



Shared Visions

A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers
presented by The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center

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Volume Two, Number Three

In this issue of *Shared Visions* we will probe the notion that lay volunteers and former lay volunteers, are in a unique position. As the number of those who have had lay volunteer experience grows, there becomes a greater possibility for a shift in the leadership of the Church. Are we crazy to feel this way? Read on and determine what you think.

What Role Can Volunteers and Former Volunteers Play in the Church?

A number of the Church's socially minded thinkers look to today's lay volunteers as a key source of leadership and hope for tomorrow's Church.

"I'm putting my money on the young emerging laity," said Franciscan Father Joe Nangle, 'people like the ex-Jesuit volunteers. They'll never be the same, though they're still a minority.' (*National Catholic Reporter*, 29 June 1992.)

The context of Nangle's comment was the worry that the Catholic Church might be running out of witnesses to justice and peace. He finds that many suburban parishioners "want to be stroked" and don't want to touch on hard subjects such as how one's Catholic faith translates into social action.

But, why look to lay volunteers, whether younger or older, as a beacon of hope? Is there something about the volunteer's experiences which nudges him or her toward leadership?

Art Jones, Editor-at-Large for the *National Catholic Reporter* suggests there is. Jones interviewed a large number of current and former lay volunteers and found a significant

number were "powerhouses" (*NCR* 23 March 1990, "From scripture to risk and liberation"). In telling the stories of these volunteers, their journeys from ordinary lives to ones of risk and liberation, it's clear many experience transformations. They came face to face with people's stark needs, and that typically changed the volunteers.

Dan Strub, for example, a 1988

graduate of Notre Dame and volunteer with Annunciation House in Texas, helped open a homeless shelter in Juarez, Mexico, namely Casa de los Peregrinos. What happened to Strub next, said Jones, was Strub "delved deeper into the work, and himself." The two immersions, into working with others' struggles and into one's own self-awareness, seemed to the volunteers to go hand-in-hand. "It is so stressful," said Monica Lynch, a volunteer co-worker with Strub, "I know I need to have daily Mass, daily prayer, to make sense of any of this." Struggle invited a greater sense of faith and self-awareness.

Sometimes volunteers are shy about considering themselves leaders. This is especially the case for younger volunteers who often find themselves serving the needs of men and women old enough to be their

parents. Older volunteers, likewise, often prefer to promote the leadership of those they serve. So here again, whether older or younger, volunteers may be slow to cast themselves in a leadership role, and perhaps appropriately so.

But think about it. If this shyness became habit forming, what a loss to the community that would be. Some of the Church's social activists, for example, are looking over their shoulders to see who is coming along to follow in their footsteps, raise consciousness and be a voice for the poor.

For those volunteers whose term of service is coming to completion, maybe it's time to begin shifting gears. How can some of the energy and enthusiasm you have for your volunteer ministry be transferred to some of the leadership roles needed in today's Church and community?

-- A.D.T.

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- Volunteer Reflection: Lynnly Tydings of Catholic Worker gives her view on Ministry and Leadership
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FEATURE:

A Catholic Worker's Model of Leadership

by Lynnly Tydings

For the last year I have lived at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House. We provide shelter to families, as well as serving meals to the homeless community around the White House. I have begun to know what it really means to lead, not by the world's standards, but by the model given to us by God--Christ.

"Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I . . . have washed your feet,

you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do." (John 13: 13-15)

Here we lead by loving one another in community--one another as friends and family. Those who come through this house do not need another social worker, mother, or father. What we provide is *accompaniment* which entails being with them *as members of our community* as they begin to identify what they need in order to take control of their lives.

The leadership I provide is rather silent. It basically consists of being available and honest. Though I am younger than most of the women here, I find them looking to me for support. What they need is someone to listen, someone they can count on to be there for them, someone who is not a judge or necessarily a counselor. When so many people come through here, having been abused by the system, honesty and love are a miraculous commodity. Though at times I get frustrated by seeming to be merely a baby sitter, chauffeur, or cook--that is the kind of leadership I hope to provide.

For example, a few weeks ago, Blanca moved out. After almost two years at Dorothy Day House, she, her sons and daughter were finally ready to begin life on their own. I am especially close to Blanca. (I was at the hospital when her baby Nancy was born!) She and I were alone in the van, having just moved most of her things into her new apartment. We were both excited! As we talked on the way home, Blanca told me how nervous she was and how afraid. Leaving Dorothy Day House was leaving home. Her sons had spent most of their young lives at our house! Yet, she knew with great certainty, that we were all part of her family--not just the Catholic Workers who choose to live at the house, but the other families as well. Rather than leaving a shelter and leaving alone, she knew that she was only moving away from her family who would continue to support and love her.

Living at the Catholic Worker is not a job, it is a life. I do not know where else I could be so challenged

and so witness to the grace of God. Living here requires that I reexamine the world's ideas of leadership, success, and failure. Many ask us what our success rate is. How do I respond when what they're asking me to do is to judge the lives of my friends? I've found that it is a great privilege to have been brought here, to be sharing the lives of so many people struggling to live faithfully in our desperate world. It is a privilege to stand around the dinner table, holding hands and praying to our God in thanksgiving for the food on the table and the mystery of the people gathered around it. While standing in this circle, we know no leaders, only that we are one, struggling together.

It was Dorothy Day's conviction that those who came for hospitality would also be a part of the life of the house, sharing in the work and decision making process. Each Monday night we gather together, Catholic Workers and guests, to plan our week, and talk, argue and decide how we are to live together at Dorothy Day House.

Dorothy Day looked to St. Therese, the Little Flower, to guide her the little way. Living here is a lesson in the way of loving leadership which grows wildly and without clear direction. As I sit and type this, I hear in the background all the familiar voices of my family, the din of evening--dishwashing, phones ringing, people laughing and talking. And I know that being a leader here is the right way, it is the hard way but the only way for me that is filled with honesty and love. Leading here sometimes means sleepless nights and crying; being available to take someone to the emergency room; or having to ask a young mother to leave knowing she will return to her abusive boyfriend. Yet, this is the place where I can look people in the eye and know God is present. This is the place where I can lead, not by the world's standards, but by Christ's model. †

Recommended Reading: • *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy Day's autobiography. (Harper & Row, NY, NY, 1952)

• *The Catholic Worker* newspaper published by the NY Catholic

Worker. (36 E. 1st Street, NY, NY 10003. 6 issues for \$.25/per yr.)

Today's Volunteers . . . Tomorrow's Leaders

A lot of us who have the privilege of working with volunteers are convinced that we are rubbing elbows with the leaders of tomorrow. There is something about the volunteer experience which brings out leadership skills. Maybe it's that volunteers frequently face demanding situations requiring creativity, flexibility and practical know-how. Maybe it's the religious convictions or training which gives volunteers an ability to step back and look at situations objectively.

In addition, working closely with supervisors, or experiencing the give and take of community living, volunteers necessarily develop increased listening skills. These volunteers are better able to build bridges between persons and to resolve difficulties in the work place.

Is this a reality or simply a hope?

Some research on volunteering and leadership suggests the connection between the two is for real and it may be closely connected with the volunteer's ability to "self-monitor."

Self-monitoring is the ability to look into our own hearts, to be aware of our feelings and motivations, and to recognize how daily events might be influencing our decisions and actions. This is a very important acquired skill which allows us to bring objectivity to problem solving in both personal and work situations. Many seem to appreciate this skill as characteristic of leaders.

Some recent research supports this claim. In one study of 120 college men and women, researchers used a paper and pencil test to identify which individuals were high and which low in this self-monitoring ability. They then formed ten small groups and gave each the task of working out an arbitrary organizational situation together. As the group came to know one another better at the end of the task, participants were then asked to select one person as their group leader. More often than not, group members selected those high in the self-

monitoring ability.

A second study took this same approach and worked with nine volunteer organizations. The results were the same. *Participants consistently voted as their leaders the individuals who were high in self-monitoring.*

So what's going on here? A third study gives us some further clues.

Here again, a paper and pencil test was used to identify individuals' communication skills, that is, their ability to formulate goals, give directions, summarize, and come across as self-assured. Then, after these participants in a theater course worked together for four months, they were asked to rate one another on their leadership skills. *Those high in communication skills were consistently selected as leaders.*

So there we have it. The first two studies found the ability to be objective and in touch with one's feelings and motivations is characteristic of leaders. The third study found that certain communication skills are also linked with leadership.

So where can we go with this? We think volunteers can go from service to leadership. You have probably been doing this during your term of service. But now, if you are completing your volunteer stint, you have an even better chance of exercising your leadership abilities.

How so? Try out these two ways for starters: self-monitoring and being a voice for the poor.

If your term of volunteer service is coming to an end, you will probably have many mixed feelings and insights into your past and current motivation for volunteer service. In searching for "what's next," you have been doing the sifting of possibilities, striving for objectivity that is central to self-monitoring. So by probing your future, you are already well on your way to deepening your leadership skills.

But there's a second and more outward thrust for your leadership abilities, namely, by being a voice for the poor and marginalized you have come to know throughout your ministry. As lay volunteers you have witnessed many varieties of poverty: educational, emotional, financial, and poverty of the spirit. As a former lay volunteer you have a unique opportunity to share your knowledge with your civic and parish communities.

Theologically, this is an important part of what the prophet does, literally from the Greek word "prophete", *gives voice or speaks for the poor*. By re-entering the mainstream of contemporary society and telling others what you have seen and experienced, you are the prophet. As a volunteer, you have what it takes. We congratulate you and encourage you to "speak up!"

-- A. D. T.

Your Re-Entry and Personal Mission Statement

Characteristically, lay volunteers go through both painless and painful personal growth. Throughout their service and ministry experience they often find themselves in challenging work and living situations. It's through this growth that they come to know more about themselves and how they want to design their own future. But what happens on the day when they leave the structure of the lay volunteer program with which they have become so accustomed?

Perhaps you dread the day you leave your community, your acquired lifestyle and surroundings and most of all, the structure your lay volunteer program provided you.

As a former volunteer myself, I thought I would miss the feeling of "being taken care of" by the program staff. During my two years of service, there were no bills to pay: no rent, no car payments, no

insurance premiums, etc. I was going to have to start thinking about those things again. But even more so, I was worried that all I had learned, all the personal growth I had gone through, and all that had been part of my two years as a lay volunteer (shared prayer, retreats, community, simplicity and active ministry) would somehow vanish once I was back in "the real world."

Luckily, my return to the states wasn't as rocky as I thought it might have been. One thing that helped a lot was our Re-entry program at the close of my second year. Without it, I may have left unfocused and discouraged. One needs to prepare to leave all that has been so comfortable for the past year or years. It isn't easy!

The Re-entry process made me realize that my ministry would continue even after I returned home. Granted, it took a while for the idea that "God isn't finished with me yet" to sink in, but once it did, it made leaving a lot easier.

Having been back for a year now, I have found another useful tool in keeping my focus and ministry alive. That is, having my own Personal Mission Statement.

You may be familiar with your program's Mission Statement. It is usually a few paragraphs long and outlines the components and goals of the program. In writing your own Mission Statement, you become able to look ahead, to see what the possibilities are for you in your new ministry as a former lay volunteer. On the attached *Shared Visions* worksheet, you will find some basic ideas to use in order to write your own Personal Mission Statement. Give it a try!

-- L. S.

Resources: • If you are nearing the end of your volunteer term, ask your program director for the Pallotti Center's *What's Next Notebook* which, along with many other issues, covers Re-entry.

• Steve Covey, *Personal Leadership Application Workbook*, © Covey Leadership Center. To receive a free packet of information call 800-255-0777.

For many of you, this issue of *Shared Visions* marks the end or near-end of your experience as a lay volunteer/missioner. What effect has your ministry had on you? Put your response in writing and share it with others by sending it to us at the Pallotti Center for possible inclusion in *Shared Visions*.

Shared Visions Worksheet

SELF-MONITORING SELF-TEST

After you've read the article on Self-Monitoring (*Today's Volunteer's . . . Tomorrow's Leaders*) you may find the following exercise to be of interest/fun.

Here are some questions to help you explore the extent to which you are good at monitoring your feelings and motivations. (These questions do not constitute a scientific scale or index--so take this exercise with a grain of salt.)

Answer scale: 3 = true, 2 = Sometimes true/sometimes false, 1 = false

1. Before I make an important decision, I carefully consider the pros and cons. ____
2. If I get upset or over-react, I can figure out why. ____
3. I pay attention to what motivates me. ____
4. I look at things objectively. ____
5. When I do something that's a mistake, I am quick to recognize my error. ____
6. I usually think before I act. ____
7. I am receptive when people criticize my work. ____

Scale Interpretation:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 21 to 17 | <i>Congratulations! You're in touch with yourself.</i> |
| 16 to 12 | <i>Pretty good--we can't all be perfect.</i> |
| 11 to 7 | <i>Spontaneity is your strength.</i> |

For Personal Reflection and/or Group Discussion Starters.

1. What experience(s) did I have during this last year that I found to be the most challenging?

2. What were some of my responses? To be more prayerful? More analytic? Self-aware? Committed?

3. In what situations as a lay volunteer did I act as a leader? When, if ever, did I deliberately take a "back seat"?

Shared Visions Worksheet

The two most important components to determine in writing a Personal Mission Statement are: "What you'd like to do" (accomplishments and contributions to make) and, "What you'd like to be" (character strengths and qualities to develop). See page 3 for related article.

Step A: Some of the elements I would like to see in my Personal Mission Statement:

What I'd like to do:

What I'd like to be:

Another way of focusing on what you want to do or be is to identify a highly influential person in your life.

Step B: Keeping in mind your focus in Step A, answer the following:

Who has been one of the most influential people in my life? _____

Which qualities do I most admire in that person? _____

What qualities have I gained (or desire to gain) from that person? _____

Define your Life Roles (woman/man, teacher/administrator, friend, organizer, parent, writer, leader, thinker/doer, son/daughter, volunteer etc.).

Step C: Choose up to six roles which stand out in your life now. Write a brief statement of how you would like to be described in that particular role. In doing this, you will discover and identify the core principles and values you desire to live by.

Life Role

Statement

Life Role

Statement

Step D: Now, relying on the thinking you've done during the previous steps, you are ready to draft a Personal Mission Statement. It is important to remember that you may need to make revisions both directly after your first draft and months or years later. Don't let your Personal Mission Statement get outdated.

Be sure your Personal Mission Statement inspires the best in you. Type up a permanent copy and refer to it regularly in order to keep your vision and values clearly in mind.

If you would like to receive *Shared Visions* after the end of your volunteer program call or write us and we'll put you on our mailing list.

HELP WANTED:

Former lay volunteers looking for job leads may write or call the St. Vincent Pallotti Center for information on our "What's Next?" Network.

Thanks to Frank Donio, S.A.C. for his dedication, hard work and instrumental role in organizing *Shared Visions* and incorporating its readers' helpful suggestions.

The mission of the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center: To promote lay volunteer service that challenges the laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church. Our goal is to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service. Local Pallotti Centers are located in Boston, Memphis, Saint Louis, and San Francisco. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

The centers take their inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary.

Shared Vision's goal is to explore five "building blocks" of spiritual development: Intellectual Growth, Emotional and Physical Health, Leadership and Prayer.

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Volume 2, Number 3

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