

# Many Ministries Around One Lord

Is it many ministries around one Lord or many people around one minister? As more and more churches make the shift to becoming missionary congregations, we discover a shift in consciousness as to who are the ministers and the ministered-to. Most adults who have grown up in the church, no matter the denomination, experience a fairly common model of ministry, one that was clergy-centered. Many people gathered around one minister who does the ministering and one church = one full time pastor is becoming a less common traits of congregational life and ministry. Today we have a new paradigm of ministry development.

The earlier model has been with us since the Middle Ages. For some, these changes of "church habits" are difficult to live out in the claiming our each of our roles in the mutual ministry of leadership in our churches.

By virtue of our baptism, we are given words of invitation to share in Christ's eternal priesthood. It is this crucified and resurrected Christ who stands as the high priest at the Center and we, the Community of the Baptized, are encircled around this empowering presence who invites us into a royal priesthood as joint heirs.

We are called through our baptism to become ministers: one to another and to the world that surrounds us. We are to be a bridge connecting the sacred and secular worlds; but only those who have eyes to see discover a flame in every bush.

Potentially in our baptism we are given these eyes to see the sacred in the ordinary; to see God at work in every segment of life: a Church, at home, at work, in the community. As we mature in Christ this potentiality because the actuality as we respond to God's presence through various acts of ministry and often becoming that presence for others as we respond to calls of service.

Among the many ministers responding to the call of the baptized, there will be in each community one whose special functions is to repeat the words Jesus used at the Last Supper as he prayed over the bread and wine. Inviting the Holy Spirit to be fully present in these humble elements from the humus Earth, the celebrant-priest prays that they may be lifted up and sanctified to be one with their Creator. In so doing, we how partake of this sacred food may also be lifted up and sanctified to become God's ver presence for others in our lives. As the voices of those present say the great AMEN, we join voices in the celebration.

The paradigm of ordained ministry dates to a time before universal literacy and the printing press when only a privileged few could read. It is easy to see how a community of people might become dependent on the only learned and literate person in their midst or even geographical area. In easy steps this person becomes *the* person, from which we get the term *the Parson*. This person/parson became the designated minister who is seminary-trained and ordained and is given the full care of the church community.

In many congregations today there are any number of people who will be at least as well educated. Thus the Parson is no longer *the person* who is the literate one among them. We are all on equal footing when it comes to basic literacy, and certainly the Grace which flows through the

priest is available for us all, at all times. This Grace is given in abundance at Baptism and to the extent that we follow the Baptismal Promises we open ourselves up to its fullness. This is most especially true when we begin with the Apostles' teaching, the breaking of the bread and the prayers, and are fed and nurtured by the Living Christ whose presence in us becomes more focused.

Ministry is initiated and nurtured in the intentional reading of the Scriptures and participating in the sacraments, both which the Church keeps for us. When these are experienced and celebrated in community both have a multiplying power that goes beyond our own personal experience. In this way we are called to become the bread we eat and the words we speak.

There are others standing in the circle of ministers around our Lord who are called to various other functions that will complement the one who presides at the Table. All these ministries are already potentially open to every baptized person.

As long as the Church as the living body of Christ is actually alive there can never be a shortage of ministers, no matter how small or economically challenged a congregation may be. The greatest challenge may be to discern the specific gifts each member has and how they can use them for the good of the whole community.

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