

- 1 Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical edition*. Harvard Semitic Studies 27, Atlanta, 1985, p. 72.
- 2 On the chariot mysticism of these early rabbis, see Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven, a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, London, 1982, esp pp. 269—348.
- 3 Cf. eg., Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World*, London, 1981, pp. 122—152.
- 4 Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon, A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins*, Notre Dame and London, 1977, pp. 54—79.
- 5 *Jewish Ant.* III, 123.
- 6 *De Spec. Leg.* 1.66.
- 7 cf *Bereshith R.* 1:1, and *The Testament of Adam*.
- 8 J. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, Brill, 1973. The reply to Neusner by Mary Douglas, p. 139.
- 9 Luc de Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa, a Structuralist Approach*, Manchester, 1985, p.50.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 200.
- 11 cf. Jonathan Goldstein, 'The Origins of the Doctrine of *Creatio ex Nihilo*', *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol 35, 1984, pp. 127—135.
- 12 cf Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*, London, 1966.
- 13 J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, London, 1967, pp 147—159.
- 14 Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and The New Priest*, Leominster, 1986, pp 130—133.
- 15 L. Wittgenstein, 'Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is (Theology as Grammar)', *Philosophical Investigations*, 373, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford, 1953.
- 16 *op. cit.*, p. 282.
- 17 cf 'koinos', F. Hauck, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel; Michigan, 1965, Vol. 3, pp 800—803.
- 18 *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. A.C. Miles and R. Rhees, Retford, 1979, p. 7.
- 19 Fergus Kerr OP, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, Oxford, 1986, p. 163.

Questioning the Idea of 'Lay' Ministries

Kathleen Walsh

Where are we in terms of lay ministries?

Two words sum up the present situation of the Church, 'ambivalence' and 'confusion'. On the one hand, we have hierarchical structures and inevitably, we are steeped in hierarchical language and assumptions. Beside this we have an increasing vocabulary acknowledging and inviting 'participation' and 'equality', issuing from the senior hierarchy and directed especially to the 'laity'.

Take the New Code of Canon Law, for instance. Can 208 reads:
 Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ's faithful.

Because of this equality they all contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ.

We might be moved, as we read, to examine whether we had been taking our baptismal responsibilities as seriously as we ought. However, should we glance back to Can. 207:

By divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church *sacred ministers*, who in law are also called clerics; the others are called lay people. (my italics)

our sense of urgency might dwindle somewhat ... especially when we consider that 'the others' form something like 98% of the total. If what we, the 'laity', do is not by divine institution and our ministry not *sacred*, but rather is *other*, then our sense of *participation*, our sense of responsibility is diminished. We are diminished. Similar examples abound in all Church documents.

On the other hand, and, one might say, despite this 'double speak', we have an increasingly participatory and vociferous 'laity', who, in East London anyway, are by no means the middle classes of Michael Hornsby Smith's 'Catholic Elites' (perhaps it's just that the working class don't fill in questionnaires!) We also have a large number (though this seems to be decreasing—as people are tending to become more involved or leave) of silent and passive 'laity'.

Somewhere in the middle we have a struggling group of, mainly parish, clergy, who identify more with the 'laity' than with the 'clerical' elite. Yet others, like the OFMs, have asked that they no longer be regarded as a clerical institute, so that the brothers would be eligible for office and the current dual status in matters of authority brought to an end. It is, I think, no mere coincidence at a time when the hierarchy is preoccupied with the 'laity', that the subject of this year's National Conference of Priests and originally of this Catholic Theological Association conference, planned predominantly by priests, should be 'Priesthood'.

As well as the parish clergy, at the centre of the current confusion we have the 'lay' parish or diocesan pastoral workers. Usually professionally qualified and salaried for the work they are doing, they remain, for good or ill, outside the official, hierarchical structures of the Church. It is understandable that they should be asking anew 'Where do I fit in the scheme of things?'; 'What is my particular identity?' It is a particularly perplexing question for 'lay' people. Why, despite many attempts, do we still have no satisfactory 'theology of the laity'? Perhaps because it is a notion so filled with contradictions, that it is an impossible task.

'Lay' ministries in the Church have begun to flourish in all parts of the world, helped by, and no doubt contributing to, a fall in vocations to

the ordained ministry. Now the bishops are to come together to try to sort out the confusion that has arisen!

There is not much problem with lay activity in 'the world'. It is the roles 'lay' people are 'assuming' in the Church that is causing concern. They are doing what it was thought they were ontologically incapable of doing—providing ecclesial leadership. 'Laity' are ministering to each others' deepest needs and longings in ways which are mutually empowering, and they are asking threatening questions about Church structures and processes of decision-making.

Hitherto, the 'lay' movement has been largely inspired, led and written about by clergy. In the last twenty years we have seen a gradual shift towards self-definition and control on the part of the 'laity'. 'Lay' people are responsible for providing for each other education and training in theology, catechetics, counselling and other communication skills, and a whole range of courses which fall under the general title of 'ministry'. 'Lay' people are not just writing for 'laity', and within the given confines of the established structures, but are seeking to affect the future shape of those structures. The impetus from the women's movement in the Church is particularly strong. The laity are beginning to feel powerful. They are examining basic assumptions and proposing new ways of conceptualising and exercising authority and leadership in the Church. This leads to a 'revisioning' of the relationships of power within the Church, and the question of 'ministry' is central.

A consciousness that one's inferior position in the structure of power relations is in part caused by one's own collusion, and so can be changed, is a prerequisite for any liberation movement. This is usually accompanied by a reclaiming and a revaluing of that which is the cause of one's inferior status and lack of self-determination: being black, female, gay, working class, or 'lay'. As far as I know Christians have never worn badges, or marched with banners declaring 'Proud to be Lay', 'Lay Liberation', or 'Lay Power'. But when people speak of the dawning 'age of the laity', this is the sort of thing that we might expect to herald it!

After reclaiming the formerly disabling features, and having revalued all that is associated with them (in this case, politics, work, family life, sex, etc.) and invested it with new meanings and new dignity, the structures of the power relations are renegotiated. After demonstrating their ability to 'name' themselves, first in defiance, but later with more ease, the hitherto silent and passive group then demonstrates its ability to control other aspects of reality. Those in apparent control eventually realise that these 'others' are not so different from themselves after all, and agree to enter into the dialogue. What else could they do. (The alternative is revolution, with the dominant group and the subordinate group exchanging places.)

It seems to me that this awakening of both the 'laity' themselves, and of the hierarchy, to 'lay' potential, is the stage which is currently reaching

its climax. It seems doubtful, however, that the description 'lay' can be usefully reclaimed.

Where would we like to be?

It is clear, in our own country, from the National Pastoral Conference, from the Easter People, and from our own East London and general Westminster responses to the 1985 Synod and to the *Lineamenta* sent out in preparation for the forthcoming Synod, where the Church is headed. That there is 'universal' consensus on this is borne out in the content and tone of the Synod's *Instrumentum Laboris*.

In reply to the question for the 1985 Synod, 'What benefits have followed from the Council in the actual life of the Church in your region?', the people of Westminster cited: increased participation by the laity, greater openness, less emphasis on guilt, (some) freedom from legalistic and authoritarian approaches, a better understanding of the Church as the People of God and not an institution, 'lay formation and education', a sense of the need to create real community in parishes, a renewed and less mechanistic understanding of the sacraments, a greater sense of co-operation and involvement in the Church. Also cited were benefits that should have followed from the Council but have not. These included a clearer identity as ('lay') Catholic Christians in the world and a greater sense of mission. Partly responsible for the failure was insufficient and ineffective adult education and formation, and the lack of a real sense of community in parishes.

These themes are echoed in the *Instrumentum*, formulated in large part from the responses to the *lineamenta*. In Parts I and II of this three-part document the word '*participation*' appears in all four of the subheadings and in eight of the thirty 'paragraphs'. The full and equal sharing of the 'laity' in all dimensions of *communio*; the importance of their vocation and mission in the Church as well as in the 'world'; the need for their ongoing education and formation; all figure largely in the remainder.

So, One Church—a 'communion of communities', in which there is full participation, real equality and a chance for everyone's gifts, insights and charisms to be developed and shared, within the Church and beyond; sacraments which belong to the community of faith; a community in which our deepest sorrows and our greatest joys can be taken up and transformed; a Church which is conscious of its own limitations and constantly works to overcome them; a Church which is in and for the world, ushering in the commonwealth of justice and love, for the greater glory of God. This is where we want to be.

What is stopping us from getting there?

An obstacle is the institutional Church's tendency towards dualistic thinking. This has been a particular concern of the feminist critique both within and beyond the Church because women, and 'the feminine', have always been associated with the underside of the classic dualisms.

Dualistic thinking and talking (and the decisions, valuing and actions which lead to and are determined by this) subordinates one thing to another. We have reason/emotion; spirit/body; male/female; church/world; active/passive; leader/led; strong/weak; holy/secular; clergy/lay. In each pair the former is traditionally (in a patriarchal society) appropriated by the dominants, in our case the Church hierarchy, and its 'opposite' projected as a defining (and limiting) characteristic of the subordinate group. The hierarchical Church, in ways equivalent to other paternalistic institutions, protests the dignity of the 'lay' state, lauds christian marriage, the family, the world of work and politics—and the 'Mission and Vocation of the Laity in the Church and in the World', until we think 'she' (note that the Church is the 'female', the subordinate, in the Christ/Church duality) doth protest too much! The 'laity', however, like the 'good' black servant, or the 'good' woman, need to know their 'place', as defined by the superior partner in the power relationship, and they need to keep to it. There are structures for keeping people in their place. One of these is language.

Language is crucial. As a means of communication it expresses our shared assumptions, and transmits values and meanings. We both form and are formed by the language we use, and the language which is used of us. Those with the power of 'naming' in any society or group have a particular control over the way in which reality is perceived and constructed. As the 'power of naming' in the Church has largely been in the hands of a male clerical elite, our words and their implicit meanings and values, their covert and overt assumptions, reflect this reality.

We have only to look at the language used in the Church of 'the others' to see the point. The 'laity' are by definition non-people. They are 'non-ordained'; inferior because they have not been 'raised' to the priesthood. Priests who leave are 'reduced' to the 'lay' state. We have ministers and 'lay' ministers, readers and 'lay' readers, catechists and 'lay' catechists, chaplains and 'lay' chaplains, spiritual directors and 'lay' spiritual directors, theologians and 'lay' theologians! We speak of 'lay' Christians and even 'lay' people! It is difficult to avoid subordinating the sub-group, the one which has the qualifying adjective—i.e. 'lay', to the main group—minister. The 'unqualified' one becomes, by usage, the 'normal', 'real' or 'better' (as e.g. in doctor and lady doctor).

But it is not as simple as that. What happens if we say that ministry is what everyone has a right and responsibility to exercise by virtue of their baptism, then we create a sub-group entitled 'ordained ministry'? In this

instance, we are adding something to 'normative' ministry, as opposed to taking it away as we do when we add the word 'lay'.

The reasons are obvious. We have a cluster of meanings associated with the word 'lay' which indicate a *lack* of something—usually specialist knowledge or skill. To this, in the Church, we can add a lack of a 'higher' calling, lack of moral character, lack of maleness or lack of 'ordination'. Likewise the word 'ordained' carries with it positive overtones of a stamp of (sacred) approval, and anything without it is therefore lacking the same validity.

Either way, then, we are left with the 'laity' themselves as somehow *less* and the ministry exercised by 'laity' as something less complete and less authoritative than the ministry exercised by clergy. There is nothing we can define as 'layness', except by negative definition (non-ordained, non-clergy—for in many cases it is clearly not professional competence that is wanting) and to construct a positive theology of the laity seems an impossible task. Linguistically we cannot assert the equality of 'lay' ministries, because in reality, under our present Church structures, they are not and cannot be equal.

At least one of the reasons for this is the special requirements of maleness and mandatory celibacy for the priesthood, and maleness for the diaconate.* Whilst over half of the people are debarred from exercising these ministries because of their inability to meet at least one of the requirements it is hard to see how equality can be asserted or attained.

If the power to exercise certain aspects of Christian sacramental ministry continues to depend on the maintenance of this 'class apart', a higher order of Christian being, then we will have to reverse the way both our sacramental theology and our ecclesiology are developing. The present debate about the 'nature' of ordination is typical of the sort of either/or thinking that holds us back. The question upon which so much seems to hang is: 'Is the ordained priesthood functional or ontological?'; 'Is it ecclesiological or personal?'

But can we really make such distinctions? Surely the answer is both. To use the feminist slogan—'The personal is political'. We live in one reality, where all aspects are intimately interwoven and affect each other. The work one does, the structures within which one operates, affect the person one is, and the person one is affects the work one feels called to, and the structures one helps to create.

The question for the Church is not whether one's calling to the priesthood should continue to be valued, but whether it should be so 'elevated' as to put it outside the sphere of the community of the baptised (which, if one can speak in this way, is what makes the ontological difference), and, as is sometimes becoming the case—outside the sphere of 'relevance'.

Do we still see, as so many peoples certainly did, a need for mediators

between ourselves and the holy? Because if we do then we, like them, will need to maintain a marginalised group of 'holy mediators'. Or have we begun to take the idea of incarnation seriously at last, and realised that at its most profound, as revealed in Christ, 'Be-ing' is not a question of either/or (Creator/created) but both/and—God and Human together. If Christ's incarnation means that there is no radical discontinuity between finite and infinite, between creator and creature, between divine and human, then surely this should be reflected in our relationships, language and other institutions. Yet despite the belief that we are made in God's image, co-creators with God, despite our incarnational theology, and such words as those of Paul to the community at Galatia, (Gal. 3:27—29) the hierarchy seems preoccupied by dividing lines and distinctions and differences.

This preoccupation is clearly demonstrated in the *Instrumentum*. There is an anxiety about making sure we do not laicise the clergy or clericalise the laity. The document talks repeatedly about the 'real' world as the domain inhabited by the 'laity', in contrast to 'the Church' which is the natural habitat of clergy and which, by implication, is not the real world. On the other hand, as 'lay' carries with it connotations of being in some way unfitted or ill-equipped for the job, should we, in Christian justice, allow any kind of 'lay' action in the Church at all? By definition, probably not.

Yet we have witnessed priests doing superb jobs in 'the world', and 'lay' people exercising inspired and inspiring liturgical and ecclesial ministries—and without the added benefit of the 'character' of ordination. In section 32 of the *Instrumentum*, 'The Need for Clarification Regarding the Non-Ordained Ministries', we read:

The exercise of the non-ordained ministries entrusted to the laity requires careful consideration. It seems necessary to define the difference between the tasks commonly assumed by the laity and those of ordained ministries. This distinction will be possible only after having outlined the essential connotations and characteristics of Church ministry entrusted to the laity.

Furthermore, it will be necessary to address a series of questions which are of relative importance:

Who can authorise the creation of such ministries in the Church? What ought to be the manner of entrusting the laity with non-ordained ministries? (A liturgical rite or simply by a juridical act?) What ought to be the duration of such ministries and the manner of discontinuing them?

But *why* does it 'seem necessary to define the difference(s)'? And how and why do 'they' decide what are the 'essential' connotations and characteristics of lay ministry? And *will* this exercise provide the necessary

information upon which to make the *distinction*? I am not convinced it will. Would it not be better to drop the words 'lay', 'laity', ordained and non-ordained, and simply talk about *ministries*? This section might then read something like this:

The exercise of ministries requires careful consideration. Furthermore, it will be necessary to address a series of questions: Who can authorise the creation of ministries in the Church? What ought to be the manner of entrusting Christians with ministries (a liturgical rite or simply a juridical act?) What ought to be the duration of ministries, and the manner of discontinuing them?

The reluctance to recast the discussion in this sort of way stops us from becoming the Church we want to be.

What do we need to get there?

It seems imperative that the implicit divisiveness in the clergy/'lay' duality will have to give way to a more pluriform ministry and leadership if we are to become the community of equals we should be. To be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic belongs to the whole Church. A Church in which all are called, but some are more called than others is no sign or sacrament to the world.

We noted the current pressure upon many of us, and perhaps especially upon clergy, as a result of the apparent take-over of ecclesial ministries by the 'laity', even though in reality many of the 'laity' still see what they are doing as 'helping the priest'. The question 'who am I?' looms large in our reflections. I think we take some of the pressure off that question by asking instead 'Who's am I?' Or, perhaps more importantly, 'Who's are we?' The words of Isaiah (43) put it beautifully: 'I have called you by your name, you are mine'. We are God's own. Precious in God's eyes, honoured and loved. Created for God's glory, we are called to be fully alive in the One God. We achieve this fullness of life in and through a responsive and responsible community of faith, within and beyond which we discover and exercise our many charisms for the greater glory of God.

It is difficult to see how, being called in this way, we can distinguish a 'lay' vocation to be 'fully alive in God' from an 'ordained' one. To reduce the many and varied gifts that are needed and given to a simple either/or denies the richness of the lively and life-giving reality that many of us have begun to experience as Church. The first step to getting rid of this clergy/lay divide will be to eliminate these and associated words from our vocabulary. We need to point to forms of ministry that are needed and are beginning to be exercised in the Church, and name them for what they are. Real functional distinctions will have to be made, but they will be limited. They do not have to become essential differences, but retain, rather, a certain 'permeable' quality.

Problems about 'laity' and 'lay' ministries are problems of leadership and authority—power problems. They arise partly because of the ways we conceptualise these phenomena. On the one hand, within a hierarchical social structure, they are seen as static 'possessions' of individuals or ruling groups. In a hierarchical view of the Church official ministers act as mediators of power, especially divine power. The leadership will not only claim the exclusive ability to 'bring down' the spirit of God through the sacraments, but also the right to rule if and when the spirit is at work. It is no wonder, then, that within such a view the 'laity' assume a very passive role.

Within a community of equals, on the other hand, power, authority and leadership are seen as processes or dynamics belonging to and at work within the group. The sort of leadership which will exist within a Church which understands itself as a whole people baptised into mission will be a *nurturing* leadership, not leadership as a personal possession, nor even as the relationship between leader and led, but rather as the pattern or system of relationships through which the Church acts effectively to fulfil its mission.

Leaders in a community of equality and mutuality will help the group keep alive its story, its vision and values. They will not be 'servants' of the community. The concept of leader as 'servant' still belongs to a hierarchical tradition. Even though it apparently up-ends that tradition and identifies with those who have fewest choices and opportunities for self-determination, it remains a concept formulated within a way of thinking which is patriarchal, and helps perpetuate it.

Leadership in a community of equals will be both mutual and multiple. Leaders will see to it that the Church has what it recognises it needs to act effectively, including, presumably, priesthood. No one person will be able to fulfil all these needs: a fundamental role of leadership will be to identify and nurture charisma, collaboration and commitment within the community. To become a true community of equals, individualistic ideas must continue to give way to more communal ways of thinking. Returning power and authority to the community will be a difficult task, for the community will need to become confident it can handle it. There are many signs that people are more than ready to begin.

Signposts : some reflections on pastoral planning in East London

For nearly ten years, now, the Church in East London has been using the method of 'pastoral planning by objectives' in an effort to move away from the idea of Church as hierarchically dominated institution, whose clergy service the 'religious' needs of a largely passive 'laity'.

The method is simple. It starts with four basic principles: that the Church exists to evangelise the world; that this evangelisation needs to be planned—we need to know not only what we are doing but why we are

doing it; no-one should boss anyone else around; we need to be united in our objectives, but allow for diversity in our action.

There are six stages in the process: *listen* to what concerns people; discuss what is heard to *identify needs*; discuss further to *decide priorities*; translate *priorities into action*—by encouraging, educating and supporting people to take action at different levels, Area, deanery, parish; *implement the agreed action* and finally *evaluate* what has been achieved. The whole process can then begin again.

Having agreed the priorities, through widespread consultation amongst as many parishioners as possible, *Everyone* in the Area is invited to say *how, where, when and why* they will take action (individually or with a group) to achieve the agreed objective. (No one is pressurised to do anything, however, and this is very important.)

Our original priorities were: to Get to Know Christ Better; to Understand and Combat Racism; to look at Ministries in the Church; Re-examine Catholic Schools; and the Problems of the Old and Young in our communities, (particularly concerning housing, unemployment and poverty.)

Although objectives have been agreed upon, and action planned, no-one has told anyone else what to do. The whole enterprise rests on co-operation, an enthusiasm to get involved and a willingness to take responsibility. This proved to be both its strength and for some a source of frustration. If the hierarchy stop telling people what to think and do, there is no shortage of people waiting to step into their shoes!

In many cases work already going on was tied into the pastoral planning process, thereby bringing people out of rather isolated situations into a much larger shared vision. That proved to have a very special dynamism. In other cases quite new action was initiated with startlingly good results, for those taking the initiative as well as for those with whom they were working. Nearly ten years on, in some of our initial priorities, poverty and anti-racism, for instance, we are only just beginning to make inroads.

At an area level the Bishop had decided his best contribution, with certain desirable 'knock on' effects would be to arrange a series of mass consciousness-raising and education programmes. The first was on 'The Person of Christ'.

Nearly two hundred people never before involved in this (or any other) sort of activity, volunteered to take part in a short course of training as discussion group leaders. Training teams were formed in each deanery, with the help of the Diocesan Adult Education Centre. Discussion papers were drawn up by a group from the Area who had between them a range of theological skills and training, and some who had no formal training but a lot of wisdom and experience. It had been agreed that our approach was to be within a theology of liberation framework. Cassettes were

produced and so were liturgy packs.

The deanery training courses alternated between theoretical and practical sessions together, and practice sessions in parishes. Prospective discussion group leaders were given practical guidance not only in how they might run, but also how they would bring together a discussion group. The approach of trainers and of discussion group leaders was one of non-domination, enabling people to discover and use resources they had within themselves and within their communities for the purpose of evangelisation.

In their deanery training sessions people also began to do some basic Christology, and to name it for what it was. Their own experience and reflections were surfaced and valued, and they were introduced to the thinking of others in our tradition. It was constantly stressed that the task of group leaders was not to have the answers but to have some insight into more and less useful ways of posing questions.

Not all the 200 people trained together gathered the suggested 10 group members each, but it was calculated that during that first four-week discussion well over a thousand people in East London were giving their attention, in prayerful study—(prayer is always an important part of every stage of the work) and in discussion, to getting to know Christ better.

Subsequent programmes, following evaluation of the processes of action and reflection, include Understanding the Spirit, Discovering the Church, Rediscovering Ministries, and Reconciliation in the World. A combination of theology and education in group skills has been offered for each programme, but not with quite the same level of Area co-ordination and planning as the first.

All the papers are firmly rooted in the Gospel, and it is easy for those familiar with the Bible to fail to realise just how liberating it is for those who read it with new eyes. In their use of photographs taken in the Area, and in the way in which information and ideas are presented and questions posed, the papers seek to motivate, equip and encourage people for evangelisation in the situations in which we live and work.

The effects are felt strongly in the Church itself. The more positive aspects are becoming increasingly apparent, but there have been some severe growing pains. At first there was an enormous *enthusiasm* generated, and a unified *vision* which was very exciting. It seemed as though everything was possible, that the Church would change overnight, and the next day would change the world!

It did not, of course, but, having seen the possibilities and discovered their voices, the 'laity' were not going to remain silent any longer. There was a lot of conflict between 'laity' and clergy, with demands made to the bishop in some instances for clergy to be replaced. There was conflict too between groups of parishioners, deanery groups and area pastoral workers.

Many argued, for instance, that the approach of liberation theology

and the option for the poor were too 'political'. They felt they were not being 'presented with' all points of view. On the other hand it was seen that action for justice has to be 'engaged' action, accompanied by a very careful examination of the assumptions upon which our thinking and acting is based.

This questioning approach has been a very important aspect of the changes that have taken and are taking place. There is conflict still, but we are more skilled at handling it. After the initial 'explosion' of years of pent-up dissatisfaction and hurt the pain is easier to bear. We are much better at forgiving each other.

Recently, we have begun a widespread programme of Racism-and Sexism-awareness which is expected to last for the next couple of years, during which concerted efforts will be made to educate new group leaders on a large scale.

Although we now have some six or seven hundred people who have been through various kinds of training (we have a team of Area workers providing education and training in theology, catechetics, youth work, communication skills, and all aspects of social and pastoral action), it will be a long time before the parishes or even the deaneries are well enough equipped to keep up the momentum.

There is a high level of participation, especially for an Inner City area, and a sense of 'ownership' and responsibility, a sense of *being* the Church. Discussion groups give rise to other small prayer and action groups and provide support for ecumenical activity and community action. Individual and community self-confidence is strong.

Some parishes have operated for long periods without their own priest, and it is increasingly rare when a priest is away for another to come in for daily Mass. The liturgical ministers are more likely to lead Eucharistic services and/or the prayer of the Church. And what is more, people take part! Getting 'lay' people to value and trust each other has enabled us to value and trust ourselves.

There is some foundation for the fear of 'clericalising the laity'. In my experience it is much easier to encourage people into ecclesial/liturgical ministries, and catechetics, than it is to motivate them to political action—even at a local neighbourhood level.

There is, however, no reason to think everyone is going to stop here. For many this is a transitional stage in their developing self-esteem and self-confidence. Our experience of active and responsible participation in the nurturing environment of the Christian community can equip, empower and 'authorise' us to evangelise the 'world'. It happens in a small way, *despite* the ambivalence and confusion about 'lay' ministry. How much more effective still the Church could be without that ambivalence and confusion!

* See my 'Authority through Superiority' in the forthcoming *Celibacy in Control: Sexuality and Power in the Roman Catholic Church*, a collection of three articles, published by K. Feduloff, 1987.