

SHARED VISIONS

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— A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers — presented by the people who bring you **Connections** —

Living Ministry

Greetings from the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center! Whether you are a new or continuing volunteer, we hope that this year's four issues of *Shared Visions* will help you in your mission. *Shared Visions* is written by former volunteers for current volunteers.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "ministry"? Perhaps you picture a priest in a robe and clerical collar presiding over the Eucharist. Perhaps you imagine a religious sister or brother working in a hospital, school or orphanage. You might think of a church, seminary or retreat house. Do you ever think of... you? Do you ever think of yourself as a minister, or your own activities and relationships as ministry?

At the Pallotti Center, we take our inspiration from St. Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850), who believed that all Christians are called to be apostles. Through our baptism, we all become ministers to our fellow Christians and all the people of the world. What does it mean to live out this call? How does recognizing ourselves as ministers affect how we think, pray, speak and behave?

As volunteers, you have committed to a very special and important kind of ministry: full-time service to others. This time of service is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on yourself as a minister: In what areas of ministry are you most gifted? When do you feel most connected to God, yourself and others? Where do you need to grow in order to be the best minister you can be?

Over the next four issues, we will explore what it means to "live ministry". No matter where you are in your faith journey, we pray that your time of service will shape your ministry in unexpected, exciting, challenging, profound and joyful ways. We also hope that you will make us a part of your volunteer experience, during your time of service and beyond! Please share your thoughts and suggestions with us at sharedvisions@pallotticenter.org.



“Ministry is the privilege and responsibility of the total Church, and everyone is called by baptism to exercise it, each in his or her own way and according to his or her own call and gifts.”

US Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Liturgy

Forward in Hope: Reflecting on Bishop Matthew Clark's Book on Lay Ministry

Whether we realize it or not, by agreeing to spend this year in lay mission service to the Church we also agreed to serve as one of the Church's ministers. Last year, Bishop Matthew H. Clark of the Diocese of Rochester gifted the Church with an exciting new book called *Forward in Hope: Saying Amen to Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009). Clark speaks from his thirty-plus years of experience as a bishop. Although his book is primarily directed to lay people in full-time professional Church ministry, many of his insights are applicable to full-time lay missionaries living out the call in volunteer programs this year.

One of Clark's best insights is that the lay person's call to ministry is not simply a band-aid approach to the priest shortage in the Church. Rather, the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) are clear in saying that we are all called to minister by virtue of our common baptism. Even if vocations were more abundant, there would be the same need for lay ministers because the Church would benefit from their unique talents and abilities. Think about your own volunteer program in this regard. Our programs might be very different if there were suddenly a large number of priests, brothers and sisters available to carry out the same ministry that you are doing now.

What unique contribution does your program make as a lay missionary group?

Clark acknowledges the fact that many more women than men are entering the field of lay ministry. Likewise, members of minority groups are disproportionately outnumbered by white Americans. These conditions have historically been true in our Catholic lay missions as well. If your program is co-ed, ask yourself what kind of gender balance has been struck in your community.

What are the power dynamics in your community, and does gender have any role to play in those?

For all communities, ask yourself how diverse your program is. If there is little diversity, what are the reasons for that?

If your program has a great deal of diversity, what has made it so diverse?

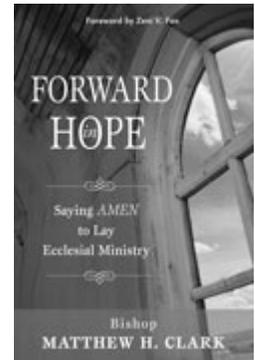
What can you do today to assure reciprocal relationships of mutual trust and support with the people you are serving with this year?

Clark also speaks about the need for stronger relationships between the bishop and his lay ministers. Clark invites four lay women and one lay man ministering in the Diocese of Rochester to contribute chapters to his book, a recurring theme that he calls "Voices from the Vineyard." Clark clearly benefits from a cordial working relationship that has been nurtured and deepened over the span of many years. In other places where time has not deepened the bonds between them, a more formal connection linking lay ministers and bishops might be needed.

Does the bishop of the place where you are ministering this year typically visit during the year?

If you had the chance to tell him one thing about the benefits that lay missionary work brings to his diocese, what would it be?

Consider reading *Forward in Hope: Saying Amen to Lay Ecclesial Ministry* and discussing it with your community this year.



Gifts of Ministry

*"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;
there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To
each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.*

*To one is given through the Spirit the **expression of wisdom**; to another the **expression of knowledge** according to the same Spirit; to another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit; to another **mighty deeds**; to another **prophecy**; to another **discernment of spirits**; to another **varieties of tongues**; to another **interpretation of tongues**. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes."*

– 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

It is no secret, nor should it come as a surprise, that each of us is given different gifts to share. But some of us do not always see ourselves as ministers, even though, by our baptism we are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and we are called to go out like the apostles and spread the Good News with the gifts God has given us.

As the saying goes, "God does not call the qualified. God qualifies the called." What gifts has God given you to use to call others?

The quiz below is just a fun example of some of the ways God may have called us to share certain gifts. Discover what gifts God may have given you that you didn't know you had!

1.) When someone you know is in a crisis and comes to you crying, do you:

- A.** Try to get her to tell you what is wrong and offer some advice
- B.** Listen to his story and then offer him some Scripture passages or spiritual readings that may help him in his particular state
- C.** Offer to say prayers for her in the coming weeks
- D.** Ask if you can pray with him in that moment and pray over him
- E.** Offer to take some kind of action for her like calling a counselor or someone that can help

2.) There is a natural disaster in another part of the world. You want to help out in some way. Do you:

- A.** Write a letter to your congressperson with suggestions on how these events might be dealt with or prevented in the future

- B.** Educate others about the event so that people are made aware of the situation and can offer aid or prevention
- C.** Take some small steps in your local area by finding a similar cause or reaching out to people affected in your own area
- D.** Start a prayer group or conduct a vigil at your parish for the cause
- E.** Plan a trip to the country affected to offer direct service to the people in need

3.) You want to sign up for a ministry team at your parish. Which do you decide to participate in?

- A.** Parish advisory committee or Parish Council
- B.** Religious Education teacher
- C.** Bereavement Group or Ministry to Shut-Ins
- D.** Rosary Society
- E.** Peace and Justice Ministry

...continued with answers on page 6

Commissioning Prayer Service

A commissioning is an opportunity to acknowledge to God, our community and ourselves the passion and commitment we have for the journey on which we embark. Commissioning does not have to be at the very beginning of your ministry. If you already have your feet wet, now is a fine time to participate in a sign of your commitment to service and mission. Details of a commissioning can be distinct based on the gifts and grace of each program. This is a commissioning prayer service which you can use as a model, adding what is especially meaningful for your community.

Arrange the room so that chairs circle a table. On the table is a sheet of paper with the logo and unlit tea lights circling the logo. A large candle can be near the logo. A number of pens should be available.

Call to Prayer - Leader:

Knowing that many of us have come to our program from diverse spiritual traditions, we gather now, appreciating our diversity in its depth and breadth. Let us begin by quieting ourselves, relaxing in comfort as we center ourselves before our loving God. *(quietly, dim the lights and light the large candle)*

Supplies

- Sheet of paper with your program's logo or a symbol meaningful to your program
- Pens
- Tea light candles (one per participant)
- Large candle
- Print out of the readings
- An opening and closing song and song sheets (optional)
- Soft music from a CD (optional)

Readings - Reader 1:

A reading from the beginning of the First Letter of Peter... (1 Peter 1:1-3)*

Reader 1: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Reflection: Leader:

Like Peter, we are called as sojourners going out in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit in each of our hearts. We have each made the commitment to serve (your program). Within each of our commitments lies faith that we serve God by serving one another. By opening ourselves to this service we make ourselves vulnerable, to live simply, to love those we serve, to risk being changed. We do this because at our core we know resurrection comes through compassion and suffering. This is what it is to be in mission.



* Other possible scriptures:
Jesus Washes the Feet of His Disciples: John 13:1-7
Hope in the Lord: Micah 7:7

Continue on page 5...

Continued from page 4...

Reader 2: *you may choose to use one or both of these reflections*

A Reflection from Mother Teresa:

"It happened once, when the Congregation of the Missionary Brothers of Charity was first established, that a young Brother came to me and said, "Mother, I have a special vocation to work with lepers. I want to give my life to them, my whole being. Nothing attracts me more than that." I know for a fact that he truly loved those afflicted with leprosy.

I, in turn, answered him, "I think that you are somewhat wrong, Brother. Our vocation consists in belonging to Jesus. The work is nothing but a means to express our love for him. That is why the work in itself is not important. What is important is for you to belong to Jesus. And he is the one who offers you the means to express that longing."

Moment of silence

Reader 3:

A Reflection from Richard J. Foster, author of *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*:
"Each activity of daily life in which we stretch ourselves on behalf of others is a prayer of action – the times when we share our car with others on rainy mornings, leave early to get them to work on time; the times when we keep up correspondence with friends or answer one last telephone call when we are dead tired at night. These times and many more like them are lived prayer."

The leader may wish to invite comment on the reflections and the meaning of volunteering, ministry and mission.

Ritual: Leader:

At this time, as a symbol of your commitment to (your program) I invite each of you to step forward and add your name around the logo of our program.
Participants can come forward one by one, writing their name then taking a candle, lighting it from the large candle.

Closing Prayer: Reader 4:

Loving God,

We thank you for the opportunity to serve you

By taking the light of Christ into the world.

May our hearts be open to your nudges,

And filled with the hope found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Sources:

Mother Teresa: *In My Own Words*, Special Memorial Edition, 1910-1997. Compiled by José Luis González-Balado. Liguori Press, Liguori, MO 1989. p. 107.

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home. By Richard J. Foster. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. 1992. p. 174.

... continued from page 3, answers to the Gifts of Ministry quiz

If you answered mostly **A's**- Gift of Wisdom- You often tap into the gift of Wisdom God gave you. You pull from your own experiences and seek to offer others advice based on the experiences God has given you.

If you answered mostly **B's**- Gift of Knowledge- You often use the gift of Knowledge. You are drawn to Spiritual readings and Church teaching and often use those tools to help others.

If you answered mostly **C's**- Gift of Healing- You often use the Gift of healing to help and inspire others. Through prayer and through kind words and actions, you reach out to help others in need.

If you answered mostly **D's**- Gift of Faith- You often turn to the gift of Faith. You turn to prayer in times of need and see prayer as the source of strength for others. You inspire others to grow in faith by your prayers and example.

If you answered mostly **E's**- Gift of Mighty Deeds- You are a person of action who reaches out to others in great ways. You do not sit on the sidelines, but take action yourself and move others to do great things as well.

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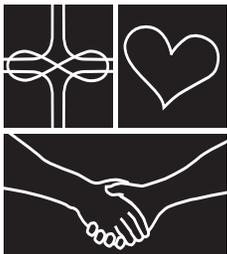
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The Mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers before, during, and after their term of service. The Center takes its 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 Visions' goal is to explore five building blocks of spiritual development: intellectual growth, emotional and physical health, leadership and prayer.



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