

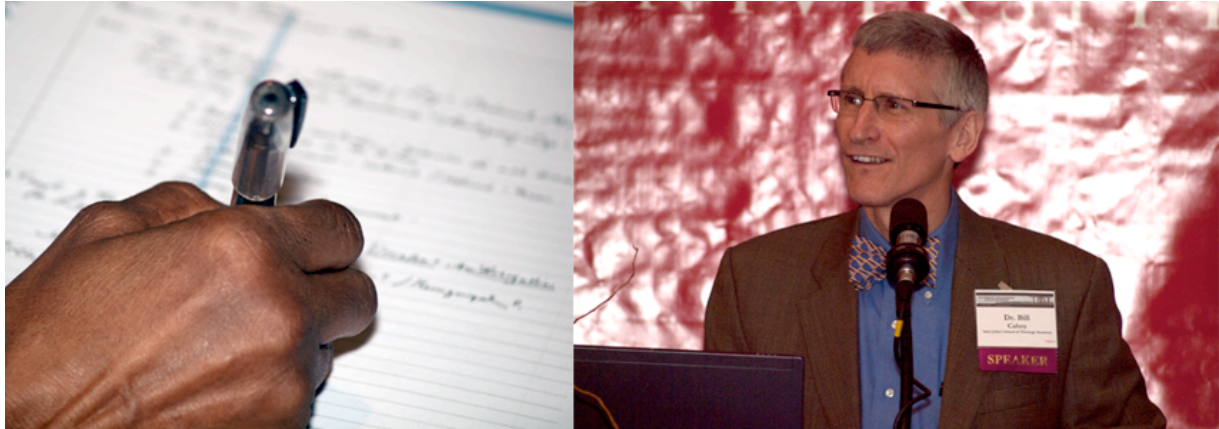
2011 Collegeville National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry

August 2-5, 2011

Collegeville, Minnesota

Post-Symposium

| 2007 Symposium Archives



“Bill Cahoy, dean of Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary outlined the common theological themes from last year’s second College Ministry Seminar to more than 230 pastoral ministers at Saint John’s University’s Guild Hall during the second day of the Collegeville National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry, held Aug. 2-5 in Collegeville, Minn. The symposium is co-sponsored by Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary and 43 organizations representing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic ministry organizations, dioceses, and Catholic Universities.”

As symposium participants seek convergence, symposium process flows forward

When two tributaries converge into a river, the result can be powerful. When more than 230 contributors converge toward a consensus, the result can be powerful to the nth power. But first, of course, they must converge.

A morning presentation by William Cahoy on the second day of the Collegeville National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry at Saint John’s University explored common theological themes - or points of convergence -- emerging from the Collegeville Ministry Seminar II, a planning meeting held in Collegeville last August in preparation for the present symposium.

During the symposium, being held Aug. 2-5 in Collegeville, Minn., more than 230 pastoral leaders are contributing to the dialogue regarding the vocation and authorization of lay ecclesial ministers. The national gathering is co-sponsored by Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary and 43 organizations representing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic ministry organizations, dioceses, and Catholic Universities.

Theological research over the past three years led to points points of convergence from theologians who wrote, received feedback, and revised essays on the theologies of vocation and authorization of lay ecclesial ministers, said Cahoy, dean of Saint John’s University School of Theology•Seminary. The hope is that the essays’ points of convergence, or some variation of them, can be adopted by the symposium and become a foundation for and understanding of lay ecclesial ministry “that makes a difference in the life of the Church and does not just sit on a shelf,” he added. “By nailing down a few points on which we generally agree, we might be able to move the conversation forward and not keep going ‘round and ‘round the same issues.”

And so, in recent years, “We have focused on framing these statements of convergence,” he said. The final drafts of those eight statements and seven essays, along with some keynote from the 2011 symposium and other materials will be published by Collegeville’s Liturgical Press in a book titled *In the Name of the Church: Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*.

The topics of vocation and authorization are reflected directly or indirectly in the eight points. Cahoy shed light on the terms as they relate to lay ecclesial ministry.

Vocation: “From the students we work with here in the School of Theology,... it is clear to us that these people are called by the Spirit to this work. It is a genuine vocation. The question is what that means, (and) how it relates to other vocations in the church.”

Authorization: “Simply put, by whose authority does the lay ecclesial minister serve? How is the authority under which that minister serves different from, say, a parochial school custodian or parish bookkeeper? What does this particular authorization mean and how is it recognized in the community?”

The impetus for this Collegeville-based national lay ecclesial ministry discernment was the first Collegeville Ministry Seminar in 2001, Cahoy said. Ten theologians were invited to Saint John’s to consider the theology of lay and ordained ministry in light of the increasingly widespread practice of lay people taking on ministerial roles in the Roman Catholic Church. That eventually led to the first Collegeville National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry in 2007.

During this same period the United States Bishops engaged in their own process of ecclesial discernment regarding the theological and practical implications of lay people in ministry. The fruit of that discernment, Cahoy said, is *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, approved by the bishops in 2005.

“Like the rest of us reflecting on the experience of lay people in ministry *Co-Workers* also highlighted vocation and authorization as topics deserving particular attention,” he continued. “We have sought to give them that attention in the second Collegeville Ministry Seminar.”

The Collegeville symposium and seminar have adopted the definition of lay ecclesial ministry from *Co-Workers*: “Within (the many ministries of the baptized) is a smaller group on whom this document focuses: those men and women whose ecclesial service is characterized by:

- *Authorization* of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church

- *Leadership* in a particular area of ministry
- *Close mutual collaboration* with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons
- *Preparation and formation* appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them

Previous documents from our Conference have called such women and men 'lay ecclesial ministers' and their service 'lay ecclesial ministry.'"

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