

## Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak  
760-758-4100 x100  
michaelr@stmoside.org

### Ministerial Leadership in the Church—Lay Ministry

*In the last number of years, we have experienced great changes in ministerial leadership in the Church. The shift from priests and sisters providing the majority of service to the community to lay women and men, in the majority, ministering along with priests, deacons, and sisters has created an entirely different “face” to Parish leadership. This new “face” is very evident here at St. Thomas More.*

*With this in mind, I want to share some thoughts on the role of a pastor taken from Canon Law and then some thoughts on lay leadership and collaboration with clergy.*

*Last week I focused on the role of the pastor. This week, the focus is on lay leadership.*

In a cover letter to his statement, “As One Who Serves,” which appeared in *The Tidings*, the Los Angeles Archdiocesan newspaper on September 30, 2005, Cardinal Mahoney said, “From one point of view we are facing a crisis. But the diminishing number of priestly and religious vocations has brought with it a deeper realization that it is in the nature of the Church to be given diverse gifts, ministries, and offices. At this time, we are being called to discern new modes of Parish leadership and a more participatory exercise of ministry in which lay, religious, and ordained together seek to build up the body of Christ through the charism of leadership.”

And from *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2005):

*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* expresses our strong desire for the fruitful collaboration of ordained and lay ministers who, in distinct but complementary ways, continue in the Church the saving mission of Christ for the world, his vineyard.

In Parishes especially, but also in other Church institutions and communities, lay women and men generously and extensively “cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community.”

This is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s movement in the lives of our sisters and brothers. We are very grateful for all who undertake various roles in Church ministry. Many do so on a limited and voluntary basis: for example, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, readers, cantors and choir members, catechists, pastoral council members, visitors to the sick and needy, and those who serve in programs such as sacramental preparation, youth ministry, including ministry with people with disabilities, and charity and justice.

We are blessed indeed to have such gifted and generous co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord to which we have all been called. Let us continue to work together as a “community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in (our) pilgrimage toward the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message for all humanity.”

*Fr. Mike*