

Boston University

OpenBU

<http://open.bu.edu>

Theses & Dissertations

STH Theses and Dissertations

2013-05

Contemporary Catholic Spirituality: The Case for Parish-Based Lay Spiritual Ministries

Troy, Susan

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/8469>

Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Project Thesis

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY: THE CASE
FOR PARISH-BASED LAY SPIRITUAL MINISTRIES

By

Susan Scully Troy

(A.B. Trinity College, 1969; M.A. the Catholic University of America, 1973; M. Div. Weston
Jesuit School of Theology, 1998)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry

2013

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY: THE CASE
FOR PARISH-BASED LAY SPIRITUAL MINISTRIES OF SPIRITUALITY

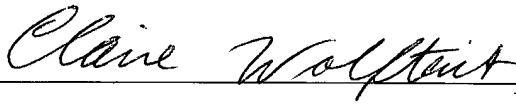
By

Susan Scully Troy

APPROVED

By

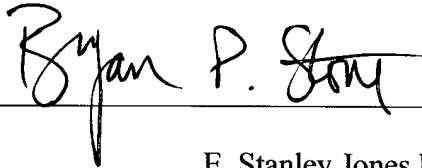
FIRST READER



Dr. Claire T. Wolfteich

Professor of Practical Theology and Spiritual Formation

SECOND READER



Dr. Bryan P. Stone

E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism

Copyright © 2013 Susan Scully Troy

All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION: SEARCH FOR AN ANSWER.....	1
The Parish	
Lay Ministry	
Spirituality	
Introduction of Classic Spiritual Practices	
Conclusions and Recommendations	
Genesis Story	
II. THE CATHOLIC PARISH IN THE UNITED STATES: THE HOME OF CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY	17
The U.S. Catholic Parish Today: A Time of Transition and Change	
The Meaning of “Parish” and why it is Central to Catholic Spirituality	
St. Albert the Great as a Parish: Now and Then	
III. LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY	69
Introduction	
The Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry	
“Co-Workers in the Vineyard”	
IV. DEVELOPMENTS IN SPIRITUALITY	98
Contemporary Christian Spirituality	
An American Social and Cultural Context	
The Eucharist and Community and Spirituality	
V. INTRODUCTION OF SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION PRACTICES IN THE PARISH.....	128
Traditional Spiritual Practices in the Parish	
Spiritual Autobiography as a Spiritual Practice in the Parish	
Spiritual Direction and Group Spiritual Direction in the Parish	
VI. CONCLUSION AND PLANS FOR FUTURE ACTION.....	161
Opportunities for Change in the Parish	
The Experience of St. Albert the Great	
The Place of the “Academy”	
The Future of Parish Based Lay Spiritual Ministry	

APPENDIX.....170
 Sample of Material from Spiritual Autobiography
 Workshop at St. Albert the Great - “St. Augustine”

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....174

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY:
THE CASE FOR A PARISH-BASED LAY MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY

Susan Scully Troy

Doctor of Ministry

Boston University School of Theology, 2013

Major professor: Claire E. Wolfteich, Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Spiritual Formation; Co-Director, Center for Practical Theology

ABSTRACT

There is no recognized lay ecclesial ministry of spirituality serving the U.S. Catholic Church. Research shows that spiritual formation is required of candidates for professional ministry, yet there is no dedicated category of ministry that focuses on spiritual formation for Catholics in a parish setting. This thesis seeks to make a case for the importance of lay parish-based spiritual ministries and to envision some such possible ministries. Toward this end, the thesis explores the nature of the parish, lay ecclesial ministry, and spiritual practices as it draws also on insights from selected ecclesiologies and concrete illustrations of spiritual ministries at one Boston Roman Catholic parish, St. Albert the Great. Experience gained from my Supervised Ministry Project, the development of a parish-based program of Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction at St. Albert the Great, supports these findings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

In my many years of experience as a spiritual director and minister from the Roman Catholic tradition, over and over again I come across situations where I wonder why “churched” individuals have no sense of their own spirituality, are not able to describe what spirituality is or are able to understand how their religious tradition is foundational to their spirituality. My assumption is that not enough is happening in the local church—specifically the Catholic parish--to help individuals and the larger faith community understand and name their spirituality. Why is there not a strong lay ministry of spirituality in every Catholic parish that would address these issues? What might be accomplished with the development of a strong parish-based lay spiritual ministry?

This Thesis Project will address these issues and attempt to make the case for the creation of a robust parish-based lay spiritual ministry that will greatly enrich the spiritual lives of Catholics by providing ongoing encouragement and support for the individual spiritual journey that is grounded in the communal spirituality of the Catholic parish. This investigation is grounded in the experiences of my own Catholicism, my ministry of spiritual direction and parish ministry and my education for professional ministry. The journey to the writing of this Project Thesis will be described in the “Genesis Story” that accompanies Chapter 1 Introduction.

The Parish

At the heart of this enquiry is the Catholic parish. A connection will be drawn between Catholic spirituality and the parish as the home of Catholic spirituality. The community is

created by the faithful for the celebration of the Eucharistic and it can be said that this Eucharistic celebration, in turn, creates the community. This Thesis focuses on the nature of the Catholic parish and its role in defining and sustaining Catholic spirituality. Questions will be raised about the connection of spirituality to community, specifically the parish community and the celebration of the Eucharist. Is participation in the Catholic parish essential for Catholic spirituality? There will be discussion about the current state of the parish and its place in the life of the U.S. Catholic Church in the 21st century. Knowledge of the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is shown to be crucial to an understanding of the contemporary Church. The decades long period of crisis (popularly named) in the life of the Church will be examined and the factors enumerated that account for this current and future period of change and challenge.

Included within this period of “crisis” is the growing issue of “former Catholics” or “un-affiliated Catholics.” With so many Catholics “leaving the Church”, meaning not being affiliated with a parish or regularly attending Mass, the question should be asked: What happens to Catholic spirituality when the Eucharistic community that sustains it is depleted or broken? What leads to the break down of community and what can be done to address these issues?

A more in depth discussion about the nature of the parish will help illumine why “the people gathered” are central to understanding the genuine nature of Christian spirituality. A history of the parish begins with the New Testament. An “ecclesiology of communion” is identified as emerging from the earliest experience of church. A selected look at the “church in history” will provide insights about the nature and role of parish. Included will be a brief examination of the significant role of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the life of the

Catholic Church of the 21st century especially as it affects Catholic self-identity and spirituality. The important role of social science research in the life of the contemporary Catholic Church as it relates to “parish” is reviewed. Also, the significance of a fuller understanding of church history and Christianity’s great spiritual tradition will be acknowledged. Both these themes will be part of several additional discussions.

Lay Ministry

Lay Ecclesial Ministry will be the focus of Chapter 3. Clearly, I am calling for the creation of a new, dedicated, parish-based lay spiritual ministry to be a major advancement in addressing the growth and support of Catholic spirituality. The question of why such a ministry does not already exist must be examined. A look at the current status and nature of lay ecclesial ministry in the Catholic Church will include information from a variety of important studies done by social science research groups. The “explosion” in the growth of lay ministry since Vatican II has had a major impact on the institutional Church and Catholic spirituality. This growth also indicates an important level of acceptance of Vatican II teachings by the Catholic membership. The documents of Vatican II, especially the *Decree of the Apostolate of Lay People* (AA), will be looked at as vitally generative of lay ministry in the U.S. Catholic Church. AA elaborates on the “laity’s special and indispensable role in the Mission of the Church.” Lay ministry and the status of the laity in today’s Catholic Church are closely related and will be examined: An understanding of the centrality of Christian discipleship to ministry and spirituality is an important part of this examination and is related to a theology of ministry.

As stated previously, acknowledging the importance of an understanding of church history and the history of Christian spirituality is critical to several aspects of my thesis. A brief and selective look at the history of ministry in the Church will be used to underscore current understandings of lay ministry, establish the connection between ministry and spirituality, honor the place of lay ministry through the ages beginning with the churches of St. Paul, as well as inform a vision for the future of lay ministry.

Spirituality

One of the most elusive and important parts of my Project Thesis will be an investigation and discussion of spirituality. It is a very large topic treated succinctly as it relates to this Thesis. As I will state frequently it is very difficult to arrive at any common understandings about the meaning of spirituality. With this addressed, I will nevertheless attempt to bring some focus to the discussion by stating that Christian/ Catholic spirituality is the focus of my Thesis Project. “Catholic spirituality” will be defined in terms of Christian discipleship and life in the Holy Spirit grounded in the Eucharistic community that is the parish. I will show how Catholic spirituality is existentially linked to an ecclesiology of communion. An important part of my argument is that the parish--the people gathered, the shared Eucharist and discipleship in the name of Jesus Christ...is the source of an understanding about Catholic spirituality and should be a vital source of strength for that spirituality.

The current culture of interest in all things “spiritual” in the United States will be addressed as it relates to Catholic spiritual longings. This culture competes with a Catholic spirituality that I proffer is understood too narrowly and is too little supported within the

Catholic community of faith. Personal and communal spirituality that compliment and ground each other in important ways are explored. There will be attention to the Eucharist as the most significant example of the relationship between personal and communal spirituality. Again, the social sciences provide statistics that help locate Catholic spirituality most powerfully in the Eucharist celebration.

The role of religion and spirituality is a theme throughout this Project Thesis. The discussion of spirituality focuses on and supports the strength and richness of a spirituality grounded in religion. A common perception that “I am spiritual but not religious,” therefore, will be addressed. Part of this discussion will again be the power of a historical perspective that supports an understanding of the great Christian spiritual tradition that can inform and strengthen the individual spiritual journey as well as the communal spiritual tradition in the parish. Certain realities affect community and therefore affect spirituality. It has been said that the Eucharist creates community and the community creates Eucharist. The essential links between Eucharist, community and spirituality need to be examined and recognized.

Again, history informs our understanding of Catholic spirituality. Knowledge about spiritual practices and the spiritual “giants” of our faith tradition can have a very real and practical impact on an individual’s personal spiritual journey. Additionally, knowledge of our spiritual history can help the parish focus more on the spiritual resources available in our tradition so that these can be made available within the parish

Introduction of Classic Spiritual Practices in the Parish

The Thesis introduces and discusses two classic Christian spiritual practices, Spiritual Autobiography and Spiritual Direction. As explained in the Genesis Story of this Project Thesis, many paths lead me to think that both these practices could find a very beneficial and important home in a parish setting. The practices differ but both are examples of how a variety of spiritual practices introduced in the parish are spirituality enriching for both the individual and the parish community. Both practices lead participants to understand and name for themselves their “spirituality” and help them form an understanding of the role the parish has had and can continue to have in informing and supporting their spirituality. The Thesis suggests that these programs will bring a renewed focus on spirituality to the parish and begin to foster lay spiritual leadership from within the parish community.

I developed and offered two workshops at St. Albert the Great Church in Weymouth, Massachusetts as the Supervised Ministry requirement in support of my Doctor in Ministry program at Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH). The first workshop was in Spiritual Autobiography where participants were introduced to the autobiographies of St. Augustine, Teresa of Avila, Jane de Chantal, Dorothy Day and James Carroll and then were encouraged to write parts of their own spiritual autobiography. The second workshop offered was Group Spiritual Direction, which brings the classic practice of spiritual direction to the parish. Both practices are introduced and explained and the benefits of their introduction into the parish are detailed. An important aspect of these two parish-based spiritual programs is that they are designed to utilize the “small group” concept. Highlighted is my assertion that “small groups” foster, among many other things, the recognition and development of ministerial leadership in

the parish and is a development to be encouraged. In general, it is anticipated that two such programs would be well received within a parish, afford many benefits, introduce participants to Christian “classics”, and promote a sense that an expanded parish-based spiritual ministry in the parish would be valuable.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Parish-Based Lay Spiritual Ministry in Spirituality

The outlook for the successful introduction of a dedicated parish-based lay spiritual ministry is presented and evaluated. The development of this lay ministry faces challenges. These are enumerated and discussed. My experience as a spiritual director and as the developer and facilitator of the parish-based programs of Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction is addressed and used to support claims about the future of this lay ministry.

Genesis Story

As a Spiritual Director for over 15 years, trained at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology where I received my Master of Divinity degree, I became aware as I met with directees¹ over the years that most spiritual “seekers” are often unaware of the nature of their own spirituality. I became increasingly curious that individuals, who sought spiritual guidance, were often quite unaware of the sources and practices of their spirituality and unable to truly identify the nature of their spirituality.

My spiritual direction practice has mainly attracted individuals from the Christian

1. “Directee” is part of the terminology of spiritual direction and is the person who pursues spiritual direction. The term “seeker” is also less frequently applied.

tradition, whether or not these seekers were currently or official affiliated with organized religion. The majority of my practice has been with Roman Catholics, using the popular nomenclature, either practicing or non-practicing, affiliated or non-affiliated, or “deconverted”, all terms that will be discussed. These individuals however were already on a considerable spiritual journey. The fact that an individual seeks out a spiritual director is an indication to me that spiritual questioning, spiritual longing, spiritual inquiry and confusion has already occurred. The wide availability of spiritual directors and especially lay spiritual directors is a growing phenomenon yet it still takes a distinct effort on the seeker’s part, to decide if one could benefit from entering into a relationship with a spiritual director. (Spiritual Directors International (SDI) is a professional organization of spiritual directors. Membership in SDI, the largest such organization in the U.S., has increased from about 400 at its beginning in 1990 to more than 6,000 today, including more than 250 in Massachusetts. (See <http://sdiworld.org/>.)

Furthermore, locating an available spiritual director that meets an individual’s perceived needs and is located within a reasonable distance from home or work, are additional challenges. What this indicates is that by the time an individual makes the successful effort to locate the right spiritual director for them, a lot of reflection and spiritual discernment on the part of the “seeker” has already occurred. Yet, as a spiritual director I have again and again been surprised upon further reflection of how little spiritual self-awareness these “seekers” bring to the process, even among seekers that are active in ministry or formally preparing for ministry. My professional experience indicates that the lack of spiritual self-awareness is a depleting deficit and the attainment of spiritual self-awareness is broadly enriching. What is “spiritual self-awareness?” Spiritual self-awareness is knowledge of one’s own deeply held beliefs and understandings that

affect the choices an individual makes, the choices that are grounded in beliefs that orient an individual to the world and to life lived.

Why do people choose spiritual direction? It seems that quite often I begin the spiritual direction process by trying to help ascertain just why the seeker has decided to investigate this centuries old spiritual practice,² and what are their understandings of the process of spiritual discernment? What can appear quite quickly in seekers who identify themselves as coming from a particular religious tradition, is that they cannot easily identify what is their faith's spiritual tradition and furthermore cannot relate how their faith tradition has helped fashion their spirituality. When asked about their "spirituality" seekers often hesitate, often stumble, and often seem embarrassed, because they cannot adequately articulate what is "their spirituality." Often they delineate prayer practices or absence of prayer practices or cite church involvement or lack of church involvement as the defining measures of their spirituality. It is a very small range. What was not happening or did not happen in their parishes or congregations in terms of support for their spiritual life as an individual and as a member of a faith community?

Another experience greatly informed the larger question of why there was not/is not more focused ministerial attention to spirituality in the Catholic parish. I was one of the original founders of the Catholic lay organization known as Voice of the Faithful, formed in 2002 in Boston, Massachusetts in response the clergy sexual abuse crisis and subsequent cover-up by the Archdiocese of Boston.³ As a spiritual director and minister in the Catholic Church I focused

2. A fuller treatment of the nature and tradition of "spiritual direction" follows in Chapters 4 and 5.

3. Voice of the Faithful, www.votf.org, was formed in 2002 in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis and subsequent cover-up in the Boston Archdiocese. VOTF celebrated its 15-year anniversary in 2012 and counts 30,000 members worldwide. See also *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change*, William D'Antonio and Anthony Pogoreic, 2007.

quickly on the desire of and need for this grass-roots lay organization to keep Christ at the center of all its endeavors and discern the work of the Holy Spirit in all that was developing and all that was planned. “Prayerful Voice,” one of several original “working groups” in VOTF was formed and I was its Chair.

It became very apparent was that within this lay organization, (in a only a few weeks VOTF grew to hundreds of faithful Catholics from all over New England,) as a lay group, there was a limited experience of lay Catholics being responsible for leading group prayer even with the very strong desire on everyone’s part to be a “prayerful Voice.” At first, the pastor of the originating parish, met with the fledgling group and so “Father” was there to lead prayer. When “Father” was not present all eyes turned to the religious sisters among the gathered. Here were members worthy and knowledgeable to lead prayer, to help keep Christ at the center of the work. But the religious sisters did not want to be the stand-ins for the ordained, they saw themselves first as members of the laity and wanted to support their brothers and sisters in faith in realizing their worthiness to lead prayer. The next layer of “acceptable” leaders of prayer was the small number among the group that had ministerial degrees and professional ministerial experience. I saw this as the instinctive emergence of a “traditional” hierarchical Catholic disposition among the Catholic laity even while they were gathered to provide remarkable lay leadership and voice their great opposition to the actions of the hierarchy of the Boston Archdiocese. I could easily guess the unvoiced sentiment... someone beside me must be “better qualified” to lead prayer, someone beside me must have the appropriate authority to lead prayer, someone beside me is truly holy and spiritual and therefore should lead prayer.

But, the religious sister and lay ministers among us agreed that those faithful laity gathered were clearly the exact persons who should be leading prayer and providing prayerful leadership. People were asked to lead pray at the beginning of each meeting. Comfort was immediately found in reciting one Our Father and/or one Hail Mary, the universal prayers of Catholicism.

These question that developed from the practice of my ministry and other ministerial experiences, particularly with the Voice of the Faithful, are a large part of what lead me to enter into doctoral ministry studies at the Boston University School of Theology. Doctoral studies at BUSTH gave me the opportunity to engage the “academy” one more time with the intent of bringing new insights to my ministry and letting my lengthy ministerial experience further inform my studies. As I often remind my directees and others in reference to the spiritual practice of reading Scripture, every time we open Scripture we bring a new person, with new experiences, to the act of reading. The same can be said of a minister who once again approaches the academy and theological studies; they bring a new self-informed by years of ministry and bring all the questions and “findings” that have been part of their ministry. This was my experience at BUSTH.

And it was exactly the experience of choosing a concentration in Spirituality, especially classes in “Spiritual Autobiography” and “Classics in Christian Spirituality” and assisting Dr. Wolfeich in the “Spiritual Guidance in the Christian Tradition” class, that led me to design a Supervised Ministry program for a Catholic parish where I would lead workshops in Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction. I more fully investigated my assumptions and experiences through research for a Project Thesis based on my ongoing ministerial experience,

my academic progression and my Supervised Ministry at St. Albert the Great Roman Catholic Church. One particularly important moment for me came in Spiritual Autobiography class at BUSTH. I was surprised at the class's (including my own) limited awareness of our own Christian spiritual heritage. I observed how the students often expressed the personal importance of their introduction to these spiritual classics, how transformative it was.

There were MTH and MDIV students in these classes along with a handful of doctoral students. The question in my mind was how did we all get to graduate education in theology and spirituality without having studied more about or experienced in practice these spiritual giants? How did we advance without reflecting on our own spiritual journeys through the ongoing writing of a spiritual autobiography or spiritual reflection? As a spiritual director, what I experienced in class at BUSTH was so often reinforced in my ministry. People were too often woefully unaware of their Christian spiritual heritage and most importantly were not being spiritually enriched by their own tradition. For me this indicated an important lack in what our respective faith traditions were providing in terms of education in spirituality and encouragement of spiritual exploration. One of the true pleasures in my ministry is to introduce someone to a practice that truly opens interior doors for them.

Every course began to stir in me further questions about the individual person of faith, their spirituality and their faith communities, in particular the Catholic parish. I had been a member of too many parishes where attention to "spirituality" meant a yearly parish wide retreat, the occasional program of prayer at Advent or Lent, but nothing that was sustained throughout the year and was really an ongoing part of the life of the parish. Certainly, there never was a dedicated ministry of spirituality. This is one person's understanding but from the dozens and

dozens of people I have sat with over the years, their experience also bore out my experience, and this crossed denominational borders. People from Catholic parishes needed to look for resources outside their faith community to strengthen the faith that originated in community and was brought back to the community. Again, the same questions come to mind; why isn't support for spiritual growth and education happening in the parish and how would it make a difference if this type of support were offered?

In the "Spiritual Guidance in the Christian Tradition" class, I spoke to the class about spiritual direction and group spiritual direction. That led to the opportunity for a group from this class to meet with me to learn the Group Spiritual Direction process while personally experiencing this prayerful practice. The reactions of this group of graduate students and ministers underscored my interest in GSD as a means of allowing this spiritual practice to be introduced to a much larger audience, incorporate the powerful small group dynamic and engender "spiritual companionship." This particular group continued to meet for years while all still students at BUSTH. The parish, then, is not the only community that I envisioned richly benefiting from the greater introduction of this practice.

The design of my Supervised Ministry program was a result of these many and varied experiences. I planned for my program to be a practical exploration of the value of introducing select spiritual practices in the great Christian tradition in a parish setting. I approached the pastor, Rev. Paul Soper, with my proposal. He was enthusiastic but clearly stated that I needed to present my plan for two workshops in spirituality at St. Albert the Great to the Parish Council. This action on his part indicated an atmosphere of collaboration with shared clerical and lay

leadership and authority at this church. This assured me that St. Albert the Great would be a positive and appropriate choice for my Supervised Ministry project.

The Parish Council listened to my proposal and voted to ask me to offer these spirituality workshops as part of my doctoral program at BUSTH. They were thoughtfully open to this opportunity for the parish. An eight-week program offering instruction in the practice of Spiritual Autobiography was announced in the parish bulletin, one session offered in the morning, one session offered in the evenings. Over thirty people responded and the dates were confirmed. I came to understand that the people of this parish were particularly open to opportunities to learn and grow in the faith (Fr. Soper, however, pointed out that this was an unusually large response to such a program in the parish.) It became clear that there was little common understanding of Spiritual Autobiography, their interest was in the opportunity to have me in the parish, a doctoral student in ministry, wanting to offer workshop in a parish (St. Albert the Great since 2002 had a very active Voice of the Faithful chapter that met at the parish. I assume that knowledge of my association with VOTF and my role as the leader of “Prayerful Voice” in some manner informed their decision.)

In the design of the Autobiography workshop I gave particular attention to the history of spirituality as setting the scene for reading select spiritual classics but wondered how this would be received. I designed two sessions on the history of Christian spirituality. There was a lot of talking on my part, timelines and fact sheets given out, and scrawling on white boards with many dashes and arrows trying to link periods and trends.

I was greatly surprised that both morning and evening groups paid close attention and was even more surprised that strong praise was given to these two evenings of “history” when

the participants later evaluated the entire program. The Spiritual Autobiography program will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 5, but my experience of the positive reception of hours of lecture about church and spiritual history in a parish setting, underscored to me what I had assumed, the need for and value of education in the history of the faith. . In part this is what led me to include several sections of historical background in my Project Thesis, underscoring my own beliefs about the importance of religious education that includes the history of the church.

In planning for this program as part of my Supervised Ministry I was unsure what would be the nature of the response from individuals being asked to write portions of their own spiritual autobiographies. Again, this is discussed further in Chapter 5, but I did receive many thoughtful, prayerful portions of autobiography that further revealed to me the value of exposure to the Christian spiritual classics in moving individuals to note their own journey and therefore, experience their own spirituality and let it spiritually enliven them in the present and for the future. Also, it was my sense that my professional training as a minister and spiritual director meant a great deal to the participants and allowed them to, perhaps, open up to me more fully. I experienced a wide degree of openness and trust on their part that I believe had to do with my status as a professional minister, my personal ability to relate to them as another person of faith who had “received the faith” from my parents and parish and had passed it on to my children, and because of the confidence they had in each other as members of a faith community that is the parish.

In both the Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction workshops of my Supervised Ministry, I was able to identify and nurture future ministerial leadership. I knew this was a crucial component to my design for increased attention to contemporary Catholic

spirituality. One more time, from my personal experience, my professional practice and my parish ministry, I felt that parish-based lay leadership was key to the success of any program. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 on Lay Ministry, it is acknowledged that the explosive growth in lay ministry since Vatican II happened in large part, not because of any organized program, but because of an individual's sense of a call from God to be active in ministry. My experience as a minister and spiritual director has born this out as directees and I discern this sense of call. I am also aware of the important dynamic of being "called" when someone else recognizes your gifts and urges you to put them to use in building up the Reign of God. The act of having one's gifts recognized, and your possible leadership encouraged, is potent in terms of parish ministry.

Lay ministry continues to grow and evolve in service of the Church, becoming even more recognized as an essential if not crucial part of the institutional Church. The many reasons for this will be discussed in Chapter 3 but it is important to note now that there is already the availability of professional trained lay ministers to assume parish-based spiritual ministry. However, even more important, is the prospect of such leadership to emerging from the very community it is to serve, the parish. How often I have thought that whereas the Vatican II and post-Vatican II generations have accepted or simply only known key Vatican II concepts such as the church as the "People of God" and the unity of all the baptized, the Council's "Call to Holiness" doesn't seem to have entered the Catholic consciousness in the same powerful way. The question I ask is whether there is a connection between Catholics' seeming resistance to accept their own holiness, and the lack of a dedicated lay spiritual ministry in the parish that would invite the exploration of one's spirituality.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CATHOLIC PARISH IN THE UNITED STATES: THE HOME OF CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY

The ecclesial community, while always having a universal dimension, finds its most visible expression in the parish.

----Code of Canon Law 26.

The Catholic parish is central to any discussion of contemporary Catholic spirituality and a full understanding of the critical role of the parish is crucial in defining and sustaining this spirituality. Two questions to be asked and answered are: What is being accomplished within the parish to encourage and support the growth of individual and communal spirituality? And, where is there opportunity in the parish for improvements or changes especially given the period of great transition the Catholic Church faces in the 21st century? The parish as the local church is historically and theologically the home of Catholic spirituality. This assumption is upheld by: an examination of the place of parish/the local church in the history of the church, an examination of the current status of the American Catholic parish after a reflection on the historical development of the parish in the United States, and a select view of several contemporary ecclesiologies that support growth toward a theology of parish previously not fully named or articulated.

The U.S. Catholic Parish Today: A Time of Transition and Change

A Statistical Look at Catholicism

The Catholic Church of the end of the 21st century in the U.S. is projected to no longer be an Americanized Western, Euro-centric church, the dominant culture of the U.S. Catholic church

for centuries. Demographic transformation---from a Euro-centric to an expected Latino/a and Hispanic-centric Catholic population in the U.S.---demands attention and clearly will drive many changes in the Church. Great increases in Asian immigration will also have an important impact. Many suggest that these changes will be transformative but that is conjecture at this point and needs to be more fully observed and analyzed. This is already beginning to be accomplished with a specific scholarly focus on Latino Catholicism that re-assesses traditional historical constructs. Timothy Matovino, professor of theology and Director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame in his 2012 *Latino Catholicism* discusses historiography concerning the Catholic Church in the U.S. He notes: “From the standpoint of original settlement, societal influence, and institutional presence, the origins in what is now the United States were decidedly Hispanic” (Matovino 2012, 7). He cites a 2008 published history of the Catholic Church in the U.S. that includes only two references to the Hispanic contribution to the Church.¹ Clearly, there is a place for scholarship that balances a pervasive Western historical perspective with the realities of both historic and contemporary Hispanic/Latino/a influences when it comes to U.S. Catholicism. For the purposes of this Project Thesis questions about how demographic and cultural changes will alter the composition of the parish, questions about the spiritual needs of the Catholic population nationally, a focus on the impact of a largely Western Christian spiritual tradition, and an investigation of the prospects for greater lay ecclesial ministry are most important. The Thesis begins to explore around the edges of such issues, though fuller treatment of these issues will be needed in further research.

1. O’Toole, James. *The Faithful: A History of Catholicism in America*. Princeton, N.J.: (Princeton University Press, 2008).

Statistics from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the lead organization of the institutional church in the United States, give a brief picture of the U.S. Catholic Church in 2011: there are 77.7 million Catholics in the U.S. (22 percent of general population) and of this number, 39 percent are Hispanic or Latino. Additionally, fifty percent of all Catholics under the age of 25 are Hispanic or Latino.

- There are 18,061 Catholic parishes in the U.S.
- There were 87 new parishes in 2011
- The average number of people attending Mass on a typical weekend at a U.S. parish is 1,100²

The majority white, Euro-centric Catholic population is in decline (CARA “National Parish Inventory” 2011). In the United States the Non-Hispanic White population decreased by 1% in the five-year period between April, 2000 and July, 2005. This group declined as a proportion of the entire U.S. population, falling from 70% of the total population in April 2000 to 67% in July 2005. All other racial and Hispanic-origin groups grew faster than the national rate in the same period. The fastest growing groups were Asians with 20% of the total population and Hispanics and Latino/as with 21%. Immigration to the United States was 4.7% of the total population in 2004-2005. The growing Hispanic population joins a Hispanic and Latino/a population centered in the Western states and in a growing number of Southern states. Hispanics and Latinos are 43% of the total population of New Mexico (with the greatest concentration) and 35% of the total population of both Texas and California (U.S. Census, 2005). The South in a 2005 U.S. Census calculation was the only region to experience a net increase in

2. <http://www.usccb.org/about/media-relations/statistics/>, Accessed 4/28/2013.

population from both domestic migration and foreign immigration. In the Northeast there was an internal migration (from state to state) calculated as -.411%. These trends are projected to remain steady for decades to come.³ This demographic reality certainly has had and will continue to have a major impact on the Catholic Church in the U.S.

But statistics of course do not tell the whole story. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Catholic Church in the U.S. is once again in a time of great transition and faces many challenges. Factors moving the Church into this period of transition are many; the changes in demographics with declining numbers of Catholics in the Northeast and Midwest and great influxes of Catholics in the South and West due to Hispanic and Latino/a immigration; the sharply declining number of priests due to lack of new vocations and the aging of the current populations of priest; the declining numbers of “people in the pews,” the Catholics who populate the parishes; and severe fiscal problems due to the declining number of Catholics, the cost of maintaining aging parishes and schools exacerbated by the paying out of huge financial settlements due the survivors of the clergy sexual abuse. These factors are driving the need for parish reconfiguration in most dioceses of the U.S. In many dioceses, especially in the Northeast and Midwest, two or more parishes might need to combine and larger parish “collaboratives” are formed, while some parishes are simply “suppressed” and a parish disappears, no longer supported by the Archdiocese.

“The Catholic share of the U.S. adult population has held fairly steady in recent decades at around 25%. What this apparent stability obscures, however, is the large number of people who have left the Catholic Church” (Pew Forum, *Faith in Flux* 2009). Roughly 10% of

3. See statistical information, <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2012.html>, Accessed 4/28/2013.

Americans are former Catholics. Statistics from this Pew Forum study find that 43% of Catholics when asked why they left the Church replied that their “spiritual needs were not being met” (Pew Forum, *Faith in Flux* 2009). This situation is addressed by the proposal here for a greater focus on a ministry of spirituality in the parish. Increased attention to such a lay ecclesial ministry in the area of spirituality would also respond to the developing desires of the U.S. population in general for a greater emphasis on spirituality and the spiritual life. (Issues of spirituality will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 4.) As has been stated, the parish is the natural home for this renewed and re-envisioned attention to spirituality and the spiritual life. Therefore, questions about what is and is not happening in the parish concerning spirituality are very important to address.

Although the numbers of U.S. Catholics continues to increase, social science research informs that this increase is due to the great influx of Hispanic and Latino/a Catholics into the U.S. and is coupled with the great increase in the number of “former Catholics.” The January 2013 Pew Forum Study on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* addresses the issue of changes in religious affiliation and the growth of the “unaffiliated” in the U.S. The survey indicates that 44% of all adults surveyed had switched affiliation from the religion in which they were raised and that “Catholicism has experienced the greatest net losses as a result of affiliation changes” (Pew Forum, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 2013). Researchers are also paying close attention to the number of Hispanic and Latino/a Catholics included in this number because it has been observed that in the 20th century great numbers of Hispanic and Latino/a Catholics “defected” to protestant churches, mainly in its Pentecostal and evangelical forms. However, “the 2006 Faith Matters survey of Robert Putnam and David Campbell found

that the defection rate among ‘Anglo’ Catholics is double that of their Latino counterparts” (Matovina 2012, 103). These demographic changes hold important information about why Catholics are choosing to become “unaffiliated.” This information should be very important to anyone investigating the future of the Catholic Church, the spiritual needs of Catholics and the role of the 21st century Catholic parish. One must question and try to understand the reasons protestant Pentecostal and evangelical churches are attracting Catholics.

What happens to “Catholic spirituality” when it becomes unaffiliated with the parish as faith community and home to sacramental expression? These issues will be addressed further in this chapter and also in Chapter 3 which focuses more directly on spirituality.

For the purposes of this Project Thesis, “Catholic” will mean someone who self-identifies as Catholic most likely I assert because as children they were baptized and then raised as Catholics. This might include many who are considered by others, for example the institutional Church, social science researchers, society in general, as “former Catholics” (or “lapsed” or “fallen away” Catholics, common nomenclature) because they “unaffiliated” themselves with the Catholic Church for any variety of reasons but continue to identify themselves as “Catholic.” There is also a continuing national and ethnic connection with Catholicism (Irish-Catholic, Italian-Catholic etc.) that survives although an individual is no longer a practicing Catholic. But in my experience those who many would name as former Catholics most often because they no longer regularly attend Mass or belong to a parish still consider themselves Catholic and should be part of the ongoing conversation in the U.S. about the Church, its future and this discussion of contemporary Catholic spirituality.

The Challenge of 'I am Spiritual but not Religious' to Catholic Spirituality

For decades, many mainline Christian congregations and Catholic parishes have been losing membership.⁴ With this substantial exodus one often hears the comment, “I am very spiritual, but not religious.” It appears that contemporary notions of spirituality have become divorced from a felt need for grounding one’s spirituality in religion. Leading commentator on the contemporary study of spirituality Sandra M. Schneiders suggests, while noting many of the problems associated with organized religion, “that religion is the optimal context for spirituality” and “community, although never perfect, is the nearly indispensable context for a wise and sustained spirituality” (Schneiders 2003, 176). Such an understanding might also address the reality that so many Catholics, in my experience, feel spiritually “lost” when they cannot find a parish to which they want to belong. Later in this chapter consideration of an “ecclesiology of communion” and “the particular and universal church” will underscore the constitutive nature of the local church or parish for Catholic/ Christian ecclesiology and spirituality. “Being spiritual but not religious” is a concept, it will be shown, that cannot truly apply to Catholic spirituality and as noted by Sandra M. Schneiders in her article “*Religion v. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum*,” “separating oneself completely from the religious tradition of one’s origin and/or culture is actually extremely difficult and requires considerable intellectual effort...” (Schneiders 2003, 169). Many Catholics no longer belong to a parish community or regularly attend worship and receive the Eucharist but still describe themselves as “spiritually” Catholic. One questions exactly what that means or how that spiritually is sustaining. The entire question of why people leave organized religion is only beginning to be a topic for research and study.

4. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, January 2013. www.religions.pewforum.org/reports

The Pew Forum study chooses to use the word “unaffiliated,” to name this issue while others interested in this contemporary phenomenon have appropriated the more nuanced term “deconversion.” The term “deconversion” is used to describe “the process by which a person, after a period of identifying herself as a member of a particular religious tradition, chooses to reject in some significant way that form of religious self- identification” (Hornbeck 2011, 10). J. Paul Hornbeck of Fordham University specifically addresses the issue of “deconversion” in the contemporary Roman Catholic Church and the need for further research and study. There are so many reasons one could conjure why an individual leaves a particular tradition, from the mundane to the theologically serious. Hornbeck calls for continued scholarly research into the phenomenon and he and Tom Beaudoin, also a professor at Fordham University, received a grant from the Louisville Institute to study deconversion in the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. This work leads Hornbeck to assert that “research in the area of deconversion is interested not only in the fact of a person's disaffiliation, but also the way in which that disaffiliation is effected” (Hornbeck 2011, 15).

A study of the phenomenon of deconversion will get to the reasons and process behind unaffiliation or deconversion. Such a study would provide important information to a Church that is interested in building and maintaining community and magisterially is proceeding on a priority course of New Evangelization. New Evangelization, according to the www.USCCB.org website “is focused on 're-proposing' the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith. Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel ‘to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularization.’ The New Evangelization invites each

Catholic to renew their relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.” (March 3, 2013) This “crisis of faith” is not elaborated and is an expression often used to mean anyone who has become “unaffiliated” with the Church. The concept of deconversion suggests that there is so much more to the process of “leaving the Church,” and it might not have anything to do with loss of faith in Jesus Christ but perhaps is an ethical stance concerning the institutional church or a genuine conversion to another faith or faith tradition, not simply a “falling away.” Answers are clearly needed and the Academy and the social science research centers seem to be poised to address the question.

Recent social science research affirms that the Catholic Church is not meeting the “spiritual needs” of its people. Indeed in the 2008 *Religious Landscape Survey* by the Pew Forum, forty-three percent of self-identified unaffiliated “former Catholics” stated they “left the Church” because their “spiritual needs were not being met.” In addition, in another Pew Forum study, seventy-one percent of unaffiliated Catholics who now belong to a Protestant church also state that they left for this reason.⁵ If this deficit were addressed it would help stem the increase of even more former Catholics and bring a freshened spiritual vitality to the Catholic parish in the United States. As noted above the question of why people leave organized religion is only beginning to be a topic for research and study.

An essential part of my Thesis is that this period of ecclesial transition might offer a unique opportunity in terms of the positive re-imagining of the life of the Church in the 21st century. A period of transition can mean a recognition and acceptance of the need for positive change such as reconfiguration of parishes to meet contemporary needs. Such a focus could and

5. <http://www.pewforum.org/faith-in-flux.aspx>, Accessed 4/28/2013.

probably would include the recognition of the need for greater support of parish-based spirituality and the development of a dedicated parish-based lay ministry of spirituality. Indeed, the entire topic of ecclesial ministry and the crucial role it plays in so many areas needs both continued and increased attention.

The parish is and has been where the People of God, the Church, gather to celebrate the Eucharist that is the center and foundation of Catholic spirituality. The parish and the Eucharist are existentially linked (this spirituality will be explored more fully in Chapter 4.) One cannot “have Eucharist” without the people gathered to remember and make present Christ’s life, death and resurrection and to affirm their ongoing participation in Christ’s nature; coming together as a faith-filled community is at the heart of Catholic understanding and identity. I contend, therefore, that any breakdown in participation in Catholic community at the parish level has an important bearing on Catholic spirituality and deserves attention from the institutional church. This is one reason why attention is given in this Project Thesis to trends around the study of Catholic disaffiliation and deconversion. The state and nature of the parish in the U.S. deserves attention in any discussion of contemporary Catholic spirituality and therefore a closer examination of the nature of parish and its place in the history of the Church is warranted.

The Meaning of Parish and why it is Central to Catholic Spirituality

The Role of Vatican II and the Life of the American Parish

One cannot understand contemporary American Catholicism without understanding the historic 21st Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council popularly known as Vatican II. The ecumenical Council of Vatican II (1962-1965) continues to have a

major impact on the Church and especially the American Church. “Vatican II has become a place marker in the ecclesiastical and ideological geography of contemporary Catholicism” (Gaillardetz 2006, xiii). Indeed, parishes in the United States are often identified as “Vatican II parishes” or “not Vatican II parishes.” Theologians, such as Church and Vatican II historian John W. O’Malley, are quick to point out that fifty years is quite a short period in the life of an ecumenical council and its reforms and influence. It is valuable therefore to pay attention to the ways in which Vatican II has had an impact on the U.S. parish and the ways it should continue to have an impact during this period of transition. . The Vatican II generation could be invited during this 50th anniversary period to re-examine the Council to better understand its documents, its theology and reforms, and to identify the work of the Council that has yet to be achieved or has been reversed in post-conciliar documents. This re-examination would be especially valuable in light of changes in parish configuration and the call for further expansion of ministerial roles for the laity.

Pope John XXIII called for the Church to reflect on its place in the modern world and work to update the Church’s thinking. The Italian word used to characterize this sentiment was *aggiornamento*, (bringing up to date) and was meant to signal an opening of the Church to modern times. Among the sixteen major documents promulgated by the Council are the four “Constitutions,” a name given to the most important documents: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (SG); The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, (LG); the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, (DV); and The Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, (GS). These are the documents that deal with major areas for re-examination and reform within the Church.

Aggiornamento communicates well the broad principle accepted by the Bishops that “change was legitimate and even good” and became a “distinguishing characteristic of Vatican II” (O’Malley 2008, 36). The Council as a “reform movement” was a concept avoided by the Council members choosing instead to see their work as a reexamination and, in French, “*ressourcement*,” meaning “a return to the source.” *Ressourcement* at Vatican II meant a return to an emphasis on the Bible and on Patristic literature as the most genuine sources of the Catholic faith tradition. The dynamism at the Council led Church historian John W. O’Malley to remind current interpreters or commentators that Vatican II “was not an end, but a start” (O’Malley 2008, 38).

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, “begins with the church’s theological foundations in the triune God” (Gaillardetz 2006, 27). *Lumen Gentium* introduced a more horizontal model of Church, recognized laywomen and men as the People of God, and delineated the “unique” rights and responsibilities of the laity in building up the Church (LG II 9) (Flannery 2004, 359). Chapter II of *Lumen Gentium* is titled “The People of God” and precedes Chapter III, “The Church is Hierarchical.” This seemingly simple editing choice signifies the new modern understanding of the laity as equal members of the Church, “born of the Spirit.” The Church is seen “as established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth” (LG II 9)(Flannery 2004, 359). Furthermore, a key proclamation of the Council was of the “priesthood of the believer,” where all share equally in Christ’s own nature as “priest, prophet and king.” (LG II 10) (Flannery 2004, 360). All the baptized have received a “Call to Holiness”: “All the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness” (LG 39) (Flannery 2004, 396). These teachings to a greater and lesser degree have been received by

the “faithful” of the 20th and 21st centuries. The degree to which the laity has received these Council teachings is critical to an understanding of how Catholics today view themselves in relationship to the Church, how the laity view the future of the parish and the Church in the United States and the laity’s openness to change and to assuming leadership positions.

At a time of reconfiguration, as is being experienced currently throughout the United States in 2012, believers’ knowledge and acceptance of themselves as partakers in Jesus’ very nature as priest, prophet and king, as the People of God, and of their Call to Holiness can do much to encourage fuller participation in the reconfiguration process. The People of God, in accepting the teachings of Vatican II can impact the planning and acceptance of necessary change including growth in spiritual life and lay ecclesial ministry. This is one of the many ways the teachings of Vatican II continue to be realized and continue to have a major role in the renewal of the Church and in this discussion’s call for openness to change.

Overlaying the ongoing changes and calls for future change and “reconfiguration” in the Catholic Church is the sensibility of Vatican II and its document *Lumen Gentium*⁶ wherein Catholics have come to understand and believe in a Church and a people infused with and animated by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps today there is a place for a greater exhibition of trust in the action of the Spirit as events concerning the future of the Church are evaluated. Work needs to be done at the Archdiocesan and parish level to help the faithful including hierarchal leadership see developments as a welcome challenge, as an opportunity to discern the work of the Spirit and imagine future courses of development and action. The People of God, I assert, need to be

6. *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, “is an attempt to express in broad strokes the doctrinal self-understanding of the Catholic Church.” Gaillardetz, Richard R. and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*, 47.

encouraged to see themselves as co-architects of the future parish. After all, it is the parish that embodies the universal as well as the particular church.

Unfortunately, transition is often viewed as a time of negative upheaval. Catholic self-identification with a particular parish is very strong and change can be seen as a threat to an individual's Catholic identity. This is the tension between a Catholic's understandings of the universal Church in relation to the particular or local church that is their parish. Bishops, when faced with the need to close parishes in past decades for the reasons given, tried without success to use membership in the universal Church as a reason for the faithful to not be overly concerned that their singular parish was slated for closing. In a statement that preceded the 2004 announcement of reconfiguration in the Archdiocese of Boston, the then-Archbishop Sean O'Malley addressed the faithful and seemingly admonished them for their "parochial mindset:"

This process [Archdiocesan reconfiguration] will challenge us to move beyond a parochial mindset and realize that we are Catholic, which means universal... We need to put the accent on Catholic and come together as one people ready to make sacrifices for our Church. We are part of something bigger than ourselves. (O'Malley, May 25, 2004/www.RCAB/Reconfiguration)

In speaking of the need to "move beyond a parochial mindset" Archbishop O'Malley can be seen to be negating the role and identity of the parish. The "parochial mindset" is the self-understanding of the particular church as "Church." He does not appear in this statement to see the particular church as making "the universal Church wholly visible" (Boff 1986, 137).⁷ He might be seen to set up a false dynamic where the particular church should be sacrificed to the

7. Boff's ecclesiology of "particular church" in relationship to the "universal church" is discussed further on in this chapter

greater good of the universal Church; there is no mention of reciprocity or maintaining the appropriate balance in right relationship. In some sense he might be seen to suggest that being church in the particular/parochial sense is selfish and inappropriate. There was a sense among some parishioners that parishes and Catholics who resisted mandated changes were and were seen by the RCAB as disrespectful of Episcopal authority, and therefore, not in genuine communion with the RCAB and the universal Church.

Archdiocesan officials in Boston and elsewhere quickly learned that membership in the “universal” Church, while a widely accepted truth among the Catholic faithful, does not stop parishioners from seeing their particular parish as the only church that is important to them. This 2004 attempt in Boston at “reconfiguration” was unsuccessful on many levels and created a “crisis” situation where many local churches, such as St. Albert the Great in Weymouth, refused to accept their Bishop’s edict to close and went into a process that came to be called “vigiling.” This will be discussed further as part of the expanded discussion in Chapter 2 of the “particular church” of St. Albert the Great in Weymouth, Massachusetts.

The Documents and teachings of Vatican II might account for many Catholics’ resistance to any action that could be seen as part of a pre-Vatican II sensibility...to include “authoritarianism” and “clericalism” in opposition to teachings about the unity of the baptized and the Church as the Body of Christ, the people gathered. Perhaps the resistance to the closing of any parish illustrates a deep understanding on the part of the People of God that their parish as local church does embody the universal church, and so caution must be taken. Caution must be taken to make sure that any reconfiguration respects these Vatican II teachings; the acceptance of these teachings are an important part of what will ultimately make reconfiguration successful.

The “Church” of the New Testament: An Ecclesiology of Communion

Vatican II “*ressourcement*” has directed those interested in the future well being of the Catholic Church back to the “original sources.” I have found this to be especially illuminating in researching the relationship between Catholic spirituality and parish. The earliest “church” as identified in the New Testament was simply and profoundly the gathering of believers in order to share a faith in the risen Jesus Christ and celebrate the memorial Eucharistic meal. The essential nature of “church” as the people gathered continues two thousand years later; one will often hear the comment, “I belong to [St. Columba’s or Blessed Sacrament] parish.” As it did in the early Church, this “belonging” speaks to a fundamental reality of Catholic identity grounded in community. Therefore, the collective experience of shared prayer, the shared celebration of Eucharist and other sacraments in the parish as local church has a crucial impact on the individual and collective experience of Catholic spirituality:

The dialectical relationship between Christian spirituality and Christian common prayer can be traced back to the very beginnings of the Church’s life. Indeed, already in the New Testament we find participation in worship regarded not only as a sign of the health of our relationship with God but also as a contributor to the well-being of that relationship (Sheldrake 2005, 44).

The Vatican II call to a time of *ressourcement* in the Church meant a call to return to the original sources of the faith and this meant a return to Scripture and the Patristic writings of the first centuries as the authoritative guides to a genuine understanding of the Church. Out of this effort in the mid-20th century flowed a fuller understanding of Church as revealed in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ. An ecclesiology of communion, or *communio* in

the Latin, can be said to have emerged from the Council with its emphasis on a “return to the sources” and its commitment to welcome Spirit-filled change for the Church.⁸ The New Testament finds Paul convinced “that Christians through the Holy Spirit, enjoy communion with the triune God and are also ‘in communion’ with other baptized Catholics” (McBrien 1989, 336). This represents both a vertical and a horizontal sense of communion that is seen to permeate the entire Christian church, a fundamental unity or communion through Baptism. Unfortunately a true communion of Christian churches is not visible at present. Ladislav Orsy, the renowned canon lawyer and present at the Second Vatican Council, offers in his 2009 book *Receiving the Council* a definition of “ecclesiology of communion:”

Although we often hear the expression “ecclesiology of communion,” rarely are we given an insightful explanation of the theological reality to which it ultimately refers....Through faith, we discover “*communio*” in the inner life of God, who is one God in three persons. In God, there is a unity in diversity, or diversity in unity. In the church an organic unity exists among individual persons; they are bonded together (Orsy 2009, 5).

In the gospels Jesus’ own life was lived in communion with disciples and followers. His call to build up the reign of God and his call to discipleship were to be realized in community, “*koinonia*” in the Greek. Whereas Jesus did not organize or call for the organization of a church as understood today, he did call for the gathering together of people in community “in memory of me” (Luke 22:15-20) to enable them to pray together, “break bread” and prepare for the work of discipleship. The people gathered became “church.”

8. “The subject matter of ecclesiology is the concrete community that exists in history (Haight, 2004, 34).”

Pentecost, traditionally viewed as the occasion of the birth of the Church, is described in Scripture as a gathering of disciples that included the twelve “together with some women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers.” (Acts 1: 13-14) It was the act of gathering that was essential so that they “could pray with one accord (Acts 2: 1-4).” Thus “church” is created. This passage from Acts also focuses on prayer and spirituality as a central feature of the faithful gathered. Indeed, in Acts the Spirit of the Risen Christ is first received when the faithful—the twelve and the disciples—gathered to pray and break bread as instructed by Jesus. The gift of the Spirit was to the community gathered, not to individuals.

In the letters of Paul, the faithful who gathered in a specific town or locale were called “church,” the Greek word chosen to refer to this was “*ekklesia*” meaning community, fellowship or participation. It is written in Acts that Paul “upon landing at Caesarea he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the Church and then went down to Antioch” (Acts 18:22, NSRV). Paul greeted the people as “church.” He was not referring to a building or buildings or to any kind of established leadership.

The history of the parish—the local church—starts with gatherings of believers as reported in the New Testament. It is interesting to note that the early followers of Jesus did not borrow an institutional model from either Jewish or pagan religions, models familiar to them. They “did not use the language of the Jewish synagogue, or the social clubs or voluntary organizations, or of the schools of philosophers” (Coriden 1997, 15). This suggests their sense of an essentially new way of being together. In addition, the “*ekklesia*” of the New Testament differed just as much as the cities, peoples and regions where they were established. The earliest Church was open to a pluralistic understanding of Church as long as the core or constitutive elements were

always present—faith in the Risen Christ, gathering for the breaking of the bread, and adherence to the teachings of Jesus. There was a diversity of ecclesiological approaches in the New Testament, among them the Jewish-Christian community, the Jewish-Hellenistic community and the Hellenistic-Gentile community (McBrien 1981, 567). Pluralism and diversity were part of the earliest notion of church and this knowledge can continue to inform our present day understandings of the local church and parish as we plan for the future.

It was the people gathered who understood that Christ was made continually present in the world through their discipleship and faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Within this constitutive framework differences were eventually resolved such as the disputation over circumcision, one of the first major obstacles to “membership” with which they dealt. “Difference” came to be understood and accepted as a natural consequence of the growth of their movement as it progressed throughout the Roman world and beyond. As Christianity spread the word “church” came to mean much more than just the local community of believers; it represented groups linked together within a city, groups in larger regions and finally the larger Christian movement. There was always a sense of both unity and difference co-existing in the notion of “church.”

The Parish in the Life of the Church: A Historical Perspective

There is not a straight line of development from the beginnings of the “church” found in the New Testament to the modern parish. In the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*, the bishops called for a return to original sources in dealing with what it means to be Church in the modern world. They grounded their discussion of church in Scripture and early Patristic

writings. It is especially important in a discussion of the place of the parish in the history of Church to understand that these Bishops' reliance or renewed interest in and focus on the earliest accounts of being church led them to Patristic writings that had special impact on the nature of modern ecclesial thinking:

This patristic theology originated in pastoral settings and was for the most part embedded in sermons or occasional treatises. It was based primarily on the principles of classic rhetoric, the art of touching hearts and minds in order to win inner assent. It was thus 'pastoral' and spiritual, not academic in orientation and proposed an ideal of the Christian life based on the Beatitudes and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (O'Malley 2008, 76).

From such a genesis one can envision a model of parish that is animated by the Holy Spirit to live a spiritual life based on a very active discipleship in the world as described in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). Data show that contemporary Catholic identity is securely grounded in the belief that Catholics must "help the poor." Eighty-four percent of respondents identify care for the poor as being inseparable from "being Catholic" (D'Antonio et al. 2007, 24).

The Local Church as a Depository of Authentic Faith

In the second century one aspect of pluralism embodied in the local churches met sharp scrutiny. A growing concern for "authentic teaching" grew out of the development of groups of Christian churches that did not *strictly* share common aspects of faith or understanding. For centuries to follow, heresies were declared such as Arianism, Nestorianism and Pelagianism. In fact, key standards of belief in Christianity were identified in negative response to the popularity of these diverging Christian movements and churches. The local church as a repository of

authentic faith was established early in the history of the church and created the continuing dialectic tension between the existence of divinely revealed truths, or dogma, and the incarnational and historical nature of the particular church that is changeable and reflects the world in which it exists. This tension continues in today's Church and in the parish life of the People of God as is exhibited by St. Albert the Great Church discussed later in this Chapter.

It was also in the second century that the term "parish" comes into use to name the local church communities. This English word comes from the Greek *paroika*; the primary meaning in the Greek world was "to dwell beside." However a secondary meaning was "resident aliens, settled foreigners, nonnative sojourners" (Coriden 1999, 19). This became the meaning for "parish" as used by the earliest Christian writers to name these early Christian communities. Those churches were made up of minority populations, often persecuted for their faith, a pilgrim people in search of opportunity to worship and live freely and fully. A definition of parish grew to be a place where a common belief in Christ might be expressed and upheld in community, and lived out in prayer and in the "breaking of the bread."

However, there were many deviations from this model of parish throughout the history of the Church. It should be noted that part of "historiography" is the understanding that history is more apt to preserve the actions of institutions than the beliefs of the people. The actions of the institutional Church at the highest levels are chronicled in the history of the Western World, often because the institutional Church became so intertwined with the political and military history of the Western world. What was happening among the people of faith at the local church level is not as well revealed through classic historical means such as written word, Church and secular records, documentation, and personal accounts. What we can extrapolate from the

contemporary experience of parish—gathering, the sharing of the Word, the breaking of the Bread—is that the faithful did successfully carry the Christian tradition forward no matter what was happening at the highest levels of Church including Vatican intrigues, rule by secular powers, the Crusades, the Inquisitions and other events. Because of the historical nature of the Church, we know that these secular events had to have an effect on the faithful and the institution of the local church. However, accommodations must have been made by the faithful that kept Christ at the center of their lives. For example, the Eucharist was not always made readily available to the faithful through participation in the liturgy yet remained at the heart of their devotional life and spirituality at the personal and community/local church level. There are records of elaborate church processions throughout Europe that accommodated an adoration of the Eucharist for hundreds of the faithful in their small towns and villages.

The term “*paroika*” appeared in Christian documents by the 4th century. The Latin translation of “*paroika*” is “*paroecia*,” and means “the local communities.” It was first applied to a local church with a *presbyter* (priest) as its leader. Other words that came into use to describe the church, such as *province*, *diocesis* and *eparchy* were borrowed from the Roman Empire’s administrative designations. “*Diocesis*” used within Christianity meant a larger cluster of churches with an *episkopos* (bishop) as its leader or overseer. These terms were borrowed from secular, political, as well as imperial usage and became official church appellations through the 13th century. The history, then, of parish is a history of an always waxing and waning connection to political and cultural forces, societal developments, and secular influences of all kinds while keeping the constitutive elements of church always present. This is an important understanding to bring to any discussion of the contemporary church.

The contemporary parish carries with it the constitutive elements from the earliest gatherings of the faithful as church/*ekklesia* but also carries elements or residuals from every place the faithful were gathered and from each era of its existence. Imperial terms, traditions and mindsets are part of that inheritance. It is the character of the incarnational Church to blossom and flourish in history. Such a self-understanding should live in the local church of every era so that the People of God might work to embed the Church in their particular time and place. This is why the advantages of knowledge of church history and the history of Christian spirituality are expressed throughout this Project Thesis, for the multiple positive benefits such understandings bring to the faith.

This historical perspective is particularly applicable to an examination of the Catholic Church in the United States. Puritan Protestantism left its mark on the Catholic Church in America just as waves of European immigrants left their German, French, Polish, Italian and Irish marks on the Church. Spain brought its Catholicism to South and Central America and to Western North America. Today, Hispanic, Latino/a immigrants are leaving their own mark on all regions of North America. This is all part of being an incarnational Church, a Church “in and of history.” It is not surprising, then, that the Catholics in this country bring their American expectations of equality, democracy, justice and independence to their experience of church. When the parishioners of St. Albert the Great Parish, discussed in the next section, displayed this particularly American stance, their Bishop was disturbed when he found these American manifestations arise in conjunction with membership in the universal Catholic Church.

Which Catholic Church Do I Belong To?

At the heart of any reflection on the Catholic parish should be an assessment of how well the constitutive elements of being genuinely Church are “faithfully” carried out. A question to be asked: Is the real world---their needs, concerns, culture--- of parishioners reflected in the activity and prayerfulness of the parish? Is the Church of their world, an incarnational church? The local church can look very different while still well representing the universal Church. In the modern (post-Council of Trent, 1545-63) Western church it could be said that there was a greater emphasis on “sameness” and deviation from this “sameness” indicated to many a breakdown in unity. There are many opportunities in the contemporary Church, especially in the United States at this time of great transition, to profit from embracing an understanding of Church as inherently diverse and rightly reflecting the diversity in culture, geography or any other variables embodied in the People of God who gather. (There will be a further discussion on the importance of knowledge of history to the process of transition facing the contemporary Catholic Church in the U.S.)

When someone, even today, refers to the “traditional” Catholic Church it is my experience as a Catholic, a spiritual director and parish minister, that what they usually unknowingly mean is the Tridentine Catholic church, the reformed church that emerged from the ecumenical Council of Trent and the Catholic Counter- Reformation. Since the time of the Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries and the Council of Trent, a focus of the Roman church in response to Protestantism rested on the validity of apostolic succession and the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome as successor to Peter. This notion of apostolic succession was crucial to Catholicism’s claim to be “the one true church” in response to the reform movements of the 16th

century and the development of churches of protest, “where by the 1530’s all of Scandinavia, the British Isles, and much of Germany, Austria and France had severed the bonds of union with Rome” (McBrien 1981, 635).

Tridentine ecclesiology was in place for centuries until it was in turn reformed by Vatican II with a new emphasis on the Church as the People of God and the faithful “in communion” as being the Body of Christ in the world. (There will be an additional exploration of the impact of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council known as Vatican II later in this chapter.) French Dominican Yves Congar (1904-95), considered one of the premier ecclesial theologians of the 20th century, influenced the thinking of the Bishops of Vatican II; in broad terms the meaning of traditional ecclesiology changed from a Tridentine ecclesiology and returned to a New Testament and early church ecclesiology. There were any number of ecclesiologies that were in effect over the course of two thousand years, but for a study of the local church an ecclesiology of communion is most important to understand as we consider a theology of parish. The ecclesiologies of two theologians, Leonardo Boff and Roger Haight, have informed my interest significantly in the place of the local church and parish in the 21st century as well as the development of a theology of parish and, therefore, have influenced this Thesis Project. A brief examination of these ecclesiologies as they relate to this Thesis follows.

Leonardo Boff and an Ecclesiology of the Particular Church

Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff in his book *Ekklesiogenesis* (1997) offers a modern (Post-Vatican II) ecclesiology based on the experience of the base Christian communities of 20th century Latin America. I was introduced to *Ekklesiogenesis* in an Ecclesiology seminar as part of

my doctoral studies. Boff's understanding suggested to me a model of how to "re-invent" the Catholic Church in North America and the world as I stated in my Introduction in Chapter 1. Here began my interest in exploring the ultimate importance of the Catholic parish to the faith, to the future of the faith and to Catholic spirituality. I see Boff's *Ekklesiogenesis* as linked to an ecclesiology of the particular church and an ecclesiology of communion that were renewed through the work of the Second Vatican Council. The Second Vatican Council did recognize the "particular" church as genuine church, "but without developing a complete theology of the local church" (Boff 1986, 14).

Boff's ecclesiology came out of his observation and experience of the 20th century Christian/Catholic grassroots or "small base community" movement in Latin America, a basically lay movement that developed in response to what Boff sees as the overwhelming size, rigidity and anonymity of most institutional churches. "Through the latter centuries, the church has acquired an organizational form with a heavily hierarchical framework and a juridical understanding of relationships among Christians, thus producing mechanical, reified inequalities and inequities" (Boff 1986, 1). I could easily relate this to my experience as a North American Catholic and my training and education in theology and ministry. Developments in the Latin American church that had led to the creation of small base communities were being repeated in the North American church; the lack of priests and little sign of future vocations to the ordained priesthood, ministerial and sacramental needs of the people not being met by current leadership; and financial crises..

According to Boff, it is the declining number of priests and the lack of vocations to the ordained priesthood that had stirred in the faithful the creative drive to be the ministers and

community they needed and wanted. For Boff, this was a new generative ecclesiology. (Boff 1986, 1-2). He held out hope that these small base communities, sharing so much with the earliest Christian communities, might be an important force in the reformation of the contemporary Church. “Without a doubt these communities can be a stimulus for mobilizing new strength in the institutional church, and they represent a call for a more thorough living of the authentically communitarian values of the Christian message” (Boff 1986, 6). Reading this in Boff led me to consider that parishes and parishioners, working with their bishops, priests, and lay ministers could be a similar “stimulus for mobilizing new strength in the new church.” This sense of optimism might be communicated to those Catholics in the United States who also face challenges to their understanding of what it means to be Church and parish in the 21st century. Boff also communicates a sense of opportunity inherent in the emergence of small base communities. Through this re-visioning of the local church, the People of God become a force to reform the universal institutional Church. The emergence of these small base communities for Boff remains a sign that the Church is its most authentic self when it can be observed as a true community, where each person in the community can be known and where individual faith is truly supported in and by the community. The question of the need of an ordained priesthood follows in both of the American continents and must be addressed.

There are lessons that can be readily applied to the Church in the United States as it faces parish reconfiguration. Let the laity take leadership in developing the future of the local church, assuring that their voices are heard. Let the laity see “base” communities rather than the hierarchical Church as the genuine foundation of the Christian Church where the people embody the faith that gathers. As boldly stated in the documents of Vatican II: “The Church is not truly

established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy " (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*)(Flannery 2004, 838). So too the laity must work alongside the hierarchy as a new configuration of church, and possibly the role of the ordained priesthood, is established throughout the U.S. As noted above, Boff pointed out that the Second Vatican council did not develop a “complete theology of the local church” (Boff 1986, 14), but rather laid the theological groundwork for further the development of ecclesiologies for the 21st century.

These ecclesiologies of community and local church found in the documents of Vatican II reinforce the sense that the parish is the heart of the Catholic Christian community and therefore the place where transformative change can be realized by the People of God as they live and pray in community. The parish as Christian community or *ekklesia* is the place where the Christian spiritual tradition is most appropriately handed on in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the “breaking open of the Word.”

Roger Haight and a Historical Ecclesiology

“Church exists not apart from the world but as part of the world.”

----Roger Haight, S.J.

Contemporary American theologian Roger Haight produced a three-volume “historical ecclesiology,” *The Christian Community in History* (2004, 2005, 2008) that addresses many of the same ecclesial points that Leonardo Boff brings out in his *Ekklesiogenesis*. A large part of my theological and ministerial education has been influenced by Haight’s development of his “historical ecclesiology.” Both Boff and Haight led me to focus on the community gathered. As I read Boff, his re-investigation of the origins of church and focus on the community gathered, I

began to concentrate on the importance of the church in history and the power of this concept to inform a renewed focus on the parish in North America. In my reading, Boff and Haight both underscore the understanding of the local church or parish as “a phenomenon of and in history” and because of this the local church must reflect the people, the times and the culture in which it exists (Haight 2004, 37). “The local church cannot be reduced to being simply a part or fragment of a universal entity called the church. Rather the whole of what it means to be church comes to realization in the local church, or in a part of the whole Christian movement” (Haight 2004, 41). This teaching strengthens the need I see for a contemporary focus on parish. This emphasizes the importance of understanding “parish” as the local church that is historical—is meant to change, is meant to reflect the realities of its world—and wholly connects the People of God to the universal church. This also relates to Boff’s stating that the “particular church” wholly represents the “universal church.”

According to Haight “the subject matter of ecclesiology is the concrete community that exists in history” (Haight 2004, 38). As stated, this approach is of particular interest in the U.S. since the “concrete community that exists in history” is radically in need of change, and without change, could crumble even further. A prominent feature of the contemporary Church is the existence and popularity of “apostolic movements” also known as “lay ecclesial movements” and the thousands of Catholics who enthusiastically make-up the membership in these extra-parish movements. Included in this group are Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, Focolare, Christian Life Communities and Catholic Charismatic Renewal as well as a growing number of popular and yet controversial (for their perceived conservative ideology) groups such as Opus Dei, the Neocatechumenate and Communion and Liberation. The popularity of these movements that exist

and function outside the confines of the parish, and seem to have little interaction with the faithful's local faith community causes one to ask what is being accomplished in these movements that is not perhaps experienced in the parish? Additionally, does the success of these movements suggest that these international groups better address a faith community's modern needs? Some of these apostolic movements or lay ecclesial movements, are centuries old, some originated in the last century. What is the potential of these movements in terms of re-imagining parish life in the 21st century? How does their success inform how we meet the requirements of Catholics in this modern and very diverse world? Can what is accomplished in these movements be replicated or based also in the parish or is it preferable for the parish to embrace and positively interact with these ecclesial movements and learn from them?

According to Allan Figueroa Deck, the point is "that the movements [lay ecclesial movements], both in the life of the local church and globally, play a growing role as mediators in the church's life. They are thriving, viable and appealing centers of service and action [discipleship]. They are providing diverse contexts that appeal to a broad spectrum of people today. As such they are *de facto* schools of lay ecclesial leadership" (Figueroa 2006, under subheading "Agents of Evangelization.") Lay grass-roots leadership in these movements is the force that maintains and expands the movement and this is of particular interest for this Project Thesis. Are Catholics looking outside their parish community to meet their spiritual and other needs and therefore depriving the parish of vital lay leadership as it moves into the 21st century? Clearly, this must be true and challenges those interested in the local church community to explore this phenomenon. Is there greater and more attractive opportunity for leadership in these lay ecclesial movements than in the parish? Is their greater experience of community in the

movements than in the parish? Is the people's faith better able to be expressed within these movements? Are these movements depleting or reinvigorating the Church? The answers to these questions could provide important understandings about the nature of the local church in today's world and inform plans for reconfiguration. Especially interesting to any discussion of contemporary Catholic spirituality is the prominent place of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement and how this addresses the Spirit-filled longings of the faithful, especially the Hispanic and Latino communities where the charismatic renewal movement is so popular and supported so enthusiastically. "Today the parish has certainly not run its course; community and Eucharist are essential to the church, however we define it. Parish in some form will always be with us, and that must be attended to one way or the other. But the success of these movements demands that the U.S. Catholic Church---clergy, religious and laity---begin to integrate that dynamic into their scheme of things more intentionally and wisely" (Deck 2006, under subheading "Challenges for Today's Parish").

The emphasis on the changing nature of a historical Church, especially the local church, deflates expectations for the unchanging or immutable nature of the parish. The changing nature of the Church, however, does not contradict the reality of certain constitutive elements that must be present for there to be the universal church, specifically the people gathered, the "breaking of the bread," and faith in the Risen Christ. Too often the "people in the pews," uninformed by Church history and the variety of ecclesiologies, make the assumption that to "be Church" is to be an unchanging part of a rigid, hierarchical system.

A phenomenon observed in the past several decades is that many Catholics have "left the Church" because they were taught or felt that change was not a genuine option in the life of the

Church. Many faithful Catholics who were part of the Voice of the Faithful organization as faithful Catholics in the beginning of the century, became extremely discouraged about whether change was possible in their Church. They were dismayed by the conduct of the institutional church and reacted by leaving their parishes. This is an example of the difficult tension that exists in the Church and in the minds of the people.

As was stated previously, former Catholics in a 2010 survey declared that they left the church because their “spiritual needs were not being met.” One wonders to what extent these Catholics pursued altering this deficit by actively working towards changes in their own parishes and how those efforts too were received. In parish ministry and elsewhere I have noted how so many of the People of God do not see themselves as the appropriate catalysts or agents of change or as the lay ecclesial movement has shown, do not see change happening within the confines of the parish. Perhaps because of this attitude parishioners have waited to learn what changes might be forthcoming instead of assuming that they should *by definition* be part of the process of change.

The Role of Social Science Research

Among the most noteworthy and valuable resources for the American Catholic Church in the 21st century are institutes for social science research in the area of church and religion in the United States. These research institutes and their scholarship, often part of Catholic universities, have come to play an important role in the life of the Church for those interested in having the appropriate information and data to understand the state of health of religion and church and to be able to make appropriate recommendations going forward. Major national foundations such

as the *Pew Forum* and the *Lilly Endowment, Inc.* have invested widely in research about religion and religious identity in the United States. Catholic universities have been leaders in the development of research programs gathering important data that has and should be utilized in all areas of church planning. Especially important has been research dedicated to lay and ordained ministry; developments in parish life, parish programs and administration; and trends in Catholic identity within the United States. The amassing of critical statistical data has been carried out by The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University; the Pew Forum; the Lilly Endowment, Inc.; The Catholic University of America's Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies; Notre Dame University's Catholic Social and Pastoral Life Initiative at the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism; Fordham University's Curran Center for American Catholic Studies and the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture among others. These provide a vital service to the Church as it continues to try to understand contemporary social, cultural and spiritual trends that affect the Church.

CARA, founded in 1964, states that it works "to increase the Catholic Church's self-understanding." CARA is one of the groups participating in the current *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* study funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. through its 2002 "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Grant Program." The Catholic Church in the United States is clearly receiving vital attention from research institutions and Catholic universities. Educational institutions and national/international foundations have heightened an awareness of the value and need for data that allows for practical planning and measurable results. A greater emphasis within the institutional Church on promoting these studies as important tools in planning and evaluation could be very valuable. The role and future vitality of the Catholic parish in the 21st

century in the United States cannot be articulated without this wealth of data; it should be used throughout archdioceses and parishes. Education is needed on how this research data might be helpful in pursuing a shared vision of a vibrant Church for the 21st Century. CARA's study "The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes" offers a statistical picture of a typical Catholic parish. In 1998 CARA initiated the National Parish Inventory (NPI), a database of parish life. This database provides a statistical sketch of what the Catholic parish in the United States looks like today. CARA published their latest findings in July 2011. Eighty-seven percent of U.S. parishes participated.⁹

Catholic parishes have traditionally used attendance at weekly Sunday liturgy/Mass and quantity of sacraments provided ("sacramental index") as indicators of parish vitality; attendance has been the key indicator for church decision-making in terms of parish configuration and viability.¹⁰ On a typical weekend in October (a standard used nationally) an average of 1,100 Catholics per parish attend Saturday Vigil or Sunday Mass. To create a true picture of U.S. Catholicism this information should be combined with the statistical information about how many Catholics are unaffiliated with the Catholic Church, and how many Catholics there are who do not belong to a parish or regularly attend Sunday mass yet self-identify as Catholic to create a true picture of U.S. Catholicism. This information is particularly relevant if the institutional church continues to pursue a course of New Evangelization in the U.S. It has been expressed by many, especially those groups seen to be officially marginalized by the institutional

9. <http://cara.georgetown.edu/Publications/parishlife.html>, Accessed 4/28/2013.

10. Statistics published yearly in the Official Catholic Directory (OCD) by the USCCB.

church---women, gays and lesbians, re-married Catholics without an anulment—that in a very real sense the Church left them, they didn't leave the Church.

The Importance of Knowledge of the History of the Church and its Spiritual Tradition

A selected look at the “church in history” will provide insights about the nature and role of parish and help provide insights for the future of the American parish and ministry. As stated, a period of transition can be a very creative and positive time. Out of the need for change can come new directions that better meet needs and are better grounded in Catholic foundational principles and practices. This is why the case will be made that greater awareness of or instruction in the history of the Church is important to the on-going life of the Church and this can happen at the parish level in many different ways. There is great value in making sure that the story of the church and Christian spirituality is part of each Catholic's own story. Such knowledge fosters openness to and an acknowledgment of change as one of the hallmarks of an incarnational church.¹¹ Historian John W. O'Malley notes that Vatican II was characterized by the “impulse acknowledging that change was legitimate and even good.” At the Council, the place of historical studies “deeply affected the study of every aspect of church life and doctrine” (O'Malley 2008, 37).

Too often in the Church I find there is a sense among the faithful that the parish you participate in at the moment is the norm. Also, there is the sense that the traditional church is the church you grew up in. How powerful if this thinking was changed to encompass an

11. “Incarnational theology” is based on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as an affirmation of the goodness of humanity, the human condition and of the created world and often leads to a focus on the importance of social justice as a hallmark of Christianity. Incarnational ecclesiology would emphasize a church of and for the world.

understanding of the Church as a dynamic institution—an incarnational Church—affected by the world around it and meant to adapt with the times. “The church is a phenomenon of and in history” (Haight 2004, 37).

American theologian Richard McBrien addressed the difference between studying the “History of the Church” instead of “The Church in History”:

If the Church is principally a hierarchical society, with the pope at the top of the pyramid and the bishops just below him, the history of the ‘Church’ is the history of the popes, of ecumenical councils, or heresies and schisms...and that is precisely what many (indeed too many) histories of the Church appear to be. (McBrien 1981, 608)

If the Church is indeed seen as The People of God then the history of the Church has to take into account their lived faith expressed within the local church and local community. “If the Church is the Body of Christ, it must be incarnate in history and affected by history, as Jesus was And if the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, it must be infinitely adaptable to the changing circumstances of history” (McBrien 1981, 609).

The People of God can benefit from seeing themselves as essential participants in forming their faith community and in how it will function in each era and place and therefore add to the “history” of the Church. Pope Pius XII’s encyclical letter *Mystici Corpus Christi*, June 29, 1943, sowed the seeds of this incarnational ecclesiology. “Pius XII sought to marry the predominant notion of the church as a visible society with the more biblically oriented notion of the church as the Mystical Body of Christ” (Gaillardetz and Clifford 2012, 50). The Second Vatican Council built on this teaching of Pius XII and in *Lumen Gentium* presented the more “incarnational” approach:

But, the society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly church and the church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality, which comes together from a human and divine element. For this reason the church is compared, in a powerful analogy to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so in somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf Eph. 4:15), (LG 8) (Flannery 2004, 357).

My experience leads me to believe that the Catholic populace lacks a fundamental knowledge of the Catholic Church in history and the history of Christian spirituality and both are important to the strength of Catholic self-identity and of the contemporary spiritual journey. Fundamental Church history and the history of Christian spirituality are not routinely or strongly part of Catholic self-understanding “Why is it so important to ground all discussion in the history of the Church? Not only is it significant for the present community [of Catholics] to recognize the ways in which the Church has developed and changed in two thousand years so that we can draw upon our rich history to face the challenges of today, but also and even more basically, it is central that we as a community come to grips with the fact that the Church has changed” (Miller ed. 2005, vii).

It would be very beneficial for the Catholic faithful to become more aware, communally and personally, of being part of a faith and a Church that developed in the world, is historical and has both had an impact on the world and been influenced by the world around it. This can happen at the parish level in many different ways, integrated throughout the various parish ministries and clearly as part of a dedicated ministry of spirituality as will be discussed further on. “Christian spirituality exists *in time*---in others words, it is always historical and always

contextual” (Sheldrake 2010, 20). It would be valuable for the Catholic faithful to understand about many “absolutes” that developed and eventually changed within the history of the faith and the Church.

People often can be seen to rest with an assumption that the Church like their God is immutable and not subject to change. It is hard to envision change or yourself as an agent of change with this stance. How more valuable it might be to know about the “process” of history and realize that they, individual Christian, are participants in this history, agents of growth and change, especially as it pertains to their faith and Church. Church historian Francine Cardman stated in a symposium on the history of Church ministry, that at every level of religious education it is “a crucial, barely started task, to understand that to teach the story of how this whole life of Christianity, of the Church, of the Christian faith, has unfolded in history is to make it more concrete, more real, more human, more like our life, more accessible to us, and more understandable and to demystify it” (Cardman 2004, 98). An improved understanding of the changing nature of the Church throughout history would lead to greater personal freedom, responsibility and accountability as concerns being church and being a Catholic Christian in the 21st century.

St. Albert the Great as a Parish: Now and Then

St. Albert the Great Roman Catholic Parish in Weymouth, Massachusetts, is a parish of the Archdiocese of Boston (the fourth largest archdiocese of the thirty-three archdioceses in the United States) and in many ways can be seen as a typical suburban parish of the Northeastern United States. The North/Northeast region of the United States continues to have the highest

concentration of Catholics in the U.S., although population trends suggest this will change in the next decades. St. Albert the Great is also representative of many post-1950 parishes (32% of all parishes) in the United States (CARA “*Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes*” 2011).

Weymouth, a small middle-class to blue-collar suburb, is located between two state capitals in the South Shore area of Massachusetts. The parish population is mainly of European descent-- Irish, Italian, French Canadian, German and Polish.

The Parish Reconfiguration Process

Genesis Story of St. Albert the Great

The history of St. Albert the Great Church, as well as the contemporary challenges it faces, has much in common with many of the parishes in the United States today, especially those in the Northwest and Midwest. St. Albert the Great was founded in 1950 in response to the growing Catholic population of the South Shore of Massachusetts. In 1950 there were already three parishes in Weymouth but the Boston archbishop, Cardinal Richard Cushing, created yet another parish to meet the needs of a growing Catholic population in what is known as the South Shore area. St. Albert the Great was configured out of portions of existing Catholic parishes that were experiencing overcrowding. This growth was also a reflection of larger social changes in transportation, employment and dispersion of urban populations to the suburbs in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States.¹² In 2012, St. Albert the Great in large part remains a typical U.S. parish and they face the opposite challenges from those they found in 1950. They

12. In the 2007 D’Antonio et. al., “*American Catholics Today*” study (page 59) the “inverted U shape” is used to explain fluctuations in the number of Catholics in the U.S. 1950 is considered the apex of this “U shape” while on either side of early 1900 and the early 21st century show there is a distinctive drop in number of Catholics.

are in a town that is “aging,” is losing population, lacks jobs and has too many Catholic Churches and not enough Catholics.

The Archdiocese of Boston in the early 21st century is going through a reconfiguration process demanded by current realities such as the declining number of Catholics, growing financial constraints, and the declining number of ordained priests along with an aging population of priests currently serving. St. Albert the Great is slated to become part of a greater South Shore collective of parishes and partner with another Weymouth parish, St. Francis. This reconfiguration time is very challenging for the Archdiocese and its parishes, as it is for the vast number of parishes in a similar process across the United States. St. Albert’s, where hospitality and welcome are seen as hallmarks of their parish spirituality, will be challenged to view what it means to be a parish “community” in a new way.¹³

Their genesis story connects St. Albert’s with the American Catholic tradition. The leadership role of the laity and the demands of a growing Catholic population for a church where they could be a community of the faithful and be known to each other, link St. Albert’s to an “American” Catholic tradition.

“American Traditional”: A Brief Look at the History of the U. S. Catholic Church

It was not the institutional Church of Rome that established the Catholic religion in North America, notes Jay P. Dolan and other noted historians of North American Catholicism. In colonial North America it was the people of faith, the laity, who came first. Their faith practice

13. This situation is an example where education in the history of the Catholic Church and an “ecclesiology of communion” would benefit parishioners and have an impact on their concerns about their future as a parish community.

carried from “home” was the originating fire and provided the impetus for the establishment of the Catholic religion in this “new world” of English and European colonies. This feature in the development of the Catholic Church in North America places North American Catholicism in close communion historically with the earliest churches of the New Testament, where the gathering of the faithful, shared belief in the Risen Christ, and the “breaking of the bread” brought “the church” into being. The “genesis story” of the Catholic Church in colonial North America has many similarities to the ecclesial genesis stories of the New Testament and highlights the importance of the local community of the gathered faithful as the local church or parish.

Likewise the story of the Catholic Church in the United States must be understood as a distinctively American story in that colonists and others had come to North America in search of religious, economic and political freedom. To secure this vision, they established a democratic and representative government by means of revolution, the War of Independence, against the oppressive authority of the British monarchy. The earliest settlers of North America in the 17th and 18th centuries and the constant waves of immigrants to follow brought their distinctive European Catholic faith with them to a new world largely colonized in the North, South and Midwest by Protestants. The Catholic Church started its life in North America as a minority church living in what was often seen as a Puritan theocracy.¹⁴ This desire to worship and replicate their personal and communal experience of church created the momentum that led to the development of the Catholic religion in the United States. It was only after this establishment of the “church of the faithful” that the institutional arm of the Church responded to the needs and

14. The exception, of course, was the founding of the colony of Maryland by Catholics where they enjoyed being part of a local Catholic majority.

supplications of the new immigrant population in North America and sent priests who would establish churches and build parishes (Dolan 1992, 116).

St. Albert the Great Church

Centuries later, history repeated itself. Once again people of faith gathered to become church in the small Massachusetts town of Weymouth. By the late 1940's and early 1950's, the Catholic faithful in Weymouth were already present in large and growing numbers. Another parish was needed to meet these peoples' needs and the institutional church responded in collaboration with the lay faithful.

In addition, as was often found throughout the history of the Catholic Church in North America, it was a core group of local Catholics in Weymouth and nearby, who came together to respond to the Archbishop's request for the founding of a new parish. So many Catholic parishes exist in the United States because of the efforts of "founding families" or "founding mothers/fathers." These "founding families" came together as "church" in 1950 in Weymouth, Massachusetts. Many of these "founding families" took second mortgages out on their homes to help fund the costs. The Boston Archdiocese acquired a parcel of land on a main route near the Hingham line. In 1955, almost five years later, St. Albert the Great was dedicated.

One of the founding families operated a bowling alley in town and donated this space for Sunday Mass. The "bowling alley" church was in place every Sunday throughout the years of construction. Worship space was created between alleys and then dismantled so that post-liturgical bowling could proceed. These facts are unique to St. Albert's but the existence of founding families, the raising of money by the faithful for a new bricks-and-mortar church, the

establishment of a temporary home in space made available to the community by community members, the centrality of a place for coming together for liturgy, can be seen as putting this 20th century parish in communion with the faithful of the 17th and 18th centuries of colonial North America and with the church of the New Testament.

St. Albert the Great is a Catholic parish embedded in a particular American society and culture yet also part of a greater Catholic tradition that has always strived to be universal in its theology and practice. The St. Albert the Great faith community lived through the changes of Vatican II. Many of the changes were somewhat jarring in their rapid departure from the past: liturgy in the vernacular; a new declaration that the people were the Church; that there the understanding that there was a “better” way to celebrate the Eucharist together; and that the gifts of the “laity” were needed and welcome in maintaining the faith and the parishes.

The life of the St. Albert the Great community. The parish of St. Albert the Great settled into its new church in 1955, welcoming new families and maintaining long-held Catholic traditions. After 1965 the new Vatican II sensibility established some new traditions while the community continued to worship together, celebrate the Sacraments, and listen even more closely to the social gospel of Jesus Christ. The parish grounded itself in programs of charitable outreach like its very active St. Vincent DePaul Society. St. Albert the Great continued to be a self-described blue-collar, middle- to low-income parish that watched the community around them change fairly rapidly throughout the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s.

North American Catholics in the 20th century were accustomed to belonging to a specific parish based on where they lived. Each parish had specific geographic boundaries devised by the Archdiocese. This standard shifted when, perhaps an effect of Vatican II, Catholics chose not to

attend their prescribed parish but another parish based on a range of reasons---Mass schedule, preferred religious education program, homilies, quickness of liturgy, greater sense of community.

The 50th Jubilee is an important marker in the life of the parish. As part of the celebration the parishioners raised money to put in stained glass windows throughout the church. Each window portray a different saint. It is my sense from working in the parish and knowing many of the people who were part of the parish at the 50th Anniversary, the selection of representative saints was very expressive of a parish spirituality (modern “saints” such as Teresa of Calcutta were represented even before their beatification.) These windows were a pictorial representation of an essential part of their faith, the “Communion of Saints.” The stained glass windows symbolize a sense of tradition, spirituality, rejuvenation and commitment as the parish enters the 21st century.

St. Albert the Great at the beginning of the new century. In January 2002 the *Boston Globe* newspaper published an article that rocked the Catholics of Boston, the United States and eventually the world. The newspaper exposed decades of sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests of the Archdiocese of Boston and a systematic cover-up of these crimes by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Boston. It is difficult to over-emphasize the impact of these revelations on the life of the Church. Parishioners of St. Albert’s were among the most active participants in the founding of Voice of the Faithful, a lay Catholic group that was formed in 2002 in response to the sexual-abuse revelations in Boston. This lay organization of self-described “faithful Catholics,” with its motto of “Keep the Faith, Change the Church,” quickly grew (within one

year) to an international organization of 30,000. St. Albert's in 2013 continues to host one of the most active chapters of Voice of the Faithful.¹⁵

Shattered by the ongoing clerical sexual abuse crisis and the resignation in disgrace of its Cardinal, Bernard Law, the Catholics of Boston were further shattered in May of 2004 when Archbishop Sean O'Malley (who succeeded Cardinal Law after his resignation in 2002) announced a massive reorganization of the Church in Boston that would include the closing of eighty-three parishes, one fifth of all the parishes in the Archdiocese. The implementation plan for the reconfiguration of parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston was first announced from the pulpit in February 2004. The local parishes in each town were told that they would be part of the process to decide which specific churches would be closed. The results of this deliberation were referred to the Archdiocese. The final results were announced in May 2004 after further deliberations at the highest levels. Certain churches would be "re-configured," closed, or merged with other parishes by September 2004. By 2003-04 a plan for the closure of a large number of churches and parishes was not unexpected. Catholics were aware for years of the pressures on the archdiocese--- too many parishes, too few priests, dire financial concerns (exacerbated by the need to pay out large monetary settlements to those abused by clergy), dwindling numbers of churchgoers, a shifting population of churchgoers from city to suburb, aging church buildings and expensive Catholic schools to maintain.

15. VOTF Mission Statement: To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. Three Goals: Support survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Support priests of integrity. Help shape structural change within the Church. See www.votf.org.

St. Albert's is slated for closure by the Archdiocese. The outcome of the process announced by Archbishop O'Malley (now Cardinal O'Malley) had enormous ramifications throughout the archdiocese and none more catastrophic than at St. Albert the Great. There was an immediate and strong negative reaction among Catholics throughout the Archdiocese (I can attest to this "strong negative reaction" as a member of the Archdiocese in 2004 and one of the founders of VOTF.). The archbishop promulgated specific criteria for determining which parishes would be slated for closure from within a given town-wide cluster. The four-parish cluster in Weymouth selected St. Albert's for closure. St. Albert the Great was especially stunned by its selection since parishioners felt their church clearly met all the requirements for a healthy, productive parish within its cluster while other parishes clearly did not. The church itself was in "pristine" physical condition and relatively young; the parish was financially solvent with no debt; there was 30% mass attendance (10% higher than the diocesan average); and they had only one priest, where all others in the cluster had two. St. Albert's by the Archdiocese own standards seemed a healthy and vibrant parish and yet they were slated for closing. The St. Albert's Parish Council, a lay advisory and leadership body in each Catholic parish, went into action to challenge the decision to close their parish. Their essential point was that the parish did not meet the Archdiocese's own criteria for closure, while other parishes in the cluster did. They were continually thwarted in their attempts to enter into dialogue with the Archdiocese. They were given a date when the parish doors would be locked and St. Albert the Great would cease to exist. This took place barely three years after the joyful celebration of the parish's 50th Jubilee, the proud acquisition of its beautiful stained glass windows that spoke to their Catholic devotion to the great lay and religious saints of their tradition and their sense of their parish as vibrant,

growing, economically robust and representative of all the very best of the Catholic faith at the beginning of the American 21st century.

St. Albert parishioners from this time will tell you that what they reacted to most strongly was the injustice of the situation. This shared sense of the injustice of the closure brought a diverse community even closer together. “I was never like this,” states one supporter of action against the closure. “I would never stand up to authority.” When asked where she found the power to resist the authority of the archdiocese she quickly stated, “It was the work of the Holy Spirit, the empowerment I felt from the preaching of Fr. Ron Coyne (pastor) and from the experience of standing together with so many other people in this community.”

A Faith Community Defies Its Bishop. The community came together for a last prayer service before the Archdiocese was scheduled to literally lock and bolt the church doors. They gathered in the face of virtual silence from the Archdiocese and with a strong continuing sense of the injustice of the situation. What happened appears to be unprecedented in the life of the Catholic Church in Boston and in the Catholic Church in the United States. After the prayer service it was suddenly suggested by lay parish leadership that the parishioners physically “occupy” the church, refuse to leave and promise to continue to “occupy” the church until they felt they had a genuine airing of their grievances with their Bishop. They wanted to be heard. After all, these were Vatican II Catholics who by the year 2004 embodied the ecclesiology that “we are the church.” What followed was a seven-month occupation of the physical church determined by a unanimous vote by all those attending the final prayer service. Parishioners recollect amazement at their own actions, as some parishioners recalled, turning into “feisty little old ladies.” They

underscored that their pastor was not the one to suggest this action either directly or by implication. The action was a result of their understanding of church and their role as laity, and their acceptance of their own authority to act on behalf of justice as a part of Christian discipleship. It must be noted that many people already held diminished respect for the authority of the Bishop and the institutional church following the clergy sexual abuse tragedy.

Parishioners continue to discuss the events of this period that has become known as “the vigil.” “Vigiling” came to describe the many other parishes that followed the lead of St. Albert the Great in 2004. A different kind of parish community resulted from “the vigil.” People who had been parishioners for years but only regularly attended one specific Sunday Mass got to meet, often for the first time, fellow parishioners from the 9, the 11, and the 5:30 Masses. The vigilers slept on the floor of their church, prayed, drank coffee, and sang hymns together. Lay led “communion services” were held regularly as were a variety of lay led prayer services. A still anonymous priest sympathetic to their cause and their desire for the Eucharist brought consecrated hosts to the church. Many who participated mention meeting new friends, becoming “activists” for the first time in their lives, participating in lay-led liturgies and prayer services, and building a new even more sustaining and Spirit-filled sense of community at St. Albert the Great. However, after the vigil a significant number of parishioners did not return. The impact on the parish’s sense of community was not all positive. One of the conditions of the agreement between the Parish Council and the Archdiocese for ending the Vigil and permanently re-opening the church was that Fr. Coyne would not be returned as pastor. Many felt this to be another injustice, and did not return to a Church that had not made Coyne’s re-instatement a

condition of ending the vigil. One current St. Albert's parishioner describes this as a "constant sorrow."

The 2004 attempt at reconfiguration of churches in the Boston Archdiocese did not meet with great success. And as the Archdiocese faces another attempt at "pastoral planning" in 2013 there is a lot to learn from what did and did not happen in 2004. The Catholic population had a very negative reaction to the entire process in 2004 even if their church/parish was not selected for closure. From the beginning of the reconfiguration process they heard from their Bishop that as Catholics they first and foremost belonged to a universal church. In a sense they were told that their allegiance to a particular parish was not "catholic" and was a misunderstanding of who they were as Catholics. The hierarchy was using a top-down ecclesiology as their argument for the closing of so many parishes. However, that was not the lived experience of these "people in the pews." Their experience of church was more specific, more particular. For them their parish was the entire Catholic Church, an ecclesiology of the particular church as put forth by Leonardo Boff. Their Catholic identity was tied to participation in parish worship, community and mission. This was perhaps the fatal flaw in the Archdiocese's thinking during this period. The hierarchy acted based on a dogmatic/creedal understanding of belief, while the people lived out a very different reality, the reality of the local/specific church embodying the totality of the universal church for them. Parishes in the Boston archdiocese in 2013, therefore, continue to be "in vigil" ten years after the original reconfiguration, officially going back and forth with Rome itself and raising versions of questions that have been debated for the entire history of the Church: What is "church"? Who has authority? What are the rights and responsibilities of the many local communities/parishes that make up "church"? These are important questions and are

a very good place for the Catholic community in the United States to be since the multiple challenges of “being church” in the U.S. in 21st century demand historical adaptation.

Parish Reconfiguration in 2012 Boston

In January 2012 the Archdiocese under the leadership of now Cardinal Sean O’Malley inaugurated a new attempt at a restructuring of the archdiocese. There were ongoing shifts in population, a lack of priests, a declining Catholic population in the local area, and a scarcity of economic resources to maintain a “status quo” church/parish configuration. So St. Albert the Great parish, a parish that survived the first attempt at “reconfiguration” in the Archdiocese of Boston, was called to be part of a second attempt by the Archdiocese to concretely address the needs of the Church. St. Albert the Great, because of its particular history, is well positioned to reflect on the nature of the Catholic parish in the 21st century and to add its voice to any discussion on adaptation and change. They had experienced the unique demands of this period as well as re-imagining what it means to be a Catholic parish going forward. What is essential? What can be adapted? What needs to improve? There are many challenges in this new process for the people of St. Albert the Great who as a community resisted what they felt were arbitrary demands from the Archdiocese during the last re-configuration process in 2004. Vestiges of anger and distrust still remain among the parishioners who were present during the Vigil period. However, there are many new parishioners who are not immersed in that experience and may bring a different experience of parish to the current discussion, while many others have changed their focus to the present and future. What is clear is that in an examination of what it means to be a Catholic parish in the 21st century the community, “the people in the pews,” matter in

profound ways. They bring a lived sense of the ever-present shifts going on in the world around them, an awareness of their properly evolving understanding of Catholicism and their own Catholic identity, and a unique, working vision of what a Catholic parish and Catholic Church should and can be.

Although these two attempts at reconfiguration were initiated within a brief ten-year period, those involved are very aware of the major changes that have come within that period. The “people in the pews” made their voices heard in a variety of ways and the Catholic leadership says it was listening. Because of this the reconfiguration effort seems to have evolved into a much more open and transparent process, grounded in the lived experience of the people in the parishes. In this second round, the Archdiocese planned for layer upon layer of listening sessions as it put forth the outlines of change.¹⁶ These are sessions where dialogue is encouraged and welcomed. Each parish community is called to reflect on the challenges faced by the larger Catholic community that is the Archdiocese of Boston and to add their voices. What the outcome will be is only conjecture, but what seems to have been accepted to a greater and lesser degree is that the reality of historical changes is recognized. It is also understood that this is a time for a new vision of Church in 21st century America beginning in the parish communities where the faith is lived out.

A 21st Century Perspective of What it Means to be a Catholic Parish

In many ways the beginning of the 21st century is documenting the history of the parish; the parish is part of an ancient religious tradition that is fully human in having to adapt to the

16. <http://www.disciplesinmission.com/the-plan/>, Accessed 4/28/2013.

realities of the world and to the realities of its own failings. Parishioners who live in a world of economic, social and personal vagaries are great candidates to understand the need for adaptability while at the same time holding fast to the core truths and practices of their faith. There is a growing understanding among the “people in the pews” that change and adaptation, even and especially in the Catholic Church, is an essential part of being in the world, an incarnational understanding. Before decisions are made, St. Albert’s in 2013 can and collectively should bring its personal and communal experience to the larger discussion of Catholic parish needs in the Archdiocese.

In this historical period of flux, redefinition and realignment within the Catholic Church in the United States, St. Albert the Great in Weymouth, Massachusetts underscores my thesis that increased attention to spiritual lay ministry and support for personal and communal spiritual growth in the parish that includes development of lay spiritual ministry is particularly relevant. This is the time to reassess what are considered essential ecclesial ministries in the Church. The entire notion of shared ministries is also very interesting and is in place in many dioceses across the nation. Shared ministries are a positive force, a collaborative sharing of resources and talent that can be seen as helping to configure the many into a felt-sense of one community. Are parish ministries and lay ecclesial ministers supporting the contemporary needs of parishioners? The multi-faceted need for major changes in parish life that confronts U.S. Catholicism provides an important opportunity to address this issue and focus on the spiritual needs of Catholics and the future of Catholicism.

CHAPTER THREE
LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

Introduction

Lay ecclesial ministry is a focus of this Project Thesis for two important reasons. First it is an important expression of lay vocation and therefore, lay spirituality (all aspects of spirituality will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4). Second, parish-based lay ministry is seen as a crucial element in successfully re-imagining the parish as a center of and for Catholic spirituality. A question to be answered is: Why is there not currently a dedicated parish-based lay ministry in spirituality recognized by the Church? These are the reasons why in this Project Thesis there is a discussion of current understandings about lay ministry, the nature of Christian ministry, the history of its development and a theology of ministry. Importantly, there is a discussion of the opportunities for future changes and growth in ministry inherent in a period of great transition.

I have discovered in my ministry of spiritual direction and in spirituality workshops I have led in a parish setting, Catholics find it difficult to recognize their personal spirituality, why that spirituality is “Catholic” and why their parish is and should be their “spiritual home.” “While a growing number of people are struggling to deal with many issues in their lives, as part of their overall desire to bring their lives into a unity around the convictions they hold, they find they do not have the structures available to them in the Church to support the tasks of personal conversion on the spiritual journey (Flannagan 2001, 23).

As will be discussed further, there has been an exponential growth in lay ecclesial ministry in the Catholic Church since Vatican II ¹and yet a parish-based lay ecclesial spiritual ministry has not emerged or developed as forcefully as other lay ministries such as religious education, parish administration, liturgical ministries and ministries of social justice and charity. Reasons vary but include, in my experience, the reluctance of lay Catholics to assume leadership roles that pertain to things “spiritual.” Spiritual matters considered appropriate only for ordained priests or other vowed celibate religious. This understanding, along with other questions concerning authority in the Church still linger and will be discussed more fully.

The Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has for decades focused on lay ministry and produced documents that strongly encourage the further development of lay ecclesial ministry. These documents began to enunciate “competencies” needed for lay ecclesial ministry, and acknowledged the need for discussion and development of lay ministerial identity in the life of the Church. The USCCB understands that the Church in its administration, worship and parish life cannot survive without lay vocations to ministry. Yet there is no clear call for the development of parish-based lay ecclesial ministry in the area of spirituality or acknowledgement that, as studies have shown, “meeting spiritual needs” is an issue that should concern them. What might be meant by “spiritual needs” will be discussed in Ch. 4.

Catholic/Christian theological and ecclesial tradition instructs that the parish or local church is the essential home of Christian spirituality yet a focus in the parish on the individual

1. “In the late 1990’s the number of lay ecclesial ministers surpassed the number of priests engaged in parish ministry” (Fox 2010, 198).

spiritual journey as well as on the spirituality embraced by the parish, is lacking within the Church.² Lay ministers are encouraged to address their own spirituality for the sake of their ministry and are often advised to have a Spiritual Director, although attention is not given to how these prospective ministers would receive such spiritual enrichment and support on the personal spiritual journey in the absence of a dedicated spiritual ministry in their parish.³ Actually, Catholics in search of guidance or support for their own spiritual journey traditionally have looked outside the parish. This can be seen as draining spiritual strength from the faith community especially in the form of possible ministry and leadership. Parishioners looking for spiritual enrichment for example seek out the college-sponsored lecture, the retreat center or nearby monastery, popular or traditional reading materials or online websites⁴ found in the hundreds (some excellent and mainstream, others peripheral and questionable), and traditional Catholic programs such as Cursillo or Marriage Encounter. This can be seen as reflecting a sense that parishioners do not expect to find this sort of spiritual nourishment in the parish, or feel that the parish is the proper setting for such spiritual inquiry.

A parish-based spiritual ministry faces important questions about what kind of lay spiritual ministry needs to be cultivated in the parish to meet unmet and often unrecognized needs. For example; how is the discussion about spirituality in the parish started? What advances in ministerial training are needed? How is lay spiritual leadership in the parish developed? How

2. "Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Parish Lay Ministry", Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, National Pastoral Life Center, 1999, begins a decades long study of these issues.

3. There will be a further discussion on what is meant by "spirituality" and how it differs from parish "faith formation."

4. All the cautionary notes concerning the reliability of the Internet in providing information amply apply to the area of spirituality and Catholic/Christian spirituality. An informed spiritual guide is needed, so to speak, to make sense of the offerings on the world-wide-web.

is this leadership supported and encouraged within current and future models of parish? If it is determined in the larger institutional Church that parish-based lay spiritual ministry is needed, what outcomes are anticipated, how do they speak to the essential relationship between personal and communal Catholic spirituality and how will appropriate leadership be put in place? These issues will be addressed further in Chapter 4, Developments in Spirituality and in Chapter 5, Towards a Parish-Based Spiritual Ministry.

The Role of the Second Vatican Council

An examination of the current state of the Catholic Church's understanding of lay ministry begins with the Second Vatican Council called into session by Pope John XXIII, October 11, 1962. The documents produced by this historic 21st Ecumenical Council mark an extraordinary shift in the Catholic Church's understanding of the "laity" and their role in the world and in the Church. The most important documents in terms of re-defining the "laity" in modern times are as follows:

Lumen Gentium (LG), The Dogmatic Constitution on The Church

Sacrosanctum concilium (SC), The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Gaudium and spes (GS), The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

Apostolicam acuositatem (AA), Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, is the primary document concerning the Church as the People of God, the baptized who as disciples and partakers in Christ's nature as prophet, priest and king, form the Church (LG 31). It is interesting to note that

the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is entitled “The Mystery of the Church” the second chapter, “The People of God,” the third chapter, “The Church is Hierarchical,” and the fourth chapter, “The Laity.” The common dignity and nature of the People of God, their common discipleship and common baptism, is noted prior to a discussion of the hierarchical nature of the Church. First, the Council documents declare that there is no distinction in discipleship, a discipleship that is at the very heart of what it means to be Christian, and yet then introduces distinctions such as ordained/non-ordained, clerical/lay because these distinctions are part of a strong tradition of dualism; this “non-clarity” of meaning gains a further foothold within the Council and post-conciliar documents

In the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* (AA), the “laity’s special and indispensable role in the mission of the Church” is elaborated. It states that “indeed, the Church can never be without the lay apostolate; it is something that derives from the layman’s very vocation as a Christian (AA 1)” (Flannery 2004, 766). Here the role of the laity, the lay apostolate, is described in terms of “vocation.” This use of the language of vocation is a very important aspect in the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church in the United States and throughout the world. Catholics who serve as ministers define their involvement in terms of a personal “call” and “vocation.” In the 2005 study 73% of all lay ministers “believe they are pursuing a lifetime of service in the Church” and 54.2% said, “The factor that most influenced them to pursue a lifetime in church ministry is a ‘call from God’” (DeLambo 2005, 71-72).

The decrees of the Second Vatican Council dramatically reoriented the Church in terms of a theology of discipleship and ministry. However, long before this council, theologians, lay groups and the laity in general were active in calling for reforms concerning the place and role of

the laity in the Church. Vatican II did not initiate the discussion in modern times, but “rather gave an official endorsement of a movement which was already in progress” (Osborne 1993, 118). An example of such a movement prior to Vatican II is the Catholic Action movement that first emerged in Western Europe and then in the United States in the 1930’s, 1940’s and 1950’s. It was a “lay movement committed to lay participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy in order to revitalize the Christian roots of Western civilization” (Gaillardetz 2006, 52). At the same time in the United States the popular Christian Family movement was active in efforts to reinvigorate Catholic family life. Furthermore, prior to Vatican II “theologians like Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Jean Danielou, Gerard Philips, and Karl Rahner had all been exploring the role of the laity in their writings” (Gaillardetz 2006, 53).

Unity Through Baptism

A theology of the laity expounded by the Council is rooted in the sacrament of baptism, a theology of charism and the Council’s declaration of a universal “call to holiness” as articulated in *Lumen Gentium*. “Therefore, all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness....This holiness of the Church is constantly shown forth in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful....”(LG 39) (Flannery 2004, 396). This understanding leads to a new paradigm of inclusion for the laity in every aspect of the life of the Church. Continued advancements based on this understanding are currently being made. It is essential on the part of the laity and the institutional Church to understand from this that lay participation should not be limited artificially: All gifts must be recognized for the good of the whole.

Lumen Gentium and the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* are cited most often as sources of a new understanding of the laity. However, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is also an important document in the Council's modern understanding of the laity. Although this decree dealt with the reform of the Sacred Liturgy, its "focus on the whole worship assembly" ...underscores... "that our *primary identity* [italics added] as Christians is not as laity or clerics, but as members of the baptized called to participate in the life and worship of the Church" (Gaillardetz 2010, 54).

The laity was indeed invited to a more active participation in the liturgical life of the church and this, I assert, continues to have a major impact on their spirituality. This was the first post-Vatican II door opened on behalf of a more active participation of the laity in the life of the Church with their involvement seen as genuine ministry. The Council's call to ensure lay participation in the Eucharist celebration, the defining sacramental rite of the entire Church, helped create a new understanding of ministry among the laity and moved the laity to an even more intimate relationship with the Eucharist and their worship community. As noted, the Eucharist and the parish faith community are important sources of Catholic spirituality and identity. "The liturgy offers a variety of resources for the spiritual formation of Catholics---a blueprint for human relationships both within and outside the community of faith"(White 2013, 44). This blueprint also includes the shared meal, reconciliation, shared gifts, voices raised in communion, and the gathering of equals.

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum concilium* (SC) states that it is the duty of pastors "to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they were doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it" (SC) (Flannery 2004, 7). This is a dramatic change from

the pre-Vatican II reality where too often the faithful were passive participants in a liturgy that had been primarily, even exclusively, the action and domain of the ordained priest. These changes in public worship--- the laity as participants not observers in the central act of Christian worship---effect major developments in spirituality.

As a result of the Council, and the particular changes introduced by the *Constitution on the Sacred Laity*, lay Catholics were invited to become acolytes, lectors/readers, commentators, and Eucharistic Ministers, roles previously reserved for the ordained. Ministries pertaining to the celebration of the Eucharist, and the catechetical ministry were the first to be developed and recognized as official or approved ministries following Vatican II. (However it should be noted that in conciliar documents promulgated after Vatican II distinctions were made about which liturgical ministries are the realms of the ordained and which are appropriate for the non-ordained. Further distinctions were made in terms of gender.) Liturgical reforms fostered a new understanding among Catholics of their relationship to the Church. The movement of the people from the pews to the altar and ambo (lectern, pulpit) I believe had a great impact on their spirituality, namely on more intimately involving them in sacred spaces and sacred rites. Their “spiritual” worlds expanded as they accepted these new ministerial roles. Participation in ministry continues to have a great impact on Catholic spirituality, both the spirituality of those that minister and the spirituality of the community or individual to whom they minister.

The laity had been told that their gifts were particularly suited to the secular world. But after Vatican II you now have women and men serving at the great prayer of the Church, the Eucharist. There is no longer a railing dividing the people from the altar, and lay men and women as Eucharistic Ministers now bring the body and blood of Jesus Christ from the altar to

members of their community, their sisters and brothers in Christ. Their “spirituality” their lived response to their baptismal call now includes their own ministry to their faith community.

The Laity and the Call to Holiness

The Council named the faithful as the “People of God,” “*Christifideles*” or “the priesthood of all believers” and defined the Church as a communion of the People of God. The Council declared a universal Call to Holiness and identified the Holy Spirit as the animating force of the Church in the modern world. In *Lumen Gentium* the laity is understood as “the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God), and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world” (LG 31) (Flannery 2004, 388). The same document expands the way in which the “office of Christ” is shared: “It is not only through the sacraments and ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his [sic] virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills, 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” (LG 12) (Flannery 2004, 363). The Spirit graces the faithful with “gifts” and “special graces” or “charisms.” This is the source of all ministry, the action of the Spirit in support of the whole mission of the Church through the individual members of the faithful in community.

The Council documents make frequent reference to St. Paul’s use of the body metaphor in describing the Church. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the

members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many” (1 Cor. 12-14). Inferred from this, of course, is that the good of the whole is dependent on the essential participation of baptized individuals in building up and maintaining the whole. In terms of the laity’s ministerial vocation in building up the Church and participation in the salvific work of Christ the Council documents further decreed that “the way be clear for them (laity) to share diligently in the salvific work of the Church according to their ability and the needs of the times (LG 33) (Flannery 2004, 391). This statement speaks to the Church’s (all the baptized, “lay” and “clerical”) need to act on behalf of the laity to make the “way clear” for their participation, recognition of past impediments to lay participation. Of particular interest in this statement is the reference to the “needs of the times,” an assent to the role of contemporary history and culture.

Expansion of Lay Ministry Since Vatican II

As Catholics began to embrace a new self-understanding as the People of God and a Vatican II ecclesiology holding that *in communio* the people were the Church, lay participation in all aspects of Church life steadily expanded. “In the years that followed the Council, ministry and ministries emerged “rapidly and variously” (O’Meara 2010, 67). This participation by lay ministers and those they served, created a changing sense of connection with people in the parish, with the sacramental life of the parish and their perception of parish as a place where the work of the Spirit was richly experienced. The number of people at work in parishes and dioceses increased dramatically. “The very model of the parish changed from one of priests in

the sanctuary and sisters in schools” (O’Meara 2010, 67). There are important language choices made here by Thomas F. O’Meara, O.P., a well-regarded Catholic theologian whose scholarship has focused on the theology of ministry. He states “ministry and ministries emerged.” This speaks to the reality that there was not a grand plan for the development of ecclesial ministries in the Church, as was also true in the Early Church. These lay ecclesial ministries emerged in the decades following the Second Vatican Council because of dramatic changes in the overall status of the laity, an altered ecclesiology and attention directed towards an understanding of the work of the Spirit in ordinary lives. The extraordinary rate of growth and the expansion of the kinds of ministries developed and held by the lay faithful since the Council are acknowledged by most observers. It is a hallmark of the modern Catholic Church and seen as a valuable legacy of Vatican II. Again, the phenomenon that so many lay ministers cite a sense of “call” speaks to ministry as being a spiritual response.

Types of lay parish ministry can be extremely varied, depending on the “gifts” of those who are available to serve (importantly if the ministerial gifts are not present in a particular community the ministry itself is often just omitted.) Quite clearly from most studies, Pastoral Associate (or Parish Life Coordinator) and Director of Religious Education (pastoral generalists) are the two LEMs most often found in parishes today. Following these two are Liturgists, Music Ministers, Youth Ministers and “other” (DeLambo 2005, 89-9).

The growth in lay ministry and the call for expanded lay ministry are in large part a response to the dramatic decline in the number of ordained priests in the United States in the late 20th and early 21st century. Many acknowledge that the lack of priests has heightened the practical need for an increase in lay ecclesial ministry; others, like O’Meara, warn against seeing

this as a simple-cause-and effect. Such a focus would obscure the larger reality that the lay faithful are re-assuming responsibilities for the building up of the Church based on a fuller understanding of their own baptism, the genesis of “church” in the first centuries and the role of the Church acting as the Body of Christ in fulfilling the mission of Christ.⁵

In many respects, the Council’s call for a re-invigorated “lay apostolate” and the growth in lay ministry were really a return to the earliest understanding of the discipleship of believers found in Scripture and in the earliest centuries of the Church. Pope John XXIII spoke of the Council as a “new Pentecost.” That biblical image is very revealing. It helps shape an understanding of the Council that grounded its renewal in the earliest understandings of ministry, as Christ’s gift of the Spirit at Pentecost to all believers.

“Co-Workers in the Vineyard”

In December 2005, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) issued its most recent and comprehensive statement concerning lay ministry in the U.S. Catholic Church, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. The document states: “ We intend *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* to be a common frame of reference for ensuring that the development of lay ecclesial ministry continues in ways that are faithful to the Church’s theological and doctrinal tradition and that respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations” (USCCB, 2005,6). *Co-Workers* builds

5. Others note that the tremendous growth in lay ministry has actually lessened the impact of the “priest shortage.” In the Long Island seminary that serves the combined dioceses of Rockville Centre and Brooklyn, two of the country’s largest dioceses, the seminary had a combined total of fewer than 40 seminarians in the 2003-2004 academic year,. At the same seminary, over 200 laywomen and men were studying for degrees in theology and ministry. This situation repeats itself throughout the United States and is not typical. In 1969 this Long Island seminary had over 240 men preparing for the priesthood (Himes, 2005, 82).

on previous documents concerning developments in lay ministry by the USCCB. These are *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity, 1970* and *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium, 1995*.⁶

In the "Introduction" to *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*⁷ there is the interesting development that "lay ministry" and "lay ecclesial ministry" are established as distinct terms. "Lay ministry" is cited as the work to which all the baptized are called in support of the mission of Jesus Christ. The sacrament of baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit are cited as foundation and authority for the "vocation" of the lay faithful. The bishops saw most of the laity as working out their lay vocation in the "secular realm," as put forth by the Second Vatican Council. (A fuller discussion of Vatican II and lay ministry will follow). "Lay ecclesial ministry" is defined in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* as the much smaller group of laity:

[The laity in ecclesial ministry] undertake a wide variety of roles in Church ministries. Many of these roles presume a significant degree of preparation, formation and professional competence. They require authorization of the hierarchy in order for the person to serve publically in the local church. They entrust to laity responsibilities for leadership in particular areas of ministry and thereby draw certain lay persons into a close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests and deacons (USCCB, 2005, 5).

Clearly, with this definition of lay ecclesial ministry, the USCCB is moving towards the further codification and institutionalization of Church-based lay ministry. Lay ecclesial ministry

6. These USCCB documents are grounded in Vatican documents on the laity, especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam actuositatem* (documents of the Second Vatican Council); *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*, 1997 interdicasterial *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Mystery of the Priest*, and *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II's 1988 encyclical.

(LEM) is delineated as “authorized” by the hierarchy, “entrusted” with responsibilities, and “drawn” into mutual collaboration with the existing pastoral ministry of the ordained/clerical⁷. Additionally the bishops note in this 2005 document that these ministries demand a “significant degree of preparation, formation, and professional competence.” This is a noteworthy post-Vatican II movement toward the achievement of professional status for lay ministry within the Church yet also a strong declaration of the derivative nature of ministerial authority as opposed to an understanding of the vocation of all the baptized. This is a distinctive movement on the part of the USCCB that both expands (in terms of formation) and narrows (in terms of authority) the understanding of ministry from the Vatican II decrees concerning the apostolate of the lay faithful. However, the American bishops in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, are quick to point out: “‘Lay ecclesial ministry’ is not itself a specific position title. We do not use the term in order to establish a new rank or order among the laity. Rather, we use the terminology as adjective to identify a developing and growing reality, to describe more fully and to seek a deeper understanding of it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit“(USCCB, 2005, 11).

Writing about *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, theologian Richard R. Gaillardetz stated: “A solid case can be made that *Co-Workers* is the most mature and coherent ecclesiastical document ever produced on a theology of ministry.... The significance of *Co-Workers* lies not in its theological originality but in its status as a tentative but genuine Episcopal reception of a theology of ministry already operative in the life of the U.S. Church”(Gaillardetz, 2010, 21 and 29). However, others are less enthusiastic about the Church’s stance concerning lay ministry, finding that not enough is being done. Thomas F. O’Meara, a leading contemporary theologian

7. “By divine institution, there are...in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons” (Canon Law 207,1). (1983 Code of Canon Law)

writing about the theology of ministry, feels that there is a view in the institutional Church of lay ministry as secondary to the superior ordained ministry, and too often those who find themselves “called” to ministry are left on their own to pursue formation, not assisted sufficiently by Church leadership (O’Meara 2010, 60). (These issues will be addressed in greater detail below.) The larger point is that there are differing views on contemporary lay ecclesial ministry, on the progress that has been made and on the needs going forward. These concerns have a direct bearing on the questions being dealt with in this Thesis concerning the viability and sustainability of new ecclesial ministries especially in the area of spirituality.

Current Status of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The USCCB uses the terms “new realities” and “explosion” to name the phenomenal growth and place of lay ministry in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. The lay faithful since Vatican II, newly aware of themselves as the “People of God” called to holiness and responsible for building up the Church in the modern world, responded in overwhelming numbers to the personal sense of “call” and “vocation” that led them to ministerial service in their Church.

Lay ecclesial ministers (LEMs), a title approved by the USCCB in 1997, are defined by the Bishops as those lay people of the Catholic Church who work at least twenty-hours per week in paid positions in parishes. (This is the definition most commonly used in studies by the USCCB and most research groups. Note that those who are unsalaried are not included in this definition and therefore most studies include only ancillary information on these “volunteers.”

This definition is a change from Vatican II in that “lay ecclesial ministry” is seen as distinct from the discipleship of all the baptized.

A 2011 CARA (Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate, Georgetown University) survey showed that there are 37,929 LEMs working in parishes in the United States (data gathered from all American Catholic dioceses). Eighty-six percent are lay and 14% non-ordained, vowed religious. Eighty percent of the LEMs are female, 20% are male. Fifty-six percent of these lay ecclesial ministers are between the ages of 50 and 69. These statistics give a broad overview of the current state of lay ecclesial ministry in the U.S. Catholic Church indicating for one thing that the population of ministers is older and female. What is of particular interest, however, is the rate of growth of lay ministry since Vatican II.⁸

The Church is fortunate to have a three-part study of lay ministry conducted for the Committee on the Laity of the USCCB by the National Pastoral Life Center and funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. in 1992, 1999, and 2005. The call for this study was initiated by the USCCB (then called National Conference of Catholic Bishops, NCCB) in 1988. This was an important attempt to understand the phenomenon of lay ministry since Vatican II, where lay people were being hired in large numbers in parishes to pastoral positions previously held only by ordained priests or vowed religious. “The first report...contained valuable information on what factors were fostering the growing use of...pastoral ministers, what obstacles were limiting this development, and what conditions were either helpful or counterproductive for the good of parish ministry and of the parish ministers themselves” (DeLambo 2005, 13).

8. For the purpose of this Project Thesis the most current statistics are obtained from *The Changing Face of the U.S. Catholic Parish, 2011*, a study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) of Georgetown University as part of “*Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership*,” an ongoing project jointly sponsored by five national ministry organizations and funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The 1997 follow-up study, *Parishes and Parish Ministers*, increased the focus of the study to include a “profile of parish life.” The number of lay ministers increased by 35% since the 1990 study and in 1997 the number of lay ministers at work in parishes outstripped the number of priests in parish ministry, a very significant development. Perhaps most important, this second study “indicated that the practice of pastoral ministry that led to engaging more and more laypeople in parish ministry was outstripping the theology and church policy regarding lay ministers”(DeLambo 2005,15). Future needs were identified. The attention of the institutional Church was directed to those areas.

The 2005 NPLC *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership* reported that the major trends in parish life were 1) the declining number of priests (the 1990 Official Catholic Directory lists 34,230 diocesan priests and 18,305 priests from religious orders: in 2005 the numbers decreased to 28,967 diocesan priests and 14,337 from religious orders); 2) the fact that there are fewer parishes but more Catholics;⁹ and 3) changing patterns in parish registrations and Mass attendance (DeLambo 2005, 34). “Parishes are getting larger while smaller percentages of parishioners are participating in the Eucharist on a given Sunday. Consequently, parishes need good structures for organizing their ministries to serve a larger community of faith” (Murnion and DeLambo 1999, 20). The 2005 study reported that two-thirds of all parishes (66%) have paid lay ministers working at least twenty hours a week, up from 54% in 1990 and 60% in 1997 (DeLambo 2005,19).

9. Parish reconfiguration and closings occur mainly in the Northeast and Midwest at the same time that there is an increase in the number of Catholics, specifically Latino/a and Hispanic Catholics in Southern and Western archdioceses. In 2005 there was a 3% drop in the number of parishes nationally and a 16% increase in the Catholic population.

The many studies and reports about “the phenomenon” of lay ecclesial ministry are a response to the reality of the ongoing development and practice of lay ministry. These studies are often an effort to discover and delineate the existing nature and scope of modern lay ministry using social science research methodology. Social science research has played a pivotal role in helping the Church in the United States towards an important self-understanding especially with regard to lay ministry. In the forward to the 2005 National Pastoral Life study, Eugene Lauer, NPLC Director, said of lay ministry in 2005 that it was probably very beneficial that the practice of lay ministry in the real world of the Church developed before the “official” theology and subsequent codification by the institutional Church were developed (DeLambro, 2005, 15). This is another acknowledgment of the Spirit-led progression of twentieth-century lay ministry stemming from the faithful’s understanding of discipleship and their obligation to work towards the building up the reign of God. “The Spirit seems to be intent upon retaining the primal Pentecostal ecclesiology where all the baptized are called to ministry” (O’Meara 2010, 59).

Funding by national unaffiliated foundations, especially the Pew Charitable Trust and the Lilly Foundation Inc., has had a profound impact on the entire discussion and development of ministry within the Catholic Church. Needs that developed out of the practice of ministry led to the development of professional organizations and associations which in turn led to professional research in the field of lay ministry within the Catholic Church. Organizations such as the Pew Charitable Trust and the Lilly Foundation provided crucial leadership. The USCCB itself came to rely on independent social science research to further understand the phenomenon of lay ecclesial ministry and indeed eventually sponsored such research and incorporated the research into its own documents such as *Co-workers in the Vineyard*. Social science research by

independent agencies such as the National Pastoral Life Center; the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA); and the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project (sponsored jointly by the National Association for Lay Leadership, the Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development, the National Association of Church Personnel, the National Association of Diaconate Directors, the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association and the National Federation of Priests Councils) is part of a burgeoning collection of research done in the last part of the 20th century and continuing into the 21st century that specifically addresses lay ecclesial ministry in the U.S. Catholic Church. The research needed to support the development of a new dedicated lay ministry of spirituality is already in place.

Current Issues that Affect Ministry

Since the 1960's most lay ministerial development was based on the individual Catholic's acceptance of his/her own authority, often in response to a closely felt "call from God" to enter into ministry at the parish level ¹⁰ (DeLambo 2005, 74). However, there have been developments that move authority for lay ministry back to a more institutionalized, hierarchical approach and this has widespread ramifications for the future of lay ministry (USCCB, "Co-workers in the Vineyard 2005," 11).

An authoritarian and hierarchical model of Church, even though greatly "reformed" by Vatican II, is still operative within the Church. This "top-down" ecclesiology has an effect on an individual's understanding of their Christian discipleship and spirituality. A communitarian model of Church engendered in *Lumen Gentium* and other Council documents led to a revitalized

10. A "response to God's call" is listed by 69.3 percent of ministers as their reason for pursuing church ministry (DeLambo 2005, 74).

notion of laity and the unity and dignity of all the baptized. One commentators notion, confirmed in my own experience, is that the equality and unity of all the baptized is a “fundamental fact that has been as hard for lay people to appropriate, as it has been for many clergy to give it a real, rather than notional, assent, and act accordingly “(Molloy 2001, 111) The lay/clerical dualism that lingers and is advanced within the Church (e.g. the notion found in “Co-workers in the Vineyard” that lay ministers “participate” in the ministry of the ordained), erodes the sense of the unity of the baptized and their call to holiness, which I assert in turn diminishes lay vocations especially in the area of ministry and the prospect of parish-based spiritual ministries. This is why attention to and focus on the teachings of Vatican II and their implementation continues to be crucial for the renewal and further advancement of lay ministry. The Council’s teachings helped lead to a new ministerial activism by the laity in support of the Church. Contemporary research identifies “the question of authorization for ministry... as one of the principal areas in need of study. Certainly this is a theological and canonical question, but it also concerns the relational life of the community and its life as a system that is presently in disequilibrium” (Fox 2010, 200).

Historical Perspectives on Ministry

The development of ministry in the Christian Church is a history of how Spirit-led discipleship and community were the foundational principles for all of ministry. Discipleship and community are at the heart of Christian spirituality and so it can be said that there is an intrinsic link between spirituality, discipleship and ministry. Ministry as a response to the needs of the faithful in community emerged from the first gatherings of the *ekklesia*. History is often a record

of the impact of social, political and cultural developments on the Church and, necessarily, on the faithful. The history of ministry, ministry's "genesis" story, points to the establishment of foundational principles and underscores the universal call to ministry in discipleship.

Flexibility and responsiveness to change and the continuing emergence of the baptized as the true keepers of the faith are "traditions" within the Church. Too often the People of God, without an understanding of early church history, incorrectly feel they are acting outside the tradition when the very opposite is true. This lack of understanding of the "laity's" role in the history of the church can be seen to hamper needed progress. Contemporary Church historian Francine Cardman states her first presupposition: "It is necessary to understand the social and political contexts of the early Church to understand the way in which it came to organize or order its life and mission. Without such historic groundings, our thought and practice of Church and ministry are bound to be historically inadequate and *pastorally ineffective*" [italics added] (Cardman, 13).

Since Vatican II there has been an effort to recognize the genuine, scripturally based tradition of ministry in the Church going back to the church of the New Testament. Again, an understanding of history helps dispel attitudes that ministry, as part of lived discipleship is a job that is somehow authoritatively bestowed upon the laity, the faithful. Vatican II's call to expand the role of Scripture in the life of the Church creates a new focus on Scripture for all Catholics. The pre-Vatican II population was not systematically exposed to Scripture other than through the liturgy and the proclamation of parts of the Gospels, part of the Epistles, and parts of Hebrew scripture. In a sense, it wasn't until after Vatican II that Catholics began to be more fully introduced to their own Christian history and their own narrative as the People of God through

fuller attention Scripture itself.¹¹ History shows us, and much of this earliest history comes from sacred Scripture, that ministry emerged, was called forth, before the emergence of church leadership---presbyter, deacon, bishop. This knowledge correctly informs the laity of their proper place within the Church. An understanding of this piece of scripturally based history would counteract the “waiting to be asked” attitude that prevails in too many parishes and undercuts any clerical assertion that a call to ministry is about sharing in the priesthood of the ordained.

“History assists us in understanding the universality, normalcy, and fullness of a baptismal ministry that has become lay ecclesial ministry” (O’Meara, 55). What is important to take away from a history of ministry that begins with the Gospels is that all ministry begins with discipleship, the act of following Jesus Christ in the world. This knowledge of discipleship as foundational is critical to an understanding of the genuine nature of Christian spirituality.

Second, it is enriching for the laity to have knowledge of the many lay led reform movements throughout the history of the church; to know that these reform movements resulted in major changes and developments that today are accepted as part of the “approved” understandings of our church and faith; the desire for reform or change, in a sense, is part of Christian discipleship. Such reform often called for a re-focus on or a return to the crucial, basic, understanding of “Church” and Christian discipleship. An example would be the ascetic movement of the third and fourth centuries as it responded to the perceived political and secular corruption of Christianity found in the worldly capital of Alexandria. Many of those who

11. In his encyclopedic work on ministry, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, noted theologian Kenan B. Osborn states, “Gospel discipleship should be maintained as the fundamental hermeneutic in which and through which all mission and ministry in the church would be evaluated” (Osborn, 1993, 594).

advocated for a “return to the sources” even this early in the development of Christianity withdrew physically to the desert for an ascetic life of solitude and scripture. One was St. Anthony of Egypt, 251-356 ACE, who is credited with the founding of monasticism. Such reform movements throughout the history of the Church are often seen as Spirit-led “correctives.” Today, in another time of transition, there is an opportunity and need to discern the movement of the same Spirit in the life of the local church as parish. History can be a teacher and companion.

History shows us that developments in ministry are both practical and responsive. When there are needs to be met within the Church, in terms of leadership, spirituality and pastoral care, the appropriate ministries seem to emerge to meet those needs. An informed understanding of this ecclesial legacy would assist and encourage the continuation of a ministerial tradition ready to meet modern demands such as are addressed in this Project Thesis.

Some historians note that the contemporary discussion of the development of ministries has been limited because of its focus on the lay/clerical distinction as the defining issue. Cardman states: “I am convinced that current ecclesiological debates focus entirely too much on matters of juridical prerogatives, exclusionary practices, and categoric, even ontological, distinctions. Focusing on such questions tends to subsume all actions and reflection about ministry into narrow categories that do not work for thinking theologically about ministry, ecclesiology and the future we are called to be as Church” (Cardman 2005, 13). A focus on lay ministry has become a discussion of “who does what.” The notion that “giving” power or authority to the laity is a diminution of clerical authority and prestige is very disruptive to a proper, advantageous discussion about the future development of lay ministry. This notion of the

laity's derived authority can be seen as deeply entrenched in the Church but a solid return to the understanding of baptism as the essential "authority" in terms of ministry can be a corrective to the lay/clergy dualism. There is evidence of a divide among priests, those who support a "servant model" of priesthood and are eager to work with the laity, and those who embrace a "cultic model" of priesthood and do not see themselves as committed to working with the laity. Additionally, those who embrace the "cultic model" are the younger generation of priests, the priests who will be entering parish ministry in the coming decades and years (D'Antonio et. al. 2007, 111).

We know that the terms "lay" and "ordained" did not exist at the time of the Gospels. There was only discipleship.¹² The twelve who Jesus gathered around him were given special mandates in the tradition of designated leadership that most often reflected the political and social tradition of the culture. However, all who followed Christ, who accepted his call to build up the reign of God in the world, were the earliest "church." To believe and act on that belief were essential to membership in the "*ekklesia*." Baptism was established as an individual's formal initiation into Christ's mission in communion with all the other baptized. Through baptism the faithful participate in Christ's very nature as "priest, prophet and king" (LG 10-13). Vatican II, in calling for a return to the "sources" of our faith, was calling the Church back to these earliest, foundational, understandings.

As previously addressed, a knowledge of the history of the Church or, as Roger Haight specifies, "the Church in history," and the history of Christian spirituality could be and should be an ongoing focus of parish life. Catholics interested in "faith formation" and a spirituality of

12. "By divine institution, there are...in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons" (Canon Law 207,1). (1983 Code of Canon Law)

discipleship could benefit from a grounding in the history of their brothers and sisters in faith in the New Testament and throughout the history of Christianity. “History assists us in understanding the universality, normalcy, and fullness of a baptismal ministry that has become lay ecclesial ministry” (O’Meara 2005, 55). What is important to take away from a history of ministry that begins with the Gospels is that all ministry starts with discipleship, the act of following Jesus Christ in the world. This knowledge of discipleship is foundational to an understanding of the genuine nature of Christian spirituality. Reform movements throughout the history of the Church can be seen as Spirit-led “correctives.” Today, in another time of transition, there is an opportunity and need to discern the movement of the same Spirit in the life of the local church as parish.

Discipleship and Ministry

A New Testament Theology of Ministry

“The New Testament overwhelmingly speaks about discipleship. In the gospels and Acts, in the Johannine writings, in the Pauline corpus, in the additional epistolary material, we are presented again and again and again with the meaning of discipleship. Only here and there are we presented with small windows on church leadership” (Osborne 2003, 109). The followers of Christ were asked to participate in the work of building up the Father’s reign by their preaching, exorcism and healing. These can be said to be the first three ministries of Christianity (Osiek 2005, 1). Further development of what it meant to be a follower of Christ (a Christian) is found in the earliest writings of the Church, the letters of Paul. Paul’s letters are the primary source for understanding the earliest development of traditions of ministry and a “theology” that

supports these understandings. According to Paul, believers are meant to welcome each other, to care for each other, and to provide practical hospitality. This is the origin of the discipleship of pastoral care (Osiek 2005, 5). Certain privileged members of the earliest communities opened their homes to others so that believers could meet, support each other in their faith, and share a meal “in remembrance” of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Paul stresses that the particular and already diverse needs of the community were to be met by the community. If a person had a special skill or position, they needed to use that gift in support of the community and the mission. The needs of the community are the responsibility of all; this is the essential meaning of being in communion, *koinonia*. “Discipleship, as found in the New Testament, is the point of departure for an investigation of the lay person in the church, for only if Christian lay men and women exist in a community that fosters such discipleship do we even have an *ekklesia*. With Jesus, of course, there is no church; but without disciples of this same Jesus, we also have no church” (Osborne 2003, 110).

This understanding has important implications for those drawn to a contemporary ministry of spirituality. The needs of the community were and are to be met by those *within* the community. A ministry of spirituality is linked to both pastoral care and discipleship and should be discerned and developed by those in the community who feel “called” and have the needed experience and gifts. It is only later in the first century that ministry becomes differentiated and a two-branch form of ministry appeared, the ministry of leadership and the ministry of pastoral care (Osiek 2005, 5).¹³

13. *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church; Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*, edited by Richard W. Miller II is the collection of papers presented by leading Church historians and theologians in a 2004 symposium sponsored by the Catholic Community Foundation of Kansas City in collaboration with the

Leadership Develops

Some commentators and members of the Church tend to see developments in ministry in jurisdictional terms of lay versus clergy. “Who does what,” dependent on some sort of false ontological difference, is too often the defining issue in any discussion of ministry. This creates a false dichotomy in terms of a New Testament understanding of ministry that is grounded in the unity of baptism, the universal call to holiness and discipleship. Unity in the Spirit for all the baptized that leads to a wealth of gifts and talents given through the Spirit in support of the community is found in the letters of Paul and the documents of Vatican II. “Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-8.) Osiek, writes of the history of the Church and specifically the “organic” sense of Spirit-driven development of ministries, which nurtures a freedom “to evolve new forms, new understandings, new interpretations and new ways of meeting real needs” (Osiek 2003, 12).

The Church and Reform: The Laity Act

Early during the second millennium of the Church’s life major reforms took place that would influence the next one thousand years of the Church’s development. “This movement began in a very quiet way, with laymen and laywomen gathering in their homes to read and pray over certain bible passages” (Osborne 2010, 34). Kenan B. Osborne, a leading contemporary theologian in the area of ministry, recognized the beginnings of this medieval reform as inspired

National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM.) It is an outstandingly rich collection of current thinking by some of the most well-known and well-regarded experts in the field.

by the “felt need” of laymen and women, looking for guidance toward a deeper spirituality and not finding it. It is relevant to note that today’s need for spiritual ministry in the local Church is not new. It is a renewal. One has to consider again, the movement of the Spirit in and among the community of the faithful, as the most powerful force in the positive development of the Church. Discernment of this movement of the Spirit is a critical task of the community. From the history of church we can say we have support for the development of a lay ministry of spirituality that supports individual “felt need” for spiritual growth and encouragement.

Since there were no printed Bibles readily available or widespread literacy at the beginning of the second millenium, lay people were involved in gatherings that reflected on a well-known theme from the Christian scriptures. Today these would be called “faith sharing groups” (Osborne 2010, 34). In terms of ministerial development, the lay faithful acted to make up for deficiencies. In these instances, they provided spiritual support or scriptural instruction to those who desired it and could not find it within existing church structures or programs. Again, Catholics today would benefit from understanding the history of spirituality and spiritual ministry in the Church. These are important precedents to reassure the faithful of their call to spiritual leadership.

The reform movement also affected European monasticism and saw the establishment of reform orders of monasteries. “The theology of Church found in these lay movements centered the Church on spiritual rather than a political or institutional dimension, which is why these movements continued to have influence” (Osborne 2010, 35). Osborne underscores his belief in the centrality of lay spirituality and lay spiritual leadership in Catholicism.

These lay movements threatened the Church hierarchy. In the early eleventh century there began a persistent feeling among Church hierarchy that “lay” meant those opposed to the “rightful” authority of the Church leadership. “On the one hand, there was throughout the second millennium a growing lay leadership within the Roman Catholic Church; on the other hand, there was a counter-effort during each century to curtail the influence of lay leadership” (Osborne 2010, 33). As noted, this sentiment might be making inroads in contemporary thinking, visible in the unwillingness to pursue collaborative leadership with the laity.

Well documented by generations of Church theologians and historians is that Martin Luther’s intention was the reform of the Catholic Church, a return to a close reading of Scripture and an emphasis on personal responsibility, the “priesthood of all believers,” and *not* to start a religion in opposition to Catholicism. In many respects what Martin Luther and other “protesters” did was to provide leadership for a Church of the faithful who felt abandoned by the Church of papal excess and secular intrigues. Luther and others addressed what were the concerns of the wider community of believers.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENTS IN SPIRITUALITY

Christian spirituality is the daily, communal, lived expression of one's ultimate beliefs, characterized by openness to the self-transcending love of God, self, neighbor, and the world through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

---Elizabeth Dreyer, "Christian Spirituality,"
The Harper/Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism.

Contemporary Christian Spirituality

In any contemporary discussion of Catholic spirituality it might be best to start with the lack of consensus both in the secular and religious worlds about what is meant by "spirituality." Indeed, the contemporary understanding of the word "spirituality" is that it is not necessarily referential to faith in the Holy Spirit but rather refers to the need to cultivate the "human spirit." "The contemporary usage of the word 'spirituality' is often vague and difficult to define precisely because it is increasingly detached from religious beliefs and specifically from its Christian origins" (Sheldrake 2010, 2). In 20th and 21st century America, the statement that "I am very spiritual but not religious" is often heard. The belief has developed that one does not have to be associated with a recognized, organized religion and its values to consider one as "spiritual." One's spirituality can be entirely self-defined and self-understood or can be a 'spiritual' connection grounded in beliefs shared by a group or population. The 'spirit' that is proclaimed to be at the center of one's contemporary spirituality is not necessarily the Spirit of the Risen Christ, the Holy Spirit of the triune God.

An understanding of contemporary spirituality is that "men and women are more aware of being on some sort of spiritual path or journey that involves opening oneself to what is beyond

the self, to an absolutely other transcendent value, to what for some is the Holy Otherness of God” (Gratton 1998, 17). The origin of the word “spiritual”, however, “is based on the earliest Christian understanding that discipleship meant a life animated by the spirit of the risen Christ., For the purpose of this study: “Christian spirituality is the lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit” (Cunningham and Egan 1996,7). This leaves open a discussion of the role of religion in Christian spirituality, whether religion necessarily mediates this encounter or if this “lived encounter” is a singular, personal spiritual event grounded in Christian beliefs. “The origins of the English word *spirituality* lie in the Latin noun *spiritualitas* associated with the adjective *spiritualis* (spiritual). These derive from the Greek *pneuma*, spirit, and the adjective *pneumatikos* as they appear in Paul’s letters in the New Testament. It is important to note that ‘spirit’ and ‘spiritual’ are not the opposite of ‘physical’ or ‘material’...but of ‘flesh’ ...in the sense of everything contrary to the Spirit of God. “A ‘spiritual person’ (see 1 Cor. 2:14-15) was simply someone within whom the Spirit of God dwelt or who lived under the influence of the Spirit of God” (Sheldrake 2010, 7).

A person who is a member of a distinct Church or religion is likely assumed to have an active spiritual life, although individual members might have difficulty explaining the nature of this spirituality. Indeed, this religious person might answer that his/her “spirituality” is expressed through a variety of practices that are not directly grounded in their religion e.g., Yoga, meditation, love of the outdoors, volunteerism, 12-step programs, and/or their careers or jobs. There seems to be a spirituality for every social movement that appears, such as the environmental and the feminist movements. These examples and many, many more are enumerated in the comprehensive *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, a volume in the series

entitled *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* published by The Crossroad Publishing Company.

This thesis works towards making a case for the development of a parish-based lay ministry of spirituality. It will be suggested from my experience as a spiritual director and involvement in spiritual ministry in the parish that many Catholics do not have an ability to name their own spirituality or articulate how this spirituality is grounded in their Catholic Christian beliefs. Add to this the contemporary reality that there is a pervasive understanding in the popular culture that “spirituality” can be individual, not communal, and not necessarily grounded in any religion or tradition. Additionally, one can also find in the popular culture a belief that religion and tradition are the enemies of what one might consider genuine spirituality.

Thomas Groome, theologian and director of the Institute of Pastoral Ministry and Religious Education at Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry, states in his book *“What Makes Us Catholic”*: “The truth is that many people find institutional religion oppressive where as they experience spirituality as liberating. ... People can encounter the Church as stymieing their spiritual lives, as controlling rather than facilitating their access to God” (Groome 2003, 271). Another point of view held by many is that organized religion with its well-established tradition and practices is in fact non-supportive or even detrimental to an individual’s spirituality and therefore must be rejected or avoided. “While a growing number of people [Christians/Catholics] are struggling to deal with many issues in their lives, as part of their overall desire to bring their lives into a unity around the convictions they hold, they find they do not have the structures available to them in the Church to support the tasks of personal conversion on the spiritual journey” (Flannagan 2001, 23). These facts have severe consequences

for the place of organized religion in American life and in the spiritual life of individuals. Attention must be paid to this phenomenon of desire for the spiritual manifested throughout contemporary society in the U.S. “The turn to spirituality informs contemporary religious consciousness as the turn to the subject marked Enlightenment thought” (Lesniak 2005, 8).

For all those interested in the health of the Catholic Church in the 21st century the fact that such a high percentage of Catholics cite “lack of support for spiritual needs” as a reason to leave the faith cannot be ignored.¹ Rejecting organized religion is often a response to a perceived lack of authentic and honest spirituality *within* the religious institution. However, this kind of rejection might leave people untethered from Catholicism or Christianity and from the Christian spiritual tradition. An ecclesial focus on opportunities for genuine spiritual discernment within the parish community should be a future goal. Additionally, Catholic individuals lack of education in their own rich Christian spiritual tradition is unfortunate, spiritually depleting, and can be seen as missing in parish life and learning. John Westerhoff, religious education theorist, states, “education encourages adult spirituality, for it fosters both knowledge of the community’s tradition and skills for a healthy critique of that tradition”(Horan 2013, 257.) Certainly the Church requires an educated, spiritually adult community of the faithful to provide the leadership and critical vision needed for the Church in the 21st century.

Carolyn Gratton, an important contemporary writer on spirituality, states: “... even great numbers of Roman Catholics, by and large traditional in their beliefs and practice have consciously or unconsciously interwoven a variety of non-traditional religious and spiritual

1. In the *Faith in Flux* study it was also found that “the most common reason for leaving Catholicism cited by former Catholics who became Protestant is that their spiritual needs were not being met (71%).” Those interested in Catholic spirituality need to find out what Protestant denominations are doing that attracts spiritually disaffected Catholics.

understandings into their everyday worship” (Gratton 1998, 17). This points to the power of alternative spiritual practices and spiritualities that permeate the popular culture. It has been my experience that many Catholic faithful are able to adapt their spirituality incorporating other traditions and secular spiritualities to meet personal spiritual needs and understandings without knowing or being enriched by the fullness of their own tradition. (For example, the spiritual practice of meditation for many people is solely associated with eastern religions. Contemporary Catholics because of celebrity practitioners might be more familiar with Jewish mysticism, *Kabbala*, than Christian mysticism.) Perhaps the 43% found in the Pew study were unable to adapt their spirituality within the practice of Catholicism or had the sense that this kind of personal spiritual adaptation or exploration was not appropriate or permitted within the Catholic Church. Here is a good reason to explore how the Catholic parish of the 21st century can help individuals ground themselves in the Church’s rich communal spirituality while also being open to adapting non-Christian spiritual practices to support this Christian spirituality.

Additionally, it would be important for contemporary Catholics to understand more fully the many Christian spiritual practices that too often are left unexamined as sources of contemporary spirituality for example *Lectio Divina*, spiritual companionship, dancing, journaling, or spiritual direction. An initial question to ask, given the findings in the Pew Forum study, might be, How do we understand what is meant by “spiritual needs?” Chances are that the responders in the Pew study meant vastly different things. However, it can be inferred from their answers that the Catholic respondents *expected* their spiritual needs would or should be met within membership and participation in the Catholic Church at the parish or local church level. This is a very interesting inference with potential for insights beyond the question of Catholic

identity. What should be the role of the Catholic parish in meeting spiritual needs? Further question might be; to what degree does the institutional Church understand the “spiritual” longings of its members? How might the Church identify these longings and also help shape spiritual desires?

The Pew Forum on *Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of 2011* shows that Catholics leave because of “dissatisfaction with how the church deals with spiritual needs,” and yet the American Council of Catholic Bishops has not focused on this finding. “Any other institution that lost one-third of its members would want to know why. But the U.S. bishops have never devoted any time at their national meetings to discussing the exodus”” states Thomas Reese, S.J., commenting on the Pew Forum findings in the *National Catholic Reporter*, April 11, 2011. (Reese 2011, 23). Those who are leaving the Church for Protestant churches are more interested in spiritual nourishment than doctrinal issues, as stated by Thomas Reese, S.J., commenting on the Pew Forum findings in the *National Catholic Reporter*, April 11, 2011. “The Catholic Church is hemorrhaging members.” Reese adds that “thankfully” the Pew Forum in this 2011 report has focused attention on this important issue for the Catholic Church.

An American Social and Cultural Context

As mentioned previously, the issue of contemporary Catholic spirituality must be addressed giving fuller focus to the context of American culture and the place of the spiritual and spirituality in U.S. society at large. This is especially important because one’s spirituality must be lived out in the real and complex world. “Christian spirituality is concerned not so much with the doctrines of Christianity as with the ways those teachings shape us as individuals who are

part of the Christian community who live in the larger world” (Cunningham and Eagan 1996, 7).² Contemporary Catholics, lay, religious and ordained, must deal with how the “emerging cultural tide of being ‘spiritual but not religious’ and believing in non-church based forms of spirituality portend for the future of American Catholicism,” states Michelle Dillon in an article entitled “Old and New Spirituality Resources” in the *National Catholic Reporter*, October 24, 2011. Commentators agree that in the 20th century in the United States and in many areas around the world, there was a general resurgence of interest in all things “spiritual.” One has only to look at a bookstore selection to note the changes. In the last decades of the 20th century and into the 21st century what were a few slim volumes on a hard-to-find bookstore backroom shelf have now become hundreds of volumes in a well-situated expansive “Spirituality” section. It is very informative to note the titles included in this “Spirituality” section. There are spiritual classics from all the world religions, manuals on prayer and other spiritual practices, classics of “New Age” spirituality popular since the 1970’s, Shamanism, witchcraft, the occult, self-help books from a wide variety of psychology practitioners, environmental and ecological-based spiritualities and many, many more. What does it mean to be “spiritual?” These book titles communicate that there is a very broad understanding of what it might mean to be spiritual by offering the interested individual the subjective ability to “choose” or “craft” spirituality.³ Clearly, it can be said that there is the trend toward finding a comfortable spirituality that addresses one’s personal needs and preferences, a consumerism model, and need not be anchored

2. Cunningham and Egan provide an excellent Appendix: Definitions/Descriptions of Christian Spirituality in their book *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition* (See bibliography.)

3. Phyllis A. Tickle’s *Re-discovering the Sacred; Spirituality in America*, 1995, is an examination of contemporary American spirituality through the lens of an examination of the published literature of spirituality in the late 20th century and early 21st century that has become exceedingly popular and culturally influential. It is an excellent, perceptive and insightful popular treatment of the subject.

to a religion or faith-based spirituality “The nineteenth-century individualism, which flourished in the United States, weakened the sense of community which is essential to an integrated sense of community, which in turn is essential to an integrated faith. The consumerist mentality of the 20th century threatened to turn religion into a commodity promising instant fulfillment” (Bacik 2002, 13). It will be discussed further that one of the hallmarks of Christian discipleship, and therefore spirituality, is that it entails making difficult choices based on Gospel values that are not always comfortable or culturally popular choices; the support of a faith community of like-minded believers is a great aid in making and supporting these choices.

A facile understanding among many people equates spiritual with religious. This would mean that spirituality occurs within the confines of organized religion and participation in the rites and practices of a given religion leads to being a “spiritual” person. This does not seem to include a more basic understanding of spirituality as action in the world, our lives lived, a personal sense of discipleship in relationship to belief in Jesus Christ. What is missing in a simplistic notion of religion and spirituality is an understanding of the individual’s personal role in fulfilling Christ’s call to build up the reign of God in the world grounded in membership and participation in a community of faith. An individual’s fulfillment of their call is grounded in a communal spirituality that supports and in turn is supported by a collective of individual responses to Christ’s call. As stated in Chapter 2 in the discussion of parish, Christian spirituality has been grounded in discipleship and communion since the earliest gatherings of church as recorded in the New Testament. Therefore, Catholic spirituality cannot truly be divorced from membership in the local church community/parish. Rather, the opposite is true; Catholic spirituality originated in community and should be sustained by membership in that community.

The departure of so many former Catholics who left the Church because “spiritual needs” were not being met is critical. If their needs are not being met at the parish level, they should be. Can it be said that there is a true communion if these needs are left unaddressed and communion is therefore disrupted?

Personal and Communal Spirituality

There are those who count themselves as spiritual persons and feel that their “spirituality” is self-defined and self-actualized. This understanding frees them from the perceived constraints of a formalized, religion-based spirituality. Contemporary Christian spirituality, however, depends on both the communal aspect of a religion-based spirituality and the personal aspect of the individual spiritual journey. It is essential to understand that the two, personal and communal spirituality, are inter-related at the most intimate level. For Catholics, it is the Eucharist that is both source and ultimate expression of this spiritual understanding. A communal meal feeds the individual and forms the many into the one Body of Christ. For example, growth in personal relationship with God through prayerful spiritual discernment and spiritual practices can lead an individual to become more fully a part of the parish community because they better understand their relationship to the Eucharist, the people gathered, and the nature of true Christian discipleship. Understanding the spirituality of hospitality that is a hallmark of your parish, perhaps opens you up to be a more welcoming person to every person you meet in life. “Although all humans are spiritual in the basic anthropological sense, and all christian [sic] spiritualities share a deep commonality, each individual develops her or his spirituality in a unique and personal way, analogously to the way individuals develop their common humanity

into a unique personality” (Schneiders 2003, 166). Ongoing participation in the community of faith with the celebration of the Eucharist is the foundational commonality of Catholic/Christian spirituality. The community is foundational; the individual is changed by his or her entry into such a community” (Osborne 2007, 15). The understanding of the centrality of communal participation in the Eucharist for Catholic spirituality exists in an uncomfortable relationship with the knowledge that many find the experience of the religion to limit their ability for spiritual self-actualization:

Christianity has not always done itself any favors in terms of making its rich and varied spiritual traditions accessible to its own adherents let alone to unaligned spiritual seekers ... it’s not only the uncommitted spiritual seekers but equally many members of the Christian Church themselves who are dissatisfied with Christianity’s apparent overconcentration on hierarchy, institutional structures, buildings, rationalist styles of religious teaching, and a preoccupation with moralistic approaches to religion (Sheldrake 2010, 2).

It is part of my thesis that with an improved orientation in Christian and Catholic Churches (more fully addressed in Chapter 5) to further accommodate the contemporary spiritual seeker within the primary, defining “communal” spirituality of church, specifically the parish and sacraments in Catholicism, many benefits would appear. Primarily this would include improved orientation in Catholic parishes towards spirituality, acknowledging the crucial interaction of communal and personal spirituality. This would be a positive step toward renewal in Catholic Church in the U.S. Some of those who left the Church because spiritual needs were not being met among other reasons might give the local parish another look. Looking to the future, the Catholic parish might become recognized as that place that rigorously supports spiritual investigation and is part of a profound spiritual tradition that finds a worthy

contemporary expression in the parish. The faithful could be helped to see even more clearly that their everyday lives reflect the way they respond to the movement of the Spirit in their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. This is the source of their spirituality.

The too often neglected realm of the spirituality of work could find a focus in the parish faith community. This would be an opportunity to help individuals see their work, their employment, their professions, as the areas where their spirituality is and can be richly lived out. In the U.S. this would address the societal and cultural reality that work and employment or unemployment are major factors in contemporary life. All matters related to work in the 21st century can be seen to replace or be equally as important as the family as the major focus of people's time, attention and concern. This is especially pertinent since families demand dual incomes, and women are a permanent part of the workforce outside of the home.⁴ Attention to the spirituality of work in the parish would be bringing into focus contemporary needs. If the home is indeed the "domestic church" then the reality that woman now spend the major part of their time away from the home has a major impact on spirituality. These contemporary Christian seekers need help in discernment and this can best happen in the spiritual community that is the parish, as I assert, with the encouragement and support of a parish-based spiritual ministry among other important parish ministries. All parish ministries work together to faithfully educate and sustain the Christian community of disciples and pilgrims that is the parish or local church.

4. See Wolfeich, Claire T. *Navigating New Terrain: Work and Women's Spiritual Lives*. (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002) for a full treatment of this subject.

Parish-based investigation of the history of spirituality would help the faithful better understand the spiritual tradition to which they belong and they might see opportunities for expanding and exploring their own spirituality or be able to recognize their personal spiritual history.⁵ Most important, the parish as a community of believers who share a spiritual tradition could provide a spiritual community of support, encouragement and accompaniment to individual members.

Meaning of Community and Spirituality in a Catholic Context

Inherent in the understanding of Eucharistic spirituality is the knowledge that community is essential to this spirituality. Jesus Christ first told his followers to gather, to come together in order to be about the work of building up the reign of God in the world. Before the meal people must first gather; to be Christian is to create and belong to a faith-filled community with Christ at the center in the Eucharist. It is in community that the word is proclaimed and the bread is broken and the wine blessed. “There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that being a Christian was purely an individual calling” (Cunningham and Eagan 1996, 10). Christians are sent out from this Eucharistic community to the world as Christian disciples in and of the world. Christians respect and honor the individual, created in the image of God, but since the very earliest days have understood that Christ is only fully known through participation in community and in the Eucharist. It is the community and Eucharist that prepares one for discipleship, the vocation of every Christian. Kenan B. Osborne, OFM, in his book *Community, Eucharist and Spirituality*, puts forward a theme that states “without viable and Gospel Christian community,

5. The development of parish-based programs of spirituality such as a program of Spiritual Autobiography that was designed for St. Albert the Great Parish will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

neither the celebration of Mass nor a Eucharistic spirituality has any meaning whatsoever” (Osborne 2007, 14). This clearly addresses the issue of Catholic spirituality not linked to active participation in a Catholic parish. How is Christian community achieved without Eucharist at the center?

“Christian spirituality presupposed a way of life and not an abstract philosophy or code of beliefs. To be a Christian is to live a certain way” (Cunningham and Eagan 1996, 9). Whereas too often spirituality is misunderstood solely as a kind of interiority, the baptismal call asks Christians to act and live in a certain concrete way in the world. Spirituality is very much about the acknowledgement and maintenance of an interior life grounded in desire for relationship with God. It is this interior life that defines and fuels discipleship, action in the world, and an individual’s way of life. It is the Eucharistic liturgy that sends Catholics into the world in order to change it. To *practice* Christian/Catholic spirituality is to be an agent of change because of faith in Christ, a faith that begins in community, is maintained in community and is also about personal relationship with God. That is what is meant by Christian discipleship. In the 21st century this should be the measure of the “Catholicity” of a parish, how that parish views its call to discipleship both communally and individually. “A parish’s spirituality has to do with who the people of the parish think they are and what they think their collective life as church community is all about” (Henderson, 1994, 113).

There needs to be discernment around what it truly means to be a gospel community, if the discussion about Catholic/Christian spirituality is to mature. Currently, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity at a time of reconfiguration of parishes and expanding Hispanic/Latino/a Catholic populations. Community is about more than membership in a group

where people have a long personal history of being known and therefore feel optimally comfortable. Do second generation Irish-Americans from the East Coast of the United States from a parish with empty pews belong to the same community as their Hispanic or Latino/a brothers and sisters in a sprawling parish in Texas or New Mexico? So, what has “being part of a community,” meant? In most Catholic parishes being a community still means selecting a parish and Mass where you personally feel most comfortable. This means “belonging” to the group attending the 9 a.m. Mass where there is no singing or expectation of a long homily. It could mean “belonging” to the 5 p.m. community where everyone sings out and they also exchange a warm and personal “sign of peace.” One’s community could be the Family Liturgy where things can be a bit noisy and unsettled because it is geared to families with young children. In any case, the selected community reflects one’s sensibility. The people “belong” to the same larger parish community but are not really a community in many senses. A genuine Christian community is about far more than group identification; it is the work of keeping Christ and gospel discipleship as its center. The 21st century offers a challenge and opportunity to explore new meanings for what it means to be a parish community. Different times demand different approaches while maintaining core beliefs about the interaction of community, Eucharist and discipleship. The configurations of community may necessarily change to accommodate current realities. This is part of the history of the local church and a contemporary process of discernment can assist in moving the Church toward a more fully realized theology of parish.

Ethnic and national parishes are part of the history of the Church in the United States. In one city in the 20th century you could find a Spanish Mass, a Polish Mass, an Italian Mass and

more all in one community. This was an accommodation to the numbers of Catholic immigrants to the U.S. and respect for their language and culture. However, these “national” churches might have undercut a genuine understanding of Christian church community that needs to be reasserted because of the contemporary mobility of all ethnic and “national” groups in the United States. Christian community exists so that the work of building up the reign of God in the world can be supported, individually and collectively. The only like-mindedness that creates genuine Christian community is an acknowledgement of Christ and the gospels as the center and foundation of a life well lived. That is what creates the community and it is not without challenges. Feelings of discomfort can be profound, for example, when leaving a well-known parish to form a collaborative with other parishes, or moving to a new neighborhood where the culture is Hispanic and not European, and vice versa. It is therefore essential to instill the most profound understandings of what it means to be “in communion” and to challenge Catholics to refocus on opportunities for their lay leadership in guiding the Church to a new expression of community.

A discussion of Catholic community today and Catholic spirituality also has to acknowledge other strong impediments to a sense of community:

The handling of the scandal of clerical sexual abuse by the hierarchy; the more recent hurts in the area of ecumenism; the scandal caused by the perceived, and often very real, harsh treatment of people in second unions after marriage breakdown; gay and lesbian Christians treated as objects of pastoral concern, rather than subjects, active in and for the church; the refusal of further public discussion on the question of women’s ordination: these are some of the factors that make the possibility of communion within the hierarchical Church very difficult for many people. The problems are not limited to the relationship between clergy and laity. Within the laity too are many articulate groups who loudly profess polemical views on particular

issues, and whether it is the intolerance of fundamentalists or the illiberality of liberals, the challenge to be the communion we say we are is ever present (Molloy 2001, 113).

All these things disrupt the community that is at the heart of Catholic identity and spirituality.

The Eucharist and Community and Spirituality

“What is the core of your spirituality?” “The Eucharist.” Over and over again contemporary Catholics name the Eucharist as the core of their Catholic identity and the heart of their spirituality.⁶ It is the celebration of the Eucharist that informs them, feeds them and sends them forth as faith-filled disciples of Christ. One cannot separate the Eucharist meal from the act of gathering nor the act of gathering from the Eucharist meal. I think back to an image of myself walking into St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City where the walls of the enormous nave are lined with ornate and elaborate individual altars, unlike the much simpler church I attended as my home parish. One could walk into the cathedral at any given time and any number of priest, would be “saying Mass” all by themselves at these side altars and there would be no one else in attendance. I distinctly remember thinking how odd that was, that something very important was missing, the people.⁷

It was Jesus himself who began the “tradition” of gathering his disciples for a meal around the “domestic table” i.e. the table in the home where meals were served. From the very earliest days the meal and the gathering of disciples are so intimately linked that they are part of one act (Foley 2008, 42). This continues to this day. The Catholic Church, unlike many other

6. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of 2011*

7. Circa 1960’s.

Christian churches, continues to have the Eucharist meal as the center of every liturgy, it continues to be a defining aspect of the religion.

Invariably, in my experience, the reason a Church or a parish is viewed positively or negatively has to do first with pastoral leadership, and closely connected to this, the celebration of the Mass. Since Vatican II, with the people more intimately involved in the Eucharistic celebration, attention is paid by the faithful to the quality of the Word proclaimed, the presence or absence of music as integral, the homily that is revelatory or not, and the quality of their welcome at the table. It seems to follow that a Eucharistic celebration that is not a true Christ-centered genuine Spirit-filled celebration of the Word of God and the Lord's Supper but rather rote and dull, will not fulfill spiritual needs for long. Therefore for many Catholics if the Eucharist is not celebrated with a sense, acknowledged or unacknowledged, of disciples gathered around the home table to share a meal before dispersing to go out and serve the Lord, there can be a sense of spiritual malaise and disappointment. I suggest that anything that regularly detracts from the faithful's experience of parish as genuine community must be subject to change since the experience of community is so completely linked to the Eucharist and the meaning of church.⁸ The Eucharist is the spiritual center of Catholicism and finds its expression only with the people gathered and these faithful gather in parishes and churches all over the world.

A Historical Perspective

The church and the Eucharist simply and profoundly have their roots in the life of Jesus and his disciples and friends. Jesus models the meal as central to the gathering....even when

8. A parish's "spirituality of hospitality" would underscore this understanding.

thousands gathered he felt obligated to make sure there was a meal served...the loaves and the fishes. Jesus, his disciples and friends, shared a meal gathered around the table in someone's home or in some other public building. This was the *ekklesia*, the people gathered. Only eventually, in the 3rd century does history show that the word *ekklesia* to refer to the building in which the people gather for the Eucharist.

In broad terms, dating from the post-Reformation period of the 16th century and the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the Mass and the Eucharist had been the work of the priest. At the altar with his back to the people, the priest was isolated physically and theologically from the faithful. The people of God who established the "church" in their gathering to break bread, who shared their faith in the Risen Christ and accepted the demands of discipleship, were left for centuries as observers, not participants, in the Eucharistic celebration. They were physically removed from the action on the altar by the very architecture of church buildings and left unable to understand Latin, the official language of the Mass and the priestly caste. The people of God were in a sense "uninvited" by their bishops to share the consecrated body and blood, the meal their ancestors in faith had baked and broken as they gathered around a simple, communal table during the first centuries after Christ's death. The faithful became observers of a rite that belonged to the ordained priesthood. They were there because of obligation. The faithful had been told by their bishops that to miss Sunday Mass was a mortal sin, placing their very souls in danger. This is some of the theology and dictates that flowed from the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century.

If the Eucharist is the center of both communal and personal Catholic spirituality then the people's experience of the liturgy should be of paramount importance to priests, ministers,

bishops and all overseers of the Catholic faith. Indeed for St. Paul, in the very first extant writings about the Eucharist in Scripture, 1 Corinthians, “the spiritual health of the community is the *sine qua non* foundation for any Eucharistic celebration” (Osborne 2007, 7). From the very beginning it was understood that any breaches in the community affected the community’s ability to celebrate the Eucharist and to be centered in Jesus Christ. With Vatican II and the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (SC) changes were made in the liturgy, changes that moved the celebration of the Eucharist from a Tridentine (pertaining to the Council of Trent) model in place since the 16th century to a new model of Church that acknowledged the unity of all the people of God, ordained and non-ordained, through their common baptism and the centrality of the community gathered. The Council called for changes that would reflect this new understanding of the priesthood of all the baptized, and a return—*ressourcement*—to the earliest understanding of the Eucharist as first and foremost a communion of the People of God. Participation in the Eucharist should be “a lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit” (Cunningham and Eagan 1996, 7). Any barriers to this “lived encounter” should be removed. Certainly the centuries old Tridentine model of passive observance of the priest’s solitary action does not inspire this personal or communal encounter. Genuine encounter with Jesus Christ through this communal “work” or “liturgy” prepares each person for participation in the world as a faith-filled disciple. As stated previously, spirituality in its most elemental understanding is a living out of one’s faith in the world and in the whole of one’s life.

Post-Vatican II and the Eucharist

There has been an erosion of the original intent of the Council fathers in several post-conciliar documents; the institutional Church has altered the laity's ministerial participation in the Eucharistic celebration. Seemingly simple things such as the Eucharistic Minister's function to help prepare the altar/table for the consecration have been changed. No longer can the Eucharistic Minister carry the empty vessels, wine and water to the altar. This function is returned to the priest. With the acceptance in 2012 of the New Roman Missal, the humble and ordinary "cup" that Jesus raised at the Last Supper is now referred to in the liturgy as a "chalice," a reversion to the language of Empire and the clerical elite. These erosions are very important to a discussion of parish, parish spirituality and personal spirituality because they have an impact on the People of God's self-understanding as Eucharistic people. These are subtle returns to a more "priest-centered" understanding of Eucharistic participation, a return to a more Tridentine "cultic" view of priesthood rather than the Vatican II focus on the unity of all the people of God. Ordination is raised up and the meaning of common baptism diluted. This diminishes the Vatican II expression of the universal Call to Holiness and the priesthood of all believers.

Eucharistic Devotions

In the past decade there has been an increase, supported by the institutional Church, in the attention given to traditional pieties that include adoration of the Eucharist, an adoration that takes place outside of the Mass and does not include participation in the Eucharist celebration itself. Periods for prayerful adoration are provided while the consecrated host (bread) is housed in a display receptacle called a "monstrance." A para-liturgical rite like Benediction is another

centuries old devotion that provides an opportunity to adore/pray before the Eucharist outside of the Mass. Originally these Eucharistic devotions met a particular need beginning in the 12th century. The people's access to the Eucharist in the churches and cathedrals was limited. Yet their desire for closeness to the consecrated bread itself remained great. Benediction, Adoration, among a variety of others, emerged as devotional opportunities. This "devotionalism" continued for centuries. Devotionalism, a form of popular religion or of personal piety, reached its apex in the U.S. during the 19th century coinciding with the great influx of European immigration.

What place does Eucharistic devotionalism have within a theology of communion and public worship centered on the table/altar, the breaking of the bread, the partaking of Christ's very body and blood? This issue is being raised here because Eucharistic devotions are important to the spiritual lives of many Catholics and need to be understood and respected. Spiritual ministry in the 21st century might call for the introduction of classic spiritual practices and a new integration of devotional practices into a larger parish-based spirituality grounded in the Eucharistic celebration as well as the community and ministerial life of the parish. This would be one of the many challenges for parish-based lay spiritual ministries.

Post-Vatican II saw these Eucharistic devotions and the devotionalism of the 19th and early 20th century fall out of favor in large part because of the Council's call for the renewal of the liturgy with increased lay participation. With the growing popularity today of Eucharistic devotions one has to question what is happening to Vatican II reforms concerning the liturgy and the participation of the People of God in the Eucharist. This is important to this Thesis because any diminishment of the laity's participation in the Eucharist or the availability of the Mass has been describe as having serious consequences for Catholic spirituality.

The history of the Eucharistic devotions that are re-emerging in popularity perhaps are instructive about the future centrality and availability of the Eucharist for the People of God in this period of transition. For the most part the practices of “adoration” developed following the Council of Trent when the Eucharist grew to be seen solely as an action of the priest. As stated previously, the faithful became observers of the Eucharistic celebration, not participants. They couldn’t understand Latin (the language of the Roman Empire) and often were so far removed physically from the altar there was no chance to see the consecration (the reason for the practice of the chiming of bells to indicate the consecration was taking place). For this reason, among others, the people developed a need to at least physically see and pray before the Eucharist. Adoration of the Eucharist in a small side chapel or in a procession through the streets of the town allowed the people closeness to the Eucharist that they did not experience at Mass. Also, prayers developed that would be said in local languages, adding a sense of participation and intimacy. The People of God’s desire for the Eucharist was the force that developed these para-liturgical events. Does the return to favor of these Eucharistic devotions coincide with the people’s insecurity about the future of parish life and the availability to them of the Eucharist? If the people of God are denied access to the Eucharist perhaps because of the lack of ordained clergy the very fabric of Catholicism as described throughout this Thesis is jeopardized. The people, as history has shown, will create new paths to the Eucharist.

Change and Transition

The Catholic Church in the United States, and in many other Euro-centric churches around the world, is on the cusp of great change for all the reasons stated in the discussion on the

future of the parish. Change can mean great opportunity, but there has to be education around the change that will guard the foundational and central place of the Eucharist in the lives of the faithful. Just like the people at St. Albert the Great, many parishioners in the U.S. are being introduced to the idea that their church will look very different from the church they grew up in or experienced in the years since Vatican II. Certainly there will be some anxiety among parishioners but there are opportunities embedded in this change, as well. These can be identified and explored in terms of Catholic spirituality.

There is a great deal of room for forward movement based on Vatican II teachings that offer even more powerful spiritual rewards and Eucharistic understandings such as a greater emphasis on the role of discipleship. “It’s very helpful to understand Eucharist as the ongoing sacrament of Christian initiation, in which we are helped to become more and more what we receive---Christ” (Baldovin 2001, 3). It can be seen as unfortunate that more contemporary Catholics do not better understand the current changes in parish configuration and administration in the light of Vatican II. In such a light, there might be a stronger sense that change in response to world and ecclesial realities is part of what it means to be a “modern Church in the world” and that responsive change, perhaps called renewal or reform, is part of the history of the Church. Vatican II’s theology of Church, more fully articulated, could underscore the People of God’s call and need to accept new challenges and be attentive to the movement of the Spirit within the supportive and defining framework of accepted truths.

There is a sense among many of the faithful that the changes called for in Vatican II are completed. Many commentators note this is not the case. As theologian and historian John W. O’Malley noted often in his book *What Happened at Vatican II?* traditionally there have been

hundreds of years of flux after ecumenical councils beginning with Nicaea in 325 and this will probably also be true for the teachings of Vatican II. Contemporary Catholics should not think that the seismic changes called for in Vatican II have been realized. If that were true then the People of God would not be so upset about the lack of ordained priests, a condition that is not new to the Church. In the U.S. you have only to look at the earliest days of colonial Catholicism when the Catholic faithful gathered, baptized, built churches and prayed together, without benefit of priest just as it was in the first centuries after Christ's death (Dolan 1992, 85). Perhaps in the U.S. the memory of overflowing immigrant churches in the Northeast and Midwest and parish rectories full of priests, is masking new directions that need to be taken at this time. Declines in the number of ordained priests highlight the need for a lay ministry that would assume greater ecclesial responsibilities.

The Role of Religion and Spirituality

There is a lively, ongoing discussion in theological and academic centers about what role religion should play in both the study and support of spirituality in a modern context. Sandra M. Schneiders has been a leading voice in the contemporary debate about the relationship between religion and spirituality. As she states it: "Although the majority of Americans claim some religious affiliation and religion is apparently a permanent feature of American culture, religion as a powerful influence in individual or societal life seems to be in serious trouble. On the other hand, spirituality has rarely enjoyed such a high profile, positive evaluations and even economic success as it does among Americans today" (Schneiders 2003, 163). Schneiders puts forward a powerful conundrum worth attention. She also addresses the larger question of why there is an

apparent separation between the obvious desire to pursue the spiritual life and doing so within traditional religious institutions. Schneider notes a seemingly great individualistic pull in terms of spirituality. This is coupled with a sense that personal spiritual longings cannot find support and expression within traditional churches but rather that these churches present a traditional, structured sense of spirituality that is inflexible and confining. Robert Wuthnow, Director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University in his excellent book, *After Heaven, Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*, also addresses this dichotomy. He suggests that the contemporary history of American spirituality is divided into two defining types, the “spirituality of home” and the “seeker’s spirituality.” Quite simply here, these types represent those who find their spirituality in church or structured communities and those who seek alternatives because their “spiritual needs” are not being met by established religious institutions and for other reasons (Wuthnow 1998, Chapter 1, 1-18, “From Dwelling to Seeking”).

A history of spirituality in the last century in the United States shows that the desire for leading a more spiritual life often meant exploration of spiritual practices from a wide variety of religious and spiritual traditions. Quite often the practices, such as meditation, had become fully estranged from their religious origins. In very broad terms, the spiritual quest can be understood as human desire to better understand the most defining aspects of one’s life in terms of ultimate existential understandings. There is a desire to identify, recognize or perhaps acknowledge the individual’s experience of relationship with the “something more” that gives ultimate meaning to the manner in which the particular life is lived and understood. The focus of this work is Christian theology and more particularly, Catholic Christian spirituality, while also recognizing

the existence of much contemporary spirituality that maintains non-alliance with organized religion.

Theology and Spirituality

My Thesis rests on my position that a focus on Catholic spiritual tradition and its expression in the Catholic parish is desirable and necessary. A focused ministry of spirituality in every parish would address this need and require the identification of lay spiritual leaders/ecclesial ministers. Centuries of spiritual pilgrims have left their spiritual wisdom embedded in a Christian theology and tradition. It is a wisdom that struggles to be passed on and expressed in the practices of contemporary religion. As will be discussed further, the spiritual understandings, struggles and practices that defined the early centuries of Christianity became overshadowed by a turn to the rational and reasoned theology that has dominated Christianity from the time of the Enlightenment to the present. That theology separated itself from what was felt to be the overly emotional and scientifically uninformed realm of the spiritual life. Spiritual understanding and experience was no longer seen as advancing theological understanding; the realm of learning and the mind had to take over from the lesser realm of heart and soul. However the trends of the 20th century and the resurgence of a desire for a more spiritual life open the door for a reaffirmation of spirituality as an essential if not defining part of Christian theology rather than a subset of practices.

Modern theological trends that give greater emphasis to an incarnational understanding of the world point the way to better understand the spiritual life not as something that sets us apart from everyday life, but as something that exactly finds its expression in life lived. “At the heart

of Christian theology lies the doctrine of incarnation---that God becomes human and that the sacred is now to be encountered within time and space” (Sheldrake 2010,10). Everyone would be enriched if “spirituality” became understood as faith lived out in our everyday lives. Joan Chittister O.P. is credited as saying, “Spirituality is theology walking.” This is both a simple and a daunting concept. Philip Sheldrake, one of the most influential theologians focusing on contemporary issues of spirituality, states “the particularity of Christian spirituality means that we cannot separate it from how we articulate Christian belief ---that is, from theology” (Sheldrake 2010, 1). What is the particularity of Christian spirituality? While this is a larger topic than can be addressed here, the following section will identify some features of Christian spirituality to ground our discussion of parish-based spiritual ministries.

The Spirit Active in the World

The earliest notions of what it meant to be a disciple of Christ, eventually a Christian, meant that one had to make a radical change in the way one lived. How one chose to live one’s life was an expression of what it meant to believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ and be animated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ. Christianity was a spirituality where people chose to live a certain way and be guided by certain central teachings and beliefs. That was its essence. Since the first millennium there were “intrinsic links” between theology and “the practice of Christian life” (Bacik 2002, 8.) Indeed, the Eastern Church still more fully maintains this original connection between theology and spirituality based on the theological centrality of the Trinity to their faith. Because of this Trinitarian focus, rather than the Western Christological

focus, the primacy of the role of the Spirit of the Risen Christ in animating all human activity and understanding has been maintained in the Eastern Church since the first millennium.

In the Western Church, after many centuries, there was a sharp turn to a rational understanding of the faith. This move sublimated the spiritual, the living and experiencing of the faith. Evident in the Western Church today is a return to a Spirit-centered theology even while the place of Western theology grounded in the classical philosophical tradition is most often maintained. A Spirit-centered theology, pneumatology,⁹ emphasizes the world and everyday life as the place where the Spirit is active and transformative, where our faith is lived out and where the sacred is revealed to be present in our lives and in our world.

St. Paul can be considered the patron saint of spirituality. It was St. Paul who in his letters described what it meant to be a disciple, that is, what are the demands of a faith in Jesus Christ. There is an emphasis on the individual's experience of the Risen Christ in Paul's letters. He was the first to use the word "spirit/*pneuma*." "When St. Paul referred to the *pneumatikos*, the 'spiritual,' his mind was on the activity and presence of the Holy Spirit in and among God's people. His attention was not on the fulfillment of the human spirit through religious practices but on the impact of God's life on human life" (Sheldrake 2005, 593.) Whereas "spirituality" came to mean an interior and perhaps passive focus, its origins are about God's action in the world and the faithful's *praxis* in response. There remains today the misconception that spiritual means the opposite of physical or material. The spiritual person is often perceived as the one who sees the world as corrupting and operates on a higher plane of prayer and interiority shunning the physical and material. The original Greek origins of the word "spiritual" and its use

9. "Pneumatology, (Gk. "study of the Spirit") the branch of systematic theology that deals with the Person and work of the Holy Spirit," developed since the 4th century (McBrien 1995, 1008).

in the earliest Christian documents, the letters of Paul, emphasized that the “life in the Spirit” was a choice made among other competing ways of life and beliefs. The spiritual life was about engagement in the world. “Paul was not a systematic theologian who wrote abstract articles about speculative questions. He was a missionary who offered advice to Christian communities wrestling with concrete problems” (Bacik 2002, 9). Paul’s conversion experience was the foundation of his belief and moved him to active discipleship and *praxis*. A renewed focus by the People of God on the activism inherent in spirituality would provide a historical corrective. Greater education about the Christian spiritual tradition and Church history in general, would go far to rehabilitating and re-infusing an understanding of Catholic spirituality. “To value ‘tradition’ is not the same as ‘traditionalism’---the defense of a fixed, antiquarian artifact” (Sheldrake 2010, 1). There is much to access in the history of Christian spirituality in terms of practices and understandings. “In order to understand our spirituality [contemporary Catholic spirituality] we also need to have some sense of what has gone before us, how that ‘before us’ has shaped us and what we can apply to our lives today in positive and negative ways” (Cunningham and Eagan 1996, 7).

The Future Role of the Parish

How can the parish help to bring alive Christian spirituality in contemporary contexts? There is much to be said for a renewed sense of the parish as a sustaining center for the personal spirituality journey. All the ministries of the Church operating out of the liturgical, prayerful and sacramental spirituality of the parish are able to come together in mutual support. The questions to be asked and answered are whether an expansion of spiritual ministry in the parish and

supported by the institutional Church in terms of recognition and training, can help enrich the spiritual life of the parish and the individual parishioner. Can such a fresh approach help re-define and re-invigorate what it means to be a Catholic parish in the 21st century? What would happen if the “spiritual needs” of the faithful were understood and then met within the parish setting? What if this became an essential understanding of the role of the Church and the parish in contemporary Catholicism?

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION OF SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION PRACTICES IN A CONTEMPORARY U.S. CATHOLIC PARISH

Spirituality is our ability to see beneath the surface of life, to discern deeper meaning under the veneer of everyday experience.

----Kevin T. Kelly, parish priest and author¹

I find it so sad that so many of us have forgotten, or never learned, that sacred is an everyday experience.

----Margaret Wheatley, *Turning to One Another*²

Traditional Christian Spiritual Practices in the Parish

I have argued thus far that the Catholic Church in the U.S. would be greatly enriched by the development and advancement of a dedicated parish-based lay spiritual ministry. The parish as the local church is in its fundamental nature the home of Christian/Catholic spirituality and is that place where the great spiritual practices and traditions of the faith could be learned and experienced. My Supervised Ministry Project was to design programs of Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction for the Catholic parish as a way to test and develop these assertions.

When planning my Supervised Ministry Project I immediately thought of St. Albert the Great Parish as a possible site. I knew from news reports and elsewhere about St. Albert the Great parish in Weymouth, Massachusetts and the community's effort in 2004 to resist the Boston Archdiocese's decision to close the parish as part of the Archdiocese's "re-configuration"

1. Kelly, Kevin T. "Spirituality and Parish" in *The Way Supplement*, 2001/101

2. Wheatley, Catherine. *Turning to One Another*. Berrett-Koehler, 2009.

plan. St. Albert the Great is in many ways a unique parish. While my findings from this Project Thesis need to be tested in other parish contexts, St. Albert's offers an excellent case study of the possibilities of lay-led spiritual ministries in an American Catholic parish. I projected that the commitment of St. Albert's to the act of vigiling as a parish community, the spiritual practices that became part of their community life in the months of Vigil, and the development of lay leadership through this process would invite the parish's interest in the spiritual ministries I would introduce.

In 2008 I contacted the pastor, Fr. Paul Soper, whom I had known when he served at my home parish in the Boston Archdiocese and who had just been reassigned to St. Albert the Great. A sign of the collaborative nature of leadership at St. Albert the Great, Fr. Soper told me that he would ask the Parish Council if I could come before them with my proposal. I met with the Parish Council who were very enthusiastic and several weeks later the parish bulletin announced that I would be offering to parishioners an 8-week program in Spiritual Autobiography as part of my year of Supervised Ministry in support of my Doctor of Ministry degree. It was my assumption that Catholics would find any number of traditional spiritual practices introduced into a contemporary parish to be interesting and spiritually valuable to parishioners. Later, what I heard most often from participants in the workshops confirmed my thinking. The parishioners told me that they would have taken *any* workshop offered because they loved to learn, were interested in anything pertaining to spirituality, and were especially intrigued that a doctoral candidate such as myself was interested in coming to their parish.

My working assumption had been that programs of spirituality designed for the Catholic parish community would find a receptive audience and that this ministry would prove the need

for such programs at the parish level. My experiences as a spiritual director were reinforced by classes at BUSTH, especially “Spiritual Autobiography” and “Spiritual Guidance in the Christian Tradition.” With this background I designed two workshops for the parish, one in Spiritual Autobiography and a second in Group Spiritual Direction. I anticipated that these two traditional practices would provide many benefits to the parish community in terms of addressing spiritual needs both identified and unidentified.

Challenges that Affect the Development of New Ministries

In planning for my Supervised Ministry Project I considered that the introduction of these two classic Christian spiritual practices might become part of a larger design for the renewed spiritual life of any Catholic parish and that part of this larger design would necessarily include the needed resources for the development and support of lay ministerial leadership. There are challenges in this proposition. The fact is that the U.S. Catholic Church is in the midst of perhaps a decades long process of transition based, in large part, on a variety of diminishing resources...financial, clerical, membership. A call for a new dedicated spiritual ministry that might introduce programs such as these in Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction competes with many other important issues that clamor for attention and might seem on the surface more deserving of attention given the limited resources available. For example, for some parishes, a new roof might supersede the need for a new program of ministry. The interconnectedness of spiritual ministries with all others such as liturgical and evangelizing ministries can be shown and emphasized. The competition of needs, physical, financial and spiritual, is a potential challenge. Nonetheless, at some point it would be beneficial to educate

Catholics in parishes about opportunities for spiritual growth in an effort to create and foster a desire for parish programs that support both individual and communal spiritual growth and enhance other programs and ministries vital to the parish. Where this effort best originates--- USCCB, Archdiocesan pastoral planning, individual parishes--- is a question for Chapter 6.

The reality that many Catholics in the past decades have unaffiliated themselves with the Church is another challenge, although I would point to hopeful possibilities here as well, such as initiatives for a new parish hospitality and outreach that would welcome back those who left the institutional Church. This would seem to fit in the U.S. Church's focus on the New Evangelization in the 21st century. The Boston Archdiocese in its 2012/13 program of pastoral planning, "Disciples in Mission," addresses many of the most difficult contemporary challenges facing the Archdiocese. After its 2004 program of re-configuration had failed due mainly to widespread opposition on the part of the faithful, it is a sign of hope that this new effort seeks to engage the laity at every level in planning for the future.

The Boston Archdiocese's Pastoral Planning Commission worked to make the process that led up to the announcement of "Disciples in Mission" inclusive, transparent and collaborative. The laity was invited to be part of the process; their input was collected and acted upon at every point in the process. This action might speak volumes to the Boston faithful about the possibility for the "unity of all the baptized" becoming a reality through collaboration that would re-image the church of the future. The Archdiocese worked towards having lay leadership in all aspects of the design and implementation of ongoing parish/parish collaborative life.³ Although the program is in its earliest stages, Boston's process indicates to me that there are

3. For a full description of the Pastoral Planning process and the "Disciples in Collaboration" plan that resulted see www.bostoncatholic.org

opportunities for Catholics to effect important change throughout this and any process for reconfiguration.⁴ I would argue that a new parish spiritual lay ministry could be accomplished, with the accompanying benefits enumerated in this thesis, within the current challenging climate. I will return to this argument in Chapter 6.

New Understandings for Devotional Practices

As asserted earlier, there is a need for increased opportunities for education in the history of the church and the history of Christian spirituality for all Catholics. This could be accomplished at the parish level and would enhance spiritual growth. An increased awareness or increased historical perspective among parishioners could help re-establish the value of traditional spiritual practices through better understanding the origins of these pieties and devotional practices in the Catholic tradition. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that devotional practices support the communal spirituality of the parish and do not remain private devotions unconnected to the entire parish's celebration of the Eucharist. Again, all spiritual practices are to be encouraged in terms that they support both personal and communal spirituality and underscore the communal spirituality of the Eucharist celebration as foundational to Christian spirituality.

The large number of traditional Catholic devotions can all be said to have had their beginnings within a particular historical and spiritual context. . Devotional practices often emerged to meet specific "lay" spiritual needs in specific periods of history when perhaps those

4. Fr. Paul Soper was appointed Director of the Office of Pastoral Planning for the Archdiocese of Boston in November of 2012 leaving his post as pastor at St. Albert the Great, and will oversee the implementation of a new pastoral plan.

needs were not met by the institutional Church. Over time these traditions witness the genuine faith of the people. However, in the centuries after the reforms of the Council of Trent, as the Mass became largely a function of the ordained priesthood, the people turned to popular devotions outside the Mass to support their need for contact with (to be in the presence of) the Eucharist (Osborne 2007, 77). Contemporary understandings of devotional practices, that include a respect for their origins, could help incorporate devotional practices into the spiritual life of the parish in a new way and help ensure that such devotional practices do not impinge on the genuine spiritual life of the community in a negative way.

A contemporary example of “the people’s piety” is seen at St. Albert the Great. During the months of vigil in 2004 there were a variety of daily prayer services and on Sunday there was a lay-led communion service when consecrated bread was delivered weekly to the church throughout the months of vigil by a sympathetic priest not of the parish. These services emerged out of the parishioners’ felt need to continue to pray together as a community and continue to see themselves as a Eucharistic community of the faithful centered in and supported by faith in Jesus Christ. Participants readily tell you that one of the most rewarding aspects of the entire period of vigil was the establishment of even greater bonds of community and the emergence of new lay led pray and communion services previously unimagined. The parishioners witnessed with new eyes the Spirit-filled power of community and the reality of the people gathered as church. To this day, eight years later, the “tradition” of lay led prayer services each Friday continues at St. Albert the Great. Many of those that led these services during the vigil continue to lead prayer. The community’s spiritual needs were met through these services and have become traditional in the parish.

Another example of a centuries-old devotion and popular piety is the “Adoration of the Eucharist.” An examination of this “people’s piety” shows how a traditional spiritual practice originates and how the role it plays in the life of the church changes. The exposition of the consecrated bread from the Eucharist celebration in a special vessel called a “monstrance” and the prayer service before the monstrance called “Benediction” have their roots in the 12th century practice of the elevation of the host at the moment of consecration in the Mass. “In popular belief the simple sight of the host raised above the altar became a spiritual act, and miraculous cures were attributed to it” (Walsh 1993, 97). The people attributed this power and meaning to the liturgical action.

There has been an increased interest in the “Adoration of the Eucharist” after it fell from favor as a devotional practice following the Vatican II focus on liturgical renewal that included enhanced lay participation in the celebration of the liturgy. It is interesting to note a return to favor of this devotional practice at a time when there is also unsettling discussion about the merging of parishes, the lack of priests resulting in lay led communion services in lieu of a Eucharist celebrated by an ordained priest, and other changes. History perhaps shows us that changes in access to the Eucharist often leave the faithful searching for an alternative access route because of the centrality of the Eucharist to Catholic identity and spirituality as discussed previously. As argued in the previous chapter, Catholics would benefit from a fuller understanding of the existential place of “gospel community” for the Eucharistic celebration, and in future planning for the Eucharist make the creation of this kind of community a priority (Osborne 2007, 15). In contemporary reconfiguration of parishes the establishment of a genuine Eucharistic community and the celebration of the Eucharist as public worship should be

paramount and devotional activities like Benediction and Adoration of the Eucharist should not be implemented as a substitute for this celebration.

Lay Ecclesial Ministry of Spirituality

A lay ministry of spirituality in the parish would help guide the parish in a variety of ways adapted to the particular parish, whatever its configuration, as the Church proceeds into the 21st century. The ministers could help make explicit the theological and traditional tenets of faith present in any given spiritual practice, newly introduced or already in place. This would include working collaboratively with all ministries to incorporate and emphasize the spiritual dimension of Catholic life. From my perspective, such actions would result in many positive benefits including a realignment of spirituality and theology at the most fundamental level of Catholicism. Simple questions answered, such as: “Why do we have a penitential rite in the liturgy? “We pray this way because it speaks to our need to be a reconciled community. This is what God wants for us.” A lay minister of spirituality would work closely with all the lay ministers to help everyone pay attention to opportunities for important connections about the nature of Catholic/Christian spirituality to be made. “Any theology of any breadth and depth has, either explicitly or implicitly, a constitutive relationship to a spirituality and cannot be fully understood without taking this into account” (Ashley 2005, 165).

My experience as a spiritual director and facilitator of programs of spirituality in the parish leads me to imagine a variety of opportunities to seamlessly integrate theological understandings into any and all aspects of parish life. For example, one of my workshops at St. Albert the Great was on a weekday morning. Before the workshop I would attend daily mass

where many of the program participants were regular attendees at this mass. After mass I would join the group for the coffee hour in the basement church hall, the same place where the workshop would be held. I joined the group for coffee and baked goods. One morning I quite casually referred to this sharing of coffee and cake as the group's "second Eucharist." This comment caught the imagination of several of the parishioners and they commented on the truth of my statement. A discussion followed. Coffee and cake after daily mass, part of St. Albert's ministry of hospitality, continues to be for some "our second Eucharist" and perhaps someone will ask what is meant by this, and some important theologizing will go on. This is just one example of an important theological understanding that is expressed and understood with just a few words spoken at the right time. In some way whenever parishioners gather and share a meal, Christ can be found at the center in the hospitality, the friendships, and the discussion of the homily or the expressions of sympathy about a regular who is home with the flu.

In the course of the life of the parish essential theological and spiritual questions can be addressed. A culture of questioning and inquiry can develop and be supported. Why do we do this or that? How does this activity or this practice reflect Catholic belief and why is it relevant to me? Lay ministers today who have answered their own felt call to active ministry have searched out further education and ministerial training. This education and training equips them with the ability to answer these and many other questions. According to the document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, ministerial education and certification as a lay ecclesial minister today requires attention to one's own spiritual life, a regular prayer life, and a relationship with a spiritual director. Thus, the question can also be asked: "Why aren't the development of a spiritual life, the obtaining of a spiritual director and the maintenance of an active prayer life, not

goals of the institutional church for each member of the Christian/Catholic community?

Spiritual Autobiography as a Spiritual Practice in the Parish

There is so much spiritual richness in the Christian tradition. One of the greatest spiritual resources comes from the women and men of faith who have gone before us and especially those who have shared their stories by writing spiritual autobiographies. The reading or writing of spiritual autobiography is “dialogue with past masters and mistresses of the interior life and allows us to look beyond the limitations of our particular culture and historical moment” (Reiser 2004, 21). Christian spiritual autobiography is a rich inheritance and opportunities to learn about such classics and learn from them are not widely made available outside advanced formal education programs. Education in the faith and investigation of Christianity’s great spiritual legacy could and should be made available at the parish level. This belief and understanding on my part was one of the things that led me to develop these two programs for the parish and evaluate their value to the spiritual life of parishioners and the parish.

Writing a spiritual autobiography is a spiritual practice that generates study of spiritual autobiography classics and the eras in which they were written. “The ‘universality’ of the classic refers to its paradoxical capacity to disclose a world of meaning and to evoke transformation in a potentially infinite succession of readers in quite different milieus” (Tracy 1994, 118) (Sheldrake 2005, 14).” The tradition of spiritual autobiography continues throughout history up to and including contemporary times. Many modern and contemporary spiritual autobiographies have much to offer. Contemporary spiritual writers such as Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen “combine a solid theology with a personal narrative style (and) are popular because their

approach illumines the spiritual life of the reader, encouraging them to examine their own stories from the perspective of the Christian tradition” (Bacik 2002, 49).

The writing of a spiritual autobiography is an intentional process of reflection on how God was and is present in one’s life throughout that life. The process guides individuals to see the value of individual experience---their personal experience---as the place where God is revealed. A focus on the discovery of God in human experience is at the heart of this practice. “The prominence of the word ‘experience’ in contemporary theology and the ministry of spiritual direction derives from an understanding of how the mind works---how it achieves insights and how knowledge becomes personal” (Reiser 2004, 3). Spiritual Autobiography is a personal narrative about an individual’s spiritual life as experienced and understood by the writer and lived out in the world. A spiritual autobiography affords the reader a view into a life perhaps very different from their own and yet identifying similarities in an always very human story. “We can only do what we can first imagine and learning about the spiritual journeys of others helps us to imagine something wider than our own experience” (Ware, 1997, 49).

Spiritual Autobiography, the personal spiritual narrative, is a classic Christian spiritual practice (as in many world religions.) An introduction in the parish to spiritual classics that have informed the faith for centuries can also help begin a process that would allow for an exploration of Church and spiritual history. A study of selected spiritual classics could allow parishioners to see that in writing their own autobiography they are part of a rich, long tradition of personal narratives concerning the individual spiritual life/journey. It would help them see that Christian “greats” like Augustine, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Merton were first and foremost individuals who worked throughout their lives in many different ways and with mixed success to understand

their relationship to God and worked also to let that relationship fashion how they lived their lives. John Macmurray in *Reason and Emotion* addresses the value of an exploration of “lives lived.” “The last thing we seem to become aware of is our conscious reflection on one another and the concrete ties that bind us together into the bundles of life (Veling 2013, 9). Reflection on our lives lived---otherwise named our Christian discipleship--- is an extremely important spiritual practice. In terms of spiritual autobiography this backward glance helps us focus on the human bonds of community and relationship. It has been my experience as a spiritual director that an understanding of our “self” and our human relationships leads powerfully to a better understanding and exploration of our relationship to God and how this is a highly personal relationship grounded, however, in a lifetime of other relationships and communities, especially the Church. A study of spiritual autobiography can also assist in arriving at a self-understanding that God knows and loves each of God’s creations in their uniqueness, in who they truly are, not a generic kind of love.

I have observed that it can be a very spiritually freeing moment when contemporary people connect with the spiritual journeys and stories of these Christian greats. In spiritual autobiography the very human is always evident alongside the perhaps spiritually profound. The human questioning, disbelief, anger, doubt, joy, passion, inner peace and turmoil are all on display and therefore accessible to contemporary Christians who might feel that a rich and rewarding spiritual life is beyond their experience and abilities. Using spiritual autobiography, both reading classic and contemporary narratives and promoting reflection and writing of one’s own spiritual autobiography, can be a very powerful tool in the parish, as is detailed in Chapter 6.

Spiritual inquiry is about paying attention to a felt longing for God or seeking help in first identifying the nature of that interior movement (Barry 1991, 34). Primarily, writing a spiritual autobiography helps an individual come to understand her/his own story, the way God was and is in their lives (or was and is felt to be absent.) It can reveal the origins and the sources of faith in an individual life or the origins and sources of non-belief. Each spiritual autobiography is populated by often previously unexplored or unexamined worldly spiritual influences (the kindness of a favorite aunt, a trip to the mountains, work, a conversation on a beach, loss of a loved one, to name only a few). In individual reflections there are often people and practices that in the backward glance are found to be critical to the development of an individual spiritual life/spirituality. “Most of us live somewhat unthinkingly in the context of social arrangements and cultural norms that shape the way we inhabit the world (Veiling 2013, 10). For example, individuals often discover the positive as well as the detrimental influence the Church might have had on their lives and spirituality. This can lead to an important re-examination of an individual’s current stance toward religion and the Church. The examined life can provide a spiritual awakening to all that is positive, all that might need to be explored, perhaps lead to understandings of why interior doors were shut to God or opened wide. A rich landscape is opened to the individual. It is very personal and yet part of a greater narrative, one that belongs to all Christians united in faith. If a program of spiritual autobiography is established in a parish, these discoveries are made from within a community that shares a spirituality and faith tradition.

The Small Group in a Parish Setting

If a program(s) of spiritual autobiography were offered within the parish it could include a small group component. A valuable benefit might be that in sharing their autobiographies participants would be introduced to the rewarding diversity that exists within the spiritual life of others. It is liberating to discover that there is a multiplicity of expressions of Catholic spirituality all are grounded in essential Christian beliefs: faith in Jesus Christ and the centrality of the Eucharist celebration, the community as the body of Christ and our common baptism that grounds our call to discipleship. Through such a program I have found that parishioners could be helped to see their overarching spiritual reality as one of communion built on discipleship with Christ at the center, ever present in the Eucharist celebration. American Catholics already live in a highly diverse world and increasingly are global citizens through global communication and information sharing. They are open to a diversity that perhaps they do not readily see in the Catholic tradition with its core dogmas, rites, creeds and emphasis on a linear and hierarchical tradition often narrowly defined. This is where the great administrative and structural changes occurring within U.S. Catholic parishes offer great opportunities for new understandings and new expressions of core Catholic beliefs and practices, an opportunity for a re-imagining and re-understanding in light of contemporary thought and experience.

The small group component of spiritual autobiography program would allow people to become comfortable with the sharing of their personal spiritual journeys and be affected by the insights and experiences of others. “We can only do what we can first imagine and learning about the spiritual journey of others helps us to imagine something wider than our own experience” (Ware 1997, 49). The potential for learning in small groups in any setting, but

especially in the parish, has been long acknowledged. Delores Leckey, for many years the pioneering head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (formerly NCCB) Secretariat for the Laity, Family, Women and Youth was an early proponent of the use of small communities or faith-sharing groups. Leckey saw them “as key building blocks of parish community and important opportunities for parishioners to relate their faith to their lives and a good way to enable communities of the parish to offer occasions for growth in faith and prayer” (Leckey, National Pastoral Life Center, Pastoral Study #2). A program of spiritual autobiography will meet the needs both of the “seeker” spiritual type and the “dweller” spiritual type identified by Wuthnow in the greater American culture since the 1950’s (Wuthnow 1998, 5). A spirituality of dwelling finds comfort and assurance in the known boundaries of physical sacred space with its traditions and doctrine while the spirituality of seeking is much more open to and desirous of looking for meaning outside traditional places and is open to all that could inform the spiritual journey. Opportunities for sharing seeker’s spiritual insights gained from a variety of places can occur within the “dwelling” confines of parish or local community, the benefits and needs for both perspectives informing each other.

Spiritual Autobiography in the Parish: The Time is Now

Writing one’s own spiritual autobiography can be encouraged through a discussion of classics and an understanding of this literary and spiritual genre. As stated earlier, Catholics are often hesitant to accept themselves as authors and guides of their own spirituality. “Priests, nuns, monks, the Dali Lama, knowledgeable people, people who know their religion,” stated a St. Albert’s parishioner when asked what she felt was “spirituality.” I find through my spiritual

direction practice and parish work a strong sense that the magisterial Church will tell the individual what to think and prescribe how to act. However, free will and supremacy of conscience are popularly acknowledged as foundational Catholic beliefs:

It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself (sic) in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. The requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection: Return to your conscience, question it... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness (51) (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part 3, Sec. 1, Art. 6).

This belief exists in perpetual delicate balance with a Church that asserts magisterial authority. Many Catholics even while acknowledging the role of conscience seem to be conditioned to first wait and see “what Father will say,” thus giving magisterial pronouncements the greater authority. An introduction to the classics of spirituality highlights the importance of the individual narrative to our collective Christian faith. A program of spiritual autobiography can be seen to help individual Catholics further establish their distinctive voice within the community of believers. It would enhance an appreciation of diversity as part of the power of community and community as the strength behind the individual voice. I have noted in my experience as a Catholic, and as a spiritual director and parish minister that there is an unfortunate sense among too many in the Catholic Church (practicing and non-practicing Catholics) that the sameness of our traditions and beliefs is Catholic Christianity’s defining strength and there is little room for the individual voice. The long, respected tradition of spiritual autobiography in Christianity underscores the power of and respect for the individual voice of faith and the individual spiritual journey grounded in the common spirituality of Christian

discipleship. This would be an important and empowering understanding for the contemporary Catholic especially as the Church anticipates even greater need for a diversity of lay ecclesial leadership in the 21st century to accommodate a diversity of parish configurations and populations.

Ecclesiology will have a great impact on spirituality at the beginning of the 21st century as Catholicism faces a restructuring and reimagining. If, as I argue, the parish is the community that supports Christian discipleship, these changes can be seen as a promising opportunity. Attention to and support of individual spiritual inquiry within the parish Catholic community is and ought to be an important ecclesial function. What if the parish were to be recognized as the home/”dwelling” where “seekers” could find support in such an exploratory endeavor? (Themes from Robert Wuthnow’s *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950’s* were referenced previously) The parish could become the hub where spiritual understanding and growth were expected, nourished, and continually re-invigorated. An increased focus on spiritual understanding and growth would enrich the discipleship—the lived spirituality of Catholics in a postmodern world of competing secular narratives.

Spiritual Autobiography at St. Albert the Great

The program of Spiritual Autobiography implemented at St. Albert the Great parish was an eight-week program introducing Spiritual Autobiography as a spiritual practice. It comprised an examination of five authors of spiritual autobiographies from ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. Foundational components of the program were two introductory sessions on the history of Christian spirituality through the centuries. As one participant exclaimed as the

history portion of the Spiritual Autobiography workshop, “Why haven’t they told us this before?!” This statement seems to represent an attitude among participants that finds the history of their faith surprisingly interesting and previously unknown or unexplored. Knowledge of Church history allows an individual to see him or herself as part of the greater Christian narrative as well as understanding the continuum of the “church in history.” Taken together, these perspectives document a world that has always had an impact on theologies and spiritual practices, dogmas and doctrines, while core truths and understandings remain constant even if disguised by historical exigencies.

A good place to start an examination of Spiritual Autobiography as spiritual practice is to determine which questions these authors of Christian classics are asking and trying to answer. While there is often a relatively narrow focus to a spiritual autobiography, the author’s own desires and needs, the “why’s and why not’s” of faith and human attempts and failures at genuine discipleship are always embedded in the narrative. Pointing this out in a parish program is one more way of helping to free the individual to focus on and respect their lived experience and their own personal desires and needs as appropriate material for spiritual autobiography and personal spirituality. It is important to examine what “theologies” and doctrines are part of any author’s “context.” This also helps the participants realize that when they reflect on their own spiritual journeys, embedded in their recollections will be theologies and teachings they were exposed to and that shaped their experience. This integration of spirituality and theology helps participants see their spirituality as a powerful indicator of who they are as Catholics and what “theologies” inform their spirituality. Many lives of those in the St. Albert Spiritual Autobiography program spanned Vatican II and it was easy to unearth pre- and post-Vatican II

understandings in their own stories. This was an important take-away from the program: over one's lifetime there are significant historical and theological influences and changes even if a linear progression had been presumed. Additionally, the examination of spiritual classics is one illustrative and important way to understand how personal life experiences---births, deaths, gains, losses, pain, challenges, and triumphs--- impact one's spirituality. An investigation of spiritual autobiography leads one to focus on the primacy of human experience in "knowing God."

Each week a different author and spiritual autobiography was studied and discussed. The group listened to a short lecture that gave background information about the author---Augustine, Teresa of Avila, Jane de Chantal, Dorothy Day, James Carroll---putting them into a brief historical and theological context thereby also underscoring the importance of context to faith and spirituality. Then each participant was given the same short passage from the autobiography to read. They were also given several questions to answer about what they read. They broke into small groups (four to five people) where they discussed how they would answer the questions based on what they read. The passages were pre-selected from a different autobiography each week for five weeks in order to focus on a certain aspect of the spiritual autobiography genre. For example, in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, the group read the passage about Augustine's misspent youth and the incident of the pear tree and his reflecting on this act of stealing and disregard for societal norms. The small groups met, read the passage and then discussed it for about twenty minutes. Then each small group shared with the larger group what they had discussed. These reflections were all listed on a white board so that the range and diversity of understandings was highlighted. In addition, this activity supported the

understanding that there was no “right” answer when one is interacting with a text. The group was then invited to follow St. Augustine’s example and privately reflect on some childhood experience, recount it in written narrative form and perhaps answer the question: “Where was God in all of this? Was God present in my life? Did I recognize it then, do I recognize it now?” The “inward” journey is upheld as spiritually rich and valuable where reflection and memory become tools for an understanding of one’s present relationship with God. Augustine is allowed to have an impact on contemporary seekers; the acknowledgement of human experience as the source for understanding one’s faith and relationship with God is presented. Participants were given the option to write a “chapter” of their spiritual autobiography that would be submitted sometime during the six weeks and be read only by the program director. If writing was submitted, the participant received written notes from me in return. Some people took advantage of the opportunity to write some portion of a spiritual autobiography beginning at different points in the program and only when or if they felt the desire or comfort level to do so.

[Appendix I: Sample of materials from parish-based Spiritual Autobiography Workshop.]

Spiritual Direction and Group Spiritual Direction at St. Albert the Great

Spiritual Direction

A resurgence of interest in the practice of Spiritual Direction has been noted. “Its remarkable growth [is being] fueled by widespread hunger for prayer and a desire for greater intimacy with God” states Kathleen Fischer, a spiritual director, author and prominent voice in the field of Christian spirituality and spiritual direction. Coupled with this growing interest in spiritual direction is the great growth in attendance at programs offered at Catholic colleges and

graduate schools and often by religious orders or retreat/spirituality centers that train for and certify this ministry. However, there is not a broad understanding among the people in the pews about this spiritual practice and if known, it is not seen as available or pertinent to the average parishioner. One reason for the growing interest in Spiritual Direction is the growth of lay ecclesial ministry and the institutions of education and training that prepare individuals for ministry. In these programs prospective ministers are often introduced to the history of spirituality and this includes attention to the development of classic spiritual practices such as meditation, contemplation, spiritual companioning, *Lectio Divina* or the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Ministerial candidates are educated in classic spiritual practice and this includes opportunities to personally experience the nature and, hopefully, spiritual efficacy, of a given practice. Spiritual Direction is often a requirement or strongly suggested for a candidate in a ministry program. (See USCCB, “Co-Workers in the Vineyard”).⁵

Spiritual Direction, as it is called, is a ministry of spiritual companioning and guidance. “A spiritual director helps others freely name what God is doing in their lives and shape their own response” (Fischer 2009, 21). A relationship is established between the “directee” or “seeker” and the director, who has been specifically trained in this ministry. The felt need or desire to explore at a greater depth the nature of one’s relationship with God usually brings someone to spiritual direction. The director is seen as a guide who has wisdom to share that might assist an individual on their spiritual journey. Whereas spiritual companions and wisdom figures are part of every religious tradition, there is an especially strong tradition in Christianity that dates back to the earliest days of the faith. Certainly, the intent of many of the letters of St.

5. I would estimate that more than half of my spiritual direction practice over the years has been with individuals who are in the process of discerning a call to ministry.

Paul was to offer spiritual assistance, instruction and guidance to various communities and individuals. As stated previously, it can be said that Christianity was always about life in the Spirit. Spirituality is intrinsic to Christianity. However, after many centuries where Christianity was seen as a movement of the Spirit in the lives of people, there was what some historians have observed a divorce between theology and spirituality in the late Medieval and Enlightenment periods that has lasted until contemporary times (Sheldrake 2005, 275). There is a movement among many modern theologians that calls for a reconciliation of spirituality and theology, a corrective and return to the earliest understandings of Christianity, i.e., that the spirit of the Risen Christ is the animating principle of Christian life.

Introduction of Group Spiritual Direction in the Catholic Parish

As with the spiritual practice of writing a spiritual autobiography, spiritual direction allows the individual person of faith an opportunity to set aside time to focus critically on their spirituality---the way they have chosen to live their lives in response to their deepest held beliefs. It is a process of reflection and discernment. Part of this spiritual practice is the discipline of regularly making time for this deeper investigation and sharing. Entering into Spiritual Direction is a personal commitment to the spiritual life. “The critical element in spiritual direction, which those involved share, is the intention to rely on God, to seek God actively and wait for God’s lead” (Dougherty 1995, 2).⁶ A person tells their story, the story of their relationship with---a higher power, ground of being, transcendent other, divinity, God---and how this relationship

6. Rose Mary Dougherty, S.S.N.D., is a pioneer in the development of the practice of Group Spiritual Direction. She developed her process while Director for Spiritual Guidance at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Bethesda, MD. S. Troy adapted her program for use in a parish setting at St. Albert the Great parish.

does or does not manifest itself in the life of the person. Spiritual Direction can be said to focus on the personal and yet can foster an understanding of the Christian's communally held and communally strengthened spirituality. My experience suggests that this connection can be even more readily and powerfully made from within the faith community that is the parish. As a Spiritual Director I find the investigation of the personal, of unique personality, to be spiritually rewarding in many different ways. An individual's acknowledgement of their own spiritual narrative and understanding of their unique stance before God, is empowering, illuminating, and grounding: "Attention to the beauty and singularity of personality magnifies rather than diminishes, our apprehension of the Divine" (Veiling 2013, 15).

Any number of important questions or needs can be brought to spiritual direction. The symbol of Spiritual Directors International, the 50-year-old professional organization of spiritual directors, has as its logo three empty chairs placed in clear relation to each other. What is powerfully implied is that one chair is for the director, one for the seeker or directee and the other for the presence of the "holy other," who Catholics identify most often as the Holy Spirit.

However, a one-on-one relationship with a spiritual director is not possible for the many people who would benefit from this spiritual practice. There is not widespread awareness of the practice of spiritual direction outside the ministerial community; I personally experience this every time someone asks me "What do you do?" Additionally, the number of spiritual directors available for private direction is limited and it sometimes takes a great deal of effort to locate one or more directors that might meet an individual's need. My practice of spiritual direction relies mainly on referrals from ministerial programs, former directees, other directors, pastors and

educators Spiritual Directors International (SDI) ⁷ does provide an on-line geographical directory of spiritual directors. However, there is a very wide range of practitioners of spiritual direction and a multiplicity of understandings of what defines a “spiritual director.” There is no current licensing apparatus or nationally or internationally recognized professional standards for spiritual directors, although organizations like SDI are working to correct this. Many spiritual directors are associated with a variety of retreat houses, established centers for spirituality, religious based and others.

My practice is purposely a private practice. I have a private office and am not officially associated with any group.⁸ This was my intention since graduating from Weston Jesuit School of Theology, to provide an opportunity for spiritual direction “in the market place” as I have described it. I wanted to widen the understanding of spiritual direction as available to all seekers. A clarifying moment that led me to believe that I had somewhat achieved my goal took place at a local grocery store. I ran into one of my directees, someone I had been seeing for years, in front of the fresh vegetables. I discreetly said hello honoring the confidentiality that is a standard of the practice. Her three small children were with her and she enthusiastically turned to them and introduced me as “Mommy’s Spiritual Director.”

The benefits of spiritual direction are beginning to be so more widely understood and sought that an alternative to the one-on-one model of spiritual direction has evolved and incorporates the additional benefits of small group participation. Programs of group spiritual direction have been developed mainly in independent centers for spirituality (like the pioneering

7. <http://sdiworld.org/>, Accessed 4/28/2013

8. An informal standard for Spritual Directors is that they have their own Spiritual Director and Spiritual Direction Supervisor as I do.

Shaleem Institute in Bethesda, Maryland), as part of religious formation programs or within academic theological institutions (BUSTH). However, in the Catholic/Christian tradition, programs of spiritual direction have not widely developed within parishes or congregations.⁹

Spiritual Direction and the Parish

The parish should be a natural home for group spiritual direction because a shared faith facilitates expression and understanding within the process. Many forms of small group sharing within parishes already exist. The Boston Archdiocese through its Spiritual Life and Worship Office has committed itself over a three-year period to the Arise program of RENEW International.¹⁰ St. Albert the Great participated in this program sponsored by the Archdiocese. The program helped train people within the parish for leadership positions in the scripture-based program of faith sharing built on the concept of small group community. RENEW International is an independent Roman Catholic organization supported by the over 150 parishes that have used its program over a 30-year period. Implementing the Arise program in the parish, with the financial support of the Archdiocese, is an important step toward bringing a greater focus on the overall spiritual health of the parish and its parishioners. What it does not do is recognize the need for a dedicated ministry of spirituality in the parish. Within the Arise program there is the

9. There are not sources for information about programs of spirituality within parishes. This relates to the fact that there has not been a focus on parish-based programs of spirituality and that, as mentioned, traditionally parishioners have had to seek spiritual programs outside of the parish. There are statistics for ministry and programs that relate to religious education, liturgy, music, administration and finance and faith formation, but not spirituality directly.

10. <http://www.renewintl.org> - Mission statement: "RENEW International fosters spiritual renewal in the Catholic tradition by empowering individuals and communities to encounter God in everyday life, deepen and share faith, and connect faith with action."□

opportunity to have parish members trained in leading small group discussions and organization, but nothing on a permanent basis.

It was my experience as a Group Spiritual Direction (GSD) facilitator that leads me to believe that GSD has the ability to offer much in the parish setting. Participants must understand that GSD is not about faith sharing traditionally understood or practiced but is a unique spiritual practice centered on prayerful silence. This prayerful silence is totally in support of the other and only secondarily involves voiced insight in response to Spirit-filled activity within prayer. It is a spiritual practice that includes the many benefits of small groups, such as spiritual companionship, and it strengthens spiritual understanding in and among the participants. GSD can have a strong impact on the spiritual life of the parish providing greater spiritual awareness; greater desire for opportunities within the parish setting for spiritual growth and support; and, significantly, possible development of a leadership base for a spiritual ministries from within the parish.

Group spiritual direction introduces what I ascertain from my ministry are two important concepts foundational to the spiritual life: the spiritual practice and discipline of silence and the acknowledgement of the power of commitment to an ongoing practice that will reap spiritual benefits. Groups meet on a regular basis, for a specific time, and then disperse until the next scheduled meeting, maintaining a commitment to strict confidentiality between meetings. This is the same pattern as in individual spiritual direction where a directee regularly meets with a director for usually one hour over the course of weeks, months, and years.

In Group Spiritual Direction the group together acts as the spiritual director for the individual who brings something of spiritual importance to share with the group on a given

week. Group Spiritual Direction also focuses on prayer, often in a very new way for parishioners. The Group is asked to pray in silence after the designated sharer has spoken and what was spoken is received in prayerful silence. It is only after this essential period of quiet prayer, sometimes lasting up to 30 minutes, that a member of the group might be moved to comment on what was shared. "Silence is both a means of drawing the group into prayer for one another and of honoring God's Spirit as the primary spiritual director for each person in the group" (Dougherty 1995, 5). Significantly, the value of GSD depends on a commitment to prayerfulness as opposed to problem solving or sharing of personal experience. Sharing and problem solving are the standard operating mechanism for small groups. However, this is counter indicated in GSD.

Group Spiritual Direction, (GSD), was offered at St. Albert the Great only after participants had completed the Spiritual Autobiography program. GSD is seen as a more "advanced" spiritual practice and some key understandings and disciplines are needed for it to be successful. Key is that the participants, to a certain degree, know and trust the others in the group and accept the rules of time, commitment and confidentiality. The parish setting is optimal for providing the prospect for the development of this level of trust among people of faith who have shared the Eucharist, shared ministry, and shared all variety of parish activities that build community. At St. Albert's an important level of trust had been built through the small group experience in the Spiritual Autobiography program and this can be built upon in any number of ways. GSD is a practice that has specific guiding principles. Skills must be learned: how to maintain appropriate, prayer-filled silence; how to listen deeply; how to pray for the other; how to share what you have encountered in prayerful silence; and how to lead the group

when it is your turn to do so. It proved to be both very challenging and rewarding for the St. Albert the Great participants.

To sit in silence is a learned skill and a major part of the Christian spiritual tradition. Jesus himself modeled for us the need to leave the demands of daily life behind and find quiet for prayer and replenishment. I find from my experience that many people can find quiet disconcerting. Popular culture tells us we should fill our day with all sorts of activities, and even tells us that when our calendar has unplanned hours, somehow we are not “accomplishing.” People often take pride that they work too hard, play too hard, and/or devote too many hours to others. Often people can be judgmental toward someone who is not always “busy.” Too often we need “permission” from some outside authority, like a Spiritual Director, to go quietly and slowly and to focus on self.

GSD offers an opportunity to learn the power of slowing down and learning to be productively quiet. Week after week participants at St. Albert the Great reflected on the difficult time they were having with “silence” after experiencing participation in GSD. A useful and revealing exercise in preparation for GSD is to have the group close their eyes and raise their hand after they think three minutes has passed. Rarely is any arm raised anywhere near three minutes. Routinely all arms seem to be raised before one minute has passed. This helps everyone understand our learned inability to recognize how slowly time actually passes. The goal in GSD is to advance in prayerful silence from a starting time of about 3 - 5 minutes to a period of 15 minutes or more. All the participants seemed to struggle with the discomfort they experienced in being in silence for any length of time. In due course the time the participants were able to sit in prayerful silence lengthened until they no longer felt the imposition of being in

silence. Participants ultimately came to value the productivity of prayerful silence and felt that in praying for the other, they were doing something worthwhile if not profound....and all in silence.

Spiritual Community

GSD both builds on and helps enhance spiritual community. Clearly, in the parish community there is a sense of spiritual community, even when unarticulated. Spiritual community is built on the shared discipleship of Christians. In Mark's gospel Jesus was told that his mother and brothers and sisters were outside waiting for him. "And looking at those sitting in a circle around him he continued, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother'" (Mark 3:32-35). Jesus states that the foundation for true community is a shared commitment to building up the reign of God in the world---discipleship. The use of familial titles in this passage from Mark underscores Jesus' belief in the intimacy and incomparable strength and importance of these relationships. This kind of spiritual community is both what the parish can offer and what they can receive from programs that help further create this shared sense of spiritual journey and purpose. "Christian discipleship is not individualistic but is essentially communal, within the community of believers, sustained by a common life and shared rituals, and expressed ideally in mutual love and acceptance. In fact, the heart of Christianity is precisely a way of life rather than an abstract code of beliefs" (Sheldrake 2010, 12).

The power of spiritual companionship is acknowledged throughout the history of spirituality, beginning with Christianity's "primary source," Scripture itself. Here it is recorded

in many different ways that Jesus chose the companionship of the group (the twelve) as well as the larger group of disciples and declared the value of companionship and accompaniment for others as they began their lives of discipleship. “He called the twelve and began sending them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (Mk 6:7). Spiritual “masters” such as St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) in the spiritual classic *“Introduction to the Devout Life”* underscores the importance of spiritual companionship and companioning. “I am not now speaking of simple charity, a love due to all mankind, but of that spiritual friendship which binds souls together, leading them to share devotions and spiritual interest, so as to have but one mind between them” (DeSales 2002, 131).

In GSD there is no problem solving. However there is a strong inclination to do so, formed through participation in other small groups. There is also a strong inclination to tell one’s own story and display how it illuminates or illustrates. However, GSD is not the place for this. GSD is about prayer and listening and thereby companioning someone as they address a particular concern or desire in their lives on the path to “transformational dialogue with God” (Fryling 2009, 23). The one who shares is most likely expressing their longings and desires for God to a group that is committed to prayerfully accompanying that person on their mostly unspoken spiritual journey. Through prayer the group assists the individual in the process of discernment of God’s will and activity in their life.

GSD as a spiritual practice challenges the individual to set aside a specific time on a regular basis to create the space to reflect on one’s relationship with God. This is perhaps GSD’s most valuable teaching, as I understand it, the value of finding time, creating space internally and externally to notice God in our lives. “Finding time” or “making time” is an elusive commodity

especially in a culture that promotes non-stop activity. Yet, it is an essential spiritual practice. The value of quiet has been devalued in contemporary society. The “productivity” of quiet can perhaps be re-learned or learned through GSD.

Secondly, GSD fosters spiritual companionship and companioning within the parish community.¹¹ “Group spiritual direction provides a unique opportunity in the life of the church or community of believers” (Fryling 2009,11). It is holy sharing for spiritual formation at a level that most likely does not take place in bible sharing or faith formation groups, liturgy, social gatherings or other “community” building activities. Yet, the fruit of GSD is that all these other aspects of parish spiritual life are positively affected by the presence of groups of GSD in the parish. I would argue that if the spiritual life of one individual in the parish is enlivened, the community that shares a faith benefits. “Spiritual direction provides a unique place where feelings are welcome and help us experience God in ways that are beyond understanding and knowledge” (Fryling 2009, 64).

Spiritual Ministry in the Parish

Spiritual Autobiography and Group Spiritual Direction are just two of many spiritual practices that could become part of parish life through the introduction of parish-based lay spiritual ministry. Both practices underscore the necessity of commitment to spiritual growth through specific practices that demand time, effort, encouragement and accompaniment. “A focus on practice nevertheless emphasizes the importance of making a deliberate attempt to

11. “Kathleen Fischer devotes a chapter of her book, *Women at the Well*, to her understanding of group spiritual direction and its congruence with the felt need of women to have the companionship of other women in their journeys (Dougherty 1995, 5).”

relate to the sacred” (Wuthnow 1998, 195). Too often in parishes, programs of spirituality are seen as occasional “add-ons” to parish life instead of essential and, particularly at this time in the life of the U.S. Catholic Church, necessary to the future viability of the Church. Part of the purpose in the introduction of these two practices at St. Albert the Great was to attempt to foster the growth of spiritual leadership from within the parish. At the conclusion of the GSD I was able to identify someone from the group who had the interest and skills to continue to facilitate this group. I was able to convince her that she was capable of accepting this responsibility and she successfully facilitated the group for many more months. The group eventual did disband and I was not still at the parish to learn all the reasons why. However, I hold that a dedicated lay minister of spirituality in the parish would have been able to provide the support needed for the new facilitator and the group to continue, perhaps expand to include more groups and to become a regular offering at the parish.

I observed parishioners grow in awareness of their own spirituality, especially with the writing of their spiritual autobiography. I sought out individuals who I felt had more to offer their parish in terms of spiritual companionship and spiritual life. Eventually, after some resistance, a parishioner at first stating “Who am I to say that I am worthy to lead a program on spirituality?” carried on the very new tradition of offering a program of spiritual autobiography in the parish. With my encouragement she accepted leadership of the program based on her experience in my workshop. I was aware of the richness of her own spiritual journey evident in the spiritual autobiography submitted to me. Several years later the program of spiritual autobiography she leads continues at the parish with some members from the original workshop still attending. Clearly, other parishioners find her leadership appropriate and valuable to their

own spiritual journey and a number of spiritual classics have found a new audience at St. Albert the Great.

The following chapter will draw upon these findings from the spiritual ministries at St. Albert the Great to further build an argument for ongoing parish-based lay spiritual ministries.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND NEED FOR FUTURE ACTION

As the U.S. Catholic Church moves into the first decades of the 21st century there is both a need and opportunity to address and greatly enrich the spiritual lives of Catholics through the organized development and support of a recognized parish-based lay ecclesial ministry of spirituality. There are challenges but these can be addressed. The advantages of such a ministry need to be clearly affirmed. The benefits of a focus on the spiritual needs of Catholics and how these needs can best be addressed in the parish must also be clearly stated. The opportunity present at this particular time is that there is a national ongoing conversation about the needs of the church in the 21st century and how to meet them. There is urgency to this conversation given the many critical areas facing the church. This conversation is taking place, unlike in the past, with the valuable assistance of the social sciences. Studies are providing the necessary data about Catholic identity, parish configuration, parish life and ministerial leadership. These issues have the attention of the institutional church, the researchers and the faithful who feel the impact most directly. Within this larger conversation about spirituality and the spiritual needs of the faithful needs to take place.

Opportunities for Change in the Parish

The U.S. model of a diocese or archdiocese comprised of a multitude of small parishes representing intact neighborhoods prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries is disappearing. There will be different models of parish based on the local and regional needs in the community. As has been discussed, churches are being closed or realigned in the Northeast and Midwest because

of changing demographics and other reasons. Yet, in the South and West regions because of the great increase in the number of Catholics due to Hispanic and Latino/a immigration there is a growing need for more and larger churches. All indications are that an era of openness and adaptability in the U.S. Catholic Church could meet such needs and would be very welcome. An investigation of the popularity and endurance of lay ecclesial movements is strongly indicated. During this period of transition, knowledge obtained from such an investigation could be incorporated into parish planning. This might strengthen relationships with these movements as well as provide encouragement for the parish. Along with the change in the configuration of parishes in dioceses and archdioceses, a standard for the local church community since the days of the Holy Roman Empire, other changes are also having an impact. Chief among these is the decline in the number of ordained priests and this is coupled with a persistent message from the Vatican that there will be no future dialogue about ordaining women or married men to provide necessary sacramental leadership in the Catholic Church. This is perhaps a crisis in ordained leadership but not in the availability of well-educated ministerial professionals.¹ There is a need to bring the needs of the church together with the existence of this cadre of professional lay ecclesial ministers. If as I have noted there is a need for a dedicated parish-based ministry of spirituality then there must also be qualified ministers to provide the leadership and to further help identify leadership within the parish community itself. Clearly there are such ministers. Whereas in the past, throughout the 20th century, strong, skilled lay leadership was most evident and widely accepted in the areas of education and health care, “the parish setting, by contrast, is a relatively new arena for displaying the talent of the lay person” (Horan 2013, 260). Within this

1. DeLambo, David. 2005. *Lay Parish Ministries: A Study of Emerging Leadership*. New York, N.Y., National Pastoral Life Center.

period of transition there clearly is opportunity for the further growth of lay leadership in the area of parish administration and all levels of ministry.

Too often I have discovered through my practice, my parish ministry and my research that there is no clear sense of what spirituality truly is or what a dedicated spiritual ministry in the parish would look like. It is my assumption that many in both leadership and in the pews assume spiritual needs are already being taken care of through the act of worship and other parish activities. While certainly public worship, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, is foundational to Catholic spirituality, I believe there is a great need to help the faithful identify their own spiritual journeys and to become more aware of how parish and liturgy are foundational to this spirituality. I suggest this is why one does not find language of spirituality in studies about parish ministry; spirituality is not seen as a separate ministry but an inherent part of all ministries. Without a separate focus I conclude that the spiritual needs of Catholics and Catholic parishes will not be fully recognized and addressed. I further conclude that this need for a separate focus on spirituality in the parish is best addressed through a dedicated ministry of spirituality. (One of the main reasons I chose to pursue my ministerial education at BUSTH was that the curriculum offered a concentration in spirituality. I have raised the question throughout my ministry and research, is why isn't there a common language of spirituality readily apparent in the Catholic Church? Also how does a conversation about spirituality that begins with a discussion of people's perceptions get started? This is not an easy question to answer. The intention of the Arise program from RENEW was to begin that conversation but as stated, without the development of an ongoing ministry dedicated to spirituality, spiritual inquiry and growth gets scattered attention at very best. My proposition is that everything about who we are

as Catholics---our shared baptism, lives centered in Christ, our desire to answer Christ's call to discipleship and build up the reign of God in our world, our sacramental view of the world---is better understood, is made more persuasive, is put in the service of our discipleship, affects our Christian lives more profoundly, if we understand the intimate relationship between spirituality and what it means to be Catholic. Though it seems counter intuitive given popular understandings about the spiritual life, spirituality is about our actions and our lives in the world. And these actions, this discipleship, are supported by an interior life and perspective grounded in faith and relationship with God experienced in the community that is the parish. I often consider how empowering and powerful it would be if I had the ability to make every Catholic understand that they were spiritual beings, had a spiritual life, were authors of their own unique spirituality born out of their Catholic faith experienced and proclaimed first in their parishes. Everyone would understand his or her "Call to Holiness." I envision this as being a great "aha" moment that would leave every person of faith renewed, restored, emboldened and empowered in their discipleship and longing to discover more.

The Experience of St. Albert the Great Church

I suggest a Spirit-filled "aha" moment happened at St. Albert the Great. Within the entire vigiling process at St. Albert the Great, a great many things happened that one could theologize about for a very long time, and people still do, both from their places in the pews or their places in the academy. However, most important in support of my Thesis was the emergence during the vigil of an appropriate spiritual ministry from within the community. This faith community's self-understanding as church led to an important adaptation. The St. Albert the Great Pastoral

Council at the time provided leadership and made sure there was dialogue and discussion and that decisions were prayerfully made with unanimity. They remained centered on the Eucharist. Consecrated bread for the Eucharist was obtained from a sympathetic priest not of the parish.² A parishioner stepped forward and the group accepted him as a leader of prayer, others followed in that role. There was need and so the People of God met it. As I see it, a parish-based lay spiritual ministry had its beginnings at St. Albert the Great.

As indicated earlier the history of ministry often tells us that ministry develops from a group consensus about the needs of the community, a reality that began with the very first Christian communities as reported by St. Paul. The widows and orphans, for example, were identified as those needing special care from the community and this community met their needs. In a sense the ministry of pastoral care was born. If the need can be identified the ministry will emerge to meet the need. I realize that I see this need from the vantage point of my ministry of spiritual direction. I have already stated that there has been amazing growth in this ministry but it developed outside the parish, so currently it does not directly support Catholic spirituality in the parish setting. There remains a need to identify in the parish opportunities for enhanced attention to spirituality. There are entryways already in place (planning for parish reconfiguration, academic institutions, social science research) where the case for enhanced attention to spirituality at the parish level could be made. It is clear from their public statements and publication, *Co-workers in the Vineyard*, that the USCCB has a commitment to the further development of lay ecclesial ministry. They borrow the phrase “co-workers in the vineyard” to name their publication about lay ministry from Pope John Paul II’s 1988 declaration

2. The issue of the centrality of the Eucharist must be addressed in the future. How is this addressed when there are not sufficient ordained priests? What will emerge at this time?

Christifideles Laici on the vocation of the laity. Starting at the very top, employing a hierarchical hermeneutic, there is support within the church for the ongoing development of lay ecclesial ministry. This is an excellent place to start but there are others. Given also the continuing lay Catholics response to the call to ministry, there are many individuals enrolled in programs of formation. This can be seen positively as ministerial development from among the co-workers. This lay call and response is welcomed by the academy and many other institutions of ministerial formation discussed below. The academy is another important place that has an impact of the understanding and development of ministry.

The Place of the “Academy”

Many educational institutions are involved in formation for professional ministry. These institutions, I surmise, can also play a role in the design and formation of a distinct parish-based spiritual ministry through their curriculum and requirements for degrees or certification. I have already referenced my own process of selection for further education in professional ministry and the attraction of a dedicated concentration in spirituality at BUSTH. BUSTH has become part of my formation and my understanding of the possibilities for enhanced ministerial focus on all aspects of spirituality. Originally I was not planning on becoming a spiritual director although I had been in direction for many years before I entered Weston Jesuit School of Theology. I enrolled at WJST with the full intention that I was preparing for further parish ministry. I had been deeply involved in parish ministry for many years, e.g., religious education, liturgy, sacramental preparation. Towards the end of my studies for the Master of Divinity degree I inadvertently made a choice that beyond a doubt has led me to this Project Thesis.

At WJST a well-respected teacher, Virginia Finn Sullivan, had announced her retirement after many years at WJST. I had not taken a class with her but knew her because she was so active in shepherding all the laywomen at WJST. She had been part of the Center for Religious Development (CRD) with William Barry, S.J. CRD was a well-known and respected center for training in the ministry of spiritual direction, a pioneer in the training of lay people for this ministry. I felt that I shouldn't pass up this last opportunity to take her practicum in spiritual direction although I had no intention of pursuing the ministry. It was Virginia Finn's comment's to me that she saw a spiritual director in me couple with my own experience in spiritual direction, and the experience of the practicum, that led me to enthusiastically pursue this particular ministry. This is when I first started connecting spiritual practice and parish ministry. My story has most likely been repeated over and over in any number of different programs or institutions. Many of us come from the ministerial world of the parish, are trained as spiritual directors, recognize the value of the individual spiritual journey, and yet know that the "average" Catholic, the parishioner, is not exposed to spiritual direction or many other enriching traditional spiritual practices in their parishes. The ministerial leadership is already in place that could guide the development of parish based spiritual ministry starting now and guiding it through the 21st century.

The Future of Parish-Based Lay Spiritual Ministry

A pastoral reconfiguration process in the Catholic Church is ongoing or will begin in many dioceses and archdioceses across the nation, like the "Disciples in Mission" program in the

Boston Archdiocese noted earlier.³ The planning entailed in the reconfiguration process is another venue for discussing a dedicated ministry of spirituality at the parish level. Phase I of the pastoral planning process in Boston was announced in January 2012 and on their website home page it states that: “This website will provide you with the tips and tools you need to start or reinvigorate planning and pastoral decision-making in your parish.” Here is an entry point for change to include the development of parish spiritual ministry and a larger, very important discussion of lay ministry in the 21st century. This national process of re-configuration and pastoral planning could mean that there are points of access all over the United States for a discussion of parish needs, of ministerial leadership, of management of resources and of future collaboration in all these areas. Going forward, while as a Spiritual Director I have been given space at St. Albert the Great to see directees, because of other obligations, I have had to limit my accessibility. There are five other Catholic parishes in the same suburban town as St. Albert the Great. Going forward I would like to be able to offer spiritual direction, with the approval of the appropriate planning teams, through all of the churches and foster a sense of parish-based spiritual direction. I have also promised to discuss my project thesis and the proposals it contains at the parish, sponsored by the Parish Council. It is not difficult to see these points of entry for a discussion of lay parish-based spiritual ministry opening up during this period of transition nation-wide.

There are two directions that are possible in support of the development of this dedicated lay ecclesial ministry. The first is that such ministry could be initially developed at the parish level or, second, “parish-based lay spiritual ministry” could be identified by the USCCB and

3. <http://www.disciplesinmission.com/>

standards and requirements promulgated like those already found in “*Co-Workers in the Vineyard*” for other recognized ministries. The top-down approach has its merits; it would quickly help make parish-based spiritual ministry the focus of attention nationally. The resources of institutes like the Pew Forum, the Lilly Foundation, Inc. and CARA might then be utilized to help further define this ministry and encourage its development at the parish level. Assistance in answering the question “What is spirituality?” would be invaluable and would help further generate discussion on the role of spirituality and its place in each Catholic’s life. The possibility of a national conversation within Catholicism about spirituality as part of or as a result of attention to creating a parish-based lay spiritual ministry is very appealing. Quite clearly, given the history of the great commitment on the part of universities and other institutions to ministerial formation, for the laity there would most likely be continued opportunities for collaboration and a partnering with these institutions to help in establishing the ministry, developing ministerial guidelines and strategies for the growth and continued support of parish-based spiritual leadership.

APPENDIX

Spirituality Workshop/St. Albert the Great Parish/October 8, 2009

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Augustine's Confessions

1. Read quote from St. Augustine's *Confessions* (next page)

Enter into this reflection time as a time of **prayer**.

Settle down, set aside some time for this peaceful reflection. Be comfortable. Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit. Let your mind travel back. Reflect on the memories that come to you.

Use the following questions as “guides” to your own reflection. If you are drawn somewhere else by reading the passage from Augustine, go to that part of your story and examine it in your mind.

Write, take notes, or tell your story.

Some questions to help your reflection on **your** story:

What are some of your earliest memories of knowing about “God?”

What are some of your earliest memories of experiencing “God?”

What are the qualities/words you associated with God at that time? Was God personal, remote, powerful, gentle, unknowable, and familiar?

What memories do you have of coming to understand your parents’ or family’s faith? Is there a particular memory or occasion that comes to mind? Are there any memories of baptism from childhood, stories told about your baptism?

Small Group Discussion: Some questions to help guide discussion

What is your reaction to first reading this passage? How did it make you feel?

What is Augustine most concerned about; what is his question for “God?”

What is the role of “family” in his faith formation?

APPENDIX**Spiritual Autobiography Workshop Quote for October 8, 2009****St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 1, Chapter 17.**

Even as a boy I had heard of eternal life promised to us through the humility of the Lord our God condescending to our pride, and I was signed with the sign of the cross, and was seasoned with His salt even from the womb of my mother, who greatly trusted in You. You saw, O Lord, how at one time, while yet a boy, being suddenly seized with pains in the stomach, and being at the point of death— You saw, O my God, for even then You were my keeper, with what emotion of mind and with what faith I solicited from the piety of my mother, and of Your Church, the mother of us all, the baptism of Your Christ, my Lord and my God. On which, the mother of my flesh being much troubled—since she, with a heart pure in Your faith, travailed in birth Galatians 4:19 more lovingly for my eternal salvation—would, had I not quickly recovered, have without delay provided for my initiation and washing by Your life-giving sacraments, confessing You, O Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins. So my cleansing was deferred, as if I must needs, should I live, be further polluted; because, indeed, the guilt contracted by sin would, after baptism, be greater and more perilous. Thus I at that time believed with my mother and the whole house, except my father; yet he did not overcome the influence of my mother's piety in me so as to prevent my believing in Christ, as he had not yet believed in Him. For she was desirous that You, O my God, should be my Father rather than he; and in this You aided her to overcome her husband, to whom, though the better of the two, she yielded obedience, because in this she

yielded obedience to You, who so commands.

I beseech You, my God, I would gladly know, if it be Your will, to what end my baptism was then deferred? Was it for my good that the reins were slackened, as it were, upon me for me to sin? Or were they not slackened? If not, whence comes it that it is still dinned into our ears on all sides, *“Let him alone, let him act as he likes, for he is not yet baptized”*? But as regards bodily health, no one exclaims, *“Let him be more seriously wounded, for he is not yet cured!”* How much better, then, had it been for me to have been cured at once; and then, by my own and my friends' diligence, my soul's restored health had been kept safe in Your keeping, who gavest it! Better, in truth. But how numerous and great waves of temptation appeared to hang over me after my childhood! These were foreseen by my mother; and she preferred that the unformed clay should be exposed to them rather than the image itself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrew, Elizabeth J. *Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 2005.
- Archdiocese of Boston. "Cardinal Announces Acceptance of Pastoral Plan for Archdiocese," BostonCatholic.org, <http://www.bostoncatholic.org/Utility/News-And-Press/Content.aspx?id=25080> (accessed March 18, 2013)
- Ashley, Matthew. "The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology and Spirituality." *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, eds. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. 159-170.
- Aumann, Jordan. *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Bacik, James J. *Catholic Spirituality: Its History and Challenges*. New York and Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002.
- Bagget, Jerome P. *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Baldovin, John, "Where is the Catholic Liturgy Going?" *The Way Supplement* 2001/10 (2001): 52-62.
- Barry S.J., William J. *Finding God in All Things*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ava Maria Press, 1991.
- Bass, Dorothy C. ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.
- Bausch, William J. *Pilgrim Church: A Popular History of Catholic Christianity*. Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989.
- Beal, John, "Constitutionalism in the Church," in *Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Catholic Church*, ed. by Francis Oakley and Bruce Russett, New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1967.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.

- _____. *Ekklesiogenesis*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Bowler, James M., "Ignatian Spirituality: A Bridge Between Postmodernity and Christian Institutional Structures," *The Way* Vol. 52, No. 1 (January 2013): 39-54.
- Boyd, Malcolm. *Take Off the Masks: The Classic Spiritual Autobiography*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.
- Brown, Michael. *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in An Anxious Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Burns, Robert A. *Catholic Spirituality and Prayer in the Secular City*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008.
- Cardman, Francine. "Who Did What in the Church in the First Millenium?" In *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*. Richard W. Miller, ed. 13-31. Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2005.
- Castelli, Jim. *The Emerging Parish: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. *Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 1994.
- Chinnici, Joseph P. *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996.
- _____. *When Values Collide: The Catholic Church, Sexual Abuse, and the Challenges of Leadership*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010.
- Chittister, Joan. *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Christifideles Laici*. Pope John Paul II. [www. Vatican.va/holy-father/John_Paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/John_Paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents.html). 1988.
- Colish, Marcia L. "Reclaiming Our History: and Practice in the Church." In *Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Catholic Church*, ed. Frances Oakley and Bruce Russet. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Connstock, Gary L. *Religious Autobiographies*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995.

- Conn, Joann Wolski. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Coriden, James A. *The Parish in Catholic Tradition: History, Theology and Canon Law*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997.
- Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2005.
- Cunningham, Lawrence S. and Keith J. Egan. *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition*. New York and Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 1996.
- _____. "Extra Arcam Noe: Criteria for Christian Spirituality. In *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. Edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- D'Antonio, William V. and James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, Katherine Meyer. *American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2001.
- D'Antonio, William V. and James D. Davidson, Dean Hoge, and Ruth Wallace. *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church*. Racine, Wisconsin: Sheed and Ward, 1989.
- D'Antonio, William V. and James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hogue, Mary C. Gautier. *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.
- D'Antonio, William V. and James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Ruth A. Wallace. *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church*. Racine, Wisconsin: Sheed and Ward, 1996.
- D'Antonio, William V. and Anthony Pogoreic. *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007.
- Davidson, James and Dean R. Hoge, "Catholics After the Scandal: A New Study's Major Findings," *Commonweal*, (November 19, 2004): 13-17.
- DeLambo, David. *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*. New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005.
- Deck, Allan Figueroa. "Where the Laity Flourish," *America*. August 14, 2006....
- Dillon, Michelle. *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason Faith and Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Dolan, Jay P. *In Search of American Catholicism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.
- Dougherty S.S.N.D., Rose Mary. *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment*. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1995.
- _____. ed. *The Lived Experience of Group Spiritual Direction*. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2003.
- Downey, Michael. "Without a Vision the People Perish: Foundations for a Spirituality of Lay Leadership." In *Called and Chosen* edited by Zeni Fox, Oxford, N.Y.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010.
- Dreyer, Elizabeth and Mark S. Burrows, ed. *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Ellis, John Tracy. *American Catholicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1956.
- Ellwood, Robert S. *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994.
- Endean, Philip. "Spirituality and Theology." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*" ed., Philip Sheldrake. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 2005.
- Faggioli, Massimo. *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2012.
- Finn, Virginia Sullivan. *Pilgrims in this World: A Lay Spirituality*. New York/Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990.
- Fisher, James T. *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Flannagan, Bernadette, "Sitting Spirituality: Where Church and Seeker Meet," *The Way Supplement* 2001/101 (2001): 20-28.
- Flannery, O.P., Austin, ed. *The Vatican Collection: Vatican Council II, Vol. 1, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Newport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004.

- Fleming, Austin and Victoria M. Tufano. *Preparing for Liturgy: A Theology and Spirituality*. Chicago, Illinois: Liturgical Training Publications, 1997.
- Foley, Edward. *From Age to Age: How Christians Have Celebrated the Eucharist*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- Fragar, Robert, ed. *Sharing Sacred Stories: Current Approaches to Spiritual Direction and Guidance*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2007.
- Froehle, Bryan T. and Mary L. Gautier. *Catholicism USA: A Portrait of the Catholic Church in the United States*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Fryling, Alice. *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Fox, Zeni and Regina Bechtle, S.C., ed. *Called and Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.
- _____. *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professional Serving the Church*. Franklin, Wisconsin and Chicago: Sheed and Ward, 2002.
- Fox ed. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. and Catherine E. Clifford. *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2006.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. "The Theological Reception of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord." In Zeni Fox ed. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Gallup, George and Jim Castelli. *The American Catholic People: Their Beliefs, Practices and Values*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987.
- Gallup, George H. *Religion in America. 1996 Report*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Religion Research, 1996.
- Ganim, Carole, ed. *Shaping Catholic Parishes: Pastoral Leaders in the 221st Century*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2000.

- Gautier, Mary L. and Paul M. Perl, Stephen J. Fichter. *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood Since Vatican II*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012.
- Gerding, Susan. *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples: Evangelizing Power in the Parish*. New York/Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999.
- Gibson, David. *The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful are Shaping a New American Catholicism*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.
- Gratton, Carolyn. *The Art of Spiritual Guidance*. New York: Crossroads, 1992.
- Gray, Mark M. "Perspectives from Parish Leaders: U.S. Parish Life and Ministry." CARA, <http://emergingmodels.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Parish-Leader-Report-Revised.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2013).
- Grienman, Jeffrey P. ed. *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: Academic, 2010.
- Groome, Thomas H. *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*. New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.
- Groome, Thomas H. and Michael Daly. *Reclaiming Catholicism: Treasures Old and New*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010.
- Hahnenberg, Edward P. *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010.
- _____. *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007.
- _____. "The Vocation of Lay Ecclesial Ministry," *Origins* 37(12) (August 30, 2007): 177-182.
- Haight, S.J., Roger. *Christian Community in History; Vol. 1, Historical Ecclesiology*. New York, London: Continuum, 2004.
- _____. *Christian Community in History: Vol. 2, Comparative Ecclesiology*. New York, London: Continuum, 2005.
- _____. *Ecclesial Existence: Vol.3, Christian Community in History*. New York, London: Continuum, 2008.
- Hater, Robert J. *The Catholic Parish: Hope for a Changing World*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004.

- Hayes, Patricia, "Lay Leadership: Expanding the Circle," *Congregations* 31 No. 2 (Spring 2005):
- Heelas, Paul. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. London: Blackwell, 1996.
- Heft, James. "Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry," *Together in God's Service*, USCCB (1998): 23-50.
- Henderson, J. Frank. "*Lay Leadership, Parish Spirituality and Liturgical Celebration*." *Journal of Liturgical Ministry*, 3 (Summer 1994): 112-116.
- Hoge, Dean R. and Jacqueline E. Wegner. *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003.
- Hoge, Dean R. and Marti R. Jewell. *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: What the Church Needs to Know*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010.
- _____. *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- Holt, Bradley. *A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005.
- Hoover, Brett C. *Losing Your Religion, Finding Your Faith: Spirituality for Young Adults*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Hornbeck, J. Patrick, "Deconversion from Roman Catholicism: Mapping a Fertile Field," *American Catholic Studies* Vol. 122 (2) (2011): 1-29.
- Howes, Robert. *Bridges: Toward the Inter-Parish Regional Community...Deaneries, Clusters, Plural Parishes*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria and Fernando F. Segovia, ed. *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press.
- Jewell, Marti and David A. Ramey. *The Changing Face of the Church: Emerging Models of Parish Leadership*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010.
- Kasper, Walter. *Theology and Church*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1989.
- Keating, James, "Unable to Touch God: The Wounded Lay Psyche," *Spiritual Life* 33:149-152 (Fall, 1987): 149-152.
- Kelly, Kevin. "Spirituality and the Parish." *The Way Supplement: Refounding Church and Spirituality* 2001/10(2001): 129-137.

- Kennedy, Eugene. *Tomorrow's Catholics, Yesterday's Church*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Lakeland, Paul. *Catholicism at the Crossroads: How the Laity Can Save the Church*. N.Y./London: Continuum, 2007.
- Lane, Thomas. *The Heart of Catholic Spirituality: Finding a Voice Through the Centuries*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.
- Leonard, Ellen M., "Ecclesial Religious Communities: Old and New," *The Way Supplement: Refounding Church and Spirituality* 2001/10 (2001): 119-127.
- Leckey, Delores. "Study #2." New York, N.Y.: National Pastoral Life Center,
- Lescher, Bruce H. and Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM. *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM*. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2006.
- Lesniak, Valerie. "Contemporary Spirituality," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005) 7-12.
- McAlpin, Kathleen. *Ministry that Transforms: A Contemplative Process of Theological Reflection*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009.
- McBrien, Richard P. *Catholicism: Study Edition*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1981.
- _____, ed. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995.
- Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1992.
- Maitland, Sara. *A Big Enough God: A Feminists Search for Joyful Theology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1995.
- Mandelker, May and Elizabeth Powers, ed. *Pilgrim Souls: A Collection of Spiritual Autobiographies*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999.
- Mannion, Gerard. *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007.
- Matovina, Timothy. *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012.

- May, Gerald G. *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions*. New York: HarperCollins, 1988.
- Miller, Richard ed. *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*. Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2005.
- Molloy, Cathy, "Church and Laity: Give and Take." *The Way Supplement, Refounding Church and Spirituality* 2001/10 (2001): 109-118.
- Morgan, Richard Lyon. *Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography: Leader's Guide*. Nashville, Tennessee: Upper Room Books, 2002.
- Murnion, Philip J. and David DeLambo. *Parishes and Parish Ministry*. New York, N.Y.: National Pastoral Life Center, 1999.
- Nanko-Fernandez, Carmen. *Theologizing en EspanGLISH: Context, Community and Ministry*. Marynoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010.
- O'Malley, John W. *What Happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.
- O'Malley, Sean, Archbishop of Boston. "Archdiocese of Boston Parish Reconfiguration," BostonCatholic.org, <http://www.bostoncatholic.org/Parishes-and-People/Content.aspx?id=14128>, (accessed March 18, 2013).
- O'Meara O.P. Thomas F. "Being a Ministering Church: Insights from History." In Zeni Fox ed. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010) 53-65.
- O'Toole, James M. *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008.
- _____, ed. *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practices in Twentieth-Century America*. Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Orsay, Ladislav. *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009.
- Osborne, OFM, Kenan B. *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium*. New York/Mahwah, N.J., 1999.
- _____. *Community Eucharist, and Spirituality*. Liguori, Missouri: Liguori. 2007.

- _____. *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003.
- _____. "Who Did What in the Second Millennium?" In *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2005) 13-31.
- Osiek, RSCJ, Carolyn. "Who Did What in the Church in the New Testament," In *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller, (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2005), 13-31.
- Peace, Richard. *Spiritual Storytelling: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Autobiography*. Hamilton, Massachusetts: Navapress, 1996.
- Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion." U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2007. 39-44.
- Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.," The Pew Forum, www.pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux.aspx. (accessed March 18, 2013).
- Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Summary of Key Findings," www.religious.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf, March 16, 2013.
- Reese S.J., Thomas J. "The Hidden Exodus: Catholics Becoming Protestants." *National Catholic Reporter*. Kansas City, Missouri: National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, April 15, 2011.
- Reiser S.J., William. *Seeking God in All Things: Theology and Spiritual Direction*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Rexhausen, Jeff and Michael Cieslak, Mary L. Gautier, Robert J. Miller. *A National Study of Recent Diocesan Efforts at Parish Re-Organization in the U.S.: Pathways for the Church in the 21st Century*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Rich, David. *Catholic Means Universal: Integrating Spirituality and Religion*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000.
- Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Roof, Wade Clark. *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journey of the Baby Boom Generation*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

- Schillebeeckx, Edward. *The Mission of the Church*. Translated by N.D. Smith. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Schneiders, Sandra M. "Religion v. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum." *Spiritus* 3(2003). Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Sewell, Marilyn, ed. *Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.
- Seddon, Philip. "Sit, Stand, Walk: The Art of Spiritual Direction." *The Way* Vol. 50 No. 2 (April 2-11): 51-67.
- Sheldrake S.J., Philip. *Explorations in Spirituality: History, Theology and Social Practice*. New York and Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2010.
- _____. ed. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- _____. *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Steinfels, Peter. *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2003.
- Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Ulanov, Ann and Barry Ulanov. *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1982.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Statistics: Laity and Parishes," www.usccb.org/about/media-relation/statistics/laity-parishes/cfm. (accessed March 16, 2013).
- Van Ness, Peter H. *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1996.
- Veling, Terry. "The Personal and Spiritual Life: All Too Human, All Too Divine," *The Way* Vol. 52, No. 1 (January 2013): 7-21.
- Walsh, Michael. *Dictionary of Catholic Devotions*: New York, N.Y.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

- Ware, Corinne. *Connecting to God: Nurturing Spirituality Through Small Groups*. Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 1997.
- Webb, Heather. *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art with Your Contemporary Community*. (El Cajon, California: Youth Specialities, 2005).
- Weldon, Michael. *A Struggle for Holy Ground: Reconciliation and the Rites of Parish Closure*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004).
- White, Susan. "Spirituality, Liturgy and Worship," *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005), 44-48.
- Wilkes, Paul. *Excellent Catholic Parishes*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2001.
- Wimberly, Edward P. *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, 1997.
- Winqvist, Charles E. "Deconstructionist Aestheticism," in *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, ed. Peter Van Ness (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1996) 187-201.
- Wills, Garry. *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Wolfe, Alan. *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003.
- Wolfteich, Claire E. *American Catholics Through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay Experience and Public Life*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001.
- _____. *Navigating New Terrain: Work and Women's Spiritual Lives*. New York/Mahwah N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998.
- _____. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty Somethings and Thirty Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- _____. *The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woes*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- _____. *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1992.

_____. *Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.

Zech, Charles E. and Robert J. Miller. *Listening to the People of God: Closing, Rebuilding, and Revitalizing Parishes*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: 2008.