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**One Body, One Spirit, One Priesthood;
Many Members, Many Charisms, Many Ministries:
Reflections Anglican and Catholic**

by

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A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology of Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Liturgical Studies.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

25 May 2007

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has successfully demonstrated the use of
the use of the Latin Laungae
in this paper.

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Description:

This essay is an examination of the theology of ministry and its orders, written from an intentionally ecumenical and liturgically sensitive perspective. It develops a theology of ministry “grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit in the sacramental experiences of Christian Initiation, and flowing from and leading to the liturgical assembly.” Drawing on the teachings of both Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions, it considers each order of ministry in relation to the other, and to the mission of the church as the community of the baptized, the body of Christ present in the world.

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in its present or in adapted form.

Signature of Student Writer

25 May 2007

**One Body, One Spirit, One Priesthood;
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What does it mean to engage in ministry in the first decade of the third Christian millennium? To whom does ministry belong? A quick search of the internet reveals that there is no commonly accepted answer to these questions. Ministry — on the web at least — can be anything from the collaborative work of a large and carefully organized diocesan pastoral staff to the crocheting of doilies by a Tennessee widow to raise money for charity. Depending on one's experience of church and community, worship and pastoral care, the term "ministry" may connote a very limited set of tasks performed by the ordained, or the entire way of a community's life together. Defining ministry, therefore, is a complex task, due in no small part to the cultural milieus in which it takes place. For instance,

Since the end of World War II, an increasingly racially and religiously diverse United States has attempted to come to terms with vast technological change, radical democratization (with its attendant insistence on human rights and the rights of all nature), and a global economy. We live in the "birth pangs" of a new era. And not unlike the struggles... faced with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, we find our entire understanding of church and ministry challenged by the stresses of massive social innovation.¹

It is evident that, together with a cultural context, one's understanding of ministry is informed by an ecclesial context, or more fittingly, an ecclesiology — a theology of the church. How a church as local community or global communion is structured, and how

¹ Standing Commission on Ministry Development of the Episcopal Church (hereafter SCMD), "Toward a Theology of Ministry" (study document presented to the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Denver, Colorado, 5-14 July, 2000): 8. <<http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/documents/towardtheologymin.pdf>> (8 May 2006).

it regards its relationship to Jesus Christ, other churches, and the world, all impact how its members will comprehend and exercise ministry.

This essay will develop a theology of ministry grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit in the sacramental experiences of Christian Initiation, and flowing from and leading to the liturgical assembly. Considering the implications of Trinitarian theology and baptism, Christology, discipleship and mission, it will articulate a relational understanding of Christian ministry drawing on the insights of those Western churches — namely the Anglican/Episcopal and Roman Catholic — that have maintained the historic episcopate and “ordered” ministry. Recognizing the historical development of ordained ministry, it will finally attempt to draw out the unique characteristics and contributions of the three-fold ordained ministry for the church, especially as a liturgical assembly.

One Lord, One Priesthood, One Baptism

New Testament scholar L. William Countryman suggests that “priesthood is a fundamental and inescapable part of being human. All human beings, knowingly or not, minister as priests to one another,”² and “the fundamental priesthood belongs to all of us by virtue of our humanity.”³ Countryman employs the category of *arcana* in defining this universal priestly ministry, with the priest as revelator of transcendent mysteries.⁴ Contemporary theologies of ministry would not disagree with the notion of a common priesthood rooted in common humanity, but are far more inclined to cast its revelatory

² L. William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999): 3.

³ Countryman: 33.

⁴ See Countryman: 3-8.

nature in terms of *relationship*, rather than in terms of transcendent mysteries. This universal human “order” of ministry is above all responsive to the Spirit-impelled encounter between the divine and the human, mediating — making accessible; explicating; breaking-open — to and for others the relationship engendered by that encounter, often through real symbols of self-giving or offering.

The notion of such a common or universal human priesthood can be recognized in Adam’s naming of the animals that God presents to him in the garden (Gen 2:19-20), with the relationship between God and creation being embodied by and mediated through Adam. Likewise, the exercise of such a priesthood is evident in the offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:3-6. Antecedent to any covenant with YHWH, Cain and Abel attempt to relate with their God through the mediation of animal and cereal offerings. Likewise Noah in Genesis 8:20 makes an offering to God, and Abram builds altars to God (Gen. 12:7; 13:18). Most curiously, the king of Salem, Melchizedek is described in Genesis 14:18 as the “priest of God Most High.” He blesses Abram and makes offerings of bread and wine. The Hebrew Scriptures thus seem to witness to a relational human priesthood prior to the establishment of any covenant with YHWH, or the inauguration of the Aaronic and Levitical orders of temple priests.

The cogency of a universal priesthood rests, for Christian theology, in the dynamic enterprise of the Holy Trinity in establishing human persons as relational beings, created in the divine image to be God’s representatives, having responsibility for creation on behalf of God (see Gen. 1:27-28). The one God of Israel and of the Nations, subsisting in three distinct yet fully divine persons, is fully and personally active in bringing the cosmos into being. The second person of the Trinity, the Word or Son of

God, no less than the Father, was present in the beginning of history and acting with the Father and the Spirit in creating the world. “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being,” (Jn. 1:3; see also Heb. 1: 2). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God became incarnate in time (Jn. 1:14), and became “like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). If understood as *both* establishing *and* mediating the relationship between God and humanity, then the co-priestly work of the Word or Son of God and the Holy Spirit — manifest definitively (mediated) in the particular life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth — is not singularly expressed in Jesus’ self-offering on the cross. Rather, it begins in the creation of the world and the giving of life as gift, is represented in human priestly activities throughout history and drives the present into future fulfillment (as it has from the beginning) under the impulse, direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

While in his human nature Jesus of Nazareth participated in the universal priesthood of humanity, and was part of the “priestly people” of Israel (see Ex. 19:3-7; Is. 61:6), he himself was not of a priestly tribe or clan.⁵ He never claimed for himself the cultic title of “priest” or the ministerial title of “rabbi,” and he eschewed the titles of messianic kingship.⁶ And yet, the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth exhibited the deep marks of a true priesthood. Jesus was utterly dependent on his relationship with his

⁵ Paul Bernier, *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992): 13.

⁶ Among the New Testament witnesses, only the Letter to the Hebrews applies the title priest (often in the form “high priest”) to Jesus. See, for example, Hebrews 2:17; 5:5; 7:26 and 10:21. 1 Peter 2:5 and 2:9 apply the concept of a collective priesthood to the church, and Revelation 5:9-10 states that the Lamb has made the saints “to be a kingdom and priests serving our God;” yet nowhere in the New Testament is the idea of being a priest predicated of an individual Christian.

God and Father for his sense of identity and mission. Secure in his relationship with and identity from God, his ministry was focused not on himself, but on the inbreaking reign of God. His words and deeds were marks of what God's rule among people was to be.

This time was characterized by an itinerant preaching and healing ministry—many concentric circles and networks, common meals given extraordinary significance, and occasional forays of disciples in Jesus' name to preach, exorcise and heal. So ministry at this point was preaching, exorcising and healing. That is simply the phase of Jesus' own ministry in Jesus' own lifetime.⁷

Jesus' ministry mediated the presence and reign of God by establishing relationships that gave primacy to persons, not institutions. "In his ministry, Jesus stood not above, but alongside those who came to him. In him, they found a person who was truly one of them."⁸ By his transparent openness to those around him, he showed himself to be the "one mediator between God and humankind,... himself human" (1 Tim. 2:5). His human openness, and therefore his mediation, reached its apex in his embrace of suffering and death for the forgiveness of sins, his resurrection and glorification, and in the unleashing of the Holy Spirit to constitute church as his Body at Pentecost.

The Paschal Mystery of Christ "creates at least a hope that [Jesus'] priestly experience will finally shape ours — a hope that has already proven strong and true in the experience of faithful people."⁹ For these "faithful people," Christian Initiation is the fundamental sacramental means of sharing in the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. By baptism in water and the triune name of God, faithful persons are immersed in the paschal death and resurrection of Jesus (see Rom. 6:3-11); they are united to the ecclesial

⁷ Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, "Who Did What in the Church in the New Testament?," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller, II (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2005): 1.

⁸ Countryman: 53.

⁹ Countryman: 61.

body of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (see, for example Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12; Col 1:18), and have bestowed on them the identity of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet. 2:9). In baptism, faithful persons are “incorporated into Christ’s body, infused with the character of Christ, and given power to represent Christ and his body, the church.”¹⁰ In baptism, the company of believers welcomes faithful persons into its midst, and charges them with the work of ministry: “We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.”¹¹

This baptismal charge, calling the church and its individual members to mission in the power of the Holy Spirit, is strengthened in the sacramental seal of confirmation and nourished in the liturgical celebration of the Holy Eucharist and reception of Communion.¹² The Eucharist “unites us in the very life of God.... By sharing in the divine life, we are given the grace to build a world of rightly ordered relationships... mirroring the divine life of the Trinity in which we share through the Eucharist.”¹³ The threefold sacraments of Christian Initiation thus establish the *laos*, the People of God,¹⁴ as the “community of people consecrated by baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ The People of God includes *all* the baptized. “The *laos* just are. Baptism ‘sears’

¹⁰ Caroline A. Westerhoff, *Calling: A Song for the Baptized* (Boston: Cowley, 1994), 16-17.

¹¹ *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (hereafter BCP) (New York: Seabury, 1979): 308.

¹² The author recognizes that a variety of theologies (and therefore controversies) surround sacramental confirmation, its purposes, meanings and effects on the individual or the church. It is, however, beyond the scope of this essay to attempt to make sense of them in relation to the topic at hand.

¹³ Michael Downey, “Ministerial Identity: A Question of Common Foundations,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood, SCL, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003): 18.

¹⁴ The term *laos* (people) is commonly employed by Anglican authors to denote the whole People of God, antecedent to the distinctions of “laity” and “ordained.” It will be employed as such throughout this essay.

¹⁵ Susan K. Wood, SCL, *Sacramental Orders* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000): 12.

this identity upon all who are marked in Christ's name."¹⁶ Thus the Catechism of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* can state "The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons."¹⁷

The community of the baptized, the People of God, are united to the ecclesial Body of Christ in a covenant relationship of discipleship and mission. Kathleen A. Cahalan suggests that "The life Christians are initiated into is the life of discipleship. Ministry arises out of the Christian life, is directed toward it, and acts in its service. It does not give rise to the Christian life. *Discipleship precedes all forms of ministry.*"¹⁸ While Cahalan is undoubtedly correct in asserting that ministry is at the service of discipleship, it is not altogether clear whether such ministry is meant to support the discipleship of the People of God *ad intra*, or if it is meant to serve the building up of the baptized community by calling others to discipleship *ad extra*. Cahalan further states that "[t]he vocation to ministry is the call by God and the community to be a leader of disciples," and

[t]hough ministers are disciples and never cease being disciples, disciples are not ministers. Disciples can be ministers insofar as they are called forth and prepared to be leaders in some aspect of the Church's ministry, but discipleship can be lived fully and authentically without participating in ministry, that is assuming some leadership role in the community.¹⁹

Cahalan clearly has in mind highly specific notions of ministry involving public recognition through licensing, liturgical commissioning or ordination. Such ministries do follow upon discipleship; however, they in no way constitute either the fundamental

¹⁶ SCMD: 12.

¹⁷ BCP: 855.

¹⁸ Kathleen A. Cahalan, "Toward a Fundamental Theology of Ministry," *Worship* 80 (2006): 110; emphasis added.

¹⁹ Cahalan: 118-119.

stratum or the whole of Christian ministry. “A minister is one who follows Jesus, who learns from the example of Jesus *and* who takes seriously the implications of the baptismal vows to say and do on Jesus’ behalf, to speak and behave as Jesus would.”²⁰ Logically and sacramentally prior to publicly recognized ministries is the ministry of all the faithful in the liturgical assembly, a “celebrating assembly,” whose ministry, the public exercise of the baptismal priesthood in the worship of God, is the “basic unit” of Christian ministry.²¹

Christian discipleship is thus one critical aspect of the baptismal identity of the People of God. Coextensive with discipleship, not derivative from it, is Christian mission. “As Christians we have heard and accepted the call into the grand and precarious quest of discipleship, and as disciples we are to become bold callers.”²² To follow Jesus with mind and heart, to learn from his teaching and example — discipleship, properly speaking — demands a commitment to live, to love and to serve following his example. For the baptized faithful, discipleship and mission are of one piece, though they are not identically expressed in Christian life. This is clearly evident in the Baptismal Covenant of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. Immediately following the creedal profession of faith, the celebrant asks those to be baptized and the community that supports them:

²⁰ Westerhoff: 16; emphasis added.

²¹ The liturgical assembly, as the local manifestation of the church itself, is ordered hierarchically. This does not subordinate the ministry of the whole Body of Christ to the ministry of the ordained — or, for that matter, to that of lay individuals who carry out specific liturgical ministry roles within the assembly. “None of the faithful are meant to assist passively at liturgical celebrations. Not only is the ordained priest a celebrant; he is one of the celebrants in the midst of the celebrating community. At times he presides in the midst of the assembly, but he never celebrates for the assembly.” R. Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, “The Liturgical Assembly: Light from Some Recent Scholarship” in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kvanagh, OSB*, ed. Nathan Mitchell and John F. Baldovin (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1996): 322.

²² Westerhoff: 5.

- Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- People* I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- People* I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
- People* I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- People* I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
- People* I will, with God's help.²³

The first and second questions pertain to one's relationship with the ecclesial community and one's personal morality. These are questions of discipleship. The remaining three questions concern one's commitment to loving service in the world. These questions make explicit for the baptizands and the community the mission and ministry into which one is baptized. Both discipleship and mission serve to build up the community of faith and to mediate relationship with God to the world after the example of Jesus. "Baptismal ministry is discipleship in which the whole body shares the identity of Christ and his mission as a priesthood of all believers."²⁴

²³ BCP: 304-305.

²⁴ SCMD: 13.

One Priesthood, Many Manifestations

There can be no doubt that the priesthood of the baptized takes many forms when it is concretized in the historical circumstances of ministry. “One possible model for baptismal ministry may be found in the biblically resonant, traditional understanding of Jesus’ own ministry, articulated in the roles of priest, prophet, and servant-king.”²⁵ The identification of these roles (or offices) with the ministry of Jesus has a long and complex history. Walter Kasper comments:

In Scripture itself Jesus’ one office is already described under many different aspects and very many different titles. Jesus is the prophet, high priest, shepherd, king, lord. The older tradition, including Luther, emphasized the *munus duplex*, the office of priest and king; it is only with Calvin that the doctrine of the threefold office is worked out....²⁶

The Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) applies the three offices directly to the baptized People of God.²⁷ The Constitution recognizes that “[t]he people as a whole is priestly, prophetic, and kingly as is each constitutive group within it.”²⁸ The People of God exercise their share in Christ’s priesthood according to their order within the church: “The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, although they differ essentially and not only by grade, are nonetheless ordered to one another; indeed, the one and the

²⁵ SCMD: 13.

²⁶ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, tr. V. Green (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977): 254. It is worth noting that during the Catholic Reformation, the *Roman Catechism* of the Council of Trent mentions the three offices in its explication of the second article of the creed.

²⁷ See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (hereafter LG), 21 November 1964, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965): 5-75, n. 10-13.

²⁸ Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 12.

other in its own manner participates in the one priesthood of Christ.”²⁹ The constitution describes the difference between the common priesthood and that of the ordained in terms of the sacramental powers and religious duties of the priest, “rather than in terms of a more developed theology of a ministerial priest’s relationship to Christ or the ecclesial community.”³⁰ One wonders if such distinctions come prematurely in a foundational discussion of the office of Christ’s priesthood. “[E]very member of [the] church is gifted for, and called to, ministry.... [N]o ministry is more important than another, but... all are equally valued expressions of members of the Body of Christ.”³¹ Those who participate in the ordained priesthood do not cease to be part of the *laos* of the church; nor are the baptized so far removed from the ordained priesthood that they are not to be considered (at least collectively) agents of the church’s liturgical and sacramental ministry. Thus, both lay and ordained orders “mediate the transforming presence of the living Christ” to the church and to the world.³² “The faithful, incorporated into the church by baptism, are deputed by that character to the worship of the Christian religion and, regenerate as children of God, they must profess before [all] people the faith that they have received from God through the Church.”³³ The body of Christ, the *laos* of God is above all the assembly of the baptized at worship, and only in the light of this common vocation to genuine liturgical ministry — and its fruits in

²⁹ *Sacerdotium autem commune fidelium et sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum, licet essentia et non gradu tantum differant, ad invicem tamen ordinantur; unum enim et alterum suo peculiari modo de uno Christi sacerdotio participant.* LG, n. 10; my translation.

³⁰ Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 13. The necessity to differentiate between the priesthood of the baptized and the ordained priesthood in terms of relationship and not sacramental functions will be illustrated below.

³¹ Katharine Jefferts Schori, *A Wing and a Prayer: A Message of Faith and Hope* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2007): 24.

³² SCMD: 14.

³³ *Fideles per baptismum in Ecclesia incorporati, ad cultum religionis christianae caractere deputantur et, in filios Dei regenerati, fidem quam a Deo per Ecclesiam acceperunt coram hominibus profiteri tenentur.* LG, n. 11; my translation. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 63, a. 2.

Christian witness — do the essential relational distinctions between the laity and the ordained become clear.

The Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit is fully and irrevocably given to each faithful person in baptism, equipping them to participate in Christian worship and in the church's mission to the world. Vatican II identifies the prophetic Spirit received in baptism with witness to Christ, a charitable lifestyle and the worship of God. The council then lays special emphasis on the assent of the faithful to the teaching authority of the Magisterium,³⁴ distinguishing between the roles of the hierarchy and the laity in exercising the prophetic office.³⁵ All the baptized are called and gifted to “challenge humanity to an ongoing commitment to live in accordance with God's intent for creation.”³⁶

The role of Christ as king is represented among the people of God by virtue of their membership in the Church. “Among all the people of the earth is the one people of God, with its citizens — drawn from all earth's peoples — established in a heavenly, and not earthly, kingdom.”³⁷ Within the church, the office of Christ's servant-kingship is manifest by the pastoral oversight of the ordained, by the administration of the temporal affairs of the church by ordained and laity in Vestries, Pastoral and Finance Councils, and by those appointed to roles of administration. In the secular realm, Christ's kingly rule is extended wherever faithful people humbly embody “self-giving service to the

³⁴ LG, n. 12.

³⁵ On this point, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism differ somewhat. Whereas the Roman church would tend to stress the receptivity of the faithful to the teaching of the Magisterium, Anglicanism has generally held the teaching authority of bishops in dialectical tension with the *consensus fidelium*, the discernment of the faithful.

³⁶ SCMD: 14.

³⁷ *Omnibus... gentibus terrae inest unus Populus Dei, cum ex omnibus gentibus mutuatur suos cives, Regni quidem indolis non terrestres, sed coelestis.* LG, n. 13; my translation.

world — humbly embodying God’s love and justice in creation and respecting the dignity of all persons.”³⁸

The one priesthood of Christ is given many and diverse expressions in the exercise of the three-fold office of Christ’s ministry as priest, prophet and servant-king. The many manifestations given to this ministry by the lay faithful and the ordained flow from baptism through worship to a common work for the edification of the church, the mediation of God’s relationship with humanity, and the establishment and furtherance of God’s reign on earth. Such ministry manifests the love of God and the life of the Holy Trinity:

[B]aptismal ministry reflects not only Jesus and his ministry. It reflects the greater mystery of God-in-Trinity: God’s people forwarding God’s kingdom by incarnating Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, ministry is, at its heart, a dynamic relationship of love — lover — beloved engaged in a restless seeking to restore created wholeness and draw everything into harmony with love.³⁹

Having established Christian Initiation, and baptism above all, as the foundation for ministry in the church, attention must now be turned to how ministry is organized and carried out among the People of God. The ministry of the ordained has already been alluded to, as it is constitutive to the self-understanding of the church. The whole church is manifest whenever two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus (see Mt. 18:20), or where “the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments [are] duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance,”⁴⁰ that is, the liturgical assembly of the local church. And yet, from its earliest days, the *laos* of all the baptized has organized ministry “in

³⁸ SCMD: 14.

³⁹ SCMD: 15.

⁴⁰ “The Articles of Religion” XIX, in BCP: 871.

terms of distinct ecclesial relations that further specify the exercise of discipleship [and mission] grounded in baptism."⁴¹ While in history those distinct ecclesial relations have differed from time to time and in various places, four orders of ministry have emerged as constant: the laity, bishops, presbyters and deacons.

Many Members, Many Ministries

The historical development of distinct orders of ministry in the Western churches is a complex tale of individual communities wrestling with what it means to be the People of God and to "do" ministry in Jesus' name in specific times and places. It is well beyond the scope of this essay to offer more than a few brief comments on the development of each order.⁴² Evident throughout the history is a movement from the interdependence of the four orders of ministry through a gradual separation and proliferation, and a recovery in the recent past of the recognition of their interdependence for life in the church.

Caroline Westerhoff notes that today "each of the four orders of ministers has different functions to perform for the church, the body of Christ, and each is dependent upon the others to make up the whole.... [E]ach order is a symbol for the others of what they are and what they are to be."⁴³ All Christians are configured to Christ and relate to the whole Body by virtue of baptism; bishops, priests and deacons are related to the

⁴¹ Susan K. Wood, SCL, "Conclusion: Convergence Points toward a Theology of Ordered Ministries," in Wood, *Ordering*: 257.

⁴² Brief but useful treatments of the historical development of Christian ministry may be found in Chapter 2 of Richard P. McBrien, *Ministry: A Theological, Pastoral Handbook* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), and in Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, "Who Did What in the Church in the New Testament?;" Francine Cardman, "Who Did What in the Church in the First Millennium?;" and Kenan Osborne, OFM, "Who Did What in the Church in the Second Millennium?," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller (see note 7 above.) A more comprehensive treatment of the history of ministry is Paul Bernier's *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach* (see note 5 above.)

⁴³ Westerhoff: 15.

body also by sacramental ordination. The “relational character” of orders is understood especially in terms of its activity within the body: as Christ is head of the body the church, so (by analogy) the ordained ministers of the church are configured to Christ as head. In the case of bishops and presbyters, this configuration to Christ as head is existentially evident; for deacons, it is constituted in their ministry as direct representatives of the bishop, and (secondarily) in their iconic modeling of Christ’s ministry of service.⁴⁴

John Jewel, in his *Apologia* or Defense of the Church of England, noted that

[We believe there to be] various orders of ministers in the church: some are deacons, others presbyters and others bishops, to whom the instruction of the people and care and administration of religion is commissioned. Still, no one is, and none is able to be, in highest charge in this universal state: for Christ is always present to his church, and has no need for a human vicar, succeeding him from and over the whole; and neither is there any mortal who can comprehend in the mind the whole universal church, that is, all the parts of the earth; less is it possible for such a one to gather its parts and rightly and fittingly administer its affairs.⁴⁵

While Jewel’s denial of one minister having universal superiority is clearly a polemic against the Roman Pontiff, his observation remains essentially accurate when ordained

⁴⁴ The author does not wish to place undue emphasis on the notion of the deacon as icon of service. Indeed, both the iconic understanding of the diaconate and the notion of the deacon as servant are contested among theologians. While challenging the use of “servant” as metaphor for the diaconate, Ted Nitz convincingly argues from a theology of church as sacrament for an iconic understanding of the diaconate. See Nitz, “Messengers, Agents, and Attendants: Rethinking the Deacon as Icon of the Body of Christ,” *Diakoneo* 28.1 (Winter 2006): 13-14. Susan Wood relies on the servant metaphor (though not exclusively) in her study of sacramental orders. See, for example, Wood: 173-174. Richard R. Gaillardetz, however, challenges both the iconic understanding and the servant metaphor, calling the coupling of the two a “theological dead end” that is particularly unhelpful for understanding the diaconate, particularly in relation to the orders of bishop and presbyter. See Gaillardetz, “On the Theological Integrity of the Diaconate,” in *Theology of the Diaconate: The State of The Question*, Owen F. Cummings, William T. Ditewig and Richard R. Gaillardetz (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005): 72-76.

⁴⁵ John Jewel, *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London: Francis Bover, 1584): sg. B ii-iii. [*Credimus...*] *varios in Ecclesia esse ordines ministrorum: Alios esse Diaconos, alios Presbyteros, alios Episcopos, quibus institutio populi et religionis cura et procuratio comissa sit: neminem tamen unum nec esse, nec esse posse, qui summae rerum universae praefit: nam et Christum semper adesse Ecclesiae suae, et vicario homine, qui ex asse in integrum succedat, no egere: et neminem mortalem posse existere, qui universam Ecclesiam, hoc est, omnes partes orbis terrarium, uel animo complecti, ne dum ordine collocare et recte ac commode administrare possit; my translation.*

ministry is understood as a *cooperative* task placed at the service of the *laos* and their collective vocation in the world. Thus “the Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members,”⁴⁶ and each order of ordained ministers has its proper role in relation to the whole body in carrying out the Spirit-impelled mission of the whole body to the world. In this arrangement, as Jewel alludes, no one order of ministry and no individual within any order bears universal authority or responsibility in this shared task. Called forth for ministry from the Christian community, the ordained exist “for” the assembly of the baptized precisely in its role as primary liturgical minister, facilitating worship and coordinating charisms.⁴⁷ “As those in each order — lay person, bishop, priest, and deacon — take up their roles within the community with clarity, authority confidence and enthusiasm, the others are better able to understand and assume their own.”⁴⁸

I. The Order of the Laity

The laity have historically least been considered ministers of the church, although they constitute the majority of its members, and indeed (as a collective) its primary liturgical minister. The lay order, unfortunately, has frequently been held in suspicion by the ordained leadership of the church, due largely to the considerable secular authority that the laity possess. A relatively recent example was articulated in Pope Pius X’s condemnation of Modernism, which was seen as a threat to the very existence to the Church — in no small part because that “most pernicious doctrine which would make of

⁴⁶ BCP: 855.

⁴⁷ This point is developed in detail by Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993): 198-203; see also Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 95-98.

⁴⁸ Westerhoff: 16.

the laity a factor of progress in the Church."⁴⁹ Such negative assessments came officially to an end in the mid-twentieth century, when church reform documents sought to recognize and extend greater inclusion to the laity in the life of the church.⁵⁰

The Catechism of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer defines the ministry of the laity thus:

to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.⁵¹

While witnessing to Christ according to one's God-given charisms and participating in Christ's mission of reconciliation are easy enough to apply, the notion of representing Christ and the church seems to pose a difficulty. True, one does represent Christ and the church to the world *ad extra* by virtue of baptism. However, how that representation to the church *ad intra* would be realized demands further development.⁵²

While this author would like to believe that the very witness of a Christian life, informed as it is by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and participation in the sacramental life of the Church, is a ministry in its own right, it is certainly clear that it differs from the

⁴⁹ Pius X, *Encyclical Letter Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (8 September 1907), n. 27 in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965): 593-650. This translation excerpted from <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis_en.html> (8 May 2006).

⁵⁰ The author has in mind specifically the Lambeth Conference Report of 1958 and LG (1964). See R. David Cox, *Priesthood in a New Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Anglican Presbyterate in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004): 327.

⁵¹ BCP: 855.

⁵² Similarly, while it is true that the laity do participate in the church's ministry *ad intra* by sharing in the "governance of the church" among both Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, the forms that such participation assumes differs greatly between the two communions. Among Roman Catholics, for one example, lay persons may participate in nominating or electing persons to, and taking part in, various *consultative* bodies such as Pastoral and Finance councils. The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church do not regard such bodies as consultative. Lay persons participate in the governance of the Episcopal Church representatively as a full and independent voting order on the parochial and diocesan level, and in equal numbers with deacons and priests on the national level. (The "House of Deputies" of the General Convention is comprised of "clergy" and "lay" orders whose votes are taken together. Bishops participate as their own "House.")

formal work, for example, of evangelization or catechesis.⁵³ Of first importance here is the recognition that the proliferation of formal lay ministries evidences the activity of the Holy Spirit: on the one hand uncovering the deep and sometimes surprising needs of the church-community, and on the other meeting those needs by bestowing charisms and drawing forth new ministers. Yet, the exercise of formal ministry by lay persons within the church (such as liturgical, administrative and educational ministries) and to the world on behalf of the church demands discernment, formation, education and public authorization.⁵⁴ The needs of the local community will determine the form such preparation and authorization take. Licensing or appointment by the local bishop serves to emphasize the interrelatedness of lay ministry with the ministry of the ordained, and liturgical commissioning or installation “can underscore the importance of [a lay] person’s role in the life of the community and provide opportunity for the lay ecclesial minister and the community to pray together.”⁵⁵

II. The Order of Bishops

The order of Bishops, though it has undergone extensive evolution and reinterpretation in history, is perhaps the oldest continuous order of ministry surviving in the church. Long identified as “successors” to the apostles, bishops “officially and sacramentally [represent] the Church.... [w]ithin the communion of churches by his [or

⁵³ Throughout this essay “ministry” and “mission” have been used somewhat interchangeably. The author states unequivocally that in this interpretation he is open to criticism and revision.

⁵⁴ Such a process is broadly defined in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) statement *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington: USCCB Publishing, 2005).

⁵⁵ USCCB: 59.

her] membership in the communion of bishops....”⁵⁶ The ministry of the bishop is that of *episkopé*, or pastoral oversight, facilitating ministry within the diocese entrusted to her or his care by virtue of ordination to this office.⁵⁷

Oversight includes a responsibility to guard the church, in collegiality with other bishops, as well as in ordaining others to continue strengthening the *laos*. The bishop is a regional administrator of the church, its chief apostle and sacramental overseer, the guardian of certain sacerdotal responsibilities, and the overseer of deacons. Bishops serve the church as facilitators of the diocese in its priestly, prophetic, and pastoral mission to the world.⁵⁸

Bishops sacramentally possess and exercise the fullness of orders (sometimes referred to as the “high priesthood” of Jesus Christ),⁵⁹ and have the responsibility of ordaining others to the priesthood or the diaconate. Bishops are the principal teachers of the gospel and the foremost celebrants of the Eucharist within their dioceses; presbyters and deacons assist the bishop in these ministries according to their respective orders with the bishop’s commission, authorization, faculty, licensure and consent.

The bishop is configured to Christ as head of the church, and is related to the church as teacher and pastor of the local church in communion with the bishops of other local churches.⁶⁰ No minister is a monad; bishops are uniquely exemplars of the unity and collegiality that mark the exercise of Christian ministry.

⁵⁶ Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 68. The present author here notes that the Roman Catholic church does not at present ordain women to any order of ministry. In 1988, the Episcopal Church elected its first woman bishop, Barbara C. Harris. To date, 14 of 37 Anglican Provinces have accepted the principle of ordaining women to the episcopacy; three (the United States, Canada, and New Zealand) have elected and ordained women as bishops.

⁵⁷ “[B]y virtue of ordination to this office” is here meant to include the election to the episcopacy (for Episcopalians) or appointment by papal authority (for Roman Catholics).

⁵⁸ SCMD: 26.

⁵⁹ See LG, n. 21, especially par. 2.

⁶⁰ See Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 72-74.

III. The Order of Presbyters

Presbyters participate in the ordained priesthood of Christ with the order of bishops. All priesthood is mediatorial of the relationship established by God with humanity; the ordained priesthood shared by bishops and presbyters mediates this relationship uniquely through sacramental ministry. “[O]rdination... creates a sacramental model, a religious icon that reminds us who we are and points us toward the living out of our [common] priesthood.”⁶¹

Historically, the ministry of priests has been viewed in a functionalistic manner, focused on cultic activity — liturgical and sacramental functions—and on preaching and teaching. Such identification between person and function has resulted in something of an identity crisis among contemporary presbyters. As many of the sacramental/liturgical and educative functions of presbyters have been delegated to deacons and lay persons, presbyters have sometimes perceived their own persons diminished in the diminution of their roles.⁶² Presbyters today exercise sacramental ministry as a presiding minister, as chief celebrant within a community of celebrants. The self-identity of the presbyter must be grounded in a relational sacramentality that embodies the word and sacraments for the community that the presbyter serves as preacher and president. The entire life of the presbyter should be marked with a spirit of healing and forgiveness, as it is the presbyter who anoints the sick and reconciles penitents. Above all, the presbyter should embody and model for the community of faith a Eucharistic way of life: a life marked by thanksgiving and offering, of willing participation in the self-giving and outpouring of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

⁶¹ Countryman: 86-87.

⁶² See Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 119.

Presbyters are related to the order of bishops as “co-workers” in virtue of their ordination to the ministerial priesthood,⁶³ and as representatives of the bishop in the local church. Presbyters “make the bishop present in the individual local congregations of the faithful, although they have a responsibility for the whole diocese as well as the whole Church.”⁶⁴ As the bishop is the minister of unity between her or his own diocese and the other dioceses with which she or he is in communion, so the presbyter is the minister of communion between the local congregation and the bishop. On behalf of the local bishop, presbyters “exercise pastoral oversight in congregations where many of the baptized — only some of whom are ordained — exercise leadership and all are called to ministry. It is the priest’s duty to animate and ‘keep in unity the charisms of the *laos* of God.’”⁶⁵

IV. *The Order of Deacons*

The ministry of deacons is perhaps the most difficult to name and describe. This is on account of three circumstances: (1) historically and in the present, the diaconate has transcended the boundary between the laity and the ordained, participating in roles and ministries that are proper to both orders; (2) the diaconate as a vocational or “permanent” order fell into disuse in the Mediaeval period and only recently has been revived as something more than a step along the way to the presbyterate;⁶⁶ (3) and though fully ordained ministers of the Church, deacons do not participate in the

⁶³ See LG, n. 28.

⁶⁴ Wood, *Sacramental Orders*: 122.

⁶⁵ SCMD: 24, quoting Edwin M. Leidel, Jr., “Claiming a Distinctive Character for the Ordained” (Commission on Ministry: Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota, 1989): vi-11.

⁶⁶ The vocational or permanent diaconate was restored to the Anglican Communion in the 88th resolution of the Lambeth Conference of 1958, and to the Roman Church by Pope Paul VI, *motu proprio*, “*Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*: General Norms for Restoring the Permanent Diaconate in the Latin Church,” 18 June 1967.

hierarchical priesthood to which bishops and presbyters are ordained; that is, they are not directly configured to Christ in his headship over the body, exercising pastoral oversight for the People of God.

The ministry of *diakonia* has frequently and widely been understood as “service,” characterized by service in support of the ministry of the bishop, in the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God, in the service of charity for those who are in need, and in service to the altar. The research of Australian theologian John Collins challenges this understanding of diaconal ministry.⁶⁷ Summarizing Collins’ work, Richard Gaillardetz observes that *diakonia*

had as its foundational biblical meaning the sense of being publicly commissioned or sent forth on behalf of another. Thus, the deacon is the one who is “sent forth” by the bishop... in service of the needs of the church as seen by the one charged with oversight of the local church.⁶⁸

This ambassadorial or missionary understanding of diaconal ministry, like its service-oriented predecessor, has its own difficulties, chief of which derives from the relationship between bishop and deacon vis-à-vis that of presbyter and bishop.

Presbyters, as noted above, share in the ministerial priesthood together with bishops; yet they do not function of their own volition, but as representatives of the bishop in particular churches, especially as presiding/sacramental ministers. Yet deacons, too, represent the ministry of the bishop. With the delegation of certain sacramental and liturgical ministries to deacons (baptism, witnessing marriage, burials and preaching), the boundary between presbyter and deacon becomes blurred. Speaking of deacons in

⁶⁷ See the review of Collin’s research by R. Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, “The Liturgical Assembly,” in Mitchell and Baldovin: 311-314.

⁶⁸ Gaillardetz: 87-88.

the early church Geraldine A. Swanson notes, “[t]hey existed then, and today, only in connection with a bishop. Bishops can function without deacons, but deacons cannot function without bishops.”⁶⁹ Cannot the same be said of presbyters? Certainly there are differences between the two orders, but theologically much remains to be sorted out.

Blurred boundaries seem to be an inescapable characteristic of the diaconate at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and this is not necessarily detrimental to the theology of the diaconate. Deacons are a sort of *liminal* people (as noted above), who exercise their Spirit-empowered ministry in the borderland of the laity and the priesthood. This is expressed liturgically above all in the deacon being the voice inviting and directing the actions of the people (“Let us offer a sign of peace;” “Go forth in the power of the Spirit...”) and in receiving the people’s offerings and preparing the altar and gifts at the Eucharist.

Deacons have a unique opportunity to claim for themselves a sort of elastic identity in relationship to Christ “in his eternal role as *diakonos* or agent of God in creation and salvation, and [to] represent the church in its loving duty and baptismal call to strive for mercy, justice, and peace.”⁷⁰ The lack of a precise theology of the diaconate allows a certain degree of flexibility, giving deacons the space and freedom to exercise a wide variety of ministries apart from the liturgy. In these they uniquely model for the whole Church the twofold mission of Christ and the Spirit, the coming of God into the dark corners of creation, and the return movement of all creation to God’s heart by the Holy Spirit. Christ’s ministry bridged the “in-between” space by making visible the

⁶⁹ Geraldine A. Swanson, “*Diakonia*: Service or Mission? The Post-Modern Diaconate and its Early Church Roots,” *Diakoneo* 28.1 (Winter 2006): 6.

⁷⁰ SCMD: 22.

unseen God and reached out to people made “in-between” by society and religion; so the ministry of the deacon fills the liminal space between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the laity, and reaches out to the poor, the sick and others made marginal by circumstance, society or even the church. In this deacons fulfill their ordination charge “to make Christ and his redemptive love known,” and “to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.”⁷¹

Conclusion

This essay has only begun the work of elaborating a theology of ministry. It has attempted its work in broadly ecumenical and conciliatory terms, attending to similarities among Roman Catholics and Anglicans, and only noting differences along the way. It has not addressed those issues of ministry that continue to divide these communions: the ordination of married persons, women, and homosexuals. Neither has it dealt with the historical issues surrounding the notion of sacramental “character,” preferring to speak in terms of relationship. And it has not mentioned the particularly problematic issue of the ordination of professed members of religious communities. It has sought, rather, to focus the discussion of ministry in the church on the one priesthood of Jesus Christ. He is the author of the universal human priesthood, and its perfecter in his Paschal-Pentecostal mystery. Wholly as a gift, he graciously extends his one priesthood to the church, and configures some to his headship in sacramental ordination. These are the key points with which the church needs to continually dwell as it considers and articulates the theological foundations and practical future of ministry, in the church and to the world.

⁷¹ BCP: 543.

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