

## SEMINAR ON PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

The seminar in Practical Theology at the 1986 convention was devoted to the topic of "Lay Ministry in North America." At the first session, the discussion was initiated by Mary Hines and Robert Kinast, both of the Washington Theological Union (Silver Spring, MD), on the topic "A Theological Interpretation of Lay Ministry." The second session was devoted to the topic "The Local Church and Education for Lay Ministry"; Eugene King, of St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada and Lucien Roy, Director of the Chicago Archdiocesan Office for Lay Ministry, began the session with presentations on educational models in their respective locales. This summary of the seminar's proceedings has been prepared by the moderator from summaries or notes provided by the four presenters and from his own notes of the conversations. The summaries of Hines, Kinast and Roy's remarks are largely quoted from the presenter's own summary, with only minor editorial changes.

First Session: Mary Hines on "The Need for New, More Inclusive Ecclesologies." Mary Hines devoted most of her remarks to the need to develop more inclusive ecclesologies rather than new theologies of the laity or of lay ministry. Such new ecclesologies must grow in the first instance out of the actual experience of lay persons as the primary ecclesial reality. These new ecclesologies must be free from predetermined role expectations since the experience of the past twenty years has shown the role divisions described in the documents of Vatican II to be inadequate in many instances. Many lay persons feel called to prepare for inner-church ministries previously reserved to the clergy, while some clergy choose to participate in the social-political or "secular" areas designated by Vatican II as the province of the laity. This phenomenon in turn calls into question the continuing adequacy of the terminology "laity, lay ministry, etc."

An important opportunity for gathering and listening to lay experience since Vatican II is presented by the upcoming Synod on the Laity, which is to be held in 1987. In order for that Synod to become an effective instrument for bringing about ecclesial change the discussion will have to move considerably beyond a number of the presuppositions which govern the preparatory document. Hines concluded by illustrating some of the ecclesiological and terminological inadequacies in the preparatory document and then by proposing that the Synod structure itself in a truly radical way by being composed of lay persons from around the worldwide Church with the bishops present as "listeners."

First Session: Robert Kinast on "A Process-Relational Interpretation of Secularity." According to Kinast, the 1987 Synod's intention to address the topic of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and the World recalls Vatican II's attempt to offer a positive definition of the laity. The conciliar documents developed a typological definition of the laity and focused on secularity as the dis-

tinctive characteristic of the laity. Secularity is not a particularly theological term and it reveals a clerical perspective in relation to which secularity stands out as distinctive. Nonetheless, the *Lineamenta* echo Vatican II in stressing secularity as a "theological and ecclesial datum." What does this mean? Using the categories of process-relational thought, secularity might be understood in terms of three important concepts—transcendence, transformation, transaction.

Transcendence and secularity are usually contrasted with each other. Transcendence is imaged as vertical and secularity as horizontal. But in a process view transcendence is horizontal because God is always correlational with creation. God is the next horizon within creation, seeing further, seeing fuller, seeing ahead. Transcendence is put more into a time frame than a space frame. Christian secularity is living toward this horizontal transcendence. It is seeking and responding to a persuasive God in the midst of the actual events which make up secular life.

Transformation is at the heart of Jesus' message, but it has been misconstrued as a private event, an inward occurrence within an isolated individual. In a process-relational view individuals are open systems of mutual influence, and their experiences are always public, social, and structural. Transformation is thus a social-political event in the sense that each person is a concentrated center of energy, activity, and influence that flows in and out of other centers.

Christianity is a religion of deeds—or transactions between and among open centers of influence—which share in the horizontal transcendence of God and effect the political transformation of persons. To feel oneself participating in the whole, vibrant, developing world is to enter a mystical experience. On the one hand this frees a person to act beyond the narrow bounds of self interest; on the other hand it enables a person to feel with others, to enter their experience and to commune with them.

The Synod can go deeper than a typological definition of secularity. If it does, it might discover a horizontal transcendence, a political transformation, and a mystical transaction which distinguishes Christian secularity from other forms of secularity and clarifies the theological meaning of the term.

Second Session: Lucien Roy on "Education for Lay Ministry—A Chicago Perspective." Roy described the present Chicago educational program, which offers courses that provide formation in theology, spirituality and pastoral skills for potential lay ministers at several regional centers throughout the archdiocese. This program has the advantage of being supported well by the institutional structures of the archdiocese, as well as by its bishop, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. Cardinal Bernardin's pastoral letter, "In Service of One Another," was one of the suggested readings for the seminar sessions. However, even given this substantial diocesan support, efforts to develop more collaborative models of ministry still encounter obstacles which arise in the larger ecclesial community of which the Chicago Archdiocese is only a part.

The first such problem is the comprehensive nature of the changes called for by the emergence of lay ministries, which affect so many other components of church organization and ecclesiology. Indeed, the emergence of lay ministries highlights the need for restructuring the delivery systems of ministry and rethinking our entire ecclesiology. A second problem area is that of clarifying roles and

language. Some issues may be purely semantic: perhaps the preference for eliminating the use of the word "lay" or for omitting adjectives like "professional" or "career" before minister. Other issues, however, are more fundamental and are linked to questions of identity and function of the ministry within the total ecclesiology. The third practical problem involves the ways in which the university and local church interact (or are unable to interact) in the preparation of persons for ministry. A fourth, and properly theological problem, is the need for further study and clarification of the "essential difference" between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful. Frequently, efforts at practical collaboration fall apart because of an insistence on this essential difference. An historical explanation and a contemporary exegesis of this theological understanding are urgently needed.

Second Session: Eugene King on "Education for Ministry—A Canadian Model." King devoted most of his presentation to elaborating on the approach of selected dioceses in Québec which have developed their own *écoles de formation*. These schools are not connected formally with any theological school in Canada, though they may make use of the talents of members of theological and university faculties. These schools of formation approach the training of lay ministers in three broad areas: *le savoir* or theological knowledge; *le savoir faire* or ministerial skills; and *le savoir être* or spirituality. These schools of formation and the ecclesial situation in Québec had been the subject of another preparatory reading for the seminar: *La Formation des agents de pastorale*, a document prepared by the Bishops' Committee on Ministries for the Québec Episcopal Conference in September, 1985.

In his comments, King identified similar practical and theological concerns inhibiting the development of lay ministry in Canada as had Lucien Roy in speaking about the United States. King, in addition, emphasized the need for pastoral theology to develop empirical data on the situations and experiences of lay ministers. Such empirical study would be a first step toward a theological interpretation that will help stabilize the development of these new ministers and their ministries and contribute to their growth and to the eventual emergence of new and more inclusive ecclesiologies, such as those called for by Mary Hines. Further, King also called for closer pastoral-theological attention to programs and practice in adult religious education and adult spirituality (as in programs located in retreat centers) so that the similarities to lay ministry training might be capitalized upon. Finally, King insisted upon the need for respecting another central ecclesiological reality, the uniqueness of local churches—here referring to dioceses—and their needs and plans for the development of lay ministry. Part of the inclusiveness of the new ecclesiologies called for so frequently throughout the seminar must necessarily entail respect for and attention to the particular and local context.

The preceding summary reveals a substantial coincidence of perspectives and projections among the four presenters—even given their diverse backgrounds and regional perspectives. Discussion among all of the seminar participants tended to confirm the four presenters' analyses of both the theological and practical issues involved in the emergence of lay ministries and in education programs for lay ministry. While the presenting problems seem to be pragmatic—declining personnel, adequate financial support for lay ministers—in the form of scholarships and salaries after the training period, overcoming resistance among clergy and la-

ity, and so on—all of the pragmatic concerns are grounded in the fundamental theological problem of an ecclesiology which is inadequate to the present experience of the Church. Although elaborate solutions to this problem were in short supply at the seminar, convictions and intuitions about the directions to be pursued in search of such solutions were plentiful. Perhaps most important of those convictions is that continuing practical-theological study of the phenomenon of lay ministry is a *sine qua non* for the development of new ecclesiologies and their actualization in the concrete life of Christian communities in the United States and Canada.

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