

PART II

*Theological and Ecclesiological
Foundations for Lay Leadership*

*Sent Out to Serve:
Disciples of Jesus as Leaders of Catholic
Colleges and Universities in a New Era*

ANTHONY J. CERNERA

Dr. Morey and Father Holtschnieder have described in their study the changed reality of the composition of those who lead Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Today, Catholic institutions of higher education draw their leaders overwhelmingly from the ranks of women and men whose full membership in the Church is defined by the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The numbers of those in positions of leadership who also have received the Sacrament of Orders and/or who have professed vows within religious communities have declined significantly and will probably continue to do so. This is a dramatic historical change in a very short period of time. We find ourselves in a new place, a place that is exciting to many and frightening to others. This phenomenon of our times has great significance and consequences for those of us who are responsible for the mission and purposes of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. It is also representative of a significant sign of the times that is broader than the higher education sector, namely the dramatic increase in the number of fully initiated members of the Christian community who are not ordained or professed religious but who are active and engaged participants in the mission and life of the Church. This extraordinary development reflects the reemergence of an ecclesial self-understanding that affirms the responsibility of all fully initiated members of the Church for the continuing mission of Christ in the world. The higher education phenomenon, and indeed the

larger sign of the times that it illustrates, represents a major paradigm shift for the Christian community in every particular church around the world, one whose consequences we are still seeking to understand and to build on for the future.

This paradigm shift is also taking place within the American context and experience, which is a way of life that values participation. Participation is indeed a defining characteristic of our society and is informed by such values as equal opportunity, free expression, responsible citizenship, democratic process, and volunteerism. These values and others like them create and maintain a culture that fosters and encourages active engagement. In addition, Catholics in the United States have embraced the ideal of participation at many levels of church life. It is common practice to see members of the church who are not ordained or members of religious communities engaged in all kinds of ministries and various forms of activity within the community and beyond.

In addition, we are a church that is now in the mainstream of American society. From the middle of the nineteenth century until the late 1920s, the Catholic Church in the United States was an immigrant church. That began to change in the third decade of the twentieth century as Catholics gradually moved out of the immigrant ghettos of major cities, poverty, and the working class. Post-World War II America saw Catholics go to college in unprecedented numbers. The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 marked a symbolic arrival of Catholics in the mainstream of American life. While no other Catholic has been elected president of the United States since that time, Catholics have come to occupy positions of leadership in corporate, civic, and public life that would have been unimaginable to the Catholic community a century and a half before.

An Autobiographical/Narrative Theology Excursion

Allow me a moment of autobiographical reflection to illustrate the paradigm shift. In 1967, I was a junior at Mount St. Michael's Academy, a wonderful high school for boys at which virtually all the teachers were members of the Marist Brothers of the Schools. My high school years, 1964 to 1968, proved a fascinating time to

be studying and growing in my understanding of being a Christian. A group of young Marist Brothers freshly out of college had joined an already vibrant community of teachers. I was invited to join a student organization known as Young Christian Students (YCS) and to participate in a leadership development program. In religion class I was learning that all of us as baptized people were members of the Church. In fact, we were the Church: the people of God called to continue the mission of Christ in the world.

That was wonderfully exciting. It made perfectly good sense, capturing for me in words what I was experiencing when I was involved in a variety of activities that today would be called service learning. Along with others my age, we were teaching the gospel to young children. We were feeding the hungry at a soup kitchen. We were active in movements promoting peace, ecumenism, and the rights of oppressed people. And we were doing these kinds of things because we understood ourselves to be disciples of Jesus and a community of disciples of Jesus. We worked alongside priests, religious brothers and sisters, and occasionally even a bishop or two.

But all that said, it was also somewhat confusing to this then-young teenager. Confusing? Yes, because the community of Jesus' disciples was also trying to catch up with this and other developments in the life of the Church in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council. Upon joining YCS, I was given some material about this wonderful movement, which had been written just before the Council. In that printed material, our work of bringing the gospel into the social setting of our world was described as "participating in the work of the hierarchy." Somehow by joining YCS or the Sodality or some other Catholic youth organization we were taking on a work that was not properly ours but belonged to the bishops. A few of us "lay people" were invited to share in what was really the work of the bishop. That sounded very different from what I was learning and what I was experiencing. So my confusion amounted to answering the apparent contradiction: Was I responding to the gospel in the ways that I was because I was a baptized member of the Church, or was I called and chosen to assist in the work of the ordained leaders of the diocese or parish? Was I the Church, along with all

the other baptized members, or were the ordained really the Church in which I had some minor but finally insignificant role?

The confusion of that time was expressed in another way in my personal journey of discipleship. I was considered a prime candidate for religious life or for ordination. According to some people, Tony was “holy” and active in various charitable works, so it was presumed that I was being called to religious life or priesthood. But that was not how I was experiencing it. On the other hand, there were few role models out there of people who were trying to be “holy” and active in following Jesus’ way that were not ordained or professed religious. So I was confused. People I respected greatly thought I should enter a particular religious community or the diocesan seminary. I decided that I should make a retreat. And so I did. In fact, I went on retreat three times during a six-year period and each time the message was clear: I was not called to those ways of discipleship. Rather, I was called to live as a disciple of Jesus, fully as a member of the church, trying to give my life fully to God just as I am.

Perhaps that was more than you want to know about me, but it may help to set the stage for a theologically informed reflection about those of us who are called from the community to be leaders of Catholic colleges and universities in a new era of church and society.

So we are at a very different place in the life of the church and the life of Catholic universities and colleges. We are seeking ways to understand ourselves, and to be understood by others in the church. We are full members of the church by virtue of the sacraments of initiation and we are also leaders who live their professional lives as an integral part of their vocation to respond to the saving love that God has revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth. This is a dramatically new development, and the church’s effort to reflect on this profound paradigm shift is still very tentative. Over the last thousand years, the church has paid little attention to the role of those whose lives were not characterized by ordination or religious profession. Most of us have become accustomed to mean the ordained when we say “church.” We have divided the church into “clerical” and “lay” in ways that nurtured an ideal of being a good lay Catholic that was about obedience and passivity

and hardly about active, full, conscious participation in and responsibility for the mission of the church. It was understood that the ones who did that kind of work were the priests and nuns.

When it comes to our colleges and universities, the issues play themselves out much the same way. For example, I have been asked at least a thousand times: Which religious order founded Sacred Heart University or which group of priests or nuns runs the university? It is always interesting to watch the expression on peoples' faces when I say that the responsibility for the founding and leading of this University has been and continues to be in the hands of a group of men and women who are active members of the church, and who are also spouses and parents.

My task in this essay is to offer a theological reflection about who we are as full members of the Church who are also called to be leaders of Catholic colleges and universities at the beginning of the twenty-first century in the United States. I propose to undertake this reflection by: 1) describing some of the key themes of the Second Vatican Council; 2) focusing on the mission and ministry of Jesus and his disciples; 3) suggesting a way of understanding ourselves as disciples who lead Catholic colleges and universities; and 4) concluding with some challenges for us to address in the years ahead.

The Second Vatican Council: The Call for *Aggiornamento* and Reading the Signs of the Times

The most important event in the life of the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century was the Second Vatican Council. This is the case for several reasons. First, it was the first time in the life of the community of Jesus' disciples that the world church met. The phrase "world church" was first used by Walbert Buhlmann and adopted by Karl Rahner to capture a radical new development in the life of the Catholic Church. Although there had been ecumenical councils before in the history of the church, this was the first time that bishops came from every continent, and those bishops included men who were native to those geographical areas. The community of Jesus' disciples was exhibiting its Catholicity in a universal and global way. Among the bishops

from Asia there were Asians; among those from Africa there were Africans—and not merely European and American missionaries who had become bishops of churches on that continent. And the same was true of the bishops who came from Latin America. This was reflective of a profound change in the face and composition of the Christian community worldwide. For the first time in its two-thousand-year history there were more Catholics from outside Europe and North America, a trend that would continue in a dramatic way well into the twenty-first century.

Second, by convening the Council, Pope John XXIII invited the church into a profound examination about its inner life (*ad intra*) and its relationship to the world (*ad extra*). He further asked that it be done in a spirit of profound faith and confidence in what God was doing in history, and not in a posture of defensive condemnation. At the ceremonies on the opening day of the Council, Pope John XXIII said:

In the daily exercise of our pastoral ministry—and much to our sorrow—we must sometimes listen to those who, consumed with zeal, have scant judgment or balance. To such ones the modern world is nothing but betrayal and ruin. They claim that this age is far worse than previous ages, and they rant on as if they had learned nothing at all from history—and yet, history is the great Teacher of Life. . . . We feel bound to disagree with these prophets of doom who are forever forecasting calamity—as though the world’s end were imminent. Today, rather, Providence is guiding us toward a new order of human relationships, which, thanks to human effort and yet far surpassing human hopes, will bring us to the realization of still higher and undreamed of expectations.¹

Third, the Council was both the culmination of a long process of self-reflection and preparation for renewal as well as the point of departure for a more intense effort at renewal and updating on the part of the church in response to a radically changing world. The Council stood as a watershed point, but the work of the Council needed to be received and incorporated into the life of the

Church. For example, the renewal of the liturgy, which called for the “full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations,”² represented the culmination of a century of preparation by liturgical scholars, many of them Benedictine monks in Europe. The same could be said for the biblical movement that prepared the way for the revival of biblical studies in the Catholic community as well as the recovery of the sacred Scriptures as an integral part of Catholic worship and daily spiritual life and practice (*lectio divina*). However, the Council also broke significant new ground in its teaching on religious liberty, ecumenical relations with other Christian churches, inter-religious dialogue, indeed in the church’s very understanding of its relationship to the world. The Council invited the church to engage in a new way of theological reflection about its mission in the world by positing the starting point for such reflection in the reading of the signs of the times. The Council acknowledged that the Church had something to learn from the world because God’s Spirit was actively engaged in the great events of history, calling the Church and all people of good will to participate in renewing the face of the earth.

Fourth, for our purposes, the most critical development at the Council was the Church’s reflection on its own self-understanding. The *aggiornamento* that the Council undertook brought the church to a new self-definition. As Hermann J. Pottmeyer wrote:

The critical impulse that can be seen at work during and after the Council was aroused because the official self-understanding of the Church which right up to the Council had been formed by a counter-reformational and neo-scholastic theology, had become questionable. It had become increasingly alien to the real life of human beings and no longer met the needs of an effective pastoral practice.³

The pre-Vatican II definition was overly juridical and excessively clerical. For example, take the definition of the church of Robert Bellarmine that was commonly used in pre-conciliar times, namely, “The one and true Church is the community of men

brought together by the profession of the same Christian faith and conjoined in the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of the legitimate pastors and especially the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman pontiff.” The Council, after rejecting an initial schema on the Church in which the first chapter was entitled “The Nature of the Church Militant,” adopted as the title of its first chapter, “The Mystery of the Church.” As Avery Dulles pointed out in his classic work, *Models of the Church*, “This change was symptomatic of the whole ecclesiology of the Council”⁴ By doing this, the Council refocused the church on what is most important about itself, namely, the presence of God in it, who calls the members to life with God, sustains them, and works through them to bring about the fulfillment of the Reign of God. This change led initially to the theological reflection of the church as “People of God” as the Council’s preferred way of describing the church. Gradually at the Council and afterwards, the notion of *communio* also emerged. The Extraordinary Synod of 1985 concluded its written reflection this way: “The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council’s documents.” Georgia Keightley reminds us that *communio*, like its Greek equivalent *koinonia*, “is an ancient one, and unlike the images found in *Lumen Gentium* that merely describe the Church, this word says what the Church actually is.”⁵ *Koinonia* is a central New Testament term. She continues:

It has as referents both God’s grace and the human response to it. Primarily, it is used to express the understanding early Christians had of themselves as constituting an entirely new form of human community, a society whose very principle of unity and identity was the felt presence of God’s own self. This shared experience of union with God through Christ in the Spirit was not only the basis for the union between believer and believer and source of the local Church’s common life, it was also recognized to be the bond that linked the local Church to Christian communities everywhere, past as well as present.

A fundamental practical consequence of this new self-understanding was the rediscovery of the 99% of the Christian community who are baptized persons responding to the call of the Lord and living their lives of discipleship in the world and in the church. It is by virtue of three sacraments of initiation that all members of the Church participate as co-equal members of the People of God. As H. Richard McCord notes:

Equality comes from the Sacrament of Baptism which, along with Confirmation and the Eucharist, joins all to Christ. By reason of this sacramental union, the People of God receive the gifts of the Spirit (charisms) enabling them to participate in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ. All differences and distinctions among the People of God are secondary in view of the fundamental unity they share as a "royal priesthood" derived from their baptism.⁶

In addition, all members of the Church were called to holiness, not just a select few. However, not only their dignity as full members of the Church, but also the warrant for all members of the Church to participate in the mission of the Church is given to all the members of the Church because they have been united to Christ in the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The apostolate of those fully initiated into the Body of Christ is "a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation, all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself."⁷ All members of the Church are fully constituted *christifideles*, and as such, they participate in Christ's three-fold mission of priest, prophet, and king. The mission of the Church itself and of all its members has its origin and foundation in the mission of Jesus.

The Mission and Ministry of Jesus

The mission of Jesus is critical for any understanding of Christian mission and ministry. All Christian mission and ministry are centered in the mission and ministry of Jesus. He is

the primordial sacrament of the church's mission and ministry, without whom there would be no vocation for individuals in the church. What was Jesus about? From this we can then reflect on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, particularly a disciple of Jesus who is called upon to lead a Catholic college or university in the United States today.

If we turn to the earliest of the four Gospels, that of St. Mark, we find Jesus at the outset of his public ministry proclaiming his central message: "The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News" (Mark 1:14-15). He is sent by the Father to proclaim the in-breaking and the nearness of the kingdom of God and on the basis of this to invite those who hear this proclamation to repent and to believe the Good News. In her wonderful book, *Consider Jesus*, Elizabeth Johnson describes the Reign of God this way:

Taken from the Hebrew tradition this symbol [the "reign of God"] signifies what the state of affairs will be when God is recognized as the One on whom everyone sets their hearts, when God finally reigns. The kingdom of God is God getting the divine way unopposed by human sinfulness and the powers of darkness. . . . The reign of God is the situation that results when God's will is really done.⁸

In response to the preaching of the Reign of God, we are invited to repent and to believe the Good News. The word so often and so misleadingly translated as "repent" is *metanoiete*. This Greek term is based on two words, *meta* (beyond) and *nous* (mind or spirit) and thus, in its most basic form, it means something like "go beyond the mind that you have." Jesus is urging his listeners first and foremost to change their way of knowing, their way of perceiving and grasping reality, their perspective, their mode of seeing. What Jesus is suggesting is that the Reign of God is here, right in our midst, waiting to break in now, if we only would open our eyes to see and then act accordingly, that is, act in a way that is consistent with the way that God intends. And what does God want? Johnson puts it simply and beautifully: "God wills our

well being. God wants the wholeness, the healing and salvation of every creature and of all of us taken together.”⁹

Jesus’ message is also an invitation to believe the Good News. For Jesus this has far more to do with being known than as a way of knowing. To have faith is to open oneself to the gift of God’s very self, to be overwhelmed by the power of God’s unconditional love for us, and to let that Love reign at all levels of our being. As such, it is not primarily a matter of understanding and assenting to propositions as it is surrendering to the God who wants to be incarnate in us. In Paul Tillich’s famous phrase, “Faith is being grasped by Ultimate Concern.” Hence when Jesus urges his listeners to believe, he is inviting them and us to let go of the dominating and fearful ego within us and to learn to live our lives at the true center of our being, God’s unconditional love for us.

As the gospel narrative unfolds, St. Mark brings us to the central questions: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29). Peter gives the correct answer, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29). However, Jesus must explain what it means to be the Christ. In so doing, he describes what it means to be a leader and a disciple in his community. Peter understandably was anticipating a messiah who would lead Israel to prominence and power. Jesus startles his disciples with a radically different message about what it meant to be the messiah, an understanding that would challenge the conventional understanding to the core.

According to Mark:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said of this quite openly. (Mark 8:31-32)

Jesus does not stop there, however. What is true of the messiah will also be true for the followers of the Anointed One:

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but

anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel will save it. (Mark 8:34-39)

Even the followers of Jesus completely misunderstand what Jesus was teaching about the messiah, discipleship, and being a leader in the new community of Jesus followers, as illustrated in Mark 10:37-45:

[James and John, the sons of Zebedee came forward and said to Jesus,] “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that those who rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Saint Paul captured the same theme earlier when he quoted a very early Christian hymn in his letter to the Philippians 2:6-11:

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of humans. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly

exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee must bow, in heaven, on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Put simply, the paradigm for us as followers of Jesus is the Paschal Mystery. Jesus invites his disciples to be willing and ready to die to an old way of life of sin, power, and slavery, and to rise to live as he lives in the power of the Holy Spirit who brings life out of death and who draws all of us into the great harvest of justice and peace, God's reign among us.

Eucharist as a Way of Understanding Ourselves as Disciples Who Lead Catholic Colleges and Universities

It is interesting to remember that the Christian community has celebrated this Paschal Mystery from its earliest days as Eucharist. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus asked his disciples to "do this in remembrance of me." In the earlier writings of St. Paul, we hear: "On the night . . . Jesus, the Servant of God, who is the Paschal Victim and Victor is Eucharist." So perhaps leadership in the Christian community is also about being Eucharist. What do I mean? When the community of Jesus' disciples celebrates the Eucharist, the actions involved are: 1) being called together; 2) giving a blessing; 3) breaking bread; 4) sharing the broken bread and the cup of salvation; and 5) being sent forth. So the key actions—called, blessed, broken, shared, and sent—perhaps give us a way of understanding who we are as Jesus' disciples and as leaders of Catholic colleges and universities.

Called

In the sacraments of initiation each and every one of us has been called to carry on the mission of Jesus in the world today. We are invited to take seriously that God has called (and continues to call) each of us to do a particular work as God's partner along with other disciples and people of good will. This challenges

us to develop the spiritual discipline to listen to the voice of God calling us in the ordinary circumstances of our lives as educators and administrators. Outrageous? Perhaps! But it is how God acts.

Blessed

Each and every one of us is a gift of God, and as a gift we are blessed and a blessing. The one who leads in the spirit of Eucharist humbly accepts his or her life as blessing with the full recognition that that gift he or she is and the gifts and talents he or she possess have been given freely by God.

Broken

The one who leads in the spirit of the Eucharist is deeply aware that Jesus was broken and that his dying and rising is the pattern of life for all those who follow in his way. The one who leads accepts the invitation to be open, to be vulnerable, to risk experiencing rejection and suffering. He or she can expect no more than the promise made to Peter by Jesus in the last chapter of John's Gospel. After Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him, and Peter responded "yes," Jesus said to Peter, "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," and then again, "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Jesus continues:

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go. (John 21:18)

Shared

The bread that is broken and the cup of salvation at the Eucharist must be shared. The one who leads in this way must be willing to share who he or she is and the blessings that each has been given with others, especially the poor and disadvantaged. This aspect of our leadership will challenge us deeply.

Sent

The community that is gathered by God's call is always sent. We are being sent out in this era to do something new as leaders of Catholic colleges and universities. We draw from a source of commissioning that comes from our baptism and we engage in a work that is our responsibility by virtue of our membership in the Church. We remain in communion with those leaders in the Church whose mission and ministry are defined differently than ours because of their ordination and/or religious profession.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me dwell for several moments on the characteristic of being sent. Being sent is almost never easy. It often suggests going to unknown places and the unknown can be very frightening. The first disciples of Jesus were sent out by him to bring the Good News to the ends of the earth. For most of them that meant going to places that they had never been to before and to engage people who were very different than them. They often had to learn new languages and ways of interacting. From earliest days, they were faced with issues that were new and challenged them to think and act differently from the ways their known experience and culture would have suggested.

Recall some of the issues facing them:

- What should we do when the first non-Jews want to join the community of disciples and live according to the gospel?
- What should we do when it is no longer possible to remain members of the synagogue?
- How should we present the good news about Jesus and reflect on who one is?
- Who is the God that is revealed in Jesus in language that would make at least some sense to Greeks and Romans?
- How should the community of disciples relate to the Roman Empire?

- How should the community organize itself once it is separated from the Jewish community?

And these are only some of the issues.

Today we are also being sent. We are creating models of leadership for Catholic colleges and universities that are led by members of the church who are not ordained or members of religious communities. This is new for the church. The incorporation of the understanding of church that includes all fully initiated members into the life of the church is still going on, and frankly, is being resisted by some who would prefer to go back to the pre-conciliar era's understanding of the church. Part of our task is to assist in the ongoing reception and incorporation of the ecclesial self-understanding that was developed at the Council. This suggests several things.

First, at the programmatic level within and between our institutions, this means that we need to develop and foster programs of ongoing theological education as well as programs of spiritual development and renewal for the leaders of our colleges and universities. Second, it also suggests the importance of leadership development programs for students on our campuses who feel called to professional lives of service as leaders of Catholic colleges and universities. Third, there is a real need for ongoing dialogue with bishops at the local and national levels so that the truth of who we are as church will be developed and continually renewed. However, the challenges that we face are not only for the church. The emergence of fully initiated members of the church in positions of leadership is occurring at a time of profound transition and even in some respects crisis. This is true for American society, the higher education within our society, and for the Catholic Church in the United States.

As a civil society we are still feeling the after-shocks of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the factors that caused it. This has challenged us as a people to redefine ourselves and our place in the world. What does it mean to be an American? What in our way of life needs to be examined and purified as we seek to create a world of greater justice and peace? How do we reduce the reigning logic of instrumental reason which tends to reduce the dignity and worth of each human being to an economic factor? How do we foster a genuine sense of human solidarity that is

respectful of the dignity and worth of every human being, cultivates a sense of global responsibility, and yet respects the unique expressions of various cultures and traditions?

As a part of the larger society, higher education is facing enormous challenges. The rise of for-profit universities and the emergence of technology within a customer-driven environment is challenging all of us to define our mission and become more efficient in our enterprise. In addition, significant numbers of colleges, especially smaller Catholic colleges that are not well endowed, struggle daily with the economics of survival in an environment that is increasingly complex and competitive.

Finally, we lead Catholic colleges and universities as members of a church that is deeply divided and in crisis, the immediate outcome of which is not at all clear. John T. McGreevy, in his recent book *Catholicism and American Freedom*, describes the present situation in the Church this way:

The polarities are stark: on the one hand, an institution enrolling more active members than any other in American society, including prominent leaders in government, the professions, the universities, the trade unions and all branches of American industry. The same institution is important to the Latino community now taking center stage in American public life, and offers more social services, including soup kitchens, schools, hospitals, and community organizing projects, than any other organization besides the federal government. On the other hand, a wounded, fractious church, ripped apart by disputes over sex, gender, and ministry, and incapable of sustaining the loyalty of many of its communicants.¹⁰

These challenges within the society, within higher education generally, and within the Church require us to continue to engage in the kind of reflection that *Gaudium et Spes* invited the church to when it developed the methodology of reading the signs of the times in the light of the gospel. This is a continuing and ongoing task. Our task as leaders is to foster this way of reflection as critical to our mission as Catholic colleges and universities.

Our task is enormously important and difficult. We need to find the ways to support one another as we seek to respond to our call to be leaders, and as we journey in this new land to which we have been sent, we will need to reflect carefully on our experience, articulate a theology from that experience in the light of the gospel, learn from our mistakes, and remain deeply rooted in God, who raised Jesus the Christ from the dead. And yet, our task is also an enormous blessing. We have the opportunity to assist the community of Jesus' disciples in its ongoing mission and renewal and by so doing help in repairing the world into that garden of justice and peace that is the Reign of God among us.

Notes

1. Pope John XXIII, in *History of Vatican II, Volume II: The Formation of the Council's Identity, First Period and Intercession, October 1962–September 1963*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo; English edition ed. Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis/Peeters, 2001).

2. *Constitution on the Liturgy [Sacrosanctum Concilium]*, #14, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975).

3. Hermann J. Pottmeyer, "The Reception of Vatican II," in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, et al. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 30.

4. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd edition (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1988), 9.

5. Georgia Masters Keightley, "Vatican II: The Church's Self-Understanding," in Anthony J. Cernera, ed., *Vatican II: The Continuing Agenda* (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 1997), 4.

6. H. Richard McCord, "Full, Conscious, and Active Participation: The Laity's Quest," in *Vatican II: The Continuing Agenda*, 155.

7. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]* (1964), #33, in Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*.

8. Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology*. (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 51-52.

9. Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 52.

10. John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 293.

Response to Anthony J. Cernera

JOHN E. THIEL

It may be helpful to the reader for me to summarize the argument of Anthony Cernera's paper briefly. In my response, though, I also would like to explore further some of the important issues that he addresses so well.

Cernera proposes an understanding of Christian discipleship derived from the words and deeds of Jesus, as well as from the fuller understanding of the Church taught at the Second Vatican Council. He catalogues all the ways in which the Second Vatican Council truly was a watershed in the age-old Catholic tradition. The Council was the first meeting of the "world church," the Church's entrée into a graceful globalization in a genuinely pluralistic way. The Council was characterized by a real openness to the Spirit, resisting the cynicism of some of its participants who could only see the sky falling in any prospect for change. The Council drew on recent movements in the Church in order to appreciate anew the holiness of its liturgy, the richness of its Scriptures, and the presence of God in every moment of history, not only in the secured past, but also in the ambiguous present and anticipated future. Most important for his argument, Cernera locates the Council's signal achievement in its theology of the Church. This theology filled out the largely institutional understanding of the Church in place since the sixteenth century by attending to the Church as the entire People of God animated by God's own presence. This fuller understanding of the Church has enabled us to see the Church as all the faithful called to discipleship by their baptism. Whereas the earlier institutional model envisioned the Church largely in the visibility of its structures and its hierarchy, the Council's community model

found the reality of the Church in the corporate responsibility of all believers to be fully engaged disciples of Jesus.

In exemplary Catholic fashion, Cernera reads scripture through the eyes of tradition, bringing the teaching of Vatican II to bear on the call of Jesus to discipleship. That call, Cernera argues, is not made to some but to all believers. Although we encounter and embrace that call as individuals to some degree, the true meaning and reality of discipleship is as social as the human world in which we live, which, as redeemed, takes shape as the social reality of the kingdom of God's love, about which Jesus spoke whenever he was able to gather an audience. Leadership and its authority in that community of discipleship should never be a matter of "lording over" but rather of humble service to others.

Cernera appeals to the Eucharist as a paradigm for discipleship, finding in the actions of its celebration keys for identifying both the responsibilities and consequences of discipleship. Again returning to Vatican II's theology of the Church, he insists that just as we are all called to discipleship in the mystery of our baptismal faith, so are we all sent into the world to engage it in the same faith, to preach Christ fearlessly by our words and deeds. This commission to spread the gospel message is one that all believers embrace where they stand. The documents of the Council refer to this situated-ness of the call to be a Christian as the "apostolate of like towards like."¹ Cernera asks us to consider the implications of this apostolate for our shared vocation as leaders in the mission of Catholic colleges and universities.

Such is my summary. Now I would like to consider Cernera's generous autobiographical remarks, since they tell us not only something about the past but also much about our present moment. Cernera recalls that as a high-school student in 1967, his call to a life of holiness clashed with the expectation of contemporaries that such a vocation could only be satisfied in priestly ministry, a vocation to which he was not called. He tells us that as a young man he was theologically educated. He knew that the Council had taught that "all the faithful enjoy a true equality with regard to the dignity and the activity which they share in the building up of the body of Christ" and that even "the distinction which the Lord has made between the sacred ministers

and the rest of the people of God implies union.”² And yet, although he knew this, the conflict caused a nagging confusion. He made three retreats in six years to confirm what he already knew but from he which felt pressured to expect something different. Confusion reigned as theological theory did not jibe very well with actual life in the Church.

Cernera’s confusion was a function of his theological education. He was confused because he knew the Church’s teaching about the reality of the Church and yet it did not match the lived reality of a Church often too comfortable with the notion that serious Christianity is only for those living a consecrated life.

Even more of us are confused today because even more of us are theologically educated. I think it fair to say this is true much more through the achievement of our Catholic colleges and universities than of our parish education programs. This confusion is at once wonderful and distressing. The doctrine of the Second Vatican Council, the teaching of the Church about the Church, is a wonderful thing to know. It is distressing because in many respects we find ourselves in much the same place that Cernera stood in 1967. A surprising number in the Church today remain uneducated about the equality of our vocation in baptism, and those who are thus educated continue to face the striking mismatch between the doctrine they know and the reality of ecclesial life in which they live. The circumstances of our current situation, however, are not exactly the same as they were in 1967.

The Church today is not animated by the spirit of optimism that filled it in 1967. Instead, it is filled with a palpable anxiety, much of it stirred by the lines drawn today between the hierarchy and the laity and focused on the integrity of the ministerial priesthood. This anxiety has been fueled by a precipitous drop in priestly vocations since the Council, by polls that show a majority of the faithful do not agree with the Magisterium’s restriction of priestly ordination to men, and, most recently, the sex abuse crisis in the American Church. This anxiety often has the effect of emphasizing the difference between priestly vocation and the baptismal vocation of every Christian to a life of holiness in a way that misrepresents and sometimes even ignores the Church’s authoritative teaching. Whereas the Council teaches that there is

an authentic distinction between the laity and the hierarchy, the distortion of this teaching transforms legitimate difference into a vocational divide.

Why does this disjunction continue between the Church's teaching and the reality of life in the Church? No doubt there are many and complex answers to this question, but here I venture a single and simple one: because so many in the Church have a vested interest in the clerical/lay divide. The anxieties surrounding the ministerial priesthood that I described a moment ago are largely those of the hierarchy. Although these anxieties are understandable in an ambiguous age like our own, they, like any form of fear, often produce distorted results. A recent manifestation of these anxieties is a kind of narcissism about the priesthood that one finds especially in young priests, whose homilies are much more likely to be about their own priestly vocation, their last trip to Rome, or the seeming primacy of papal authority in the hierarchy of truths than about the immeasurable depths of God's love or the experience of grace in the day-to-day lives of their congregation. In an age of anxiety about the priesthood, there are perceived advantages, however wrong-headed, in promoting the integrity of the priesthood by stressing its utter vocational difference from the vocation of all believers.

The hierarchy, though, is by no means the only party at fault here. The abiding clerical/lay divide is powerfully fostered by many of the lay faithful, whether they are theologically educated or not. The responsibility of the baptismal vocation that Vatican II articulates so well is often regarded by the laity as an onerous task happily left to the professional clerics who have "signed on" for a job most would rather avoid. After all, leading a holy life, being a truly faithful disciple of Jesus, is an extraordinarily difficult thing to do, and so many lay faithful are relieved, quite frankly, to think that this is someone else's lot in life.

Perhaps it should not surprise us that the clerical/lay divide endures in all quarters of the contemporary Church, even though we are approaching the fortieth anniversary of the Council's close. If we are easy on ourselves, we will offer explanations such as "our tradition is old, and moves slowly, and it is taking us time truly to appreciate the teaching of the Council." I think that a

better theological explanation would point to the different varieties of resistance to the Council's teaching as manifestations of sin. And since, as Catholics, we believe that sin is resistible with the aid of divine grace, there is no need for us as a Church to continue in our old ways but to work at making the clerical/lay divide into a doctrinally informed clerical/lay distinction, fully committed to the Christian vocation that we all share.

Any meaningful consideration of lay leadership in Catholic higher education, to say nothing of lay leadership in the Church at large, must begin with the theological foundations that Cernera has sketched for us, lest our understanding of leadership be fashioned by some other template out there in the world ready to be grasped as effective and expedient: public opinion, the bottom line, the drives of educational consumerism, and so forth. It is important that we understand our leadership to be a ministry; and so the expression of a charism, our theological way of describing talent energized by God's grace. Also, we should remember that charismatic ministries in all quarters of the Church are often salaried, directly or indirectly, and that no contradiction exists in that. It seems to me that all our talk about Catholic identity in our colleges and universities in recent years often proliferates in confusing ways precisely because we do not begin by attending to the ways in which our common vocation in baptism makes our educational mission a ministry that we should understand as humble service to the gospel.

It is difficult for us to think of leadership in this way for a host of reasons. The gospel is so challenging; other understandings of leadership, like those drawn from the corporate world, seem so much more practical, respected in our culture, and readily recognized by our trustees; and, as all of us know, colleges and universities are not typically places where the virtue of humility carries the day. But at the heart of our difficulty with ministerial leadership is the central point in Cernera's paper: the way that the clerical/lay divide makes ministry a living responsibility only for a small number of Catholics who occupy very few of the positions of leadership in Catholic education today. Our commitment to that divide means that we never even have to face the issue of what leadership conceived as ministry in service to the gospel

might mean concretely in our lives as believers and in our lives as believers who carry on the mission of Catholic education.

I hope we can consider some of the first steps Cernera proposes to us in facing the responsibility of lay leadership: ongoing theological education, development programs for students called to the vocation of leadership in Catholic colleges and universities, and ongoing dialogue with bishops. In concluding, I would like to call attention to the advice that Cernera offers about how we should reflect on the responsibility of leadership and its practical implementation.

I appreciate the way that Cernera appeals to the Eucharist for guidance in understanding the qualities of true leadership in Catholic education. He might have turned first to his own considerable experience as a university president, or to our best theoretical literature on management principles, or to the marks of virtue outlined in Aristotle's ethics. These other resources, and many more like them, will have their own truth to tell, and no doubt will inform the kind of leadership we seek. But it would be a mistake to give principles other than the basic beliefs of our own tradition a primacy in setting the course for our reflection on leadership and its enactment.

I know that some may find in these words a certain kind of post-liberal suspicion that tries to deal with the problem of religious particularity by circling the wagons of tradition against the world. I believe, though, that Catholic doctrine does not allow for such a view, as the Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*) teaches so clearly. Assigning priority to the tradition, however, in our search for the truth of our lives is a matter of priorities. As we turn to our tradition first for guidance in our leadership responsibilities, we do not find only one resource and we do not find one simple answer. We find as much plurality as unity in the resources it offers and thus in the direction it gives: the life of Jesus in not one but four versions; not one but seven sacraments; saints who practiced holiness in surprisingly different ways; hundreds of pages of the sacred scriptural Word with several interpretive senses; and a sacred tradition that continues to develop anew with each passing day, as it will until the eschaton. As well, we find as much

ambiguity as clarity in the resources our tradition offers, and thus, in the direction it gives to defining the task of leadership. This ambiguity can often be frustrating as we face concrete decisions, or plan for the future, or try to respond to someone who expects a precise definition, in twenty-five words or less, of what it means to be a Catholic institution of higher education today. But we work to eliminate that ambiguity at our peril, for a dimension of it is the divine mystery in which all creation courses and toward which all authentic leadership leads.

Notes

1. *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People [Apostolicam Actuositatem]* (1965), in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 13.
2. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]* (1964), in Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, 32.

Response to Anthony J. Cernera

DIANA L. HAYES

I have learned from my own experience in the church that I come from a different perspective than many in this room, not because of my theological training or lack thereof, but simply because of my own cultural and historical context. I think we have our work cut out for us as we work to ensure that Catholic colleges and universities continue to do the work of educating leaders for the twenty-first century, both for the church and for the world.

The United States is unique among nations in that it has given rise to the development of a vast network of Catholic schools at every level of education. Catholic parochial and higher education systems in the United States have accomplished what may have seemed initially an impossible task: that of taking the children of immigrants and transforming them into politicians, lawyers, doctors and nurses, teachers and professors, businessmen and women, and of course, priests and religious. I think sometimes we do not know what we have wrought. The U.S. Church is no longer a ghetto church. It is now a meaningful part of the American mainstream and is serving as a critical moral voice in the public square, as well as a voice of reconciliation and healing.

The 1960s brought about dramatic changes in how we saw ourselves and lived as a Church. But it also brought significant changes in our country's social, political, and legal frameworks. As has been noted, the election of John F. Kennedy as the first, and to date, only Catholic president, marked a symbolic arrival of Catholics into the mainstream of American life. Also, Pope John XXIII's convening of the Second Vatican Council and charging it to reach out to the modern world and to work to help ameliorate its many problems, rather than to retreat from or condemn it,

marked a critical shift in the Church's self-understanding. It is a shift, however, that is still seeking fulfillment. Many who supported and worked for this *aggiornamento* continue to fend off efforts of those who wish to return to a Church that was overly juridical and excessively clerical. Arguably there can be problems with change if it takes place too quickly, and/or with inadequate reflection. But there can also be problems with refusing to be open to the signs of the times, a denial of the ever-changing reality in which we and our Church reside.

A proverbial phrase attributed to Heraclitus says that it is impossible to step into the same river twice. The water has flowed beyond you and a new flow approaches. Like a river, today's Catholics have moved on. They have grown and matured, and the Church itself is a different place than it was forty or even twenty years ago. We cannot expect to develop Catholic lay leaders using models for training priests or religious, nor can we expect the laity to act, think, or behave as they did.

In their pastoral letter of a few years ago, *Our Hearts Were Burning*, U.S. bishops appeared to recognize the maturity of the Catholic faithful and called for programs of religious education at every level that would go from cradle to grave, rather than stopping abruptly, as had happened for too many after Confirmation. With such preparation, I think it would make the task of Catholic colleges and universities much easier, as there would be a much broader foundation upon which to build. Recent events in the Church, however, make me fear that the bishops are not exactly listening to their own teachings.

Other events took place in the 1960s that had an impact on all of us, Catholic or not. The major event, of course, that overlapped Vatican II in many ways, was the civil rights movement that involved Christians and Jews, believers and non-believers, blacks and whites and so many others. Martin Luther King, Jr., called for the emergence of God's beloved community in our midst, urging especially his fellow Christians to also live by the teachings of Jesus, which they fervently proclaimed but often profaned. King's argument was based, of course, on Genesis 1 and 2, the creation of all humanity by God, and probably unknowingly he echoed the Vatican fathers who asserted in the 1965 document, *Gaudium et*

Spes, that all are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image, all have the same nature and origin, and being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny. As such, there is a basic equality between all people and this conviction must be given even greater recognition.

This is at the heart of my response. The civil rights movement was a liberating catalyst that sparked liberation movements, not just for African Americans, but also for women, Latinos and Latinas, Asians and Native Americans. It provided a paradigm for how people could come together as a community rooted in faith and walking out with that faith in order to change the world around them. For Catholics who participated quite often against the will of Catholic hierarchical leaders, this movement and the Second Vatican Council revealed to them a Catholic Church with a very diverse face—a multi-hued, multi-cultural Church whose members came from every land and whose cultures and traditions helped to make up the tradition of the Church itself. Catholics of color were especially affected by these events and movements. No longer willing to be missionized and recognizing rightly that they had come of age in their Mother Church, they demanded the right to speak for themselves and to worship in a unique style and manner and harmony. Their songs, their dance, their ways of speaking about God and Jesus Christ moved beyond the rubrics of the Roman Catholic rite. In other words, they called for a true inculturation of the gospel into their traditions and heritages that had not been done heretofore.

It could be said that a stumbling giant had been awakened: not only the Catholic laity who saw and claimed their right as the People of God to participate in the mission of the Church, but also Catholic laity of color began to reclaim their history. It is important to remember that the Church was born from within Judaism as a world church and then went into a kind of European captivity before returning once again to becoming a world church. When one thinks about the ancestry, for example, of persons of African descent in the Catholic Church, we were there the first year with the Ethiopian eunuch who became a Christian.

The recognition of the essential role of the laity has profound significance for our self-understanding as Church. Anthony

Cernera is correct in noting that “99% of the Christian community who are baptized are responding to the call of the Lord and living their lives of discipleship in the world and in the Church.” Equally important are those committed and active Christians who are persons of color seeking opportunities historically barred to them to serve their Church as lay persons at every level. Sadly, we have to acknowledge that the history of many of our leading colleges and universities prior to the 1960s is blighted by the sins of sexism and racism and their fallout. Women and persons of color were not admitted to many Catholic institutions of higher education until the 1960s. The result is a vacuum that will haunt us for decades. Where are the black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American leaders—lay or religious? I know of only one black president of a Catholic university, and that is Norman Francis. His university, however, is one that is also historically black, Xavier University of New Orleans. Xavier somehow manages to produce the most black leaders in the health and science professions of any university in the United States. It would be beneficial, I would think, for all of us to learn how they accomplish this and to borrow some of their models.

It is critical that we recognize the need to encourage leaders in Catholic higher education from a pool that is inclusive and diverse. Strong demographic shifts toward Hispanics and African Americans are already upon us, both in the nation and in our Church. It has often been said that by the middle of the century the United States will have a majority of Hispanic-speaking people. The Catholic Church will reach that point decades sooner. Are we prepared or even preparing for these shifts? We are increasingly aware of them, but what exactly are we doing about them? How do we encourage blacks and Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans that there is a future for them in our colleges and universities—that they will be encouraged and supported, that they will be welcomed and relied upon?

It is of critical importance that the model programs needed are developed in ways inclusive of other styles of learning, other styles of teaching, other styles of working in community. It is imperative that we look for students to encourage, not just at the college level, but also the high school and perhaps even the elementary

level, identifying, targeting, soliciting, promoting, assuring them that there is a future for them in this Church. We need them now and we will need them in even greater numbers in the future as faculty, administrators, trustees, and in time, hopefully, presidents of our Catholic colleges and universities. This means, however, changing how we recruit students and faculty, as well. I believe it also means that learning about other cultures than the European one can no longer be seen as a luxury or an elective, but as a necessity. And the learning must start at the top, in the president's office, and work itself all the way down to the faculty and administrative staff.

As you can see, I am rather passionate about this. I have reason to be. I am a convert to the Catholic Church, called in my thirty-first year from the life of a Methodist attorney to that of a Catholic theologian. I am not exaggerating when I say that it was a great shock to me as well as to my family. I think I am still reeling from it. For me, the Catholic Church was a total mystery and I had no idea what it was about, what I was being called into, or why I was being called into it. I did not know whether it was Satan or God at first. I believe it was God who brought me into this Church, perhaps to be a harasser of all. I do not know. But I was even more surprised when I arrived at Catholic University of America in 1980, only to discover that I was the first lay woman, as well as the first African American woman, to be in the pontifical degree program in theology. So I spent five years studying with about forty seminarians, to the consternation of them and many of my professors who accused me of being in classes I was not supposed to be in, such as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I was even more shocked when I arrived at the Catholic University of Louvaine in Belgium, and found much the same thing. Once again, I was going to be a first.

All of my Catholic life—really most of my life—I have been a first in many areas, and it can be wearing. Being a convert is difficult and I struggle to understand this monolithic hierarchical institution, as do many. But it is also a human entity, and that is what saves it, I think. It can also be freeing, however, to be a convert. I have a great deal of knowledge of the pre-Vatican II Church but I have no memory, for which I think I am grateful.

Thus, I have never longed for what was, or even looked at what might have been. I have no desire to go back, because I was never there in the first place. The problem, I think, with many who want to go back is they weren't there either!

As a professor of theology at a Catholic university, I believe it is of critical importance for me to prepare our students for the challenges and realities of today. It is important to examine the problems and the good things about the past, but also to help them to look to the possibilities that lay ahead. I encourage them to learn from each other as Catholics, but also to learn about and become friends with Protestants, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and all of the other students that are now filling the classrooms at Georgetown. I do not see this reality as a threat or as something that has gone wrong. I see it as a positive challenge to enable us to broaden our self-understanding, and theirs as well. We must prepare all of them for very different futures: One that is not color blind, but color filled, representative of the diversity that exists in God's self, as we are all God's creation.

Although I rejoice in the fact that an African American, Bishop Wilton Gregory, now heads the Conference of U.S. Bishops, I am also aware of the very long struggle that my people have undergone and continue to undergo along with other racial minorities, although the term minority is really an oxymoron now. I have been told by Catholics and Protestants alike that I must be a Protestant because I am African American, and how dare I say I am a Catholic because there are no black Catholics. In actuality, there are three million black Catholics. If we were to, for some strange reason, separate from this Church, we would be the second largest black Christian church in the United States, which stuns the Baptists immensely! There are black administrators at our colleges and universities—I have spoken at their annual conferences—but they are few in number. There are six black Catholic systematic theologians—which is probably why I am always so tired—four canon lawyers, and three Church historians. The list is pathetically short when one realizes that there are over three million of us in the Church.

All of us, however, are the Church. We are the People of God. As leaders of Catholic colleges and universities, all of us,

regardless of gender or ethnicity, must lead the way for the rest of the Church. We have a mandate from God to make the Reign of God possible by preparing leaders to heal an increasingly broken and torn world in Church. We are preparing for the in-breaking of God's spirit among us.