework for the relationship that exists among ministerial colleagues in the Church. It is particularly apt for describing the developing relationship between non-ordained religious and lay ecclesial ministers.

Conclusion

Countless non-ordained men and women have embraced Vatican II’s invitation to share in an active and public way in the mission of the church. By their generous response these women and men have changed the ministerial landscape of the Catholic Church. Brothers, sisters, married, and single men and women have changed ministries, created new ministries, worked together, and forged relationships with those for whom and with whom they serve. In

²⁵⁵ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 11.

²⁵⁶ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 36-37.

²⁵⁷ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 37.

doing so, these ministers have become true colleagues to one another and architects of collaboration for the Church.

Collaboration requires a mutuality and reciprocity of gifts, an exchange of experience, and a sharing of strengths. No one questions whether these non-clerical minister colleagues have much to give to the people of God. It is an accepted fact! But lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained religious also have a tremendous amount to share with each other. If these ministers and forms of ministry are to become what God created them to be, they need each other. The next chapter will explore the mutual exchange that exists between lay ecclesial ministry and non-ordained apostolic religious life, and will consider what they have to offer each other as colleagues in a collaborative relationship.

Chapter 3

The Mutual Exchange between Lay Ecclesial Ministers

and Non-ordained Apostolic Religious

As colleagues in ministry and companions on the journey, lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious have much to offer each other. Through their experiences of working together to build the kingdom, these two groups of ministers encourage and challenge the other to become what God has called them to be. This dynamic unfolds both between individual members of the respective groups, as may be found on a parish team, and between larger collections of ministers, such as organized efforts by religious communities to foster lay leadership. It must be understood that these exchanges, regardless of type, are occasions for both parties to experience growth. Neither religious nor lay ecclesial ministers have arrived at a state of perfection. So, while each group shares from their strengths there is always an opportunity to learn from the experience of the other and the normal exchange characteristic of human relationships.

The mutual exchange of strengths and experience ought to characterize the collaborative relationship that exists between all ministerial colleagues: clergy, lay, and religious. However, this chapter is exclusively concerned with what lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious have to offer each other. Just as there are numerous men and women among the ranks of these two groups, so too there are myriad gifts to share. Nonetheless, for simplicity's sake, I have identified three specific areas of mutuality and reciprocity between religious and lay ecclesial ministers. These are: belonging to the community of those doing lay ministry, their approach to ministry (here termed, "way of proceeding"), and the life-long formation necessary

for ministry. In each of these areas, I will describe the strengths offered by each group, examine how these strengths are benefits for both groups, and consider the challenges and growing edges that exist within these exchanges. Finally, I will propose the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) as an example of mutuality and reciprocity between lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious done well.

A Community of Mutual Support for those Doing Lay Ministry

Community is an important aspect of all ministry - especially lay ministry - within the Catholic Church.²⁵⁸ When community is properly understood as “a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists,” it becomes clear that community is an apt way to describe the collaborative relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious.²⁵⁹ In fact, community is the privileged context for the “working together with, being supportive of, bearing the burdens of, [and] rejoicing with co-workers in the vineyard” that characterizes this relationship.²⁶⁰ The vitality of the lay ministry community depends on the sharing of strengths among the members. Lay ecclesial ministers contribute a robust population of well-trained and motivated ministers to the community and apostolic religious bring an abundance of older wisdom figures.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Julianna Casey, “Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 150.

²⁵⁹ “Community,” Dictionary.com, Accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/community>.

²⁶⁰ Casey, “Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 150.

²⁶¹ The assertions that lay ecclesial ministers contribute well-trained and motivated ministers to the community and that apostolic religious bring an abundance of older wisdom figures are not meant to imply that lay ecclesial ministers lack wisdom figures or that apostolic religious are not well-trained or motivated. Rather, it is the author’s intention to demonstrate how the particular strengths of both groups may be an asset to each other.

Apostolic Religious: Wisdom Figures

The conversation about religious life today tends to be dominated by numbers: the declining population and the rising average age. Both are undeniable facts; but they do not tell the whole story. The population of religious sisters and brothers may be considerably smaller and older than it was a generation ago; but these men and women still have much to give to the Church and to their colleagues in ministry. One specific and important way that religious can contribute to the building up of their lay colleagues is as wisdom figures, or for some in the formal role of mentor, of new lay ministers.²⁶² The demographics of religious life support this. The most recent actuarial data released by the National Religious Retirement Office indicate that only ten percent of religious are under the age of fifty.²⁶³ This stands in stark contrast to the forty percent of lay ecclesial ministers under fifty.²⁶⁴ Additionally, in 1992 it was estimated that nearly forty-two percent of ecclesial ministers were religious sisters or brothers,²⁶⁵ in contrast to the current statistic of fourteen percent.²⁶⁶ These statistics mean that there are many older religious, many of whom have experience doing ecclesial ministry; and some of whom could potentially serve younger and/or less experienced lay ministers as wisdom figures, cheerleaders, and mentors.

²⁶² I am not making an exclusive claim that only religious brothers and sisters can serve as mentors and wisdom figure for new lay ecclesial ministers. Indeed, there is a whole generation of older and experienced lay ecclesial ministers that may also be well-suited to serve in this capacity.

²⁶³ National Religious Retirement Office, "Actuarial Projections for the National Religious Retirement Office," (May 5, 2016), 9. <http://www.usccb.org/about/national-religious-retirement-office/upload/Mercer-Actuarial-Study.pdf>.

²⁶⁴ CARA, "Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States," 4.

<http://www.usccb.org/upload/lem-summit-2015-cara-research-review-on-lay-ecclesial-ministry-2015.pdf>.

²⁶⁵ Philip Murnion, *New Parish Ministers: Laity & Religious on Parish Staffs: A Study Conducted for the Committee on Pastoral Practices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops with the Support of Lilly Endowment, Inc.* (New York, NY: National Pastoral Life Center, 1992), 27.

²⁶⁶ CARA, "Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States," 4.

The Emerging Models Project Special Report on Young Adult Pastoral Leadership noted that “young adult pastoral ministers want to be mentored by older church workers” and “want a workplace where wisdom is passed on.”²⁶⁷ Mentoring is traditionally understood as “the one-on-one professional development of someone less experienced by a wiser, older, and more experienced person.”²⁶⁸ Unlike supervision, mentoring may occur between two people who do not work together and may include non-work matters.²⁶⁹ Therefore, religious who are still involved in active ministry, as well as those who are retired, may act as mentors for those new to ministry. The Emerging Models Project specifically recommends that “religious communities create some form of lay ecclesial ministry mentorship program to help new and younger church workers grow professionally, personally, and spiritually.”²⁷⁰

Formal and informal mentoring, such as that offered by wisdom figures, is known to have many benefits for both mentors and mentees. For mentees, mentoring is shown to enhance identity, increase job satisfaction, reduce attrition, and lead to greater socialization, involvement, motivation, and promote self-efficacy. Additionally, mentoring provides professional relationships and role models.²⁷¹ When surveyed about their desire for mentoring, one young lay minister responded that “when young adults have someone to process things with and invite them deeper into it, they will stick with it because that encounter will authentically be with

²⁶⁷ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 16.
<https://nccl.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/CL%20Weekly/2013/Next%20Gen%20EMP%20Report%20%203.pdf>.

²⁶⁸ Patrice M Buzzanell, "Spiritual Mentoring: Embracing the Mentor-Mentee Relational Process." In *As the Spirit Moves Us: Embracing Spirituality in the Postsecondary Experience*, edited by Katherine Grace Hendrix (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 8.

²⁶⁹ "Mentoring," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 7, 2014, Accessed March 22, 2018.
academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/mentoring/610314.

²⁷⁰ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 59.

²⁷¹ "Mentoring," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 7, 2014, Accessed March 22, 2018.
academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/mentoring/610314.

Jesus.”²⁷² Another stated that “solid mentoring will help us realize the dynamic movement of the Spirit – moving and changing our lives and generations. Through training and mentoring, we can learn the gifts of faith that different life-stages bring.”²⁷³ Thus, it is clear that mentoring is also an aid to the spiritual growth necessary to sustain a life of ministry in the Church.

Religious, as mentors and wisdom figures, also benefit from their service to new ministers. Research suggests that mentors experience personal satisfaction from passing knowledge and skills on to others and in return receive new energy from their mentees. Additionally, being a mentor allows one to be generative and build a legacy.²⁷⁴ It is well known within religious congregations that many brothers and sisters have a difficult time leaving active ministry because so much of their self-understanding is tied to what they do. For these religious women and men, a “ministry of spiritual mentoring”²⁷⁵ may be an appropriate manner to affirm and utilize their wisdom.²⁷⁶ However, as is true of all mentoring, care needs to be exercised to ensure that the supports offered to mentees are appropriate to their needs, and to help them become “full and equal partners and not ... promote a new kind of dependence.”²⁷⁷

Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Growing Population of Ministers

As is the case with religious brothers and sisters, a great deal of the discussion surrounding lay ecclesial ministry is focused on numbers. It is difficult to overstate the rapid

²⁷² NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 16.

²⁷³ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 16.

²⁷⁴ "Mentoring," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 7, 2014, Accessed March 22, 2018. academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/mentoring/610314.

²⁷⁵ Edward Sellner, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990), 151.

²⁷⁶ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 34.

²⁷⁷ Sandra Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 97.

growth in the population of lay ecclesial ministers over the last thirty years. According to CARA, in 2017 there were 17,722 lay professional ministers (a designation that excludes vowed religious) in the United States. This is a substantial group in its own right. However, the rapid growth of lay ministry becomes even more apparent when compared to the 1995 population of 10,674.²⁷⁸ (By way of comparison, the combined populations of religious brothers and sisters in the United States fell by 47,732 during the same period of time.²⁷⁹) As of 2015, CARA estimated that the Catholic Church “has gained a net of about 430 additional lay ecclesial ministers in parish ministry each year.” Additionally, this group accounts for forty percent of all ministry personnel.²⁸⁰ However, the strength of lay ecclesial ministers is not limited to their physical presence. They are a well-prepared and professional body of ministers, as demonstrated by the fact that seventy-two percent of lay ecclesial ministers have either a master’s degree or ministry formation program certificate or are working on one.²⁸¹ Finally, CARA reports that eighty-nine percent of lay ecclesial ministers are motivated by a sense of a call from God.²⁸²

Though this robust population of well-trained and motivated ministers is in and of itself a blessing for the lay ministry community, their true value cannot be summarized in statistics. Instead, for their non-ordained apostolic religious colleagues, their very existence is a gift. For religious, ministry has traditionally been a communal experience. Prior to Vatican II, congregations engaged in corporate apostolates; and thus a religious sister or brother could count on sharing ministry with colleagues from their own community. However, the diversification of ministry among religious and their declining population have caused a gradual shift from

²⁷⁸ CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

²⁷⁹ CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

²⁸⁰ CARA, “Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States,” 2.

²⁸¹ CARA, “Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States,” 22.

²⁸² CARA, “Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States,” 17.

ministerial settings that were “exclusively vowed religious to primarily laity to almost exclusively laity.”²⁸³ As a result, religious were left devoid of their traditional ministerial companions. Happily, ministry among married and single lay men and women is flourishing. One result is that ministry is able to remain a communal experience for religious, though with a previously unimagined set of colleagues.

It is quite possible that lay ecclesial ministers may be unaware of the consolation that their presence is to the apostolic religious with whom they share ministry. Instead, for lay ecclesial ministers, it is more likely that their growing and increasingly professional population is viewed as a sign of their legitimacy and acceptance by the institutional Church. No longer perceived or perceiving themselves as “solitary boundary dwellers,” lay ecclesial ministers may serve the people of God with the confidence that comes from being in a secure position.²⁸⁴ In fact, lay ecclesial ministers are now the majority group within the lay ministry community.

The vigorous growth of the population of lay ecclesial ministers is a tremendous gift for the Church, and a particular cause of joy for the lay ministry community. However, in order for this development to be a true asset for both lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious, care must be taken to avoid the marginalization or dismissal of religious as irrelevant. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the early years of lay ecclesial ministry, lay ministers were often treated poorly by religious sisters and brothers, who did not value their contributions as ministers.²⁸⁵ Such behavior was then, as it is today, completely contrary to a collaborative relationship among colleagues.

²⁸³ Casey, “Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 146.

²⁸⁴ NALM Advocacy Committee, “NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present,” 4. accessed December 8, 2017. <https://nalm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NALM-at-40-History-.pdf>.

²⁸⁵ NALM Advocacy Committee, “NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present,” 11.

The Way of Proceeding

The phrase “way of proceeding” is frequently used by the Society of Jesus to describe “certain attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior” that have “been and will be central to Jesuit action.”²⁸⁶ Borrowing from the Jesuits, this term is a meaningful way to speak of the variety of experiences and approaches to ministry that religious and lay ecclesial ministers employ in their work and their collaborative relationship with each other. Religious sisters and brothers bring the attitudes, values and patterns of behavior that arise from centuries of ministerial experience. Equally, lay ecclesial ministers bring a wealth of expertise drawn from their personal and professional contexts that are undeveloped, if not altogether missing, from the history of apostolic religious. The result is a reciprocal relationship in which non-clerical ministers are able to draw on each other’s strengths in order to inform their ministry and better serve the Church.

Apostolic Religious Life: History

The first canonically recognized non-clerical, non-monastic religious sisters and brothers emerged from the mendicant movements of the thirteenth century.²⁸⁷ Prior to this time, monasticism was the sole form of religious life.²⁸⁸ Eschewing the stability of the monastery, Franciscans and Dominicans adopted a life of “apostolic mobility” that allowed them to meet the new and emerging needs of medieval society and the Church.²⁸⁹ Later apostolic orders such as the Society of Jesus and the Ursulines further developed the merging of apostolic service and

²⁸⁶ Society of Jesus, "Decree 26: Conclusion: Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding," *General Congregation 34* (1995), Accessed March 10, 2018. https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1995_Decree26GC34/.

²⁸⁷ Lawrence Cada, *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life* (Whitinsville, MA: Affirmation Books, 1985), 31.

²⁸⁸ John Maia Lozano, *Discipleship: Towards an Understanding of Religious Life* (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1983), 87.

²⁸⁹ Cada, *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life*, 29.

religious consecration begun by the mendicants.²⁹⁰ Some scholars, including Sandra Schneiders, believe that non-ordained apostolic religious life can be traced back much farther. Schneiders posits that the consecrated virgins of the fourth century are the first form of apostolic women religious, and that the later *vita apostolica* and Beguine movements ought to be considered part of the history of non-ordained apostolic religious life as well.²⁹¹ Regardless of whether one accepts a legacy of non-clerical apostolic religious life originating with the consecrated virgins of the fourth century or with the Third Order Franciscan sisters and brothers of the thirteenth century, it is clear that religious have a long history of responding to the needs of the people of God.

One of the gifts that apostolic religious life has to offer the Church is a continuity of practice and tradition.²⁹² Because of this, apostolic religious life has shaped the way that the Church understands the form and function of lay ministry.²⁹³ As the prototype for lay ministry, religious life offers time-tested models that may be of assistance to today's lay ecclesial ministers. Though the unique circumstances of religious life make it inappropriate, if not impossible, for lay men and women to imitate the examples provided by sisters and brothers, the existence of such models means that lay ecclesial ministers do not have to start from scratch as they seek to integrate spirituality and work, to navigate ecclesial bureaucracies and politics, or to minister in clerically dominated frameworks. Examples for how to approach these challenges can be drawn from great models in history; such as St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, the congregational history of the Alexian Brothers, and the religious colleagues with whom they share ministry.

²⁹⁰ Cada, *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life*, 33.

²⁹¹ Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 291.

²⁹² Bernard J. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 202.

²⁹³ Casey, "Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 144.

The history of apostolic religious life has also provided religious, as congregations and individuals, with experience, organization, and leverage that enables them now to “facilitate the entrance of laypeople into ministry.”²⁹⁴ By offering what Schneiders terms “‘toeholds’ in ministry,” religious sisters and brothers are able to help lay men and women avoid some of the pitfalls in ministry that religious have known.²⁹⁵ Some of these pitfalls include the ill effects of clericalism, unjust personnel practices, and disappointments in ministry. Schneiders hopes that the experience of and, when possible, guidance from religious sisters and brothers will help lay ecclesial ministers to weather, and prevent some of the negative experiences associated with a life of ministry.²⁹⁶

Apostolic religious also benefit from sharing their ministerial history with lay ministers. As discussed in the previous chapter, religious sisters and brothers have been experiencing a certain “placelessness” in the Church since Vatican II. By consciously claiming and sharing the fruit of their ministerial history, religious have an opportunity to be reminded of the successes and trials of their collective and individual graced history. This could be a powerful antidote for low morale. In the sharing of the lessons and models gleaned from the history of religious life, there is a need to avoid antiquarianism. It is possible that some religious in their zeal to share or some lay ministers in their desire to “do things the right way” could try to restore models of the past, without translating them for the contemporary realities of ministry or ministers. Thomas O’Meara suggests that should this happen, it not only fails to foster the growth of ministry, but is anti-ministerial, because such an approach “serves as a museum of the past and not the grace of the present.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 96.

²⁹⁵ Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 96.

²⁹⁶ Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 96.

²⁹⁷ Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 245.

Lay Ecclesial Ministry: New Perspectives

Ministers bring their whole selves to the work of ministry. Just as religious sisters and brothers minister in a manner formed by their congregational history and charism, so too the ministry of lay ecclesial ministers is informed by their primary relationships and commitments. However, as phenomenologically lay people, these relationships and commitments are lived beyond the confines of an explicitly ecclesial setting. This secularity is formative of the worldview of lay ministers, and affects their values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior. Thus, lay ministers bring experiences, sensitivities, and emphases missing from a ministerial landscape dominated by consecrated celibate men and women. An example of how the circumstances of a lay minister's life could impact his or her approach to ministry can be seen in the way a married Director of Religious Education with children might perceive and respond to the spiritual and catechetical needs of parents.

In addition to the experience of secularity, lay ecclesial ministers often bring professional competencies and skill sets that are not common among religious brothers and sisters. For many, lay ecclesial ministry is a second career. As a result, these men and women bring transferable skills that can enhance the effectiveness of ministry. Likewise, the growing population of generation X and millennial lay ministers possess a knowledge of, and familiarity with, technology that would be a tremendous asset to any ministry.²⁹⁸ For example, consider the impact that experience working in communications or familiarity with social media could have on the evangelization efforts of a parish.

²⁹⁸ CARA, "Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the United States," 23.

In the preceding examples, the lay men and women are not simply bringing values and skills, but truly new perspectives to ministry. By sharing their perspectives with religious men and women, lay ecclesial ministers draw attention to previously unrecognized needs; and they share strategies for ministry that are compatible with the rapidly changing expectations of the people of God in the postmodern era.²⁹⁹ These perspectives are not replacements for the historical legacy of religious, but rather they are complementary. Their reception challenges complacency and broadens the way of proceeding. This presents an opportunity for the revitalization of both non-ordained apostolic religious and their ministries.

The Emerging Models Project Special Report on Young Adult Pastoral Leadership noted that one of the greatest frustrations among new and young lay ministers is the resistance they encounter to their perspectives from those who hold an “attitude of ‘we have always done it this way.’”³⁰⁰ In the same report, lay ministers described these experiences as condescending.³⁰¹ For this reason, the acceptance and incorporation of the new perspectives offered by lay ecclesial ministers is an important opportunity to recognize the unique expertise and contributions of these lay men and women. Such recognition helps to build the efficacy of lay ministers and gives them valuable experiences of leadership. This is a vital step in establishing the equality that ought to characterize relationships among colleagues.

Those seeking to incorporate the perspectives offered by lay ecclesial ministers must be careful to preserve a healthy balance between new and well-established values, attitudes and practices. New perspectives should not be adopted simply because they are novel. Rather, the

²⁹⁹ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 36.

³⁰⁰ Though this report is primarily concerned with new and young lay ministers, there is reason to believe that older, seasoned lay ecclesial ministers encounter the same difficulty.

³⁰¹ NALM, "The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: Their Chips Are All In: A Closer Examination of the Current Reality," Edited by Paul E. Jarzembowski, 32.

emphasis must be placed on meaningfully responding to the contemporary reality of the Church. Doing this ensures that the ongoing contributions of religious and lay ecclesial ministers are valued as truly complementary forces in the lay ministry of the Church.

Formation for Ministry Across the Lifespan

“Ministers become ministers over a lifetime.”³⁰² The process by which one becomes a minister, regardless of state in life, is a process of life-long formation and transformation that considers the often multiple locations of their life, and presumes an individual’s commitment to personal conversion. Because of this, formation for ministry in the Church must be more than academic or simple preparation for apostolic/ministerial competence. Instead, formation must address the whole person. This requires that formation reflect the expanded understanding of ministry and take into consideration the essential differences between the vocations to the religious life and a life of lay ecclesial ministry.³⁰³ Therefore, formation for non-ordained apostolic religious and lay ministers must be distinct. However, members of both groups are able to contribute in significant ways to each other’s formation. Gone are the days when lay formation meant that “priests and religious trained, formed, educated, and delegated responsibility to the laity.” Now these areas, especially formation for both laity and religious “are the result of mutual interactions and are mutually beneficial.”³⁰⁴ Religious, as a way of life in the Church and as individuals, can serve as a resource for initial formation of lay ecclesial ministers. Likewise, lay ecclesial ministers, collectively and individually, because of the nature of their involvement with

³⁰² Janet K. Ruffing, "Formation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Rooted in a Genuinely Lay and Ecclesial Spirituality," In *Reflections on Renewal: Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*, edited by Donna M. Eschenauer and Harold Daly Horell, 139-50 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 144.

³⁰³ Rose McDermott, "Co-Workers in The Vineyard of The Lord: A Canonical Analysis." *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 67, no. 2 (2007): 451-52.

³⁰⁴ Leonard Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 39.

religious in ministry, are uniquely poised to promote the ongoing formation of religious brothers and sisters.

Apostolic Religious Life: Expertise for Initial Stages of Ministerial Formation

Any discussion concerning the role of religious sisters and brothers in the formation of lay ministers must begin by acknowledging that lay ecclesial ministers have within their ranks many people who are capable of serving as formators. However, religious are still able to play a valuable role in lay ministry formation. Historically, many of the earliest lay ministry formation programs were established by religious sisters and brothers. For example, Sister Barbara Quinn, RSCJ began early lay ministry formation groups in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Diocese of Anchorage.³⁰⁵ Similarly, the desire to learn and share best practices for the formation of lay ministers motivated Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST, to begin an organization that eventually became the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM).³⁰⁶ Today, many religious continue to contribute leadership and experience in lay formation programs. Additionally, several sisters and brothers share their expertise on formation for lay ecclesial ministry by writing on the topic. Some prominent examples are Sister Janet Ruffing, RSM, and Sister Juliana Casey, IHM. Whether religious contribute their individual talents to the formation of lay ministers in person as directors of programs, formators, and mentors, or do so in writing, they play an important role in eliciting and supporting lay ecclesial ministry.

In addition to the human resources sisters and brothers contribute to the formation of lay ministers, religious are also able to share a holistic model for lay formation. Though lay ministry formation programs are structured according to the pillars of formation outlined in the *Program*

³⁰⁵ Interview with Sister Barbara Quinn, RSCJ on February 23, 2018.

³⁰⁶ NALM Advocacy Committee, "NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present," 3.

for Priestly Formation, initial formation for religious life provides a more suitable model. This is the case because religious formation has historically been the only model of formation for non-clerical ministry in the Church.³⁰⁷ However, programs of formation for religious life must be translated so that they correspond to the unique charisms and circumstances of lay ministers, and do not seek to create clones of sisters and brothers.³⁰⁸ Nonetheless, formation for religious life provides a valuable model for vocation discernment, fostering the integration of spirituality and ministry, and navigating ecclesial repositioning.

For religious and lay ministers alike, the development of a deep prayer life and the assumption of a public persona in the Church are two of the most important and difficult tasks associated with beginning ministry. Because of this, religious formation has developed strategies to help candidates for religious life develop the necessary skills. Many of these strategies can readily be translated for the needs of prospective lay ministers. For example, intense instruction in methods of prayer, reflection and meditation; the practice of spiritual direction; and regular retreats are all elements of religious formation that would be a tremendous benefit for lay men and women preparing for ministry.³⁰⁹ Additionally the guidance offered by formators, ministerial supervision, and internships in ministry that characterize the initial formation of religious would be a great help to lay men and women as they learn how to speak and act on behalf of the Church, as well as to balance their private desires with public demands.³¹⁰ By adopting these and

³⁰⁷ Casey, "Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 144.

³⁰⁸ Casey, "Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 153.

³⁰⁹ Casey, "Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 152-53.

³¹⁰ Richard McCord, "Foreword," in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtle (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), x.

other practices of initial formation for religious life, lay ecclesial ministry formation programs will be strengthened and candidates will be better prepared for the demands of ministry.

Contributing to the formation of lay ministers is a wonderfully generative experience for religious. By sharing the strengths of initial formation for religious life in a way appropriate for lay men and women, religious sisters and brothers gain the benefit of well-prepared colleagues in ministry. However, therein lies the challenge as well. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that prospective lay ministers are not made to become “mini novices.”³¹¹ Transferring practices from religious formation without translating them is a hindrance to the development of lay ministers and antithetical to the entire purpose of sharing formational practices.

Lay Ecclesial Ministry: An Opportunity for Ongoing Formation

Perfectae Caritatis mandated that religious renew every aspect of their lives. This renewal, according to *Perfectae Caritatis*, is marked by a constant return to the sources of Christian life, the primitive inspiration of their institutes, and adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.³¹² Therefore, religious were directed to “adapt their ministry to what the locality and the times require.”³¹³ However, religious were also reminded that “before all else, religious life is ordered to the following of Christ by its members ... [and] the profession of the evangelical counsels” and so the adapted ministries “will be of no avail unless they are animated by a spiritual renewal, which must always be assigned primary importance even in the development of active ministry.”³¹⁴

³¹¹ Casey, “Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox, 144.

³¹² Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, §2.

³¹³ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, §20.

³¹⁴ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, §2 e.

In 1996, approximately thirty years after the promulgation of *Perfectae Caritatis*, Pope John Paul II issued the *Post Synodal Exhortation Vita Consecrata* (VC). *Vita Consecrata* praised religious founders and foundresses who “in openness to the working of the Holy Spirit, successfully interpreted the signs of the times and responded wisely to new needs,”³¹⁵ and reiterated *Perfectae Caritatis*’s call to renewal.³¹⁶ Additionally, *Vita Consecrata* spoke of the necessity of continuing formation as “an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration.”³¹⁷ Ongoing formation is a means of growth as humans and religious, as well as an integral part of the renewal envisioned by Vatican II.

As a sign of the times and a vibrant reality in the ministry of the Church, lay ecclesial ministry presents religious with an opportunity for continued renewal and ongoing formation. The realization that there are other non-ordained people in the Church doing the same work as religious, and doing it as well, is an invitation for religious to remember that their primary identity does not lie in their work, but is rooted in their role as consecrated religious. Though this insight is often only gained through experience, it is a great benefit to religious as they seek to become more and more who God has called them to be.

When it comes to the pervasive “dialectical problem of being and doing,” apostolic religious face two specific challenges.³¹⁸ The first is a tendency to prioritize ministry such that it supersedes everything else. Doing this damages both the minister and the ministry, and manifests in compulsive over-work and lack of self-care.³¹⁹ Against this tendency, the fact of lay ecclesial ministry presents an opportunity for religious to embrace what Leonard Doohan refers to as the

³¹⁵ Pope John Paul II. *Vita Consecrata*, §9.

³¹⁶ Pope John Paul II. *Vita Consecrata*, §71.

³¹⁷ Pope John Paul II. *Vita Consecrata*, § 69.

³¹⁸ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 253.

³¹⁹ Ruffing, "Formation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Rooted in a Genuinely Lay and Ecclesial Spirituality," 144.

“subjective personalist approach to ministry.” This approach values the minister as more important than the work done.³²⁰ A second danger consists in the tendency of some religious to over-identify with one’s work and place of ministry. Parochialization, the term given to this phenomenon, refers to the assimilation of lay religious into their ministry settings (especially parish and diocesan structures) in such a way that their place of ministry replaces their congregation as the primary locus of their lives.³²¹ Schneiders suggests that parochialization has “undermined the specificity of Religious ministry in the Church and contributed to the identity confusion of Religious themselves.”³²²

Everyone, especially lay ministers, benefit from having better formed religious ministry colleagues who have a healthy sense of balance and identity. It is likely that lay ministers are unaware of the role that they play in the ongoing formation of religious sisters and brothers. It is also imaginable that religious may not recognize or respond to the opportunity as well. This is the challenge. The opportunity that lay ecclesial ministry presents for the ongoing formation of religious does not require that the lay ministers be cognizant of the dynamic; but in order to be beneficial to religious, they must recognize it.

The National Association for Lay Ministry as an Example of Mutuality and Reciprocity

The National Association for Lay Ministry has its origins in a gathering of twenty lay formation directors who met together in Philadelphia in 1977. The gathering was organized by Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST, and Sister Catherine Francis Lamb, MBST, who were the co-directors of the Missionary Servant Office of Lay Ministries. The original participants are

³²⁰ Doohan, *Grass Roots Pastors: A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*, 17.

³²¹ Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 245-46.

³²² Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 246.

described as “some priests, many vowed religious, and some lay persons” who met to “share their stories, to learn about best practices and challenges in formation, and to advocate for lay ministry.”³²³ Thus from its earliest days, NALM has reflected the collaborative nature that characterizes the relationship that exists between religious and lay minister colleagues.

Originally known as the National Association of Lay Ministry Coordinators, the current title, National Association for Lay Ministry, was adopted in 1981. The wording of the title is significant. It is not an association of lay ministers or for lay ministers, but *for lay ministry*. The title makes clear then that the goal of NALM is to support “the ministry in the Church performed by its lay members.”³²⁴ The 2017 mission statement develops this commitment. It reads

The National Association for Lay Ministry is a collaborative organization of lay, religious and ordained ministers that empowers, advocates for, and develops lay pastoral leadership and promotes the growth of lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church.³²⁵

As an organization, NALM embodies the mutual exchange between religious and lay ecclesial ministers that is the topic of this chapter. By drawing members from the laity and religious, NALM promotes the ministerial lay ministry community. Additionally, the sharing of strengths in the areas of formation and the way of proceeding are included within NALM’s work to empower, develop leadership, and promote the growth of lay pastoral ministry.

To ensure that there is a mutual exchange of strengths within NALM, membership in the organization has remained open to anyone who “supported the growth and development of lay ministry – lay and ordained ministers, single and married, vowed religious, priests and deacons.”³²⁶ Furthermore, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that the executive board of NALM reflects the collaborative nature of the organization, alternating key leadership roles

³²³ NALM Advocacy Committee, "NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present," 8.

³²⁴ NALM Advocacy Committee, "NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present," 8.

³²⁵ NALM Advocacy Committee, "NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present," 1.

³²⁶ NALM Advocacy Committee, "NALM at 40 - Taking a Look Back, A History of NALM 1977 to the Present," 3.

between men and women from all states of life in the Church. Benefiting from outstanding leadership, NALM continues to offer excellent resources for advocacy and certification; an annual conference featuring lay, religious and clerical presenters; and special programs for ongoing formation, such as pilgrimages.

Conclusion

As colleagues in ministry engaged in a collaborative relationship, lay ecclesial ministers and religious sisters and brothers have much to offer each other. This chapter has focused on a few specific strengths that lay men and women and non-ordained apostolic religious possess that foster the development of the lay ministerial community, the way of proceeding, and the lifelong formation for lay ministry. Led by the Holy Spirit, these vibrant forces in the Church will be enabled to discover new expertise and experiences to share with each other. Through this ongoing mutual exchange, these men and women help each other grow closer to who God has called them to be with and for the people of God. Thus, because of the ministerial nature of this vocation, it is clear that the benefits extend well beyond individual ministers to the church as a whole.

As a developing reality in the Church, the collaborative ministry of religious and lay men and women is a sign of hope for the faithful. However, it also indicates the need for continued growth and ongoing reflection within the Church. The conclusion of this thesis will consider the implications of the relationship between non-ordained apostolic religious and lay ecclesial ministers for the use of the term “lay,” responding to the placelessness experienced by religious, and the responsibility to fostering collegiality and collaboration within the community of mutual support for those doing lay ministry.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have explored the history, theological underpinnings, and mutual exchange between lay ecclesial ministers and non-ordained apostolic religious in order to describe the relationship between the two groups. The conclusion that non-ordained apostolic religious are not lay ecclesial ministers, but rather are people who may do lay ecclesial ministry as colleagues in a collaborative relationship with lay ecclesial ministers, illuminates several implications that warrant further consideration. Three of these will be addressed here, they are: the ongoing use of term “lay,” the need to respond to the post-conciliar sense of placelessness that religious experience, and the practical responsibility of fostering collegiality and collaboration among religious and lay ecclesial ministers.

The difficulties associated with the use of the term “lay” have been a recurring theme throughout this study. Thus far we have considered the term’s convoluted etymology, connotations of inferiority, and conflicting conciliar interpretations, all of which make the word “lay” problematic. In this thesis, we have seen that the contradictory juridical and typological descriptions of lay-ness are one of the primary reasons for the determination that religious are not lay ecclesial ministers. However, the conflict between the connotative meaning of lay as lacking skills, knowledge, and preparation and the accepted definition of lay ecclesial ministers as “baptized persons who are professionally prepared and officially authorized to perform a ministry,” makes it difficult to identify the married and single men and women doing ecclesial ministry as lay.³²⁷

³²⁷ Doris Gottemoeller, “Catholic Institutional Ministries: The History and Legacy,” in *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, eds. Zeni Fox and Regina M. Bechtel, 55.

The teaching of Vatican II that “the chosen People of God is, therefore, one: ‘one Lord, one faith, one Baptism’: there is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ” raises the question of whether it is helpful, or even appropriate to make distinctions such as lay and cleric within the Body of Christ.³²⁸ It must be noted that while there is only one type of Christian, baptized, Christians have many different functions. In the case of function, it is possible and necessary to differentiate between roles that require the sacrament of holy orders and those that do not. But is the word lay the best way to do this? The negative connotations associated with lay-ness appear to establish a hierarchy of ministries. These are significant question for the Church to address in light of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the faithful are either described or identify themselves as lay.

Unfortunately, there are not any obvious solutions to the predicaments caused by use of the label lay to describe people or ministries. Further complicating the situation is the reality that the term lay is used by many Christian denominations, and so efforts to correct the conundrum have ecumenical implications. Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of the inadequacy is an important first step towards determining more appropriate language. Efforts to determine more suitable language would be greatly aided by a review of the current Church teachings regarding laity. A primary focus of such a review could be to determine whether the fundamental feature of lay-ness is secularity (as in LG §31), non-ordination (as in LG §43), a combination of the two, or something completely different. Clarity on this point would be a first step in affirming the dignity of the laity and would be a tremendous help to those who struggle to understand their role and function in the Church, especially religious sisters and brothers.

³²⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §32.

The lack of clarity that non-ordained religious experience regarding their role and function in the Church is described by Sandra Schneiders as placelessness. Largely caused by Vatican II's explicit rejection of the belief that sisters and brothers occupied a middle, or third state, between the clergy and the laity, this placelessness has disturbed religious for over fifty years. Certain that they are not clergy, but also equally sure that they are not phenomenologically lay, non-ordained religious would benefit from the previously proposed clarification of Catholic Church teaching on the topic of laity. However, religious are not helpless as they wait for the Magisterium to address the issue. Though the experience of placelessness originated with magisterial teachings, the solution can be aided by them, but does not depend on them.

Studies such as the one undertaken here ideally provide some clarity about the fundamental nature of religious life. For example, this thesis has demonstrated that religious are not simply vowed lay ecclesial ministers, even though religious and lay ecclesial ministers share the same baptismal mission and sometimes do identical ministries in the Church. My conclusion implies that a religious is not defined by the work he or she does. This is contrary to the traditional practice of religious that viewed ministry and consecration as inseparable. However, this realization, affirmed by *Vita Consecrata*, provides one of many possible starting points from which religious can reclaim their place, albeit a different one, in the Church.

Chapter three described how the existence of, and shared ministry with, lay ecclesial ministers is an opportunity for the ongoing formation of religious. In addition to helping religious to be mindful of their primary identity as consecrated people, the ongoing formation occasioned by lay ecclesial ministers can help brothers and sisters to name and claim what makes religious life unique in the life of the Church, as well as what distinguishes individual congregations. Thus, efforts to rediscover the founding charisms and missions of their religious

congregations, as mandated by *Perfectae Caritatis*, as well as reflections on the nature of religious consecration become means of re-forming an individual and communal ecclesial self-understandings. By relying on their agency as mature Christians, religious sisters and brothers can gain a surer sense of the importance, role, and function of religious in the Church. This certainty will enable religious to be more confident in their ministry of building the Kingdom.

The third consequence of the determination that religious are not lay ecclesial ministers and that religious are colleagues of lay ecclesial ministers in a relationship of collaboration implies that both religious and lay ministers have a responsibility to foster this relationship. The growth of the relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and religious sisters and brothers doing lay ecclesial ministry requires an intentionality on the part of both parties. Since collegiality and collaboration presume an equality and shared purpose, this has profound implications for the way that religious and lay ecclesial ministers interact with each other.

Apostolicam Actuositatem recognized the importance of the interaction between religious and lay within the context of ministry, directing in § 25 that “religious brothers and sisters will hold lay apostolic works in high regard; and will gladly help in promoting them in accordance with the spirit and rules of their institute.”³²⁹ Revolutionary at the time that the document was promulgated, the statement contains two important points for the present consideration of how religious foster collegiality and collaboration with their lay minister peers. The first is that the manner in which the religious promote the laity and their works is in accord with the spirit and rules of their religious institutes. By establishing the normative nature of the spirit and rules of religious congregations for members, it reinforces the previously described importance of rediscovering one’s congregational charism and mission.

³²⁹ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §25.

The second important point made in *AA* §25 is that there is no mention that the religious must be doing the same work as the lay people. This is an important reminder for religious, especially those who are engaged in what are considered traditional congregational institutional ministries. For example, a religious brother who teaches at a congregation-owned academy has the responsibility to promote lay ministry and foster collegiality and collaboration. Obviously, this should impact the way he interacts with lay members of the faculty. But it ought also to shape the way that the brother teaches, aware that he is involved in the formation of students who may one day discern calls to religious life and lay ecclesial ministry. It is easy for religious in scenarios such as these to overlook or otherwise be unaware of their ability and responsibility to foster collegiality and collaboration.

As this conclusion was being written, Pope Francis promulgated his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*. This document sought to “repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time.³³⁰” In many ways, Pope Francis’ document paralleled the development of this thesis, beginning with the theology of baptism and developing its implications for the way one grows in holiness and contributes to the mission of the Church. Though Pope Francis never explicitly addresses the topic of lay ecclesial ministry or the apostolic works of religious, by writing “growth in holiness is a journey in community side by side with others,”³³¹ he proclaims the importance of collaborative relationships in the Church. This is an invaluable truth for all members of the Church, especially lay ecclesial ministers and religious, as we move forward together as colleagues in the mission of the people of God.

³³⁰ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, §2.

³³¹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, §141.

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