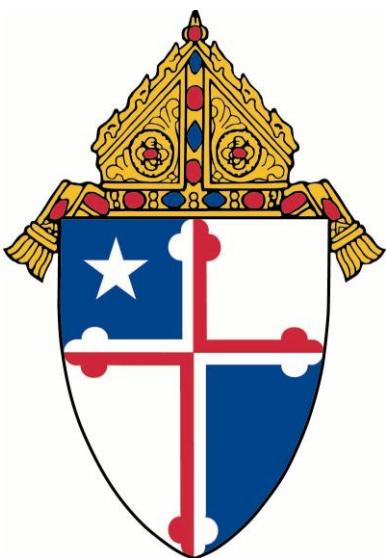


building a

CULTURE *of* FORMATION



A REPORT TO PASTORAL LEADERS
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

BUILDING A CULTURE OF FORMATION

God's Call and Our Response

Through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist every Christian is called to participate actively and co-responsibly in the Church's mission of salvation in the world. Moreover, in those same sacraments, the Holy Spirit pours out gifts which make it possible for every Christian man and woman to assume different ministries and forms of service that complement one another and are for the good of all (cf. *Christifideles Laici*, no. 20).

Everyone has a responsibility to answer the call to mission and to develop the gifts she or he has been given by sharing them in the family, the workplace, the civic community, and the parish or diocese. A parallel responsibility exists within the Church's leadership "to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices, and the roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed, for a good many of them in the sacrament of matrimony" (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 23).¹



The Christian faithful are called to participation in ministry by virtue of their baptism. These disciples are called and gifted, and they have been given a mandate. As disciples, they are to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to witness to his power "to the ends of the earth."² Lay ministry is a response to this calling and giftedness. We read in the words of the Gospel of Luke³ "*The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.*" So many laborers are needed to be about the work of the Gospel, the work of evangelization.

Each and every individual is called by God. There is in this a grand equality; our roles differ, our areas of ministry differ, but we are all called by God to be about His work. Pope John Paul II said so beautifully in an address at Glasgow "*It is essential for us to understand that Jesus has a specific task in life for each and every one of us. Each one of us is hand-picked, called by name – by Jesus! There is no one among us who does not have a divine vocation!*"

This is our starting point; that each person has a divine vocation. We believe that people are called and gifted and that God has a specific task in life for every single person. Every person. Parish and school leaders are charged with developing a culture of formation in our parishes and schools that are based on the foundational belief that all are called and gifted.

¹ *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, USCCB, 1995

² Acts 1:8

³ Luke 10:3

A Culture of Formation

What is meant by a culture of formation? “Culture” comes from the Latin *cultura*, from *colere* meaning “tend, guard, cultivate, till.” Parishes and schools that have a culture of formation tend, guard, cultivate and till each and every individual; they tend, guard, cultivate and till each and every ministry; they tend guard, cultivate and till each and every calling. They are discerning communities, asking God what needs have to be met, and who is called to meet those needs. They are highly relational communities; formation does not exist in a vacuum. They value competency, and are willing to make the efforts to increase the levels of competency. They challenge people as sisters and brothers to grow in Christ.

A culture of formation fosters the understanding that people come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have advanced degrees, others may not read and write, and some have different learning challenges. They have a sense that the people of the parish or school community come from varying ecclesiologies, represent different generations, celebrate in a number of different languages, and were raised with different ethnic traditions.

Parishes and schools with a strong culture of formation identify and celebrate these differences, but they also celebrate what we have in common. The Eucharist unites us as one. Strong pastoral leaders give a clarion call that unites us. They are united in mission and ministry. They see the goodness of the Lord, and the goodness of one another. They challenge each other, correct one another, but first and foremost love one another. They know the treasure of community and hold one another’s joys and hopes and tears. They share their faith and they even share their food!

In a parish or school where there is a culture of formation there is a solid pastoral leader empowering people to plan, share and create. The focus is on doing God’s work; people in those communities are challenged to live lives of holiness and discipleship. There is a respect for the unique calling of each individual and a willingness to help people recognize their limitations.

A parish or school where there is a culture of formation finds at its very core a dynamic orthodoxy...an openness to the movement of the Spirit, while being rooted in Tradition. They are parishes that refuse to create barriers to the work of the Spirit. They have leaders who would embrace the late Cardinal O’Connor’s morning prayer to “never get in the way of anybody trying to do good.” They are open to new wineskins.

The following is a list of many of the principles embraced by those who promote a culture of formation.

PRINCIPLES FOR PASTORAL LEADERS AND PASTORAL STAFFS IN BUILDING A CULTURE OF FORMATION

PRINCIPLE ONE: Recognizes the Mission, the Call and the Need

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members who recognize that the call to ministry is rooted in baptism. They recognize the great need for all to about the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Explanation

It is clear that pastoral leaders set the tone for a parish or school. Their willingness to “go the extra mile,” by personally inviting people into ministry, supporting that call, and nurturing the ministry is critical. Pastoral staff members that are supportive and provide opportunities for growth for lay ministers ensure that so many can do so much more for the building of the Kingdom.

So many lay ministers provide powerful testimony to the inspiration, guidance, and direction provided by pastoral leaders and their staffs.

Inspiration

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring (the) good news!" But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what was heard from us?"

Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Romans 10: 13-17

PRINCIPLE TWO: Respects and Celebrates a Multicultural Church

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members who serve and celebrate a multicultural church. They exhibit sensitivity to and solidarity with the many different people who come together as one church.

Explanation

It seems paradoxical that leaders are servants, but service is the stuff of which pastoral leaders are made. Pastoral leaders are at once teachers and disciples. They are servants in a multicultural church. There are outstanding pastoral leaders who have travelled abroad to learn more about cultural groups in their parishes, or have learned a new language to communicate with parishioners. They have learned to sign or have interpreters for those who are hearing impaired. They have conveyed information in a variety of ways for persons with different learning styles. They recognize persons in the military as a cultural group, often with different ministerial needs. They outreach to

Inspiration

"We who speak and you who listen acknowledge ourselves as fellow disciples of a single teacher"

Saint Augustine (Sermons, 23:2).

Intercultural communication—sustained efforts, carried out by people of diverse cultures, to appreciate their differences, work out conflicts, and build on commonalities—will thus be an important component of coming to know and respect the diverse cultures that make up today's Church. The dominant culture in the United States stresses the individual and his or her feelings and decisions. In less individualistic cultures, individuals may feel hesitant to express their own opinions openly, even in a friendly setting, without reinforcement from the group. Among immigrants of the same group, too, divisions along lines of social class or educational background can erect barriers to understanding, with some members adapting to the

different generations, different family configurations and different ecclesiologies. They embrace each individual as a gift from God, and as someone who is called to serve.

procedures and practices of parish life more readily than others. Often, culturally sensitive intermediaries are needed to facilitate exchanges, mediate conflicts, and promote genuine participation by all. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, USCCB, 2000

PRINCIPLE THREE: Acknowledges the Value of Lay Ministry

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members who value the work of lay ministers as co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

Explanation

When parish and school leadership value the work of lay ministers, it clearly shows. They work in a spirit of collaboration and of collegiality. Each person respects the ministry of the other.

Strong pastoral leaders have often been compared to conductors of symphonies. They have no need to play first chair in each section. Rather, it is their responsibility to make sure that everyone plays together as one, making a beautiful sound that is pleasing to one another and to our God.

Inspiration

"You go into my vineyard too... You go too." "The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. In preaching to the people Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact and comments on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard: "Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lord's laborers."

Christifideles Laici

PRINCIPLE FOUR: Calls for Competency and On-Going Formation

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members that value competency in lay ministry, and regularly ask: "What are we doing to increase the competency of our lay ministers to serve the people of God?" There is a high value placed on the ongoing human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of lay ministers.

Explanation

Pastoral leaders who are clear about expectation, who set the bar high, have people who meet and exceed those expectations. They know that simply filling slots does not produce good ministry and leads to a high turn-over rate.

Often, people are afraid to ask others to attend formation opportunities, figuring that the ministry they are doing takes too much time already. They fear the lay minister may quit. To the contrary, people who are not competent often discourage easily, and quit anyway. It is clear that we need to sound a call for competency, and then prepare to help our people who respond to that call.

Inspiration

Can. 231 §1. Lay persons who permanently or temporarily devote themselves to special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation required to fulfill their function properly and to carry out this function conscientiously, eagerly, and diligently.

Code of Canon Law

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Individual lay ministers are encouraged to complete a formation plan that identifies areas of growth in the spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral areas of formation. They are encouraged to meet with someone who will reflect on the plan with them, and provide honest feedback.

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Romans 12: 6-13

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Provides for Formation and Celebration

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members that provide and encourage opportunities for growth and for financial support for formation of lay ministers. They celebrate milestones along the way; installations in ministry, completed courses, archdiocesan recognitions, etc.

Explanation

Each parish and school should have a plan for providing opportunities for formation for those in ministry. Some parishes and schools set aside development money allocated for this purpose alone. Others have assisted people in getting college degrees in Theology, so strong is their commitment to formation. Formation should be on the agenda of many of our meetings. Finance committees should be trained in mission, liturgical committees should be given opportunities to more deeply engage the sacred liturgy, and all of our meetings should be opportunities for prayer. Parishes and schools need to make a commitment to funding these growth opportunities.

Inspiration

“Since the laity share in their own way in the mission of the Church, their apostolic formation is specially characterized by the distinctively secular and particular quality of the lay state and by its own form of the spiritual life.

The formation for the apostolate presupposes a certain human and well-rounded formation adapted to the natural abilities and conditions of each lay person. Well-informed about the modern world, the lay person should be a member of his own community and adjusted to its culture.”

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity

Principle Six: Establishes Clear Expectations

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members that provide clear expectations for ministry and assist lay ministers in meeting those expectations.

Explanation

Some pastoral leaders provide job descriptions for their lay ministers. The commitment is clear, the expectations of the ministry are clear. Lay ministers know who their supervisor is, where they can go when they have questions and what resources are available to the lay ministers.

Inspiration

“It is thus that the *lay faithful are formed by the Church and in the Church* in a mutual communion and collaboration of all her members: clergy, religious and lay faithful. Thus the whole ecclesial community, in its diverse members, receives the fruitfulness of the Spirit and actively cooperates towards that end. With this in mind Methodius of Olympo wrote: ‘Those not yet perfected are carried and formed by those more perfect, as in the womb of a mother, until the time they are generated and brought forth for the greatness and beauty of virtue’(217). This happened with Saint Paul, who was carried and brought forth in the Church by those who were perfected (in the person of Ananias) and, then Paul in his turn, became perfected and fruitful in bringing forth many children.” *Christifideles Laici*

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Maximizes Technology

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members willing to provide for increased use of technology in their parishes and schools.

Explanation

We minister now to a generation which goes first to a website to find information. We have people who look to technology for information, education, formation and training. Parishes and schools with a culture of formation pay attention to technology as an instrument of outreach and evangelization.

Inspiration

“The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. These changes are particularly evident among those young people who have grown up with the new technologies and are at home in a digital world that often seems quite foreign to those of us who, as adults, have had to learn to understand and appreciate the opportunities it has to offer for communications.” Pope Benedict

Principle Eight: Serves as Role Models and Collaborators

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and pastoral staff members who serve as models of formation; living out their call to holiness as they grow in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and personal formation. They collaborate with one another, regionally, and on an archdiocesan level.

Explanation

Each of us is called to holiness; pastoral leaders remind us of that call. By living virtuous lives, they exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control mark their existence.

Pastoral leaders are at once teacher and disciple, leader and follower. They are all of this and more. And by the grace of God and the many good efforts of these pastoral leaders, the mission of the Church is advanced.

Inspiration

“*Imitate me as I imitate Christ.*” 1 Corinthians 11:1

“In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.” *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*



Equip for Ministry is a process for Lay Ministry formation sponsored by the Department of Evangelization of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

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