

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Synod 2014

Background Paper:

***The Call to Leadership –
Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons***

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I. **Introduction: Discipleship: Our Fundamental Catholic Identity**
Introduction written by Bishop Donald J. Hying

In the Gospels, Jesus confronts us with a fundamental question: Who do you say that I am? As Christians and members of the Church, we answer with Simon, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” In faith, we can add Savior, Light of the world, the Word made flesh, the Resurrection, the Prince of Peace. Through the saving activity of Jesus’ Incarnation, life, death and resurrection, we become adopted children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, all in the mystery, communion and sacrament of the Church. The relationship that Jesus enjoys with the Father by nature of who he is, we receive as a pure offer of grace.

Baptized into the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, we proclaim Christ’s saving Gospel through a faith lived out in the words, actions, work, relationships and values of our lives. Our fundamental identity as disciples of Jesus Christ gives focus and method to the important activity of the new evangelization. As we painfully know, too many Catholics have not really been evangelized to know and experience the personal love of Jesus Christ, have been poorly catechized in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith, and do not participate in the sacramental life of the Church in any meaningful way. If we seek to change this disturbing trend, parishes must continue to grow in their fundamental identity as dynamic communities of faith which form intentional disciples. If we are not focused on formation for discipleship, we are failing the mission of Christ.

What do intentional Catholic disciples look like? How do they act? What is qualitatively different about their lives and personalities? The answer is clear yet challenging. Disciples are ordinary people who have experienced the love, forgiveness, presence, consolation and challenge of God poured out through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. They have fallen in love with the Lord and find their deepest identity in their relationship with him. They find God and the mission of his Kingdom to be the fundamental purpose of their lives and, having a strong **Catholic identity**, find the whole Catholic experience of the Scriptures, sacraments, moral life and prayer to be the transformative means of their ongoing conversion. As Paul discovered on the road to Damascus, they are people loved and forgiven by Jesus Christ.

Disciples instinctively **evangelize**, that is they naturally share their experience of God and their faith in him with others. The power of moral example itself evangelizes, as others intuitively sense that such a person lives from a very different center of meaning and purpose than secular society. In addition to witnessing by example, disciples are both courageous and articulate in their proclamation of Jesus and the difference he has made in their lives. They will freely pray with others, do volunteer work, witness to how the Lord has worked in their daily experience, offer moral advice when asked, share spiritual books, CDs and DVDs with family, friends and co-workers, all the while actively cultivating a discipleship response in those around them. The power of one Catholic who knows, practices and proclaims the faith is truly remarkable.

An intentional disciple is a good **steward**, knowing that everything in life is a superabundant gift freely bestowed upon us by the Lord, both to enrich us but also to bless and benefit others. This deep conviction of existence as a gift leads to a profound gratitude that pours itself out in deeds of mercy, love and healing. Like Mary who anoints the feet of Jesus with an extravagant costly perfume that cost 300 days' wages, we are compelled to break open and pour out the gifts of our lives in loving service of others and so fill the world with the sacred fragrance of Christ.

An intentional disciple is a Catholic maximalist, not asking what the minimum is that **must** be done in order to be saved, but rather asking what **can** be done for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Like St. Paul, a disciple has moved from the obligation of the law into the astonishing freedom of Christ, who liberates us to do every good work. In this context, the Blessed Virgin Mary is clearly the first and premier disciple who responds in total faith to the seemingly impossible proposal of the angel, places her entire being at the service of God and gives flesh to the Incarnate Word.

St. Augustine insists that when a Christian disciple places the whole mystery and gift of life at the service of God, the Lord Jesus takes flesh within that person and is offered to the world once again. For us as Catholics, in this critical moment in history, we cannot afford to proceed with business as usual. All over the world, millions of Catholics are asking the same questions:

- How can I have a deeper and more authentic relationship with Jesus Christ?
- How can I more effectively live out my faith in such a way that it actually makes a difference in the lives of others, especially my family and friends?
- How can we continue to insert Gospel values into the public square of politics, economy, health care and education?
- How can we bring back all of those Catholics who have fallen away from the practice of the faith?

In millions of different ways, intentional disciples are living out the exciting answers to these important questions. If the Gospel is the script of our lives, the new evangelization is the urgent challenge to act out with fresh enthusiasm and generosity the great drama of Christ's salvation.

Synod 2014 invites us to consider anew how to be intentional disciples, especially in the areas of Catholic Social Teaching, Cultural Diversity, Evangelization, Formation, Leadership, Liturgy, Marriage and Family, and Stewardship.

II. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Introduction and Overview

Intentional disciples seriously discern how they may be called to leadership within the life of the Church. As baptized Catholics, we are all called to holiness, to transform the world by responding to God’s invitation to follow his Son as disciples and to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is our **primary vocation**. Most of the faithful live out this call in the secular realm, sustained and nurtured first with the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), and later with the Sacrament of Matrimony or in the single life.

Christian discipleship in the world of work and family life requires tenacity and diligence in the face of an ever-growing social secularism and relativism. For this reason, all the baptized must be leaders in the secular realms in which they are grounded. In the 21st century, the call to Catholic leadership, rooted in the witness of our faith in the public square, cannot be ignored or taken lightly. It can and should be one of the arenas in which we find and express our Catholic identity.

The Church itself also needs leaders. This has been divinely revealed from the very beginning. During his public ministry, Jesus Christ established Simon Peter as the first leader of his Church: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). It was in the context of Peter’s confession of faith in Jesus as “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16) that Jesus appointed Peter as the “rock” of the Church. Here we find sacred Scripture providing the foundation for Church leadership: confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

Leadership in the Church will hinge on our **secondary vocation**: marriage, priesthood, religious life, diaconate, or a generous single life. Very often we discern how we are called to serve within the Church from a leadership perspective through our secondary vocation.

Among the baptized, some are called to leadership in the Church as ordained and lay leaders. Our Church structure of ordained priests and deacons working alongside well-educated and formed laity (including religious brothers and sisters) is one of the defining characteristics of our Catholic identity. This ecclesial structure provides the faithful with direct access to the sacraments and services of the Church, divine and human gifts intended to unify the Church and serve the congregation as a whole. How the Church’s formal leadership is organized also communicates to the world our deep-seeded Catholic belief in the Triune God who specifically calls some among the baptized faithful to lead his Church with distinctive roles and responsibilities.

The intentional disciple understands that by their baptism, each is called to leadership. Baptized Catholics lead by the moral example of their lives and by the public practice of their faith. Some of the faithful are additionally called to serve in more official leadership roles as ordained and lay leaders in the Church. This paper examines the call to leadership for the laity, priests, and deacons within the following context:

- Current Cultural Realities
- Theological Foundations
- Other Related Information
- Key Issues to Be Addressed
- Key Questions for Consideration

Special attention is given to the distinctive functions, unique charisms, and current opportunities and obstacles for these leadership positions in the Church today.

III. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Current Cultural Realities

Christ taught his disciples to be intentional. During his public ministry, Jesus sent the Twelve on mission to evangelize others by healing the sick, exorcising the demons, and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God (Mt. 10:1-15; Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6). From the very beginning, Christ empowered the leaders of his Church to carry out the mission of “the evangelization of humanity” (*Program for Priestly Formation*, 5th edition, USCCB, p. 9).

Throughout the ages, the Church has adapted this central mission of evangelization to the cultures in which it is immersed – and often very successfully. This is certainly true for the United States. In America today, nearly 78 million people are Catholic. In fact, the U.S. has witnessed a 75% growth in the Catholic population over the past 40 years (“The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes,” CARA Report 2011, p. 8). Catholics today makeup 22% of the country’s total population and enjoy the status as the largest Christian denomination in the United States.

During this period of rapid Catholic expansion in the U.S., the Church, however, has struggled to keep pace with a proportionate level of ordained and lay leaders to minister and serve the baptized faithful. Currently, we have about 40,000 priests (2/3 diocesan priests and 1/3 religious order priests), 17,000 permanent deacons, and another 38,000 lay leaders (full- or part-time paid parish ministry positions, including vowed religious sisters and brothers) to lead this large Catholic flock (“The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes,” p. 58). Broadly speaking, today only 1 in 810 Catholics in the U.S. are in ordained and lay leadership roles in the Church. And there is, on average, only one priest for every 1,925 Catholics.

What do we know about those Catholics currently answering the call to ordained and lay leadership in the Catholic Church?

In the 2011-2012 academic year, there were 3,723 men studying for the priesthood in the 43 theologates (seminaries and schools of theology) across the United States. (Unless otherwise indicated, all facts and figures in this section are taken from a recent CARA report, “Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollment: Statistical Overview for 2011-2012”). This is a 3% increase from the previous year, and the highest number of seminarians since the 1988-89 academic year. Seventy-five percent of these men were studying for the priesthood for dioceses, 25% for religious orders. While this is far below the nearly 8,100 seminarians studying for the priesthood forty-five years ago in 1968-69, recent trends in numbers show some promise. Additionally, one out of 5 men is age 24 or younger, with the majority of seminarians (56%) between the ages of 25-34.

Unfortunately, the rate at which priests are retiring is significantly outpacing the rate at which seminarians are being ordained for the priesthood. Archdioceses and dioceses across the country are facing priest shortages that are impacting parish life. It is increasingly common for Catholic parishes in the U.S. to share the decreasing number of priests. As this trend continues, estimates are that by 2020 one priest assigned to multiple parishes will be the norm.

Ordained permanent deacons in the United States, on the other hand, tell a slightly different story. Ever since the Second Vatican Council restored the permanent Diaconate to the Universal Church (*Lumen Gentium* 29), the number of deacons in the United States has grown steadily over the past forty years. Averaging a consistent 3% growth each year for the past ten years, the 176 active identified diaconate formation programs across the U.S. has educated, formed, and ordained just over 17,000 permanent deacons to date. Currently, there are 2,302 deacon candidates studying for the diaconate.

Unlike men studying for priesthood, men studying to become permanent deacons can be married. In fact, the vast majority (96%) are married men. Furthermore, deacon candidates tend to be considerably older than seminarians, with three-quarters being in their forties and fifties, and almost 20% being 60 or older. This is a direct result of Canon Law 1031 #2 that requires married deacon candidates to be 35 or older to be ordained. Unmarried deacon candidates can be ordained at the age of twenty-five.

One of the major differences between priests and deacons is evidenced in their formal educational background. Seminarians studying for the priesthood are required to have an undergraduate degree before entering the seminary (preferably a degree in Philosophy), and then receive a rigorous four-year program, resulting in most cases with a Masters of Divinity. Deacon candidates, on the other hand, come to diaconate formation programs with varied educational backgrounds. The majority (84%) have at least some college education ranging from 38% having a bachelor's degree and one-third having a graduate degree. The remaining 16% of deacon candidates have a high school diploma or less. Diaconate formation programs range anywhere from three to six years to complete and differ in their requirements for admission, length of program, and number of courses required for completion.

Increased interest and attention has been given to the education and formation of the laity for leadership roles within the Church with the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*. In 1980, the U.S. Bishops issued their pastoral statement: *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity*. With this statement, the U.S. Bishops affirmed the importance of lay men and women answering the Lord's call and encouraged the laity to take an active and responsible role in the mission of the Church. This was reiterated again in 1995 and 2006 in the USCCB document *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*.

In *Called and Gifted*, the bishops expressed their appreciation for the contributions of lay men and women who volunteer and serve the Church in capacities ranging from parish and diocesan councils to Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The bishops also acknowledged and affirmed the "new development" of Catholic lay men and women preparing professionally to work in the Church. Referring to this group of laity as "ecclesial ministers," the U.S. Bishops welcomed this new development as "a gift to the Church."

Since the early 1980s, opportunities for the education and formation of the Catholic laity have steadily increased. Today, Catholic lay men and women who answer the call to leadership within the Church can enroll in a degree or certificate program. In the U.S., there are 240 active programs designed for the education and formation of the laity who are committed to serving the Church in professional and semi-professional leadership role. In the 2011-12 academic year, there were 17,452 men and women enrolled in these programs, with the majority (70%) seeking

certificates, and the remaining thirty percent seeking graduate degrees in ministry. The number of lay leaders in the Church has nearly doubled in the past twenty-five years, from approximately 21,000 in 1990 to nearly 38,000 in 2014 ("The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes," p. 59). Of these approximately 38,000 lay leaders, 14% are vowed religious sisters and brothers.

Lay formation programs are often sponsored by the diocese or co-sponsored in collaboration between the diocese and a local Catholic college or university. About 20% of the lay formation programs are sponsored exclusively by a local Catholic college or university. Slightly more women (61%) than men enroll in lay formation programs. Like the deacon candidates, most laity in formation programs are in their forties and fifties (57%). Younger laity (those under the age of 40), tend toward pursuing the graduate degree more so than the certificate. But only 13% of laity enrolled in formation programs are under the age of 30.

One of the pressing cultural realities for the laity seeking leadership positions is the Church involves economics. There has been a sharp decline in the number of paid positions for lay ministers as well as a systemic low pay structure. Many well-educated laity who received advanced degrees in ministry (with its incurred debt) find the wages in the Church as a hardship. Furthermore, local parishes under economic strain often resort to reducing full-time positions to part-time positions.

In sum, the current cultural reality for lay leaders in the U.S. Catholic Church today reveals interesting and positives trends, as well as areas for concern. Positively, there are an abundance of education and formation programs available in the U.S. for those seeking ordained and lay leadership roles in the Church. Men seeking ordination as deacons has been growing steady for the past 10 years, and 2011-12 saw the highest number of men entering seminaries across the country since 1988-89. Interestingly, the number of men and women entering and graduating from lay formation programs is growing rapidly and is significantly outpacing the number of men studying for ordination as priests or deacons.

An obvious pressing concern is that the U.S. Catholic Church needs more ordained and lay leaders for its almost 78 million members. We are facing an acute priest shortage that does not appear to reversing in the near future. We need to offer lay leaders a more sustainable wage. And few too young people under the age of thirty are pursuing ordained and lay leadership roles in the Church. In 2010 as a result of the Emerging Models Project, the National Association for Lay Ministry issued a study on young adult Catholics and their future in ministry. Catholics are reminded here to take a serious look at *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders, What the Church Needs to Know*.

Much work lies ahead as we seek ways to educate and form intentional disciples who seek leadership roles within our Church, especially those called to ordination.

IV. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Theological Foundations

The theological foundations for the ordained and lay leaders in the Church in the modern Church today are rooted in Scripture and established as normative in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, most notably, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution On the Church), *Christus Dominus* (Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops In the Church), *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree On the Ministry and Life of Priests), and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree On the Apostolate of the Laity). Emphasis is placed on these theological foundations again in *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People (Christi fideles Laici)*, a post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation by John Paul II, promulgated in 1987. In addition, other documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Code of Canon Law* further articulate the theological basis for these leadership roles within the Church.

The Church has established clear guidelines and directives for men seeking ordination as priests and deacons, and men and women seeking lay leadership roles. Seminaries, Schools of Theology, and Catholic institutions of higher education which educate and form ordained and lay leaders focus on four elements of formation: intellectual, spiritual, human, and pastoral. The norms for these formational elements are found in the *Program of Priestly Formation* (5th edition), in the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, and in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. These guidelines have been issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as recently as 2005.

Jesus' original call of the four fishermen to be his disciples (Mt. 4:18-22) and the commission of the resurrected Christ to the apostles to evangelize the nations (Mt. 28:19) provides the Gospel foundation for the ministry of the priesthood (John Paul II, *I will Give you Shepherds: On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, no. 2). The call and commission of the disciples connects the priesthood to its apostolic origins and to the very mission of the Church.

In addition to the Scriptural basis, the nature, mission, and ministry of priests rest on three theological foundations: Trinitarian, Christological, and Ecclesiological (*Program of Priestly Formation*, pp. 8-10). Priests are uniquely aligned to the Trinity: "The priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as Head and Shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world" (*PPF*, p.8). Priests function as Christ's presence in the world: "Priests are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the One High Priest, embodying his way of life and making himself visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care" (*PPF*, 9). And priests are inextricably connected to the Church: "The priesthood, along with the word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church. The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire people of God" (*PPF*, 9).

In terms of the diaconate, the Second Vatican Council is widely recognized for reestablishing the diaconate "as a proper and permanent rank in the hierarchy" (*NDPD*, 3). Two years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI issued in 1967 his Apostolic Letter, *Restoring the Permanent Diaconate*, implementing the recommendation of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, 29. Grounded in Scripture (Paul's First Letter to Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7) with Stephen, the first Christian martyr and deacon of

the Jerusalem church as their patron saint, the Sacred Order of Deacon functions primarily in “service” (in Greek, *diakonia*) to the Church.

Deacons are “a driving force for the Church’s service or *diakonia* toward the local Christian communities, and as a sign or sacrament of the Lord Christ himself, who ‘came not to be served but to serve’” (NDPD, 3). Significantly, “the deacon’s ministry of service is linked with the missionary dimension of the Church: the missionary efforts of the deacon will embrace the ministry of the word, the liturgy, and works of charity which, in their turn, are carried into daily life. Mission includes witness to Christ in a secular profession or occupation” (NDPD, 3).

Within the Church, deacons have a clear role and function as laid out in the *NPDP*, 27-30. The Sacrament of Orders “configures” deacons to Christ as consecrated witness to service. The deacon has “a distinct identity and integrity in the Church that marks him neither a lay person nor a priest; rather, the deacon is a cleric who is ordained to *diakonia*, namely, a service to God’s People in communion with the bishop and his body of priests.” Both married and celibate deacons “serve God’s People by their witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love... In their secular employment, deacons also make evident the dignity of human work.” The deacon “is ordained precisely for service in both the sanctuary and the marketplace.”

Similar to men answering the call to priesthood and the diaconate, some laity among the many faithful are called to work in the Church. Lay people answering the call to leadership in Church are oriented from the Sacraments of Initiation, and not the Sacrament of Orders, as with priests and deacons. The Church supports and affirms the role of the laity: “Sharing in the function of Christ, priest, prophet, and king, the laity have an active part of their own in the life and activity of the church. Their activity within the church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect” (*Apostolate of the Lay People*, 10).

Men and women answering the call to leadership in the Church are 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, priest, and deacons; *preparation and formation* appropriate to the level of responsibility that are assigned to them” (*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, p. 10).

The USCCB refers to these lay leaders as “lay ecclesial ministers” in numerous key documents: *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity* (pp. 3-4, 1980); *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (pp. 16-17, 1995); *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions* (pp. 7-8, 1997); and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (p. 10, 2005). The U.S. Bishops are clear that this term is not intended “to establish a new rank or order among the laity” (*Co-Workers*, p. 11). Rather, the term is “generic” and reflects “service that is done by lay persons...within the community of the Church...and is a participation in the threefold ministry of Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king” (*Co-Workers*, p. 11).

Priests, deacons and laity, working in collaboration, are united in one source, the ministry of Christ. The Church’s theological foundation for leadership lives out the Trinitarian vision of Saint Paul: “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” (I Cor. 12:4-6).

V. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Other Related Information

As we seek ways to develop intentional disciples within the leadership of the Church to more closely reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of U.S. Catholics, we are confronted with the underrepresentation of most groups among the ordained. The majority of seminarians (nearly two-thirds) are white/Caucasian, 15% are Hispanic/Latino, 10% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% are black/African American. The racial and ethnic profile of deacons candidates is similar to seminarians, with the vast majority (74%) being white/Caucasian, about one in six Hispanic/Latino, 4% Asians/Pacific Islanders, and only 2% blacks/African Americans.

Unlike the seminarians and deacons candidates, the racial and ethnic profile of the laity enrolled in formation programs is nearly split even between white/Caucasian candidates (49%) and Hispanic/Latino candidates (43%). Asians/Pacific Islanders and blacks/African Americans lay candidates remain in the clear minority however, with 2% and 3% respectively (CARA report, “Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollment: Statistical Overview for 2011-2012”).

VI. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Key Issues to Be Addressed

One of the key issues that affect all three leadership roles in the Church is the limited number of baptized Catholics responding to the call to lead in the Church, both in the U.S. and in the Milwaukee Archdiocese. Although the number of laity that have been responding to call is larger than those called to the priesthood and the diaconate, the overall response to the call is far too few. But perhaps the more pressing dilemma of “leadership” stems from a functional standpoint – diminishing **leadership** for: governance, pastoral care, catechesis, evangelization (internal), stewardship, sacraments and the apostolate (external). These realities beg not only the question: How do we get more leaders?, but also: How do we get more leadership? These are distinct and separate critical questions to be addressed.

Closely connected to the shortage of ordained and lay leaders is the need to engage more fully the younger “Generation X” (born 1965-1980) and the “Millennial”(born after 1980) Catholics; that is, Catholics currently in their 20s and 30s. Getting this group to embrace the idea of “intentional discipleship” is our best opportunity to bend the curve of too few ordained and lay leaders in the Church.

Three key aspects are necessary to address the overall shortage of ordained and lay leaders as well as offer a compelling invitation for younger Catholics to take seriously their faith. First, current ordained and lay leaders must develop a better understanding of the worldview of this next generation of Catholics. How younger Catholics make meaning of life in an age of globalization, technology, and relativism is insufficiently understood by many older Catholics. Second, Catholics of all ages, especially the faithful “Catholic in the pew,” need training, education, and formation in using the set of tools already available to them for discerning the call to leadership in the Church in our 21st century world. From the abundance of theologates and Catholic colleges and universities to the many already-existing adult education programs in parishes – both local and national - the Church provides many resources that are simply underutilized. Third, those among us who are ourselves “intentional disciples” need to be more conscious of inviting fellow Catholics, especially young Catholics in middle school, high school, and college, to discernment of Church leadership. The power of a “tap on the shoulder” and some words of encouragement can be exercised so much more.

VII. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Key Questions for Consideration

The key questions arise from the various sections of this background paper.

Current cultural realities: How can we better marshal the abundance of human and financial Catholic resources in the U.S. to increase the response to the call to ordained and lay leadership? How can the Church offer a more sustainable wage for its lay leaders?

Theological Foundations: How do we educate Catholics on the different charisms of leadership in the Church, encouraging the ordained and lay to be “co-responsible” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009) for the Church’s mission?

Related information: What systems need to be developed to increase Hispanic, African-American, and Asian/Pacific Islander lay and ordained leaders?

Key issues: How do we overcome the generational divide in the Church today?

VIII. The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons: Conclusion

U.S. Catholics in the 21st century have an abundance of resources, from Vatican II documents to U.S. Bishops and Papal statements, which guide and ground us in the sacred call to ordained and lay leadership in the Church. We are also nearly 78 million strong, almost 22% of this country’s total population – a nation of unparalleled wealth and opportunity. In this regard, we find ourselves in a uniquely privileged moment in Church history.

The challenge of our day rests in developing intentional disciples that take seriously the call to leadership in the Church. Part of our overall response to the New Evangelization must lie in building up the ranks of the priests, deacons, and lay leaders to help shepherd the Church established by Jesus Christ himself.