

**National Association of Catholic Chaplains**  
***Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord***  
**Background on Document**

**I. Introduction (Comments by Rick McCord)**

- a. Not definitive theological work
  - i. We may not have it all together, but together we have it all
  - ii. LEM: focused, professional, authorized
- b. A response from U.S. Catholic Bishops
  - i. **What?** To new realities present in Church's life and ministries
    - 1. growth and diversification of Catholic Population
      - a. 1957 to today 107% increase in Catholics
      - b. 40% share pastors with other parishes
    - 2. expanded and diversified lay participation
    - 3. emerging groups of laity now perform ecclesial ministries
      - a. 1980 NCCB "Called and Gifted"
        - i. Prepare to work professionally
        - ii. Financed, administration
      - b. Co-Workers focuses on – "pastoring" of people without pastor
        - i. Authorization
        - ii. Leadership
        - iii. Close mutual relationships
        - iv. Preparation and formation
    - 4. focus: adult, advanced, Christian ministerial formation
  - ii. **How?** Offers theological and pastoral resources to dioceses, programs, and academic institutions
    - 1. Contextualizes and offers a rationale within an ecclesiology:
      - a. Communion and mission
      - b. Relational, differentiated, within a hierarchical communion
      - c. Communion of persons for mission
    - 2. LEM
      - a. Generic (encompass and describe many)
      - b. Not a specific position title or ranking
      - c. "adjective" to identify a developing and growing reality, describe it more fully, understanding more deeply
        - i. Lay
        - ii. Ecclesial – communion/mission
        - iii. Ministry
          - 1. – share in three-fold ministry of Christ
            - a. Priest
            - b. Prophet
            - c. King
    - 3. LEM is a permanent feature on the ministerial landscape
      - a. High degree of quality
    - 4. Two assumptions about ministries
      - a. Ecclesial – serve within Church (as is – blessed and broken)
      - b. Collaborative – open to and capable of ....

- iii. **Why?** For the recognition of LEM within the context of a broader renewal in how we understand and organize lay and ordained ministries.
  - 1. Renewal comes from emphasizing the relational character of ministries in which roles are different but complementary.
    - a. Need to integration into consciousness and structure of Church
    - b. Renewal in clear relationships to discipleship and mission
- iv. **For Whom?**
  - 1. First and foremost diocesan bishops
  - 2. Then for many persons share responsibility for ensuring that the work of lay ecclesial ministers “can flourish for the good of the whole community...”
    - a. those who educate and form
  - 3. lay ministers
    - a. express gratitude
    - b. convey an understanding of unique and necessary service
    - c. thus Romans 16:3-16 “my co-workers”
- v. **For what?**
  - 1. “guiding, educating, forming, employing, evaluating, and sustaining those laity call to collaborate with priests and deacons”
- vi. **Where?**
  - 1. mainly parish ministry
  - 2. “principles and strategies...be considered for their relevance to other settings

## Outline

### Part One: Foundations

#### A. Describing and Responding to New Realities

- a. The Call to All Believers
- b. The Call to the Lay Faithful
- c. The Call to Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- d. Reality of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

#### B. Understanding the Realities in Light of Theology and Church Teaching

- a. Triune God: Source of Church's Mission
  - i. Fundamentally relational
  - ii. Jesus proclaim Good News of Kingdom of God
  - iii. Sacraments of Initiation: members of Body
  - iv. Charisms of Spirit – benefit for community
- b. Church: A Communion for Mission
  - i. Mystery of Trinitarian communion: source and fruit of mission
  - ii. Common dignity
  - iii. Mission that shapes whole Christian life
- c. Ministry: Serving the Church and Its Mission
  - i. Diversity of gifts
  - ii. Diaconia – service
  - iii. Priest – not merit by sacramental character
  - iv. Profoundly relational
- d. The Bishop and Lay Ecclesial Ministers (LEM)
  - i. Center of, ensuring, maintaining communion
  - ii. Creates structures and venues to foster communion
  - iii. Set before, being for, and being with
  - iv. LEM – “find their relationships with the community and its pastors both by virtue of the Sacraments of Initiation and by virtue of the recognition and authorization received from these pastors.”
  - v. Bishop: give oversight (*episcopo*) - often delegated – “to order these new ministerial relationships within his diocese and to affirm and guide the use of those gifts...”
- e. The Priest and Lay Ecclesial Ministers
  - i. Primary collaborator with bishop
  - ii. In church and in forefront of church
  - iii. Ordered to one another, yet intimately related
- f. The Deacon and Lay Ecclesial Ministers
  - i. Depend for the exercise of the ministry on the bishop
  - ii. Carry out some of the same tasks as LEM
  - iii. Not functional but sacramental distinction – work together
- g. The Lay Faithful and Lay Ecclesial Ministers
  - i. LEM take on new relationship to mission of Church
  - ii. Persons of genuine love for the whole Catholic Church
    1. in communion of heart and mind with pope
    2. ecclesial identity shaped by obedience to bishop and to universal magisterium
    3. expressed by generous collaboration
    4. no elitism – service for good of church

## Part Two: Pastoral Implications

### A. Pathways to LEM

- a. The desire for LEM
  - i. unique pathways, young adult, mid-life, small faith communities
  - ii. life investment worthy of support
  - iii. personal invitation
- b. Discernment of a Call to LEM
  - i. Call: dramatic or over time
  - ii. Discernment: process
  - iii. Mentoring: formal and informal
  - iv. Dispositions
    1. Being in full communion
    2. Desire to serve Church/mission
    3. Commitment to regular prayer, Mass, sacraments
    4. Zeal to live Christian life, and willingness to live and teach as the magisterium teaches
    5. Emotional maturity, including ability to sustain friendships and professional relationships and the management and appropriate expression of anger and affection
    6. Intellectual gifts
    7. Commitment to good communication and conflict resolution
    8. USCCB/CCA Standards 2003
- c. Determination of Suitability for LEM
  - i. Help of spiritual director, mentor
  - ii. Demonstrated in several ways
    1. Within beliefs/ disciplines of Catholic faith
      - a. Prayer, scripture, liturgy
      - b. Know/adhere to Church doctrine in teaching and discussion
      - c. Respect/appreciate Traditions/traditions
      - d. Regular celebration of sacraments
      - e. Ability or potential to direct others in their service
    2. Psychological and social health
      - a. Chaste live
      - b. Friendships and collegial relationships the lead to personal and professional
      - c. Mature emotional balance, respect for all within Church, and freedom from personal agenda
      - d. Willingness and ability to engage in disciplined study, including academic and ecclesial subjects
      - e. Appreciation of new ideas, critical thinking ability, and ability to manage stress
  - iii. Gradual process, involves multiple agents
    1. Academic
    2. Ministerial formation
    3. References, screening
    4. Not one-time process

## B. Formation for LEM

### a. Introduction

1. Need high standards, effective methods, comprehensive goals
2. Whole person
3. Four areas
  - a. Human qualities
  - b. Spirituality
  - c. Adequate knowledge (theological/pastoral studies) and intellectual skill
  - d. Practical pastoral abilities

Level and extent of formation – no single answer

4. Partnerships
5. “special character from secularity proper to lay state and from its particular spirituality” – different life circumstances
6. Formators – recognize and tap life experiences
7. Cultural context of every person
  - a. Programs: multicultural, cultural diversity

### Four Areas

### b. Human Formation: GOAL - *seeks to develop the lay ecclesial minister's human qualities and character, fostering a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service*

#### 1. Elements

- a. Basic understanding of self and others
- b. Psychological health
- c. Mature sexuality
- d. Physical health
- e. Knowledge of one's personal gifts and special charisms
- f. Recognition of the traits and abilities one lacks
- g. Understanding of family systems and dynamics
- h. Ability to learn from both praise and criticism
- i. Appreciation and valuing of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity
- j. A genuine respect and concern for others (rooted in Jesus example, Church's teaching)
- k. Virtues of Christian discipleship

#### 2. Methods

- a. Small faith community
- b. Affirmation/critique
- c. Periodic Feedback
- d. Counseling
- e. Fostering of self-reflection/self-awareness

### c. Spiritual Formation: GOAL - *aims to arouse and animate true hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions. It promotes and strengthens that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one's life. Openness to this ongoing conversion is a prerequisite for fruitful spiritual formation.*

#### 1. Elements

- a. Living union with Christ
- b. Build on the word of God
- c. Based on Liturgy, especially the sacraments
- d. Incarnational spirituality of presence, and the paschal spirituality of loving service

- e. Awareness of sin
- f. Spirituality of suffering
- g. Marian spirituality
- h. Love for the Church
  - i. Rejoice in what Christ has made the church and allow it to shape one's identity
  - ii. Accepting role of serving publicly in local church
- i. Devotion to the Eucharist
- j. Ecumenical spirit
- 2. Methods
  - a. Daily prayer and spiritual practices
  - b. Spiritual direction
  - c. Faith sharing and theological reflection
  - d. Practice of justice and charity
  - e. Studying the lives of the saints
- d. Intellectual Formation: GOAL – *develop the lay ecclesial minister's understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith that is rooted in God's revelation and embodied in the living tradition of the Church. It consists chiefly of the study of the sacred sciences but draws upon a wide variety of other disciplines: philosophy, literature and the arts, psychology, sociology, counseling, medical ethics, culture and language studies, business administration, leadership and organizational development, law, and so on. While the sacred sciences are the main focus here, we recognize the value of these other disciplines and encourage their study and use whenever relevant for effective ministry.*
  - 1. Preliminary Considerations
    - a. Theology for Ministry
      - i. More complete and systematic
      - ii. Principles and methods to sciences
      - iii. Scholarly
      - iv. Broaden and deepen faith
      - v. Better-grounded and informed ministry
    - b. Ecumenical and Interfaith Dimension
      - i. Hermeneutics: deposit of faith/formulations
      - ii. Hierarchy of truths: structure/relations
      - iii. Fruits of ecumenical dialogue
  - 2. Elements
    - a. Scripture and interpretation
    - b. Dogmatic theology
    - c. Church history
    - d. Liturgical and sacramental
    - e. Moral theology and Catholic social teaching
    - f. Pastoral theology
    - g. Spirituality
    - h. Canon law
  - 3. Methods
    - a. Variety of adult methods
- e. Pastoral Formation: GOAL – *cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in ministry settings and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry*
  - 1. Elements
    - a. Methods for providing formation to others
    - b. Leading community prayer and preaching

- c. Pastoral ministry skills
  - d. Family mission and family perspective
  - e. Effective relationship and communication skills
  - f. Collaboration
  - g. Discernment of signs of the times
  - h. Gift discernment and volunteer ministry management
  - i. Change and conflict management skills
  - j. Basic counseling skills
  - k. Culture and language studies
  - l. Administration skills
  - m. Leadership and organizational development
  - n. Applicable civil law
  - o. Ministerial codes of ethics
- 2. Methods
    - a. Practical experience and mentored reflection
- f. Integrating the Four Elements
    - 1. Guided pastoral reflection
    - 2. Shared formation vision
    - 3. Practice of ministry and theological reflection of it
- g. Ongoing Formation
    - 1. Strengthens ministerial identity
    - 2. Helps build relationships – key to collaboration
    - 3. Many venues
    - 4. Also teaching, giving workshops, mentoring others
- h. Agents of formation
    - 1. Spirit of Jesus
    - 2. Bishop in communication with institutions
    - 3. Pastors and supervisors
    - 4. Local community
    - 5. Formation programs
    - 6. Formators
    - 7. Ultimately – self-formation

### **C. Authorization for LEM**

- a. Introductory comments
  - a. Focuses on LEM within parish communities, but principles and strategies may also be considered for relevance to other settings
  - b. Process by which prepared lay men/women given responsibilities for ecclesial ministry by competent Church authority
    - 1. Acknowledgement of competence for specific role (certification)
    - 2. Appointment of individual to specific position (commissioning) along with delineations of obligations, responsibilities, and authority of position
    - 3. Announcement of appointment to community
  - c. Formal, public declaration – end result of personal/ecclesial discernment
  - d. Diocesan bishop determines if and how
- b. The role of the bishop in the authorization of LEM
  - a. Oversight
  - b. Ensures suitability
  - c. Attentive to proper preparation

- c. The role of pastor in authorization process
  - a. Responsible for pastoral care of parish
  - b. Support crucial
- d. Specific roles covered by authorization process
  - a. Bishop identifies those roles essential to collaborating in pastoral care
- e. Certification of candidates for LEM
  - a. Process: has education, formation, and professional skills?
    - 1. Requirements
    - 2. Evaluate extent one meets these requirements
  - b. Options for setting requirements
    - 1. National associations and USCCB/CCA Standards
    - 2. What's available in existing formation programs
    - 3. Diocese may establish program, seek accreditation
  - c. Two points in authorization process
    - 1. Time being considered for position
    - 2. Pre-established list of persons
  - d. Provinces and regions can work together
- f. Appointment of LEM
  - a. Done in writing
    - 1. Rights and obligations attached to office
    - 2. Limits of authority
    - 3. Others items related to human resources
  - b. Need consistent terminology from canon law
    - 1. "Entrust" generally used when involving great discretion concerning specific programming.
    - 2. "Mandate" for specific instances
  - c. Bishops reserve right to review credentials before appointments
- g. Blessings and Rituals
  - a. Public prayer and ritual can be significant for minister and community
    - 1. Emphasize relationship of the diocesan bishop with LEM
    - 2. Underscore importance of role
  - b. Models exist
- h. Additional considerations
  - a. Process needs to include
    - 1. Provision for accepting experience in lieu of coursework
    - 2. Evaluating/recognizing outside U.S. credentials/ experience
    - 3. Flexibility so the volunteers with parish experience and personal and professional qualities not excluded
  - b. N.B. – authorization process occasions bishop to demonstrate support for LEM and model collaboration

#### **D. Ministerial Workplace**

- a. Best organizational practices needed
- b. Comprehensive personnel system – Some human resource areas
  - a. Recruitment and selection
  - b. Orientation and support for new LEM
  - c. Evaluation and feedback
  - d. Compensation
  - e. Transitions and terminations

- f. Grievance procedures
- c. Resources and outcomes
  - a. Diocese, under bishop's guidance, is primary support
  - b. Clusters, associations, NACPA
  - c. Outcomes of integration of resources
    - 1. Improved morale
    - 2. Savings of time and money
    - 3. Avoidance of fracturing community via disputes
    - 4. Successful recruitment and retention of qualified and committed LEM

## **E. Conclusion**

- a. Same God working that called Prisca and Aquila
- b. Program already exists – found in Gospel and living tradition
- c. Must be translated into
  - a. *Pastoral initiatives adapted to circumstances of each community*
- d. Co-Workers one resource
- e. Within five years (December 2005 printing) be helpful to revisit materials in light of experience.
- f. Let us go forward in hope!