

### ***Remembering NALM over 35 years!***

Eleven years ago I was invited by Maryanne Harrington to begin a new adventure with her as she reestablished a lay ministry formation program called the Church Ministry Institute in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Since that time I have been a faculty member, mentor, and now I am the Administrator for the Church Ministry Institute. The past three years have been an exciting time for me as I assist her, meet wonderful people, and learn more and more about the importance of Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church. One of the first days as administrator, Maryanne spoke to me about being a member of a national organization named NALM. My beginning thoughts were: what was this organization and how did NALM come about? Well, I have tried to make some connections and would like to share with you the rich history that belongs to the National Association for Lay Ministry.

Since the Second Vatican council, several ministries that had for a time been retained by the clergy were returned to the laity and several new forms of ministry emerged. The vocation of the laity as apostles to the world and stewards of the Church's mission as an evangelizer has given rise to the popular term "lay ministry" to describe the active vocation of all the baptized. Included in this general lay ministry are several specific ministries designed to support the Church community, such as lector/reader, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, catechist, sponsor/godparent, spouse, parent, etc. In addition to those serving as lay ministers, there are a number of non-ordained persons who have undertaken roles that immediately prior to Vatican II belonged entirely to the ordained. These include such roles as parish pastoral and catechetical staff, hospital and prison ministry, campus ministry, as well as many diocesan leadership roles. Lay Ecclesial Ministry identifies this broad category of roles rather than a specific job title. The terminology has been adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to

establish a framework to indicate what is common to many roles and responsibilities undertaken by lay persons, for example, Pastoral Coordinator or Moderator of a Parish, Pastoral Associate, Director of Religious Education, Youth Minister, Campus Minister, Hospital Chaplain.

Within the framework of Vatican Council II, the birth of NALM took place in 1981 with a group of lay people, vowed religious, and clergy (who really began meeting annually in 1976) who established the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) in the United States. Their initial purpose was to share their expertise and to support each other in the common goal of establishing and improving programs of lay ministry formation throughout the United States. Some of the “pioneers” were John Reid and Sister Florita Rodman who are considered the parents/grandparents of the NALM. Loughlan Sofield was also a part of the founding group. These initial members have made NALM into a professional organization that supports, educates, and advocates for lay ministers and promotes the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church.

*What are some of the accomplishments of NALM over the past 35 years?*

## **Standards**

In 1990, NFCYM [National Association for Catholic Youth Ministry] received approval of their standards from the USCC Commission on Certification and Accreditation for the first parish-based lay ecclesial ministers, and youth ministers. The following year, 1991, NALM followed suit and received approval of standards for pastoral associates and parish life coordinators. In 1996, NCCL [National Conference for Catechetical Leadership] received approval of parish catechetical leaders’ standards. In 1999 NALM, NCCL, and NFCYM joined efforts to combine their standards for different fields within lay ecclesial ministry into the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, published in 2003. These

combined standards were for parish catechetical leaders, pastoral associates and parish life coordinators. In 2005, NPM [National Pastoral Musicians] joined this effort and certification standards for directors of music ministries were added to the combined certification standards.

### **Emerging Models for Pastoral Leadership**

An exciting and still on-going project began in 2003. The *Emerging Models for Pastoral Leadership* project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, was launched to conduct research into pastoral leadership models in today's parishes and to begin a national conversation about the role of "pastoral imagination" in developing spiritually alive parishes. This project was a collaboration of five national organizations: NALM, [the Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development \(CPPCD\)](#), the [National Association of Church Personnel Administrators \(NACPA\)](#), the [National Federation of Priest Councils \(NFPC\)](#), the [National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association \(NCYAMA\)](#) and the National Association of Deacon Directors.

The *Emerging Models* project included a variety of creative and engaging processes. Research included the experience of Parish Life Coordinators, models and experience of multi-parish pastoring, diocesan consultations and regional gatherings to identify and discuss changes already taking place in parishes.

Phase I of the *Emerging Models* project culminated in a National Ministry Summit in June 2008 in Orlando, FL. 1200 persons from the five collaborating organizations met to receive research reports, to critically reflect upon the research, and to develop recommendations for action in six key areas. Five books have been published as a result of this first phase of the Emerging Models project. You can read much more at [www.emergingmodels.org](http://www.emergingmodels.org).

### **Advocacy**

NALM issued its first position statement on employment practices for lay ecclesial ministries in February of 2006 when the NALM Board of Directors appointed an Advocacy Committee. Among the committee charges was the statement: “Identify issues of concern to lay ministers and advocate for a response at the local, regional, or national level.” With this in mind, NALM members were asked to participate in an on-line survey in order to identify issues of concern. Three areas of concern were identified by the survey participants, with the most common area being workplace issues. The issues that were identified are ones that could be addressed by Human Resource departments, diocesan policies and procedures, diocesan lay ecclesial ministry offices and bishops. Among the specific issues were salaries, benefits, pension, retirement, job security, termination, pastor change, and authority/accountability.

### **Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord**

The 2005 document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, issued by the USCCB, contains the wisdom and guidance that is needed to address the concerns raised by the National Association of Lay Ministers as a result of the survey. In the section entitled “The Ministerial Workplace” the document states: “Thus, in the ministerial workplace, one finds the special challenge of establishing policies and practices that integrate Gospel values and best organizational practices. They imply respect for persons, justice, integrity, efficient use of resources, successful accomplishment of mission and goals, and an environment in which committed and skilled workers are treated fairly” (Co-Workers, 61). *Co-Workers* also invites continued reflection and feedback on the development of lay ecclesial ministry. The NALM Board of Directors has accepted the invitation to reflect on some of the topics covered in *Co-Workers* in “ways that are faithful to the Church’s theological and doctrinal tradition and that respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations” (Co-Workers, 6). During the years

preceding the publication of *Co-Workers*, NALM members were also involved in shaping the document through consultations and workshops at the annual conferences.

### **Regional Gatherings**

Through the generosity of an anonymous grant, several gatherings were held in various regions of the country. These meetings gathered lay ministers to share their stories and reflect together on their experience as lay ministers in the Church. The regional meetings also provided opportunities for mutual support and encouragement, hope for the future!

### **What is happening in NALM in 2011?**

The *Emerging Models for Pastoral Leadership* project was renewed in 2009 through the generosity of the Lilly Endowment. During this phase of the project, collaborating organizations are hosting symposia, continuing research, and extending the work of the National Ministry Summit. NALM continues to be a significant partner in this project.

NALM is focusing its efforts on the revision of the Standards and the development of certification processes for lay ecclesial ministers. Several national Catholic organizations have formed an Alliance to steward this revision and development. Three key issues being addressed by the Alliance:

- Revision of the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, following the guidelines from USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation
- Development of a national certification process offered by the Alliance partners but approved by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation
- Consolidating the different codes of ethics for different lay ecclesial ministries into a single code of ethics for all lay ecclesial ministers.

The goal is to submit these items for approval by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation by the end of year 2011.

NALM also co-hosted an invitational symposium in late 2010 to further *Emerging Models* research on young adults as the next generation of leaders. The information from this symposium will be included in continuing *Emerging Models* work during this year.

**In conclusion...**

Now we look forward to celebrating 35 years of gathering our **Vision, Voice, and Vitality** as NALM prepares to host Conference 2011 in Indianapolis. This conference will launch a year of celebration marking 35 years of support for and advocacy on behalf of lay ministers and lay ministry in the Church.

WOW! Can I take a deep breath and continue to marvel at all that has happened over the past 35 years!! I am inspired by those who I minister to and with each day. I stand in awe of all those who have had and still have the vision, courage, faith, dedication and love of the Catholic Church in the United States. May God continue to bless us for another 35 years!