

Class 9: Theology of Ministry: Called, Gifted, and Sent

Overview:

The word “ministry” comes from the Greek word *diakonia*, for “serving and attending upon someone.” We find the roots of Christian ministry in Jesus’ own call to serve “to preach the good news to the poor” (Lk. 4.18-19). “In Jesus’ ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and reconciling, the presence of God’s kingdom broke in upon human history in a new and definitive way” (NDCS, 658). Ministry is about building God’s kingdom through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit through a community of believers. This ministry of service, of faith-in-action, will always follow the pattern of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus’ ministry of the “good news” is now committed to the Christian community. Recognizing the various gifts (charisms) of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, the community channels these gifts toward the building of God’s kingdom, a society of peace and justice, where people’s needs are met, especially the need to experience the presence of a merciful God.

Since Vatican II, a major shift in the understanding of ministry took place in the Church. Ministry was no longer the privileged domain of clergy and religious but also of lay people by virtue of their baptism. The sacrament of baptism is the invitation from Christ to participate *directly* in the mission of the Church. The Holy Spirit constantly calls individuals to hear the Word of God, and in freedom, respond to the invitation to carry out the service rendered them in building the Kingdom of God. For this reason, those in ministry develop a contemplative stance and a prayer style that will guide their commitment to service.

Objectives:

- To grasp more fully the biblical understanding of the term “ministry.”
- To develop an awareness of Jesus’ ministry as a pattern for contemporary ministry.
- To expand one’s knowledge of the different notions of ministry before and after Vatican II.
- To develop a fuller appreciation of the ministry of lay people and its relationship to the sacrament of baptism and confirmation.
- To understand the relationship between ministry, a life of prayer and the kingdom of God.

Resources:

- **Handbook for Today’s Catholic.** 26-28, 51-54, 116-126.

- **Catholic Catechism of the Church.** [897-913], [1928-1948], [13, 162, 2088, 2087], [904-914], [4-10, 821, 905].
- US Bishops: *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium.* Access document at <http://goo.gl/7iDhR> .
- US Bishops: *Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice.* Access document at <http://goo.gl/KBCsT> .
- Vatican II: *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam Actuositatem).*
- John Paul II: *Christifideles Laici.* Access document at <http://goo.gl/yikEw> .
- T. McGonigle, “Ministry, Ministerial Spirituality” in **New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality** (NDCS), 658-659.
- T. O’Meara, “Ministry” in **The New Dictionary of Theology** (NDT), 657-661.
- R. Wicks (ed.), **Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers.** Vol 1, Paulist Press, 1995.
- P. Philibert, **The Priesthood of the Faithful: Key to a Living Church.** Liturgical Press, 2005.
- P. Bernier, **Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach.** Twenty-Third Publications, 2006.

Outline:

1. Jesus’ ministry. Religious experience of being loved by God in the river Jordan. Experience of the desert. Reading of Isaiah and mission in service of the kingdom. Jesus’ agenda for ministry is outlined in Lk. 4.18-19.
2. *Diakonia*, as it is found in the New Testament (Rom. 12.7), means “ministry.” We get the word “deacon” from this Greek term. It means a church action or some form of service to the community (Eph. 4.12). Every ministry is rooted in a charism; some charisms in each Christian can lead to a specific ministry. Diaconal charisms come to baptized women and men in many forms during their lives (NDT, 658). In the early church, men and women were called “co-workers with God” (Col. 4.11).
3. Development of ministry in the NT [see handout A]:
 - a. First, there was the ministry of Jesus (c. 27-30 CE);
 - b. the first communities of Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus (30-45 CE);
 - c. the wider foundations of the churches by the Twelve and by other apostles (importance to teacher, prophet and apostle) (45-70 CE);
 - d. development of bishop, presbyter and deacon as specific ministries (70-110 CE);
 - e. Two structures of ministry evolved during the first century:
 - i. apostle-prophet-teacher, and
 - ii. bishop-presbyter-deacon.
 - iii. How the churches moved from the first triad (i) to the second (ii) is unknown.
 - f. Women were involved in ministry from the beginning. Full membership of women in the Christian community was a revolution for the first century. Rival groups of Christianity did not always incorporate women as members. A principle of the Church we must ponder is from *Galatians* (3.28). Women were followers of Jesus from the beginning to the end. We should expect that ministry is open to all the baptized.

- g. Ministry in the first communities focused on action and service, not of power and honor. Ministry came not only from the Spirit and the Twelve but from the community itself.
- 4. Ministry before Vatican II [see handout B]. Gregorian Reform. Council of Trent (1545-1565) was a reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Hierarchy in question. Ministry was exclusive domain of the clergy and religious; lay people became “Father’s helper,” second class citizens in the Church. “Pay, pray, and obey.” Grace came through the hierarchical system to the people. As a “perfect society,” the Church grew in terms of numbers, increase number of baptisms.
- 5. Ministry after Vatican II. All are called to holiness. Ministry no longer domain of clergy and ordained, but to all the baptized. Ministry is rooted in baptism and confirmation. Lay people participate directly in the mission of Christ. Priesthood of lay people. Key themes:
 - a. **Mission of the Church:** to build the kingdom of God.
 - b. **Identity of the Baptized:** *But you are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation* (1Pt. 9).
 - c. **Mission of the Baptized:** We are the message, signs, sacraments, of Christ’s redeeming activity. We are all baptized into Jesus’ vocation and mission to be prophet, priest and king.
 - d. **Levels of ministry:**
 - i. General ministry – passing service to others.
 - ii. Public ministry – lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ordained ministries.
 - e. **Key points in ministry**
 - i. Ministry is rooted in the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. All ministry is functional, for the benefit of others, not primarily the minister.
 - iii. Ultimately, all ministry is for the sake of the Kingdom of God, which is the object of the church’s ministry.
 - iv. Knowing what Christ did and what he is still doing lies at the heart of the what the church is all about.
 - v. Ministry is not a vocation for the few, but obligatory for all the baptized.
- 6. Seven Pastoral Criteria for doing ministry. Leave the one in search for the 99 (see Mt. 18.12).
 - a. Reach out to everyone, not just to a few.
 - b. Recognize the presence of God already working in people’s lives.
 - c. Begin all ministry with the poor as a starting point. The “poor” are those who “don’t know,” who “cannot,” who “don’t practice,” and who “cannot respond.”
 - d. Do not destroy what exists, but build upon existing structures and practices.
 - e. Distribute the greatest number of responsibilities to the greatest number of people.
 - f. Understand that all progress is slow and progressive.
 - g. Work towards a desired future, as subjects, rather than as objects.
- 7. Vatican II vision of the contemporary parish and need for renewal in ministries. (Sources are documents from Vatican II.)

- a. Renewal is a grace and gift of God (AG, 37b). Such a renewal grows when there is a desire to reach out to “the 99”, those who do not feel as though “they belong” (AG, 37 b and c). In this way the Church becomes visible (SC, 42)
 - b. Lay people have a role in ministry and renewal of the Christian community (AA, 10). Lay people are subjects of the mission of the Church and not mere collaborators. They participate in the functions of Christ priest, prophet and king.
 - c. Lay people participate in the liturgical life, apostolic works, missionary action, preaching the Word of God, efforts of the ordained by professional competency, and administration of finances, etc. (Note: ministry is not just being a lector or Eucharist minister, or what is called “sanctuary ministry.” Ministry has two directions: inside the institutional Church and outside to the margins of society.)
 - d. The role of lay people is to integrate the diversity of human concerns in the Church [see handout C]:
 - i. problems, issues, and challenges from and of society;
 - ii. issues related to salvation;
 - iii. collaboration with apostolic initiatives
 - e. In order to respond to these demands, ministry should be (**Medellin Document 15**, no. 13):
 - i. a *pastoral de conjunto* (see Dueweke article at <http://goo.gl/C8ew7>).
 - ii. a team ministry directed toward the formation of small communities.
 - iii. a decentralization of services (places, functions, persons).
 - iv. a coordination of dispersed efforts (AA 10).
8. Ministers must also have a commitment to prayer. There is a difference between “doing God’s work” and “working for God.” One can become overly involved in doing “good things” in a parish. But one must learn to “discern” what God wants, and this might require saying “No” to other “good things.” In order to discern, one must pray, listen to God’s Spirit in the heart by praying the scriptures and by listening contemplatively. Prayer should always precede active ministry. Prayer is not separate from ministry but is the attitude of listening and responding to the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit gives the strength to carry out a ministry.
 9. Ministry and the Eucharist. “To drink from the cup” at mass is a sign of our willingness to commit ourselves to a life of service, and to “empty ourselves” for others, especially those in need. Jesus asked James and John if they could “drink from the cup” (Mt. 20.22; Mk. 10.38). Before receiving communion, St. Augustine shows the Eucharist, the body of Christ, to the assembly and says “Receive what you are, be what you receive.” Ministry is about the building up of the body of Christ through love. St. Paul says the same in Eph. 4.16.
 10. The person who is involved in ministry will be a person of prayer, who brings the needs of one’s brothers and sisters into the pattern and awareness of Christ’s concern for all.

Questions for small groups:

1. Ministry is a call to loving service. Every Christian receives a gift, or charism, from the Holy Spirit for building the community that is to be Christ's witness in the world. What kinds of "charisms" do you see in the people in your parish? Are there people who have charisms and gifts, but no one recognizes them? What happens to the community when a few people dominate all the ministries?
2. We have the habit of "Praying for Vocations." What does this really mean? If all baptized people have a "vocation", say to the married or single life, why do we focus only on priesthood and religious life?
3. Some say "There is a crisis of vocations to the priesthood and religious life because there is a crisis in understanding the Church's mission." What do you think?
4. Has the participation of women in ministry increased or declined in the Church?
5. Before Vatican II, lay people were treated like "Father's little helper" and as "Second Class Citizens." Vatican II corrected this image of "pay, pray, and obey." How do you understand the role of lay people now?
6. In your ministry, how do you bring the needs of the poor and those of your brothers and sisters to prayer?
7. Are you able to recognize your gifts for ministry?
8. Review Handout C. Which challenge strikes you?

History and Forms of Ministry

Handout A

The Ministry of Jesus

Healer

Exorcist

Teacher

Reconciler

Peacemaker

Liberator

Ministry to the Reign of God

Ministries in Acts

Teaching 5:25

Preaching 8:4

Healing 5:15

Exorcism 8:7

Public Prayer 8:15

Prophecy 11:27; 21:9

Presbyter 11:30; 15:10

Conclusion: Ministry in Acts continues with Jesus' ministries, but ministers (Apostles, Paul, members of the community) also acted creatively in raising new ministries in response to needs.

Established Forms of Ministry

The Twelve (Matthew and Luke)

Apostle

Deaconess

Prophets

Prophetesses

Teachers

Widow

Leaders

**History of Ministry:
From the Gregorian Reforms to Vatican II**

Handout B

1. The Gregorian Reform centralizes the church and its ministry and moves it into the arena of the spiritual
2. Trent gives the church an ontology of ministry with three levels and canonizes a theology of plenitude vested in the bishop
3. Vatican I, with its decree on papal infallibility, “divinizes” top-down ministry and finally links ministry and jurisdiction
4. Vatican II stops the long narrowing process of ministry and opens it up to married deacons and to the charisms of the baptized sharing in the three fold ministry of Christ as priest, prophet and king.

Notes on Vatican II

With Vatican II there is a new era in which lay people is central in the mission work of the church in society and active agents of the internal life of the church. The new spirit is found in the Catholic action movements of the 20th century. Vatican II empowers people.

The Church is now not thought of as the hierarchy, but as the “People of God”

Baptism is the sacramental basis of all ministry.

There are shifts from:

- Clerical ecclesiology to communion ecclesiology (LG is point of departure)
- Priesthood of Christ—from cult liturgy to life of sacrifice to God

Ministerial priesthood—from something individual to a gift in the community to help others in the community live out their priesthood

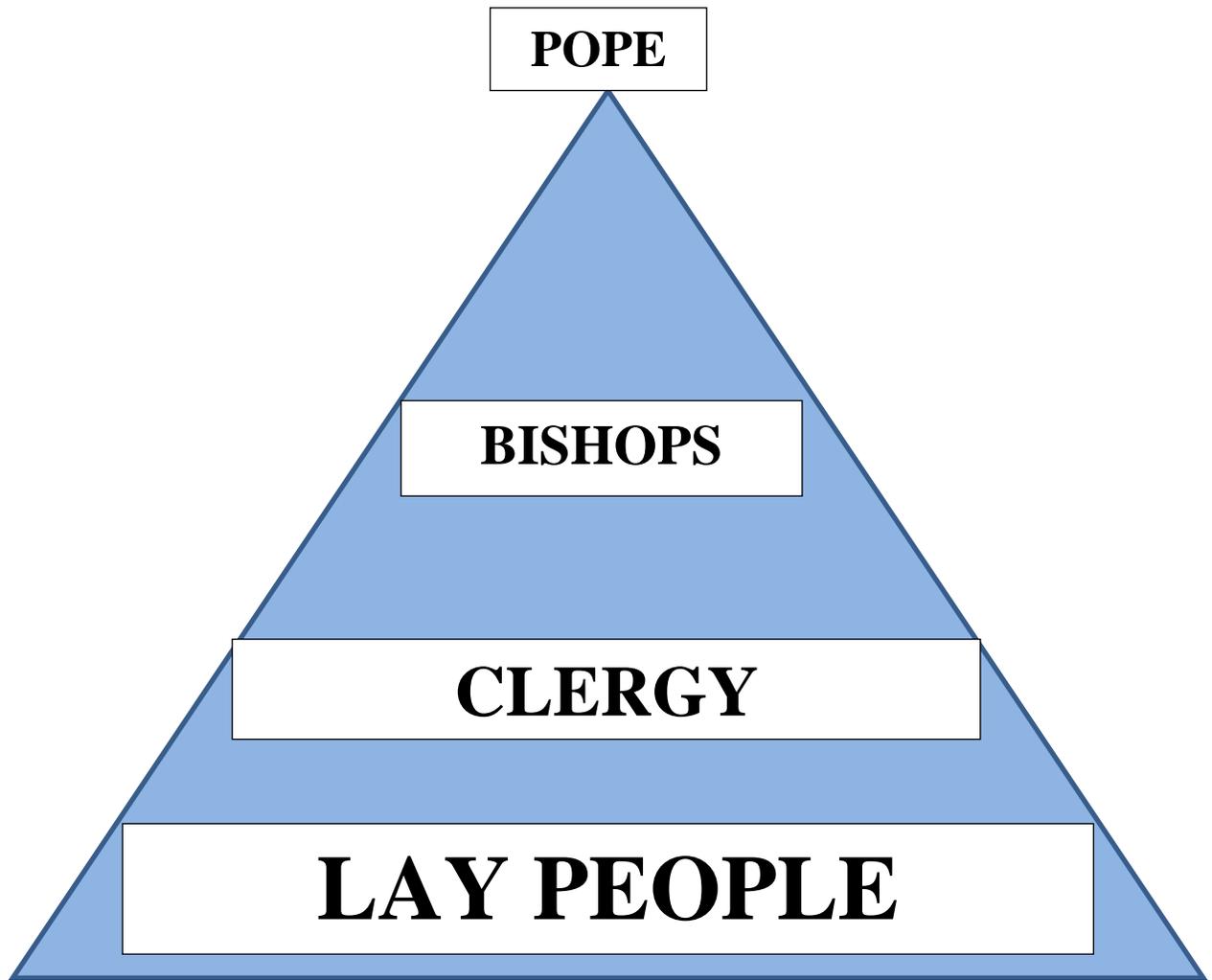
Key Issues in Vatican II

- A Christian is another Christ on earth anointed by the Holy Spirit, sanctifying the world to God
- Signs of the times
- Kingdom of God (LG 31)
- Priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood
- Baptismal consecration to priesthood

History of Ministry: Future Challenges

Handout C

1. Kingdom of God: mission and notion of church as servant to the reign of God in our global society
2. Baptism and consecration into ministry
3. Priesthood: emerging forms?
4. Priestless parishes, lay parish coordinators, etc.
5. Developing model of parish life
6. Collegiality and accountability
7. Inculturation
8. Option for the poor
9. Struggle for life
10. Stewardship of our sacred earth
11. Church as counter-cultural
12. Holiness, new saints need to be laity (and married!)
13. The Border
14. Adult Formation and scholarships for training lay leaders
15. Ministerial Paradigm Shift: from volunteers—to participants in Christ's priesthood
16. Ecumenism
17. Just starting...just do it!
18. The use of the media to evangelize



PRE VATICAN II

