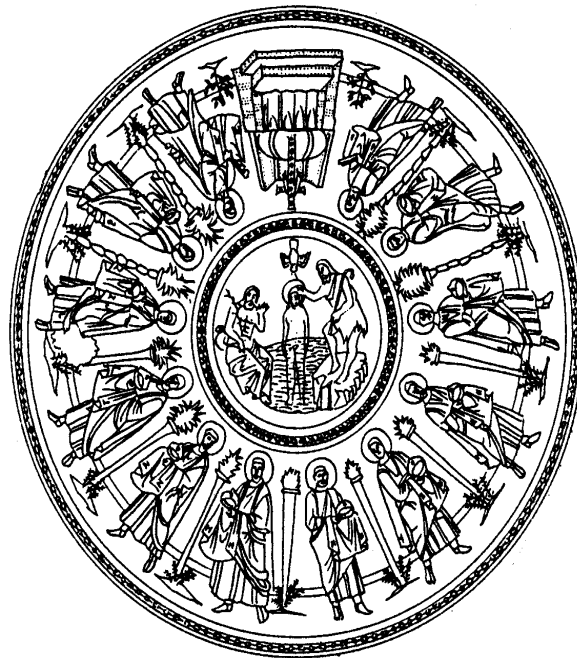

A REPORT ON A
PLANNING CONSULTATION
ON
CHRISTIAN VOCATION
AND DISCIPLESHIP



CONVENED BY THE
NOTRE DAME INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH LIFE
AT THE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 16-18, 2000

Executive Summary

On March 16-18, 2000, the Notre Dame Institute for Church Life convened a panel of experts from national and diocesan organizations and from the University to address the question of how to prepare most usefully for a national conference on issues touching the evolving life of the laity in the church. The focus of the consultation was not on ecclesial lay ministry. That aspect of the role and status of the lay Catholic has been much examined and fruitfully addressed. Rather, the focus was on the questions and issues that have been neglected and that may be responsible for a general lack of appreciation for the church's rich teaching on the dynamic nature of the Christian life.

The themes of vocation and discipleship were chosen to shape the participants' conversations. The panel quickly affirmed the centrality of the theology of baptism and the concurrent importance of the call to discipleship as rich and ancient themes in Christian theology that hold much promise for a renewed understanding of the dynamic nature of the Christian life. The conversations explored both positive ways to develop the related theological themes and addressed the obstacles and problems arising from the culture and the lived experience of the church which impede the development of this theme. Recommendations emerged both for adult catechesis as well as for priorities in shaping a future national consultation on Christian Vocation and Discipleship.

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March 16-18, 2000

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A Report on a Planning Consultation on Christian Vocation and Discipleship
convened at the University of Notre Dame by the Institute for Church Life
March 16-18, 2000

Background

During its mission review process (1997-98) Notre Dame's Institute for Church Life articulated the goal of exploring a number of pastoral concerns that were conceived of in terms of "new energy sources" for its future programs and activities. Along with its constituent centers, the Institute for Church Life strives to implement its mission of assisting the church and its leaders to address the challenges and opportunities that face it in this period of continuing change. Three particular challenges arose from our mission process discussions, namely, Hispanic/Latino pastoral concerns, spirituality as addressed in the academy and in the culture, and the changing role and status of the laity in the church. In consequence, during the 1998-99 academic year, the Institute convened national consultations on Hispanic/Latino Pastoral Concerns and on Spirituality. (Reports on these consultations are available from the Institute for Church Life.)

The third topic of the changing role and status of the laity proved to be a complex one, difficult to address for a number of reasons. First, the Institute explicitly wishes to avoid merely duplicating the efforts of others. Much excellent theological work and institutional analysis has been done relative to the phenomenon of lay ministries. The NCCB Office on the Laity along with an NCCB Committee on Lay Ministry Formation has produced studies and conferences that articulate the best thinking available on the roles, responsibilities, and formational issues touching upon ecclesial lay ministries. Dr. Zeni Fox has captured the essential points of development of this on-going conversation among bishops, pastors, theologians, and lay ministers in her book, *New Ecclesial Ministry*. In addition, the National Pastoral Life Center has published two waves of research detailing the demographics of lay ministers in the U.S. Church along with helpful interpretation of the principal areas of pastoral response required in the local church.¹

Second, this area of the role and status of the laity in the church is complicated by controversy attached to the status of ordained ministers. Compared to the middle of the twentieth century, most countries with significant Catholic populations now feel the effects of a scarcity of priests and seminarians. The impact and implications of this scarcity have fueled insistent debates concerning the advisability of expanding the pool of suitable candidates for presbyteral ordination at the very time that the Holy See is emphasizing the definitive restriction of ordination to male celibate candidates only. It appears likely that any enhancement of the public role of laity in ministry will be construed by some Vatican officials as a threat to their restrictive policies, like a foot in the door of promoting the ordination of married or female candidates.

Third, and ultimately, the topic of the role and status of the laity in the church runs into the inherently difficult task of having to articulate a dynamic vision of Christian life in the world within ecclesiological categories that deny or diminish its significance. In our discussions at the Institute for Church Life, the category "laity" itself became problematic because it is so easily associated with a Christomonist ecclesiology and with an image of ministry that is overly cultic. By this we mean that an ecclesiology that sees bishops and priests as "vicars" of Christ who act with divine powers in Christ's place (prescinding from the action of the Holy Spirit who offers transforming charisms to all the baptized) assigns to the laity an essentially passive (if not inert) role. Further, "ministry" in this construct appears dominantly (if not uniquely) cultic. But this kind of understanding of church

implicitly denies the fundamental mission of the baptized. The whole church is called to work for the transformation of the temporal order. The whole People of God has the mission to serve the emergence of the coming Reign of God.²

For these reasons, this consultation was held under the title of "Christian Vocation and Discipleship." Before anyone is bishop or priest or deacon, that person is first called by baptism to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. The ministry of service of the ordained is ordered to enabling the charisms of all the baptized as leaven in the mass of social interactions. The most commonly underdefined part of this equation is the dynamic impact of the laity within their own proper spheres of influence, especially within their professional life. How can we articulate this vision in practical ways? How can we promote this calling to discipleship? How can we develop the catechesis that effectively conveys this good news? These are the questions that led us to imagine the importance of a consultation of experts to consider defining Christian Vocation and Discipleship more clearly and abundantly.

Responses to the Pre-Consultation Questionnaire

In preparation for our gathering at Notre Dame, we asked each participant to respond to a questionnaire that would give us a chance to identify common concerns and perspectives among us before we came together. (The responses to that questionnaire appear in an appendix to this report.) Once gathered, we began with discussions over the questionnaire report, asking especially what each participant's dominant impression was about the priority issues that we should address. We worked throughout the consultation in small groups of six persons. The following observations are based on the summary of the small group discussions.

What must be our priority interest? What needs most attention?

- We need new categories that are inclusive instead of exclusive. This will help us start new conversations with new starting points. We need new language to help us build bridges to supplant old language that keeps us boxed up and set apart. We need to attend to the power of symbol—learning from the success of the RCIA and acknowledging the symbolic language of the young.
- New language and new categories will emerge from the recognition of the universal call of all the baptized to discipleship. (We were all surprised at how commonly the participants in the consultation invoked the theology of baptism as the root or source of our hopes for articulating a richer vision of church and society.)
- Baptism requires discipleship, which in turn requires mission and transformation of community and society. Discipleship also requires espousal of Jesus' passion for justice; it promotes courageous action. Discipleship is the source of apostolic energy with a passion to reach out and include.
- Saying this renders us aware of the distance between the common understandings of baptism and the church's dream of a vital future articulated in the documents of Vatican II. So formation for apostolic awareness is crucial. But this formation of adult Christians (especially) must also be formation for holiness. The principal sign of the church as a sacrament of Christ's presence through the Spirit in the world is the transformed lives of its members: this is most clearly seen when the church gathers as one in the Eucharist "where their works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and

married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body...become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Jesus Christ." (LG/34)³

- A strategy for undertaking this difficult work of catechesis is to begin with an historical and sociological context. Can we show how deeply society has changed since the ingrained categories of Counter-Reformation ecclesiology became established as dominant? Can we show how local societies/communities (local churches) have changed--e.g., no longer ghettos insulated from the surrounding culture, but Christian enclaves in the midst of the culture? Can we re-position the effective moment of sacramental grace, moving it outside ritual experience (though drawing from ritual) and into the arena of family, work, neighborhood, city, society? Can we address the urgency of expressing inclusivity in our discourse, our rites, and our actions: racial, gender, class, and cultural inclusivity?
- What is leadership within this new matrix? In parallel fashion, why is effective leadership that can engage the potentials of this new ecclesial reality so rarely experienced? Can we courageously address the "incoherent" structures that limit rather than encourage the emergence of dynamic experiences of local church?

These were the issues that set up our continuing discussions. In broad summary, we were asked to:

- make baptism the central and primordial source of Christian life and mission,
- underline the central role of discipleship as foundational to every Christian life,
- resituate the dynamic locus of grace as transformative in time and in society,
- search for new language and new symbols to connect with living experience.

Moving toward a Definition of Key Issues

On Friday morning, participants were required to choose two key issues out of the abundance of things brought up in the pre-consultation questionnaire. Once again, these ideas were brought first into small group discussions, then shared in plenary discussion. The précis which follows is synthetic: --similar ideas that surfaced repeatedly are drawn together here into expressions meant to include the ideas in summary fashion.

A Statement of Key Issues

- We must develop a cohesive and commonly accepted understanding of the Church's mission. Our identity as Christians flows from our mission. The church is ready to explore (and exploit) its rich postconciliar understanding of baptism. Baptism is an experience of Christ rooted in symbol: we need to communicate that this sacrament has a life-long efficacy and a universal transformative power. One participant said: "This will awaken the sleeping giant, i.e., invite into action the discipleship and ministry that flows from baptism."
- This is a message of greatest importance to young adults. We can no longer count on taken-for-granted loyalty among Gen-X Catholics. Our young adults are deeply relational and communal in their outlook. However, their loyalty moves toward persons and communities where they find their own needs and interests recognized and respected. They need to know the message that the church imagines them to be a dynamic element in its life and mission. This may require getting away from "churchy" language and searching for "earthy" ways to evoke a passion for ecclesial life.

- Roman Catholicism in the U.S. is facing a very serious crisis with regard to retaining young adults. Its inability to do so will have serious consequences for the church's institutional life; young adults are the future of the church.
- Changes in economic life (Americans are "overworked" and "overspent") inhibit building the kind of community that is necessary for nurturing a sense of vocation and discipleship. Can we address these problems critically and prophetically without demeaning the culture? Can we help people find spiritual meaning in their everyday work without endorsing the status quo?
- Culture and faith mutually affect and condition one another. We cannot be disciples except within a culture and in relation to the culture. Disciples must be learners—learning from the creation and its changing dynamics which are the Lord's handiwork. Disciples must also discern what is of the Lord and be prophetic for the culture and within the culture.
- The call to holiness is antecedent and foundational to all other vocations. Exploring this could help us overcome the dichotomies of clergy vs. laity and of spirituality vs. religion. If we come to religious ritual with the conviction that we are there as friends of God, intimates of the Holy, then spirituality and religion find their complementarity and their balance in life.
- Holiness is the source of our Christian nobility. Here is where we find the conviction of our oneness in God and the principle of inclusiveness. Inclusiveness will require new models of empowerment, collaboration, communication, and reconciliation to unite and promote the solidarity of women and men, young and old, people of differing races and cultures and classes.
- We must foster intentional adult appropriation of Christian mission and Catholic identity and fight unconscious and half-hearted lingering in religious practice. How do we get cradle Catholics to understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and to take on their responsibilities to transform the world? This transformation includes attitudes toward injustice, oppression, the rights and needs of people of color, gays/lesbians, the poor and unemployed, etc. It takes an alert, intentional Christian to "read the signs of the times."
- In and through baptism, we are called to holiness (intimacy with God in Jesus through the gift of the Holy Spirit). Lay people don't think of themselves as "called to be holy" and the holiness possible within everyday life is insufficiently explored. There are many, utterly diverse ways to be holy.
- De facto, we have a spiritual caste system that has diminished the awareness and actualization of lay discipleship. Theology shows us that we must explore a "discipleship of equals" model, restructuring leadership to clarify the dynamic and apostolic qualities of baptismal life, to provide ritual and symbolic supports for the effective ministry of the laity, and bringing authority into more effective dialogue with the community. We can't keep the new wine of this new age in old wineskins--or they'll break open and fail us.
- We need an ecclesiology that allows for creativity, possible failure, and the resolution of conflict. We are in an Exodus situation, on the way to a promised future church. Here top-down solutions are doomed to failure when they lack flexibility and fluidity. The history of the Catholic Church is filled with examples of experimentation with new forms of religious life, pastoral practices, and missionary adaptations. We

need an ecclesiology that encourages and confers some sort of positive status upon this kind of experimentation under our current conditions.

- We have much to learn from the reform churches where the universal priesthood of the baptized and the apostolic empowerment of the people have been at the heart of their ecclesiology and spirituality.

Concluding this part of our consultation, we agreed that the focus of our discussion has been about "initiation and formation of disciples for mission today." This insight led us to the next step, viz., trying to articulate the methods and means that can bring about such initiation and formation.

How Do We Bring About Initiation and Formation for Mission?

It is the same task as creating an "adult" church:

- collaborative in spirit and marked by vital community,
- aware of its call to service, expressed in openness and hospitality,
- welcoming questions and addressing them in cordial dialogue,
- acknowledging the gifts of each member and sharing them in complementary fashion,
- where decision making is inclusive and collaborative.

The stories of the members must be brought together within the story of the community of Jesus: preaching, storytelling, and scripture study must be experienced as concretely in touch with the real experience of the community.

We must develop (from the pulpit and in catechesis) a mission-oriented pastoral theology.

We should recognize and foster "intermediate institutions" for living discipleship in communities of discernment and social action (e.g., Jesuit Volunteers, Christian Family Movement, Small Christian Communities); recognize the enduring validity of the formula for Catholic Action: Observe, Judge, Act.

Seek common ground: defuse tensions between Left and Right. Find a way of calling people into mission that rises above the ideological and cultural divisions, bet on the young.

Acknowledge the relation of affiliation into Catholic church life to structural issues of church policy:

- the choosing of bishops without consideration for the history and interests of the local church,
- the need to include women in every level of church life,
- the differing needs of the many churches within the global church, and
- the relationship of the Catholic community to the Protestant world and to world religions.

These observations pointed up the need to attend to these factors:

- recognizing the dignity and apostolic efficacy of church members,
- creating ritual and social action that engages and honors the gifts of church members,
- giving primacy to the prophetic in the activities of parish ministers, and
- generating a passion for mission that is linked to the identity of the Christian as disciple.

Steps toward Pastoral Action

As a next step, we asked the participants, working in small groups, to address two dominant questions:

What do you most want to see evolve in the pastoral life of the U.S. Church so as to bring about the initiation and formation of disciples for mission today?

- 1) A solid development of the following pastoral practices:
 - good preaching -- "storytelling" in all its forms to bring the message of the gospel to the world,
 - engaging ritual and seminary formation that has this vision in mind,
 - involved outreach: active religious education for adults that begins with their experience and gives them tools for personal growth and discipleship that will produce "new wineskins,"
 - better faith sharing and/or scripture sharing groups,
 - better opportunities for spiritual growth, for scripture study, for prayer, for service,
 - better support of and formation of RCIA teams, sponsors and god-parents,
 - better attention to "message, community, prayer and service" (RCIA #75) as the standards for all members of the parish community.
- 2) The conviction that each of us is a responsible and gifted person called to share our own talents and to complement one another in the building of God's kingdom. We sustain this conviction through prayer and study of theology and scripture related to daily living.
- 3) The church must become a forum for open and cordial dialogue (ACC, #57):⁴
 - applying the learning of scripture studies to all aspect of church life: doctrine, structures, leadership;
 - identifying mission and essential goals of formation--letting processes, structures, and leaders evolve naturally;
 - Catholics need to be wherever people are being neglected.
- 4) We must recover the sense of profound equality of all the baptized as priests, prophets, and kings: as those who serve the servants of God in the common transformation of the world. This implies the recognition and appreciation of the diversity of gifts (charisms) brought by people and cultures.
- 5) Vatican I focused on the papacy; Vatican II highlighted the ministry of bishops. Only now is the church ready to convene a council to resolve the meaning and mission of lay Christians as the dynamic element of the church's mission in the world.
- 6) We overestimate the connectedness of Catholics, their affiliation to their local Catholic churches. To bring about vital sacramental life, commitment to justice and peace, and a stronger sense of Catholic identity, we will need to effect structural transformations to achieve true collaborative ministry and genuine hospitality to those unfamiliar with our communities.
- 7) We will require the realization of genuine subsidiarity, collegiality, synodality to draw on the wisdom of all, to permit legitimate diversity, so that all feel listened to. This means some revision of structures to give laity real responsibilities in personnel, policy, and even doctrinal decisions. In mission, doing everything (except what conscience forbids) with other Christians to enhance missional effectiveness.
- 8) We must develop a renewed understanding of "the call (vocation) to holiness"

stemming from baptismal identity and give more attention to the challenges of and the need to evangelize American culture as it shapes and gives context to our understanding of church.

9) Parish life will need to evolve to create:

- vibrant and nourishing worship life,
- a dynamic community of communities,
- open, facilitating structures,
- authentic shared leadership models,
- on-going support for family life as domestic church,
- inclusive communities where all are welcome, and
- ministries to people of all ages that are integrated within parish life.

We need a stronger congruity between community and its leadership in all aspects. Today we have a situation in which those two realities are diverging, growing apart. We must ask: does the leadership truly "look after" the community which it is given to lead? How could this be improved? We must also ask what kind of communities the leaders are forming. Are these communities strong enough to initiate and form disciples for mission?

10) We need a broader array of "intermediate institutions" (between the individual and "the Church," parallel to parishes) that invite disciples to concretize their call to mission within U.S. Culture. The institutions should have some sort of ecclesial recognition and backing. Examples: Jesuit Volunteer Corps, but not just for young postgraduates (or, more recently, retirees), but also married and single folk at all of life's stages. For families, other possibilities include extending notions of Third Order affiliation with established religious orders. Incorporating faculty at universities to advise student volunteer groups.

11) Additional qualities to enhance Christian formation:

- creation of ireal^l parish councils: elected by the people (for terms) accountable for all essential decisions (budget, hiring, programs, etc.) with appropriate delegation;
- on-going education of all about sacraments, especially baptism,
- stronger embedding of the idea of social teachings as constitutive of Christian discipleship,
- stronger links between the church and the People of God in U.S.A. with church and People Of God in other parts of the world,
- greater emphases on "experiential learning" opportunities for engaging reflection and action on behalf of justice,
- greater inter-religious collaboration in Christian prayer, service and action, and study groups,
- services outreach to people of other faiths for collaboration on common projects/goals,
- enhancement of "common ground" efforts at all levels (parish, dioceses, professional groups, etc.).

How does the theme of discipleship enable the faithful development of church life?

1) The theme of discipleship clarifies that all the baptized are called and gifted.

This strengthens the inclusion of everyone and indicates their vital importance to the work of evangelization. To get to this point, we will have to ask--and listen carefully to the answers to--the question, "What does the Gospel really mean to you?" Each adult Catholic needs to address this question.

2) Discipleship requires an environment that moves us beyond mere strategy to sharing of lived experience. At the level of strategy we'll argue, at the level of experience we may

engage and be engaged and then moved. Transformation becomes part of the process and creates motivation and desire to learn and discover more of how other folks (tradition) have experienced and responded to the call through the ages as well as now.

3) The development of diocesan pastoral councils are built upon the presumption of common discipleship. They do more than advise, they also provide models of transformational action in and by the diocese (the initiation and formation of disciples for mission).

4) "Disciples" experience their power for good within intermediate structures which allow effective expression of the baptismal call. (See comments above about intermediate structures.) Such structures provide a base of lived experience to confirm and enlarge the person's sense of mission. This keeps a focus on the Kingdom preached by Jesus; calls forth active involvement from all the Christifideles, and allows for freer movement of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world.

5) The theme of discipleship creates a climate of peer respect and mutuality in the work of bringing in the Kingdom of God and serving the world's peoples with the work of evangelization.

Concluding Dynamics

At the end of the morning on Friday, we asked a number of participants to give us their views about what we had accomplished so far with a view to where we still needed to go. Here is a brief précis of those reflections.

From Jon Nilson:

First, the good news is that we show a significant consensus relative to the need to develop and propagate new language, categories, and structures that can name and develop the relationship of all the baptized to the mission of the church. We have been able to note some significant models that already do this. (See, e.g., the pre-consultation questionnaire report in the appendix.)

Second, certain tasks appear to be evident. Here are some:

a) Place the discussion of the role and mission of the baptized within a clear articulation of the historical and social context of the changing church of today. How has the church changed? How is the culture changing? How do we realistically relate our topic to these inescapable realities?

b) What do we mean by "mission"? How did we ever arrive at an understanding of mission that leaves out the most dynamic element of the church, viz., its people?

c) How do we imagine "discipleship"? Is there some better word to express the shaping of the Christian life of the baptized with reference to their real and effective life? We want to "cast the net as inclusively as possible" in defining the image of disciple.

d) We have the task of defining concretely "initiation" and "formation" both in terms of what the result must be and in terms of the "methods" of realizing the desired outcomes.

From Zeni Fox:

We seem to have discovered common interest with regard to the content of our work, viz., a call to discipleship rooted in baptism. We have been less clear about the end point of the process. Nonetheless some ideas have emerged that help here:

- commitment to dialogue (including good listening),
- "adult faith" as a way of describing legitimate religious autonomy,
- the importance of leadership formation, and
- taking a holistic approach to discipleship, including formation for spiritual growth as well as for social or ecclesial action.

It is clear that we need to strive for greater clarity about goals and outcomes for a national conference of some kind.

From Tom East:

We have discovered much likemindedness and energy, as is clear from the remarks already made. Perhaps it would help to ask some questions:

Who do we hope to influence? Answer: Christians who will become disciples by owning their call to mission and to community.

What does a living gathering of active disciples look like? Answer: It will be hospitable, inclusive, and generate vibrant shared life in worship.

How do we go about creating appropriate leadership? Answer: By sharing decision-making and power with those who must become dynamic agents within families, workplace, and social structures. This involves the way we use language, the way we facilitate involvement through structures, the spirit of subsidiarity, and the insight that informs practical administration.

The challenge will be to create conversations that embrace these hopes. This will lead to innovation and renovation of our communities and the sharing of the good news we are celebrating here.

From Sister Rosa Maria Icaza:

At the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio (MACC) our goal is developing community leadership through faith and culture. This is similar to the request made by Jon Nilson (above). MACC's strategy is to build a strong self-image and empower the dignity of leaders in formation. The key element is catechetical materials suited to the needs of the people. Adult formation moves to the heart of the believer through experience--this includes integrating prayer and popular religion into the message.

Our primary interest has got to be extending a broader mission to the people. Identity for discipleship and in mission is hard to discern and to develop. The key instinct remains the pattern: See, Judge, Act, Celebrate. We need to recognize that we are aiming to introduce transforming formation within the lives of over-busy people.

Finally it is also imperative to facilitate a paradigm shift in the minds of church leaders. Effective leadership today identifies apostolic Christians, provides effective formation for them, and empowers and accompanies them in mission. Obviously, the changes needed touch every level of church.

From H. Richard McCord:

At the heart of the NCCB Laity Committee's work has been the goal of enabling full participation of all the Catholic people in the life of the church--its worship, its mission, and its life of holiness. This requires a collaborative relationship between the church's ordained

leaders and the active members of parishes and other Catholic communities. In our document, *Called and Gifted*, we developed the framework of a four-fold vocation of the baptized:

called to holiness	called to community
called to mission and ministry	called to maturity

This articulates the broad vocation of the laity, within which exists the more specialized and narrow call to Ecclesial Lay Ministries (ELM). This formula makes it clear, however, that the two vocations are one at root and must remain linked. It clarifies these important dimensions of ELM as well: that ELM is lay, a legitimate expression of the lay vocation, and at the service of empowerment of others.

From Bill Dinges

There is a dangerous tendency among young Catholics (and young people in our culture) to uncouple religion and spirituality and to opt for spirituality without religion. For lots of reasons, this is not a legitimate option. But we need to be able to demonstrate that.

There is likewise a tendency for them to conflate religion with ethics. Any turn-off from ethical challenges they don't like becomes a turn-off for religious involvement. We have lots of education to do to show how much of what the church teaches in its ethical policies arises from nature and society as well as from the word of God. And where it arises from the word of God, we need to be able to dialogue concretely with the actual social conditions of our times.

Taking Off on a Tangent: Have We Focused Properly on Christian Life?

Saturday morning was set aside to summarize the consultation discussions and to look forward to concrete recommendations for future activities. However, early on, it became clear that many of us thought that we had not sufficiently stressed one dimension of our topic. So we spent the primal energies and major time of the morning addressing the vocation to the Christian life as expressed in effective action in the world.

A few points capture this moment in the consultation:

- A) We had all agreed with great vigor that there is much to be explored in the theology of baptism as the common root of all church ministries.
- B) We had tried to exploit the theme of discipleship both theologically and practically to urge movement toward a more collaborative church and a deeper perception of the universal call to holiness of all believers.
- C) We had begun to describe transformations that would assist and embody these developments.

What appeared as underdeveloped, however, was the theme of the transforming grace of Christian life expressed in the competencies of the faithful where they are professionally most effective and appropriately engaged. This is the theme often referred to as the "ministry of the marketplace." This latter term is confusing, however, because most theologians define ministry as doing something public for the advent of the kingdom of God on behalf of the Christian community. But the dynamic which we recognize as needing further exploration is the expression of the grace of justice, integrity, Christian vision, and compassion (along with other virtues) in the exercise of human work in the world. Here are some of the ways in which the participants further defined the question:

- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus as a parent, an executive, a worker, a citizen, a scholar, or as some other responsible person in society?
- How does that fulfill the mission of the church?
- How do Christians view their motivation for their parental responsibilities, for their professional life, for their civic participation?
- Why isn't this idea (already quite clear in *Lumen Gentium*) taking root in the church?
- This concept of lay apostolic impact is the culmination and fruition of all the structures of catechesis, celebration, ritual, and ministerial service in the church.

It was clear, after considerable discussion, that this aspect of Christian vocation and discipleship is under-defined, under-celebrated, and poorly disseminated. We concluded that this needs to be a central part of the proposed follow-up of a national conference on the theme of vocation and discipleship.

Parameters for a Conference

The participants generously agreed to explore recommendations for the execution of a national conference on Christian Life and Discipleship. Here we report only on the generally agreed-upon dynamics that appeared to be significant for all of us. These are the key ideas:

- a conference with an inner core and outer reaches: some thirty or so experts who consult and agree to produce a conference report, surrounded by larger (and shifting) groups of people (from the campus and from outside) who enter into the process to the degree that they can;
- the participation of experts who can speak with conviction about the themes--including in particular Catholic lay leaders who can witness to the power of faith and the expression of faith in their professional lives;
- a mix of theological conversation with critical witness--calling upon both theological and pastoral experts to dialogue with successful lay leaders: thus, themes of baptism, discipleship, mission; but also holiness, evangelization, and the struggle for justice in the lived reality of people's lives;
- a concern to create a "process" that might be duplicated/replicated in other locales--a way of disseminating the good news of our work more widely in the national church.

Reaching for Closure

Before we adjourned, we asked participants to sum up their experience of the consultation on a number of points. Here is the record of that process:

What Have We Learned?

- That we live in ambiguity and faith; but there is energy and life in the struggle;
- That this whole question fits well within the sacramental worldview that is so characteristic of Catholicism--the ordinary too is holy;
- There are others--some wonderful people--who are grappling with the same issues and questions that I am;

- This is a vast topic: too much to deal with in a weekend.

What's New in Understanding the Central Issues?

- Discipleship language is important as an organizing principle;
- What is central (vocation, baptism, discipleship) may be viewed from so many different (and legitimate) points of view;
- That the central issues, viz., discipleship, mission, formation, and engagement of the culture, are a further specification of what it means for a Christian to have a lively sense of baptismal vocation;
- There is significant energy around these issues for people from a broad range of "locations" in the church;
- I'm more convinced than ever of the need for new images and words: the old ones have just not infused the life of the church. We need to listen to folks (and to poets and novelists) struggling with the God-questions of our time;
- That a vision of church that I thought was dying during the last twenty years is still provoking energy and enthusiasm in Roman Catholicism;
- We are caught in a great paradigm shift, and that's why we need so much effort to define what's happening to us;
- Solving the problem of how to get the message out will necessitate at least some focus on its external and internal causes;
- Young adults are a group that needs new modes of expressing who they understand themselves to be in the church.

What Have We Learned about Needed Pastoral Responses?

- We need to be clear--and to listen. I was impressed by the importance of non-parish, non-diocesan institutions like ICL for moving the church forward;
- We must listen, aware that we do not yet have many answers;
- Pastoral responses will need to be delivered using new images, language, symbols, as ways of expressing the central Christian themes: this is especially critical in engaging younger generations;
- Can we find new terminology for "vocation"? We need to do so;
- We have to face the fact that local parish leaders and members are the vital agents who will be needed to bring about the transformations we have been describing;
- Culture-affirming and culture-denying individuals will approach all these issues quite differently;

- Include in the discussion lay persons working in secular jobs (in government, public education, business, health, etc.) for their critical experience--and include as well representatives of the Eastern Churches (who have some very different and helpful views);
- Pay attention to the least among us: the economically poor, the intellectually stunted, the ideologically disillusioned...
- "Since I hold out little hope for significant structural change in the church, I am not optimistic. It is clear that the issue is adult responsibility of adult Catholics for the church."
- Clear signs show us that pastoral responses in the Latino and Asian/Pacific cultures will need to be different and distinctive.

Finally, What Other Matters Should be Noted?

- This was graced and profound time.
- Satellite links to local conversations sounds like a good idea.
- I feel energized to continue struggling...and helping others to respond.
- This program could profitably be carried out with some resources and participation of other Christian churches.
- Unless we speak the truth, the church will not be vital. This means talking about population issues (conception, abortion), the role of the Christian, the choices of gays/lesbians--all in the context of respect, civility, and charity.
- My hopes for enlightening conversation were fulfilled.
- How will we begin to explore deeper, richer images of God that touch the wounds and hearts of people today?
- Keep in mind similar efforts to name and call us to be church in the modern world, e.g., NALM, the final events of Jubilee Justice, etc.
- The future of the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. is in serious jeopardy as it is related to young adults who are, in fact, its future. This consultation seemed to circumvent this issue or to subsume it under the rubric of "Christian" identity. There are two distinct issues here: our Catholic future and the Christian theology of discipleship. Is there something about the Catholic church worth saving? If so, say what it is.

1 Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City, MO.: Sheed & Ward, 1997). Philip J. Murnion et al., *New Parish Ministers: Laity & Religious on Parish Staffs* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1992). Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Parish Lay Ministry* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1999).

2 See the valuable article: Richard R. Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (1999) 115-139. A source of great insight is Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (New York: Paulist, 1990).

3 Vatican Council II: *Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, Austin Flannery, ed. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996) 52, ¶34. Cf. The entire Chapter IV on "The Laity," 48-58.

4 *Ibid.*, 403f.