



*As I Have Done For You
A Pastoral Letter on Ministry*

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and the
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Part One | The Changing Parish Saint Leo's Parish, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 1955

In the year 1955 St. Leo's Parish, Los Angeles, looked like most parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and indeed, across the United States. At the time, the pastor of St. Leo's Parish had been there 22 years, and two full-time assistant pastors were assigned to help with church duties. On weekends, two priests from a large religious order arrived to help with confessions on Saturdays and with Masses on Sundays. These three full-time and two part-time priests served this average parish of 1,500 families.

The primary pastoral work of the parish was sacramental, educational, and devotional. Five Latin Masses were celebrated on Sunday morning beginning with the 6 a.m. Mass and ending with the 11:30 a.m. Mass. There were no Saturday evening anticipated Masses and the eucharistic fast was in effect from midnight on Saturday until after one received Holy Communion at Mass on Sunday. The priests alone distributed Holy Communion at every Mass and read the Scriptures in Latin, while the faithful followed the translated text in their missals. Usually the Gospel was repeated in English just before the sermon.

Weekday Masses were at 6:30 a.m. and 8 a.m., and a Mass for the schoolchildren was celebrated every Thursday morning at 9 a.m. During Lent, schoolchildren were brought to Mass each morning before the beginning of the school day. All school children went to confession on the Thursdays before First Fridays. On Fridays in Lent, the children made the Stations of the Cross immediately after Mass. St. Leo's Catholic School was staffed by a large group of Sisters. Most students had a Sister teacher for most of the eight grades. Lay teachers were the exception at St. Leo's.

Confessions were heard every Saturday from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Since most parishioners went to confession before receiving Communion, the lines to get into the confessional were often quite long. Confessions were often heard during Sunday Mass as well.

Devotions to Our Lady of Perpetual Help were held on Tuesday evenings, the Ladies' Sodality met in church to pray the rosary together on Wednesday evenings, and the Holy Name Society gathered for a Holy Hour on Thursday evenings. Quite often the devotions were followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The younger assistant pastor was in charge of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, helped organize the Saturday morning program, taught the volunteer teachers, and took care of all the details of the program. He also trained and supervised the altar boys and set their regular schedules.

The senior assistant pastor took care of visiting the sick in the hospital and convalescent homes, and looked after the small Chi Rho Club youth group that met twice a month. He was also chaplain to the Legion of Mary.

The assistant pastors visited the parish school regularly and were visible on the playground often during recess or lunchtime. They would drop in on classes frequently and were considered special heroes to the school children.

The pastor took care of the parish administration, finances, Mass schedules and other similar duties. He also served as the chaplain to the Holy Name Society and the Altar Society.

During the course of a week at St. Leo's Parish, there were few meetings of the parishioners. Members of parish organizations tended to meet during the daytime or on the weekend. Occasionally they met in the evenings, but these were usually set aside for the devotions.

The priests would schedule appointments during the evening hours to assist couples preparing for marriage or to counsel people. It was rare that more than one priest had a meeting to attend on a weeknight evening.

The parish had few paid employees. There was the janitor who cleaned the church and parish hall, and often took care of the school as well. A housekeeper lived in the rectory and took care of all the needs of the priests in their home. One parish secretary handled the telephone and the front door and those other duties that would arise, such as mimeographing the Sunday bulletin on Friday mornings.

St. Leo's, like most parishes, had a part-time choir director and an organist who received very modest stipends for their work. The Altar Society took care of the sanctuary, sacristy, vestments, and sacred linens—all were volunteers.

The spiritual needs of the parishioners were fairly routine. They attended Sunday Mass faithfully and came to confession at least once a month. Some came to the devotions during the evenings. Many sent their children to the parish school, while most, who supported the parish financially, had little participation in the ordinary life of the parish during the course of the week. The parish church was there when needed—for baptism, First Communion, confirmation, marriage, and funeral Masses—and the priests responded to such normal family emergencies as illness, accident, or death.

Since all of the Masses and sacraments were celebrated in Latin, the ethnic makeup of the parish did not make much difference. St. Leo's did have parishioners from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but the majority spoke English. The priests assumed that most everyone in the parish spoke English sufficiently. On the other hand, the priest's sermon was, for all intents and purposes, the only English spoken during the Mass. It often took the form of moral exhortation, peppered with reminders of the requirements of one's duties in church and civil life. Rarely was the sermon directly related to the Epistle, the Gospel, or to an explanation of the Scriptures, which received little attention in comparison to the heart and soul of the Mass—the moment of consecration.

By all accounts, the above description would hold true for almost all of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. At the time, St. Leo's would be described as a fine, active parish of the archdiocese, and almost everyone would agree. The pastoral life of the parish was simple and fairly routine, and the spiritual needs of the parishioners were met in accord with the schedule of services offered.

Saint Leo's, LA, 2005

The parishioners from St. Leo's in 1955 will hardly recognize their old parish in the year 2005. St. Leo's is still a typical parish—typical for an archdiocese with well over six million Catholics. It is estimated that the number of Catholics will continue to grow by at least one million every five years into the foreseeable future. The Catholic population of the archdiocese is richly multicultural and quite diverse. Every Sunday, the Eucharist is celebrated in over 50 languages in parishes all across southern California. There are still large numbers of parishioners whose origins are European; however, now there are larger numbers of parishioners from Asia and Africa, while the majority has roots in Mexico and Latin America, and a vast number of our population is immigrant and poor. Amidst these shifting circumstances, St. Leo's 2005 understands itself as a vibrant Catholic community of faith, impelled by the Spirit to evangelize and, in word and deed, become a light to the nations.

Steeped in the riches of the Catholic tradition, the people of St. Leo's are aware that there is no returning to the days prior to the Second Vatican Council when there were large numbers of priests, Sisters, and Brothers, and when the role of the laity in ministry seemed unnecessary and was inadequately recognized. At St. Leo's, there is a strong sense of the baptismal call and a deep and growing awareness that all in the parish are responsible—to varying degrees and in different ways—for being and for building the Body of Christ in their own time and place. Their vision for the future of St. Leo's is reminiscent of the vision of the prophet Isaiah:

*You yourselves shall be named priests of the Lord,
Ministers of our God you shall be called. (Isaiah 61: 6)*

At St. Leo's Parish it is understood that ordained priests and deacons, women and men religious, and the baptized faithful all share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, each according to his or her own gifts given in baptism, strengthened in confirmation, and invigorated week by week, or even day by day, in the Eucharist.

St. Leo's now has over 5,000 Catholic households. Over the last seven years, many English-speaking families have moved away from the parish. The current parish census indicates an ever-expanding Hispanic and Asian population. In a recent poll, many of the older parishioners

expressed great dismay at the possibility of reducing the number of English Masses from two to one. Several threatened to leave the parish and go to another.

St. Leo's is now served by a pastor, a lay pastoral associate who is a married lay woman with two young children, a permanent deacon, and a large staff of laypeople, some of whom are full-time, some part-time, and others volunteer. There is a parish business manager who manages the temporal affairs of the parish: managing the front office, balancing the books, ordering supplies, assuring that all parish facilities run efficiently. The pastor is fluent in English and Spanish. The deacon is a widower in his mid-60s, the father of four adult sons. He is Spanish-speaking and struggles with English. The pastoral associate speaks no Spanish, but communicates well with the Vietnamese parishioners. The pastor presides at most of the liturgies in English and Spanish and is grateful when a priest from one of the other parishes in the pastoral region lends a hand from time to time. One "supply" priest visits to help with Mass in Vietnamese and another with the Mass in Korean.

The Saturday evening and Sunday Masses are well attended. A particular strength in the parish is the preaching at Mass, especially when the deacon manages to relate the Gospel to the demands of marriage and family life. The director of liturgy is a full-time, paid staff member. She does an admirable job at coordinating all the different liturgies at St. Leo's, planning music appropriate for each and working with the different priests who come to celebrate Mass at the parish, as well as with the other lay ministers involved in the different liturgies. Morning Mass is celebrated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Parishioners are encouraged to go to Mass on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at neighboring parishes.

With increasing frequency, the deacon officiates at weddings at St. Leo's. Often, two or three couples are wed in the same nuptial ceremony outside Mass. The baptism of infants usually takes place within the context of the regularly scheduled Sunday Masses. Funeral liturgies are often celebrated within the schedule of weekday Masses.

St. Leo's School continues to struggle financially. There is no wait for students. The number of applicants each year far exceeds capacity. While most of the students at St. Leo's are Catholic, some are not. There is one Sister in the school and a young single lay man is the principal. The lay teachers and staff at St. Leo's could all earn larger salaries as employees in the public school system, but they are committed to St. Leo's, its students, and its mission.

Most of the Catholic children of St. Leo's Parish attend the public schools and receive their religious education through the various catechetical programs of the parish, which enroll five times the number of students as the parish school. The Director of Religious Education is a full-time staff member of the parish, but also lends a hand at the neighboring parish. Her work takes her away from home most evenings, since the catechetical programs must be organized around the students' school schedules. Catechetical programs must also be developed in light of the different languages spoken by students and their parents. One of the hopes of the pastor and his staff is that parents will take greater responsibility for the religious education of their children, fostering more home-based catechesis and fewer parish-centered programs of religious education. All on the staff are aware that this will call for a change in thinking on the part of a great number of the parents, as well as an increase in their willingness to be educated for the purpose of educating their children in the faith.

Each day and most evenings of the week there is something going on at St. Leo's. The Pastoral Council meets on the first Tuesday evening of each month. During any given meeting of the Pastoral Council, there may be a discussion of the need for volunteers for the parish-sponsored food pantry, or of the need for more frequent outreach to the elderly and the shut-in in the parish, or of finding more creative ways to raise funds for the various programs of the parish. Marriage preparation classes are also held on Tuesday evenings. These are coordinated and conducted by three married couples in the parish, one couple for each of the major language groups in the parish. On Wednesday evenings there are classes in adult faith formation, taught by one of the seminarians for the archdiocese who is in residence at another parish in the cluster to which St. Leo's belongs. A new group has emerged in the parish, and meets on Thursday evenings. Aware of the diverse religious groups within the parish boundaries, this group is seeking ways to engage in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue as an expression of St. Leo's commitment to a new evangelization. On Friday evenings, the young adult group gathers at the parish at six o'clock and then decides on which restaurant and movie theatre they will go to together. Over dinner they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the literacy program which they have launched in the parish. Additionally, there are small groups that meet once a week: the charismatic prayer group, the Cursillo group, and the communities of self- and mutual help inspired by the Twelve-Step Program.

The pastor, the pastoral associate and the deacon share oversight of the various groups and activities of the parish. The pastor tries to be present for as many of the evening meetings as possible. When he is not able to do so, he asks the deacon or the pastoral associate to go instead. In addition to numerous scheduled parochial duties, his typical day might also include a funeral Mass, a visit to the hospital to anoint a patient who is gravely ill, and a meeting with the other pastors of the deanery in the archdiocese. At the end of the day, he might have yet another commitment, which brings him away from the parish. He relies heavily on the members of the parish staff, especially the pastoral associate and the deacon. Without them he would have little chance for a day of rest and recuperation each week. He is aware of the need for ongoing formation for himself and for all the members of his staff, and is seeking creative ways to make this possible. As pastor, he understands that it is his duty to take advantage of the many opportunities within the archdiocese to develop his skills as a minister of Christ and his Church, and to encourage others on his staff, and within the parish at large, to do so as well.

Because St. Leo's understands itself to be an evangelizing Catholic community, the Word of God in Scripture is central to its life, prayer, and ministry. The readings for the coming Sunday are reflected upon in all groups and meetings in the parish, as well as in the 25 small Christian communities scattered throughout the many blocks which make up St. Leo's. Indeed, the people of St. Leo's have come to think of themselves as a community of communities. These small communities, or ecclesial groups, are of such size as to allow for the development of human relationships rooted in a shared vision and in commonly-held purposes and values. They also allow for an ongoing experience of shared faith and prayer.

The pastor, pastoral associate, deacon and other members of the parish staff gather on Monday evenings with each of the following groups in rotation: catechists, teachers, leaders of small groups and animators of various ministries and initiatives within the parish. Their focus is less on programs and organizations and more on communities of mission and ministry: feeding the poor of the parish and beyond, visiting those shut-in, preparing couples for marriage, working in RCIA teams to assure readiness for sacramental initiation into the Church, and organizing circles of catechists devoted to the religious education of children, teens and adults. All are

invited to look at their own lives and the life of St. Leo's Parish in light of the Sunday readings, discerning how the Word is calling for their own transformation, for the transformation of the whole Church and the wider world. Here, the pastor plays an important role, since it is in the Monday gathering for Scripture reflection that he preaches the Word in such a way as to invite parish leaders to be teachers and exemplars of the Word in their own communities through the exercise of their various ministries throughout the week. It is here, during the Monday evening meeting, that the preparation of the prayers of the faithful for the Sunday liturgy begins. As the members of the community gather in faith around the Word together with their pastor, they can listen to one another and begin to voice in prayer the needs of the parish, the neighborhood, the wider Church and the world. It is also during the Monday meeting that the pastor and the deacon begin to profit from the wisdom of the community, listening to their concerns and insights and bringing them to bear upon the preparation of the Sunday homily.

Scripture study and faith sharing takes place in various groups throughout the parish during the week and strengthens the identity of St. Leo's as a communion of communities. Thus the people called together by the Word come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday having already reflected at length on the readings. They are prepared for the liturgy and more deeply bonded with other members of the community who have likewise been washed in the Word throughout the week. At St. Leo's, the parishioners are aware that the full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy to which they were called at the Second Vatican Council (Sacrosanctum concilium 14) is not possible unless there is full, conscious and active participation in the life of the community.

The activities of the parish and its liturgical life strengthen the sense of being called through baptism to share in the mission of Christ and the Spirit. The gathering on Sunday for Eucharist is understood as the source and summit of the parish's life, but not the whole of it. The parish church is no longer seen as the place where people go simply to have their needs met. Rather, the parish is where one and all are challenged to exercise their baptismal calling. The pastor no longer sees himself as the one called to meet all the needs of the people, but as the one who animates the people of the parish to put their gifts to the service of each other and of the wider Church and the world. The pastor presides over a community of faith, gathers it together, calls it to unity and charity, orders its life, and animates its mission. This he does preeminently in the celebration of the Eucharist with his people. At St. Leo's, who the pastor is and what he does can only be understood in terms of his relationship to his people, his Church, the entire Body of Christ. It is not just the ordained, but the community as a whole, which is called to share in the mission of Christ and the Spirit, to witness to the presence of Christ and the creative activity of the Spirit in the Church and in the world.

Week by week, the people of St. Leo's gather for Word and Sacrament. The Sunday Lectionary is the principal text for the spiritual life of the people and of the pastor, just as the Eucharist is their principal source of spiritual nourishment. As their knowledge of Scripture has deepened, they have come to see themselves in the Gospel account of Jesus and the apostles faced with a hungry crowd. In Mark 6: 30-44, the apostles are concerned about how so many people will be fed. Jesus tells them, "Give them something to eat yourselves." The pastor at St. Leo's seeks to discern, call forth, animate, and send forth his parishioners to serve the needs of the people. Jesus does not feed the hungry people himself, but he urges those near him to do so; and yet it is Jesus who makes the feeding possible by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. At St. Leo's, the pastor is not the one who does it all, but is one who is devoted to animating the baptismal gifts of his people for the service of others. Like Andrew in John's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (6: 1-14), the pastor has an eye for what is present in the

community and brings it to the Lord, so that the Lord might now show how it is sufficient and give it increase for the life of the whole Church.

By all accounts, the above description would hold true for almost all of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 2005. St. Leo's would be described as a fine, active parish of the archdiocese, and almost everyone would agree. The pastoral life of St. Leo's, L.A., 2005, is anything but simple and routine, and the spiritual needs of the parishioners are not met according to the schedule of services provided in 1955—or even in the year 2000.

Part Two | On The Road Together

The two depictions of St. Leo's Parish in Los Angeles give some indication of the vast changes that have taken place in the life of the Church and its ministry in recent decades. The portrait of St. Leo's 2005 "names" the reality that awaits us in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles at this time. But, more importantly, it expresses what I believe the priests, people, and parishes of this archdiocese are called to be and become in the coming years of this new millennium.

Aware of the many changes affecting the life of the Church, the priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles assembled in Palm Springs, California, in October 1997, together with the Archbishop and the five Regional Bishops. Our purpose was to explore together the nature of the ordained priesthood in light of the challenges we must face in the Church of today, as well as in the Church of tomorrow. Throughout our gathering, one of the themes was Jesus washing the feet of the disciples (John 13) as a model for priestly ministry. As we reflected on our lives and our work, our joys and our struggles, most of the priests expressed a great sense of satisfaction, indeed excitement, in their priestly ministry. Some offered quite memorable personal witness to the joys and the struggles they have experienced in their priestly ministry. Even as the image of the priest appears to be shifting in significant ways, and as the expectations placed on the ordained seem to mount, when all is said and done, priests in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles are both happy and fulfilled in their vocation to be ministers of Christ and his Church.

Certain tensions remain, however. While the priests agree that a central part of their vocation entails pastoral leadership, many see the administrative responsibilities they bear as a hindrance rather than a help in the full flourishing of their ministry. In general, priests desire less administration or none of it at all; they see it as lying outside the scope of priestly work and ministry. What, then, is the relationship between pastoral leadership and administration? As priests seek new understandings of ministry, with less emphasis on pastoral administration, what responsibilities must they be willing to set aside for a more fruitful exercise of their ministry? A further tensions remains: While most priests claim to be happy and fulfilled in their ministry, they give little evidence of enthusiasm for promoting priestly vocations.

The mood of the Assembly was sober and realistic as well as positive and hopeful. While the number of priests is declining and their average age rising, the number of Catholics in the archdiocese is increasing and the gifts of the lay faithful have been flourishing in unprecedented numbers and in wondrous ways. There was also a sharp awareness and a growing appreciation of the fact that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is truly a multicultural Church. The Priests' Assembly sought out ways to recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit amidst these developments. As the priests of the archdiocese continue to explore different understandings and models of ministry, there is a deepening awareness that even as we are faced with a shortage of priestly and religious vocations, we are being invited to a deeper understanding of the nature of the Christian vocation, and a fuller appreciation of ministry both ordained and nonordained. There was and there remains a strong conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading us toward new horizons.

Given these circumstances, there was a clear recognition that mere adjustment and small shifts in practice will not suffice. What is called for is a major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice. This necessitates four things.

First, it must be recognized that lay ministry rooted in the priesthood of the baptized is not a stopgap measure. Even if seminaries were once again filled to overflowing and convents packed with Sisters, there would still remain the need for cultivating, developing, and sustaining the full flourishing of ministries that we have witnessed in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. In the wake of the council, we have arrived at a clearer recognition that it is in the nature of the Church to be endowed with many gifts, and that these gifts are the basis for the vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate, and the religious life, as well as for the many ministries rooted in the call of baptism.

Second, there is a pressing need for greater collaboration and inclusivity in ministry in the Church of the new millennium. While collaboration is to be a hallmark of the ministry shared among the priests themselves, as well as between the bishop and his priests, a major concern at the Priests' Assembly was to develop a deeper understanding of collaboration between the ministries of the ordained and of the nonordained.

Third, there is a need for a clear understanding of the nature of lay ecclesial ministry on the part of the baptized and those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Finally, there is a need for a common foundational theology as the basis for the formation of seminarians, deacons, religious and lay persons for ministry, as well as for the development of more collaborative skills on the part of the ordained, so that one and all can exercise their ministry in a collaborative fashion.

In the course of the Priests' Assembly it was decided that the priests and their Archbishop would together write a Pastoral Letter on Ministry, articulating a clear vision of ministries, ordained and nonordained, and inviting local communities to begin to plan for the future of ministry in the archdiocese.

Following the Priests' Assembly, the priests, Regional Bishops and Archbishop gathered in convocation at St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, during June 1998 and June 1999. One of the aims of these Priests' Convocations was to discuss further the many challenges that await us as we move toward a more collaborative and inclusive approach to ministry. The discussion has continued within the deaneries of the five pastoral regions of the archdiocese. In the Fall of 1998, a report on the 1997 Priests' Assembly in Palm Springs, entitled "Calling Forth Pastoral Ministry for Tomorrow's Church: Hope For the Future," was published in *The Tidings and Vida Nueva* (December 4, 1998) and included a call for input from individuals, parishes, and other constituencies within the archdiocese about the present and future of ministry.

The title of this Pastoral Letter comes from the Gospel of John. After washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus tells them: "As I have done for you, you should do also" (John 13: 15). It expresses the conviction that all ministry in the Church, ordained and nonordained, is rooted in Christ the Servant.

This Pastoral Letter appears in the course of an ongoing dialogue on ministry in tomorrow's Church. It is intended as a signpost along the way, as we move together to be and to build the Body of Christ. In spelling out this vision of ministries, ordained and nonordained, I call upon the whole Church of Los Angeles to think and to plan for appropriate ways to meet the changing needs of the Church. This Letter is intended, then, as a tool, a mechanism for reshaping the ministerial structures of the local Church in a way that is both more collaborative and more attentive to the diversity of cultures which make up the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. No less will do if we are to remain faithful to our vocation as a Catholic people: to be a sacrament of the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, in our own time and place. The Second Vatican Council reminded us in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), that it is in the nature of the Church to be a light to all nations. In responding to this gift and task, a clearer understanding of ministries ordained and nonordained in this new millennium is required, not merely desirable. By the light of this fresh understanding, we will be better able to move forward in preparation for the coming of the Day of the Lord, when Christ will be all in all (Colossians 3: 11).

Part Three | A Share in the One Priesthood

It has taken the shortage of priestly and religious vocations to awaken in us an appreciation of a broadly based shared ministry and a realization that it is in the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ to be endowed with many gifts, ministries and offices. What some refer to as a "vocations crisis" is, rather, one of the many fruits of the Second Vatican Council, a sign of God's deep love for the Church, and an invitation to a more creative and effective ordering of gifts and energy in the Body of Christ. This is a time of great challenge and opportunity in the Church, not least of all because the gifts of the lay faithful have been flourishing in unprecedented numbers and in unforeseen ways.

Conciliar Orientations

Following the Second Vatican Council there has been a rediscovery in Catholic theology of baptism as the foundational sacrament of ministry, and a clearer recognition that ministry is not just for the ordained. The council related the baptismal call, the ministry of the baptized, and the office of the ordained to the mystery of Christ and found in each a reflection of the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. Every vocation in the Church and every ministry is rooted in the same reality of Christ and his presence by the Spirit in the Church. The Christian vocation is rooted in the Church as a sacrament of Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit. All ministry, be it the ministry of the baptized or of the ordained, is to be understood in relation to the community of the Church which expresses and receives its identity as the Body of Christ in Word and Sacrament. All ministry is for the service of the Church and the wider world, a participation in the ministry of Christ the Servant who, after washing the feet of his disciples urges them, and us, one and all: "As I have done for you, you should do also" (John 13: 15).

The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, calls us to an awareness of the one priesthood of Christ into which we are initiated through baptism. Both ordained and baptismal priesthoods share in this one priesthood. The laity as well as the ordained participate in the threefold office of Christ the prophet, priest, and king. What emerges from the Second Vatican Council is a clear theology of the laity rooted in an understanding of the Church as the People of God, in the universal call to holiness, and in an appreciation of the diversity of the nature of the Church both hierarchical and charismatic (*Lumen gentium* 4). The common priesthood of the faithful and the ordained priesthood are of different kinds. But because the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful are none the less interrelated (*Lumen gentium* 10), it is altogether clear that lay people share in the Church's saving mission through baptism, confirmation, and the ongoing celebration of the Eucharist. Thus with the Second Vatican Council there is a restoration of the baptismal dignity of the laity, an emerging recognition of baptism as the basis and foundation of all ministry, and a fuller realization that ministry is not exercised only by the ordained. Ministry is rooted in the charisms given by the Spirit in baptism:

There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7)

A Baptismal Priesthood: An Abundance of Gifts

Rooted in the gifts of the Spirit given in baptism, ministry both ordained and nonordained is a share in the anointing of Christ as prophet, priest, and king in the waters of the Jordan (Matthew 3: 13-17; Mark 1: 9-11; Luke 3: 21-22; John 1: 29-34). Baptized at the hands of John the Baptist, Jesus the Christ is impelled by the Spirit into the wilderness to be a witness to the glory of God the Father. His whole life was given to worship of the Father through the service of self-sacrificial love.

Brought into being through baptism, the Christian community is formed in and through the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17). It becomes the Body of Christ who is Priest, and it joins itself to Christ the Priest in his return to the Father in his self-offering, thereby becoming a priestly community endowed with the flourishing of gifts to sanctify and evangelize the world (1 Peter 2: 9).

All Christians are configured to Christ through baptism, for that is the sacrament by which the new People of God are incorporated into the Church, participate in Christ's death and resurrection, and assume the name "Christian." All Christians are called to a life of discipleship and have the obligation of extending his work and presence in the world today, advancing the Reign of God in our own time and place. All share in the one same vocation—to be and to build the Body of Christ, building up the Kingdom of God here and now.

It is in the Church, at this time and in this place, that the presence of Christ—the one who witnessed, worshiped, and above all, served—continues. And it is through witness, worship, and service that the Church continually expresses and receives its identity as the Body of Christ.

The baptized are called to share in the Church's mission through mutual service (*diakonia*), through a life of worship (*leitourgia/koinonia*), and through witness (*marturia*) to the Gospel by holiness of life. These are the hallmarks of Christian living. The manner and degree of engagement in this common call differ, depending on the gifts and ministries given by the Spirit: "And the gifts are given so that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4: 11).

Most lay persons are called to transform the world by living out their baptismal vocation, being and becoming the Body of Christ in the world, advancing the Kingdom of God amidst the pressing demands of marriage, family, school and workplace.

The baptized also witness to the light and love of Christ through all forms of prophetic utterance, through teaching, through the ministry of catechesis, through theological reflection by which they seek to probe the riches of the Word and the Christian tradition, and through participation in the Church's evangelical mission, sometimes being sent from home and country as heralds and servants of the Good News in other lands.

The baptized worship God in Spirit and in Truth through full, conscious and active participation in the Sunday liturgy, through the proclamation of the Word in word and in deed, through the liturgical ministries of lector, musician or eucharistic minister, through the many other ministries which serve to animate the community gathered for prayer.

The baptized serve God through administration, feeding the hungry, caring for the needs of the sick, working for justice, washing the feet of the homeless, safeguarding and protecting the rights of the last, the littlest, and the least, giving the Body and Blood of Christ to those gathered at the Table of the Lord, and bringing this Holy Communion to those who are sick at home or in hospital. In all these ways and more, the gifts of the Christian people for witness, worship, and service are being shared for the greater glory of God in a community of faith, hope, and love whose members together become a living doxology—alive for the praise and glory of God the Father, through Christ the Word, in the creative and bonding Spirit of Love through which the world is transformed.

In our own day, in addition to the call to the office of bishop, presbyter, or deacon, and the vocation to the consecrated religious life, some lay persons are called to "lay ecclesial ministry," a vocation of full time Church service in response to the needs of each local community. This must be distinguished from the vocation of all the baptized to advance the Reign of God through their commitments to marriage and family, workplace and social responsibility. It must also be distinguished from the many other lay ministries that flourish in the Church for the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world. Within the context of the common call to service which is given to all the baptized, "lay ecclesial ministry" refers to professionally trained or otherwise properly prepared women and men, including vowed religious, who are in positions of service and leadership in the Church.

This is a unique vocation in the Church, a call to service in the name of the Church. "Lay ecclesial ministry" does not describe one kind of service or work, but refers to the ministries of committed persons, women and men, married or single, which are exercised in a stable, public, recognized, and authorized way. This is Church ministry in the strict and formal sense. It emerges from a personal call, requires appropriate formation, and is undertaken with both the support and the authorization of competent Church authority. Lay ecclesial ministers serve in such capacities as Pastoral Associate, Parish Business Manager, Director of Religious Education, Catechist, Director of the RCIA program, Youth/Young Adult Minister or Coordinator of Liturgy. The vocation to lay ecclesial ministry calls for greater attention and support in the Church today, through public recognition and authorization within a particular ecclesial community, even as we recognize the inestimable value of the foundational vocation

of the baptized, from which arise the vocations to ordained ministry and the vowed religious life, as well as marriage and the committed single life.

Whatever the vocation or ministry, ordained or nonordained, each and every one is an expression of the threefold mission of every baptized Christian. What the Church is—a Body of witness, worship, and service, participating in the threefold office of Christ who is prophet, priest, and king—is what each of us is called to be. We do this according to the gifts, the charisms we have received in baptism. These differ. But whatever we do, we do it in the name of the Lord in the power of the Spirit for the building of the Body of Christ and the transformation of the wider world.

Priestly identity can only be discerned within priestly relationships—with Christ, with the priestly People of God, with the bishop and other priests. The purpose of priestly ordination is to call forth and serve the priesthood of the whole Church, the entire Body. The ordained priesthood is not only a ministry for the Church on behalf of Christ, but it is also a ministry done with a priestly people (*Lumen gentium* 10). Although the notion of the priesthood of the community is older than the concept of an ordained ministerial priesthood (1 Peter 2: 5-9), the Church very early recognized the consecrated ministry of those who are called uniquely to the service of God's priestly people.

The priest both engages the priesthood of the faithful and represents the priesthood of Christ to the priestly people. This the priest does principally through preparing the People of God to celebrate the Eucharist and by presiding over the eucharistic celebration. The priest also does this as one whose life, by a unique and permanent sacramental character, is ordered to prayer, witness, and service in the name of and on behalf of the whole Church.

Priest as Sign of Ecclesial Communion

In light of shifting perceptions of the nature of ministry, priests sometimes wonder about the distinctiveness of the ordained ministry. This calls for a clear articulation of the identity of the priest. What precisely is the priest ordained to be and to do?

The essence of ordination to the priesthood lies in being a co-worker with the bishop(s) to assist in the threefold office of teaching, sanctifying, and guiding. Priests are co-workers with the bishop. The priest builds up the Church by engaging in a threefold ministry of preaching the Word, celebration of divine worship that is rooted in his sacramental ordination, and guidance of the faithful. But the ordained priest's ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and guiding is also linked to the more fundamental mission of the baptized to witness, worship, and serve. As is the bishop's. By teaching, the priest enlightens, encourages, and at times corrects the baptized faithful as they strive to witness (*marturia*) to the Gospel amidst a culture quite indifferent and often hostile to its values. The ordained priest sanctifies the baptized by preaching the Word (for Christ is present when the Word is proclaimed and preached), by leading prayer (for Christ is present whenever two or three gather faithfully in his name) and by celebrating the sacraments

(for Christ is present in every sacrament, and, above all, in the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian worship). All this he does best when he understands himself first as a member of God's holy people gathered at worship (leitourgia/koinonia). And the ordained guides by establishing, cultivating, and sustaining patterns of relationship rooted in equality, interdependence and mutual service (diakonia), calling forth and coordinating the gifts of all the baptized.

In understanding properly the ministry of the ordained priest, what must be underlined is the gift of presiding over the life of a community and its prayer. The priest must know how to evangelize, to catechize, to preach, to pray, to celebrate, to discern, but, above all, he must know how to draw all the baptized together into communion and mutual service.

The sacramental life of the Church is centered on the Eucharist, whose celebration is to reflect the many gifts and roles exercised in the Church community. The ordained priest exercises his ministry by calling all the faithful to its celebration, by affirming their baptismal call within it, and by centering the life of the community around Christ in memory and in hope, through the gift of the one Spirit given to all the baptized.

By his share in Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, the ordained priest focuses in his person the revelation of Christ in and to the Church. Just as the ordained represent the entire community of faith, hope and love, so also the members of the Body of Christ should recognize themselves in the ministry of the ordained: in the bishop's ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and guiding; in the priest's ministry of witness to the Word, sanctification through sacramental celebration, and exercise of pastoral leadership.

Deacons serve the Church by assisting bishops and priests. Through ordination deacons participate in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, but they do not share in the ministerial priesthood itself (*Lumen gentium* 29). Nonetheless they express in a most visible way the character of the Church as servant. Diakonia is so central to the life of the Church that it is singled out and sacramentalized in diaconal ordination. The ordained deacon signifies in his person the unique charism of service in and for the Church.

From its origins, sacramental ordination has served the purpose of building up and presiding over the Church. Our understanding of the ordained priesthood has changed and is still changing. But certain key terms have been used over time to try to pinpoint the priestly role.

The term *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ) has been used to show that it is really Christ who acts in the Eucharist and in the sacraments. No personal power or gift of holiness on the part of the minister can assure this, even though the priest's gifts must be put at the service of Christ and the Spirit to add a fitting witness to the sacramental action. The priest can never stand in as a substitute for Christ, nor ever represent all that Christ truly is.

The term *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ the head) has been used to indicate that the priest acts in the person of the Church and of Christ the head of the Church. Affirming that the priest acts in *in persona Christi capitis* relates priestly ministry to the whole Body, head and members, and emphasizes the priest's collaborative role, the need to work with other ministries, and the need to draw into the unity of the Gospel and the Church community all the gifts and ministries that come from Christ and his Spirit. As head of the community, the priest addresses challenging prophetic words to the community, exercises pastoral ministry of oversight and direction of the charisms of the community, and presides sacramentally as the instrument of Christ's action in the sacraments. But, in headship, the ordained minister is in the Church, not above the Church, or apart from the Church. The Church is the primary subject of liturgical and sacramental activity. The whole Church celebrates the sacraments—head and members.

The term pastor (shepherd) has been used to express the priest's relationship both to Christ and to the faithful. The term priest has been used to underscore the reality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and in the ministry of the ordained.

Models of ministry continue to change, and in times of rapid change such as our own great discernment is needed. In light of the many gifts and challenges that are calling us to reshape our ministerial structures, the priest may be best understood as a sign of ecclesial communion. By sacramental ordination, the priest signifies the unity, apostolicity, and catholicity of the Church, the Body of Christ, the entire People of God—head and members.

When we are gathered by Word and Sacrament at the Table of the Lord as the one Body of Christ, we are amidst the real presence of the apostolic Church here and now. The priest as co-worker with the bishop seeks to preserve communion within eucharistic assemblies and between and among local Churches and all Churches of the apostolic faith throughout the world. We are at our roots when the People of God gather faithfully together at the Eucharist with their bishop and with his priests and deacons and other ministers. The Spirit evokes the apostolic Church not by bringing us into the past, but by wedding the past to the ongoing life and faith of this community, and by enlivening the charisms and enabling their full flourishing in a way that marked the early gatherings of the Church at prayer.

A Future Full of Hope

The Church at this moment may be likened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13 ff). Like them, we continue to speak with one another about all that God has been doing in our midst. Like them, we are on the road, *in via*, amidst a journey, and, like them, many of our expectations have been unsettled. As our tightly-held expectations are disturbed, the gift of the Lord's presence, the power of the Spirit, is ours to receive, and the Lord is in our midst, no less than on the road to Emmaus—as companion on the journey, as teacher, as guide and, especially, in the Blessing and Breaking of the Eucharistic Bread.

All across the continents a broadly based, shared ministry has been awakened in the Church by the Second Vatican Council and the developments which followed. Now we see with greater clarity that the Church is endowed with many gifts and ministries and offices. Today we recognize more clearly the role of the laity and the requirement to exercise all ministry in a more communal and collaborative fashion. All of these developments are signs of God's enduring love and care for the Church, and all are invitations to renewed and deeper faith in the Spirit's guidance, to profound gratitude for the Spirit's gifts, and to an ever-widening hope for a future as yet unknown.

Part Four | Planning for the Future: Toward a Collaborative, Inclusive Ministry

Ministry in this new millennium will be more collaborative and more inclusive in its exercise. The Body is endowed with many gifts. Authentic collaboration is rooted in the conviction that all of the baptized are given a share in Christ's priestly ministry, and that one and all are necessary for the fulfillment of the Church's mission. True collaboration requires an appreciation of the distinction and differentiation of roles and responsibilities in the Body of Christ, together with a clear recognition of the fundamental equality of all the baptized, ordained and nonordained. For effective collaboration to occur, each one must believe that he or she has something to offer, and have trust in the gifts that others bring to our common task. Above all, we must be willing to admit that we can achieve something together that we cannot achieve alone.

While lay ministry differs from the ministry of the ordained, it too is a participation in the priestly ministry of Christ and so appropriate in its own right. Only with this realization is true collaboration between ministries ordained and nonordained possible.

If we are to move forward in confidence and hope, what is required, not simply desirable, is planning at all levels of ecclesial life in order to meet the growing needs of an ever-changing Church. What follows are four sets of exercises to be explored by parish-based groups, pastoral councils and other groups within the archdiocese as they seek to strategize ways to meet ministerial needs of the Church of tomorrow.

Exercise One: Seeing and Understanding

The first exercise involves looking at "snapshots" of Church life which seek to capture some of the challenges to be faced as we respond to the gift and the task of reshaping ministerial structures in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. These snapshots are intended to capture some of realities to be faced in the Church in this new millennium. You may select one of these snapshots and examine it at great length during one of your group meetings. Or you may focus on several of them over the course of a series of meetings during which you try to understand the challenges that await you and chart out a strategy for reshaping ministerial structures in

more appropriate ways. There is an abundance of scenarios that can be captured in snapshots like the ones that follow. In the course of looking at these snapshots, you may want to develop your own for closer examination.

A 56-year-old Sister has been the Director of Religious Education in her parish for 13 years. Over the last year, tensions between herself and the pastor have been mounting. These tensions are brought to a head when a first-year seminarian, 30 years old, is assigned to help out in the parish as part of his seminary formation. He is introduced to the parish community during the Sunday Masses. The pastor is "all aglow with excitement and enthusiasm," referring to the seminarian as "the hope for the future of the Church." The DRE feels resentful because the pastor has made a "big scene," "falling all over the seminarian." "The pastor acts like the only ones doing ministry are himself and this 'wet behind the ears' seminarian." She claims, "I cover for him day in and day out. So do all the other lay ministers on the staff. Each of us does more than he does." The Sister, an appropriately trained minister, feels like hired help. She does not feel appreciated. Do you have any advice for her? For the pastor?

* * *

The functions of ministry continue to evolve today as they have in the past. In the Church of the future, should there be a transfer of jurisdictional authority, it is conceivable that lay ministers may preside at burial services, witness marriages, and baptize on a regular basis. If the ordained priest is identified primarily with what he does, this identity is potentially threatened with changes in activity. Since some of what the priest does is becoming more and more interchangeable with what the lay people do, this may result in an identity crisis for the ordained minister. In light of so many changes, a 62-year-old priest approaches his bishop in frustration, and articulates his concerns thus:

Now that just about anybody can do just about anything in the Church today, why would anyone want to be a priest?

With the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the importance of the laity, and with its understanding that the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders resides in the bishop(s), the importance of the priesthood has gotten lost in the shuffle.

Saying Mass and hearing confessions, the priest's "job description," gets so little attention because of the administrative burdens of a parish priest, and because of the expectation that he "empower the laity."

My "job description" has changed too much already. I am afraid that I will be unable to negotiate yet more changes that lie ahead.

What would you tell this priest if you were his bishop?

* * *

A 32-year-old physician is thinking of leaving his practice. He enrolls in an M.A. program in Pastoral Studies. As he nears completion of the M.A., he does indeed leave his medical practice and accepts a pastoral internship in the most remote region of the diocese, where there are three parishes with one pastor. A retired priest says Mass on two Sundays a month in one of the parishes, but can do no more. The doctor-become-lay minister is considering being ordained a permanent deacon, something he has begun discussing with his bishop. For now, he is pleased to be "just" a pastoral associate. In this remote region of the diocese, people do not like to travel very far. Indeed, some cannot. How can these three parishes share resources in such a scenario? How are the tasks and resources to be distributed? Concretely, how/where is the Easter Vigil to be celebrated in the coming year(s)?

* * *

The pastor and priest associate of a large parish are both on the verge of burnout because of the weight of pastoral activity and, even more, because of the day-to-day maintenance of the parish. To meet the crisis head on, the pastor hires a parish business manager and asks the bishop for the appointment of a lay pastoral associate. The latter takes up several tasks often associated with the priesthood, among them: leading the prayers at the vigil service before a funeral Mass, conducting the prayers for the commendation of the dead at graveside, and visiting the seriously ill in home and hospital. But the parishioners want personal contact with a priest in such circumstances. Discuss various strategies for facing the ministerial challenges in this scenario.

* * *

A young couple is preparing for marriage. They expect to visit with a priest periodically in the course of the preparation. In the initial contact, the priest instructs the couple to work henceforward with the parish marriage preparation team, comprised of married couples and led by the lay pastoral associate. They express their disappointment at not having one-on-one contact with the priest and decide to go to another parish for "personal attention." If you were the lay pastoral associate, what would you say to the young couple?

* * *

Several neighboring parish councils collaborate in working out their daily Mass schedule, so that there is no unnecessary replication of services. Parishioners are duly informed of the new Mass schedule, and encouraged to participate in the Masses at neighboring parishes. They resist on the grounds that "the other church is not my parish." What recommendations might be made to move forward?

* * *

A bishop is faced with closing or clustering parishes because he does not have enough priests to provide a resident pastor for each parish. What advice would you give to the bishop?

* * *

The Guadalupanas have gathered at the parish church on Thursday evenings for years, followed by a meeting with the parish priest to discuss their various apostolic works within the parish. The new pastor informs them that, because of other parochial duties, he is unable to join with them for their sessions. The Guadalupanas feel abandoned. More importantly, they are reluctant to meet without the presence of a priest, because of their commonly-held conviction that they cannot make decisions affecting the life of anyone in the parish without the approval of a priest. Any advice?

* * *

A senior pastor feels that he cannot retire because there is no priest to replace him as pastor. Despite his age, deteriorating health, and long years of service, he decides to stay on as pastor out of a sense of responsibility to his people. What other options are at his disposal?

* * *

A lay woman feels called to lay ecclesial ministry but cannot afford to live on a "church salary." How to proceed?

* * *

A member of the parish for more than 20 years is increasingly frustrated because he cannot connect with a priest. Secretaries, receptionists, lay associates, voice mail—but no priest is to be found. After finally reaching a priest, the parishioner is advised that what concerns him would be better dealt with by the deacon in the parish. He resists the advice. Any recommendations?

* * *

One parishioner telephones another and reports: "A few days ago I called the church for information about planning the Quinceañera for our youngest daughter. The parish secretary told me that the pastor was doing 'group' Quinceañeras only. Our family has a long history of priests conducting the Quinceañera in the presence of family and friends, not in front of the whole church filled with total strangers! I am hurt and enraged that the priest will not honor our traditions and do the Quinceañera the way it has always been done." What would you say if you were part of this telephone conversation?

* * *

A shy and reticent parishioner asks to see the pastor. She expresses great sadness as she tells him: "Our parish used to have three priests serving us. Now there is only you, Father, and there are no associate priests. On Sunday, we have 'supply' priests and sometimes it seems like these visitors are saying all the Masses. For many years we were urged to build a stronger sense of

community in the parish, but now I am beginning to feel a loss of a sense of family and community in my parish because of all these visiting priests. What's going to happen to our parish, Father?" What would you recommend that the pastor say?

Exercise Two: Understanding and Judging

In the second exercise the focus is on one or another of the scriptural sources which provide the basis for the understanding of ministry expressed in this Pastoral Letter. The purpose of the exercise is to gain a clearer understanding of the nature of ministry, ordained and nonordained, and, in light of that understanding, to come to some judgments about the way ministry is to be exercised in your parish in the coming years. What does the passage say about ministry in the Church, the coming Church "seen" in the snapshots in Exercise One? Do our current ministerial structures in the parish, deanery, pastoral region, and the archdiocese help or hinder the view of ministry expressed in:

- 1 Corinthians 12 ff. "Gifts that Differ"
- John 13: 1-20 "As I have done for you"
- Mark 6: 30-44 "You feed them"

Discuss how our exercise of ministry in the Church might be a clearer expression of our commitment to take to heart Jesus' words to his disciples: "I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done for you."

Exercise Three: Deciding

The third exercise is intended to help parish groups decide what needs to be done, what changes need to be made, in order to move toward a more collaborative and inclusive approach to ministry. Within the context of your small group or parish community, invite one or another of those present to share the story of the circumstances which brought him or her to recognize the need to change, to be more collaborative and inclusive—perhaps in a personal relationship, in the family, at the workplace, and then in their life in the Church and in their ministry. What decisions needed to be made and why? What was needed to sustain and strengthen the decision once it was made? Invite the individual and the whole group to focus on a series of questions, among them: What were the perceptions, convictions, behavior that had to be set aside in response to a call to greater collaboration? Consider several qualities often judged necessary for collaboration in ministry:

- Respect for the priesthood of the baptized and the ministerial priesthood rooted in the conviction that each is essential to the life of the Church.
- Commitment to ongoing conversion to equality, interdependence, mutuality in every dimension of ecclesial life.
- Openness.
- Willingness to change.
- Vulnerability, the recognition of the need for help, because we cannot and should not try to do it all ourselves.

- Nondefensiveness.
- Generosity, a willingness to share.
- Holding in poised spiritual liberty the inevitable tensions that come with change.

Which of these qualities do you judge to be most important as your parish moves toward a more collaborative and inclusive approach to ministry? What is missing from the list of qualities? Name them. What are the strengths and challenges of a more collaborative, participatory, inclusive approach to ministry? Spell them out. Does a collaborative and inclusive approach to ministry have any weaknesses or shortcomings? Be specific.

Exercise Four: Acting

The fourth exercise involves identifying concrete and quite specific actions that must now be taken in light of what has been seen and understood, and in view of the judgments and decisions arising from the previous exercises. This exercise focuses on several questions to be explored together at the parish, deanery, regional, and archdiocesan levels.

1. How does the priest best discern charism and vocation in the members of his parish community?
2. How might we better educate seminarians and priests to recognize and develop the gifts of the all the baptized?
3. How might the priest be better at mentoring leaders in the parish and in forming faithful disciples?
4. How do we animate people to respond to their baptismal call to full participation in the life of the Church, to share in the mission of Christ and the Spirit according to their unique vocation and gift?
5. Through baptism, all Christians are called to share in the mission of Christ and the Spirit. The demands of Christian discipleship entail giving particular attention to the last, the littlest and the least in Church and society. Who are the last, the littlest and the least in your parish, neighborhood, workplace, school, community? And what concrete steps can be taken to be of greater service to them?
6. What concrete steps should we take to develop a process to discern, identify, and call forth the gifts of the baptized and then provide adequate formation in the exercise of lay ecclesial ministry?
7. What concrete steps can we take to nourish, support and sustain vocations to the ordained priesthood and religious life?
8. How can we assure that the training and formation of lay ecclesial ministers will be one of the top priorities of the archdiocese and of our parishes?
9. How do we educate lay Catholics to embrace new models of ministry?
10. How do we help priests negotiate the many changes that yet lie ahead?
11. How do we learn the skill of listening to one another within our communities, small groups, the parish, the deanery, the pastoral region, the archdiocese?
12. If you were to develop a job description of the ordained priest in the Church today, what would it look like?

Conclusion

The dawn of this new millennium is an occasion of great joy and deep hope. This is a moment of grace, a time in history when we, clergy, religious and laity, are called to recognize the rich opportunities that are ours for the service of Christ and his Church. We are gifted by God to respond to the challenges that await us. We have no reason to fear, but an abundance of reasons to live in hope and confidence.

There are many resources within our archdiocese to help us, one and all, to respond to the gifts and the tasks before us. I pledge my support to the priests, religious and laity as we move together to meet the needs of our local Church, working to reshape ministerial structures so that they allow for a more collaborative and inclusive exercise of ministry. This archdiocese has fine programs of education and training for ministry. I urge you to take advantage of the many opportunities offered through the archdiocese, through St. John's Seminary, St. John's Seminary College, Loyola Marymount University, Mount St. Mary's College, and other resources. We welcome your active participation to assure that the rich diversity of the Spirit's gifts will continue to flourish in service of the Body of Christ and the wider world in our own time and place.

As we move together in a spirit of true collaboration, one of the challenges awaiting us is to learn more about sharing resources at the local level. If ministry is to be truly collaborative and inclusive, then we must make greater efforts in "twinning" and establishing "sister parishes" throughout the archdiocese. How can we encourage developing "sister parish" relationships between poorer parishes and those with greater financial resources? In working together to establish greater collaboration between different parishes we will all gain a fuller appreciation of the ways in which all ministers of Christ and his Church are challenged to become more effective advocates for the poor, the last, the littlest, the least in both Church and society.

Since the conclusion of the Priests' Assembly in October 1997, the priests of the archdiocese have been working more closely at the deanery level. Greater collaboration in ministry will require that we commit ourselves to work even more closely within all our deaneries. How do we enhance the importance of the deanery as a resource and model of collaboration? How do we enhance the decision-making ability of the pastoral regions and deaneries to deal with local situations? How to form a more effective, collaborative deanery structure? How can the deanery become a context for the continuation of the work of the Priests' Assembly and Convocations?

This Pastoral Letter is itself the fruit of the Priests' Assembly of 1997 and the Convocations of 1998 and 1999. These have been vitally important gatherings for the life of our archdiocese and for its future. If we are to continue to reap the rich rewards of those gatherings, to continue to develop a more collaborative and inclusive approach to ministry that the priests have called for, then one of the challenges that awaits us now is to gather together priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders to explore how we all might more effectively exercise our ministry as servants of Christ and his Church.

It is, then, with great joy that I announce that I am hereby convoking an Archdiocesan Synod which will include members of the whole People of God. The last Synod in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was held in 1960, prior to the Second Vatican Council. The pre-Synodal process will begin now with the promulgation of this Pastoral Letter, and hopefully, will conclude in late 2002 or early 2003 in our new Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

In preparation for the Synod, I urge each and every priest, deacon, religious, and baptized Catholic within the archdiocese to take to heart the words of this Pastoral Letter. If the message is to be taken to heart, what is required, not merely desirable, is that each and every parish begin to plan for studying the entire Pastoral Letter and for engaging in the exercises in Part Four of this Letter. In so doing we will be better able to move forward together in the hope of being and building the Body of Christ in this local Church of Los Angeles.

Ours is a rich inheritance, a plentiful endowment. But this is not a treasure of silver or gold. Rather, our inheritance is an abundance of gift—a flourishing of gifts more plentiful than we had ever imagined!