2. A Complex Landscape

Faithful Stewards of God’s Grace recognises the diverse reality and complex settings of lay pastoral ministry. To understand lay pastoral ministry and to address its challenges it is opportune to explore the current landscape.

2.1 Understanding the terminology

2.1.1 Understanding ‘Lay’ and ‘Laity’

The first area of complexity is one of language. There are several notable difficulties with language in any account or discussion of lay pastoral ministry. The first is that the use of the terms ‘lay’, ‘laity’, and ‘lay people’ can be a source of confusion in today’s society. In popular secular parlance, to be lay is to be someone not of a specific occupation, someone outside of a particular profession, someone not having expert knowledge or professional qualifications. Such definitions are counter to the understanding that lay people in an ecclesial setting can be appointed to formal, public ministries within the Church, and that they can be theologically competent, have pastoral expertise, and be professionally adept. Such lay people serve in and with the Church in a complementary manner with those who have received the sacrament of holy orders.

The terms ‘baptised’ and ‘faithful’ are sometimes used as synonyms for ‘laity.’ The proper use of these terms also includes ordained and consecrated religious members of the Church. Through Baptism, all are called to proclaim the Good News.

Faithful Stewards of God’s Grace affirms the increasing numbers of experienced, educated, and trained lay people who are visibly active in the common vocation of Christian discipleship, both in the Church and in the world.

2.1.2 Understanding ‘Pastoral Ministry’

The term ‘pastoral ministry’ is also subject to various interpretations. ‘Pastoral ministry’ on behalf of the Catholic community can be seen to include:

- liturgical ministries;
- sacramental preparation;
• church management or administration;
• pastoral care provided in the contexts of schools, hospitals, and prisons.

The above list is broad, and often lay and ordained ministers may be engaged alongside each other, or in each other’s stead to a certain degree, in any of these areas. This has led to one extreme response contending that ‘pastoral’ be reserved solely to the ordained ministry. Another extreme is to equate the functions of lay pastoral ministry as inseparable from ordained ministry. It is clear that holding either of these views would make advancing an understanding of lay pastoral ministry problematic at best.

There is also concern that, if providing ‘pastoral care’ is reserved for people with particular set[s] of qualifications, or is associated only with specialised (or paid) roles, then other people may not feel welcome to exercise this form of care in the course of their church-related activity or work: e.g. in their contact with the faithful while working in a school or in parish management. The pastoral component of these roles may not receive sufficient recognition or support.

Conversely, if ‘pastoral care’ became an expected element of such positions as parish secretaries or sacristans, some may feel unworthy, underprepared, or under-qualified to exercise this function.40

This resource does not seek to prescribe what roles should be encompassed by the term ‘lay pastoral ministry.’ Yet it does seek to be an aid/guide in the development of a shared vision, a common understanding, and recognition of lay pastoral ministry at national and local levels.

Therefore, this resource recognises:

a. the pastoral ministerial functions exercised by lay people, according to the lay vocation arising from sacramental initiation; and
b. ministry exercised by lay people in collaboration with the ministry of the ordained, according to deputation given by ordained pastors, supplying in situations of necessity and emergency.41

Both of these forms of lay pastoral ministries provide ‘a special complementary capacity for service,’ in partnership with the teaching,

41 CL 23.
sanctifying, and governing functions of ordained ministry.\textsuperscript{42}

2.1.3 Understanding ‘Lay Pastoral Ministry’

The designation ‘lay pastoral ministry’ is not unanimously used or accepted in the Catholic Church in Australia: ‘lay ministry’, ‘non-ordained ministry’, ‘lay ecclesial ministry’, and ‘lay apostolate’ are all terms used to describe this function. Some feel that the language is only meaningful in the Church context, for others a liturgical ministry could be considered pastoral.\textsuperscript{43} To avoid the negative connotations sometimes associated with ‘lay’ and ‘non-ordained’, some theologians have proposed the use of alternative terms such as ‘installed ministries’ and ‘commissioned ministries’.\textsuperscript{44}

Furthermore, within the sphere of lay pastoral ministry, various nomenclatures are used to refer to specific ministry roles. Across Catholic dioceses in Australia, terms such as the following are used: lay ecclesial ministers, lay leaders, pastoral leaders, pastoral coordinators, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, senior pastoral associates, pastoral assistants, pastoral workers, sacramental coordinators, lay ministers, youth workers and lay chaplains.\textsuperscript{45}

Paradoxically, there is both considerable overlap and inconsistency in how these designations or titles are used: the types of tasks assigned to these roles may be similar, or even identical, but the degree of responsibility prescribed, the freedom and capacity granted for activity, and the classification of relationships with other ministers, especially parish priests, can be widely disparate.\textsuperscript{46}

Similarly, expectations of what constitutes suitable candidacy can be inconsistent between comparable lay pastoral ministry descriptions, for example, expectations of certain levels of education, experience, accreditation and authorisation are not uniform across the Australian landscape. Neither are there cohesive defined roles and responsibilities, or remuneration.\textsuperscript{47}

One of the aims of this resource is to contribute to the development of a

\textsuperscript{42} CL 20; Pope John Paul II. Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; 1997. n. 2.
\textsuperscript{43} McGrath et al. 2016. p. 47
\textsuperscript{44} Wood S, Downey M. Ordering the baptismal priesthood. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press; 2005. p. 44-47.
\textsuperscript{45} McGrath et al. 2016. p. 9-12.
\textsuperscript{46} McGrath et al. 2016. p. 58.
\textsuperscript{47} McGrath et al. 2016. p. 12.
common language about such position titles and to suggest standardised training, employment policies, and uniform practices of commissioning, accreditation, and accountability.48

2.1.4 Consecrated religious persons

The language of ‘lay pastoral ministry’ is further complicated if the word ‘lay’ is understood as being synonymous with ‘non-ordained’. Consecrated religious persons who are ‘non-ordained’ can also be identified as 'lay persons.'49 This resource recognises the distinctive character of the religious state of life, which gives special witness, transforming the world according to the spirit of the beatitudes.50

In accordance with the teachings of Vatican II, this resource acknowledges that some members of the ordained and lay faithful are called by God to the religious life, ‘so that they might enjoy this particular gift in the life of the Church and thus each in one’s own way, may be of some advantage to the salvific mission of the Church.’51 Nevertheless, in specific pastoral contexts, certain titles are used to designate both lay and religious ministry roles. In such cases, ministry responsibilities and activities may be common to both lay and religious persons, yet their embodiment will be unique according to the diverse gifts and charisms of each.52

2.2 Understanding complementarity of ministries of lay pastoral ministry and of priests

The Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry research revealed a number of concerns surrounding public ministry roles. The first apprehension is that lay pastoral ministry seeks to replace ordained ministry and that lay people are contesting the priest’s responsibility of pastoral care. Some see increased lay involvement as a response to an ageing demographic in ordained priests and a decline in vocations to the ordained priesthood. The development of recognised lay pastoral ministry roles consequently has become, in the eyes of some, just one pastoral strategy to address the ‘shortage of priests’, alongside the ordination of deacons, the incardination of international priests, and the clustering of parishes.

While the introduction of priests from other countries and cultures and the

49 McGrath et al. 2016. p. 46.
50 LG 13, 31.
51 LG 43.
52 See Chapter Three.
restoration of the permanent diaconate can be described as direct measures to ‘provide regions, where there is a shortage of clergy, with sacred ministers’\(^{53}\) the diaconate as a separate order, has a specific ministry but is not to replace the priest nor the lay ministry.

Following Vatican II the permanent diaconate was restored.\(^{54}\) Neither the permanent diaconate nor lay pastoral ministry seeks to ‘prejudice the meaning, role or flourishing of the ministerial priesthood, which must always be fostered because of its indispensability.’\(^{55}\)

Priests, deacons, religious and lay people are each in their own way, sharers in the ministry of Christ, and carry out for their own part the Christian mission in the Church and in the world.\(^{56}\)

2.2.1 Diversity and complementarity

Research conducted by the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry has raised another concern that the increased number of international priests and the restoration of the permanent diaconate could diminish the role of the lay faithful, and limit the growth of lay pastoral ministry. Priests from other countries and permanent deacons are sometimes viewed as being in competition with lay people involved in pastoral ministry.

*Faithful Stewards of God’s Grace* contends that ‘constructive and patient collaboration between international priests, deacons and others involved in the pastoral ministry should be promoted with generosity and conviction.’\(^{57}\) The Church is an ‘organic’ communion, ‘characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities.’\(^{58}\) Thus lay people, international priests and permanent deacons should work in collaboration with priests and religious, in communion with the diocesan bishop, to exercise pastoral care for the good of the community.

2.2.2 Avoiding clericalisation of lay people

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\(^{54}\) LG 29.

\(^{55}\) Congregation for the Clergy n. 2.

\(^{56}\) LG 31, 41.

\(^{57}\) Congregation for the Clergy n. 41.

\(^{58}\) CL 20.
Church authority is essential to good order. An obstacle to collaboration in building up the Church is one of the ‘clericalisation’ of lay persons. This can happen in different ways. For example, clericalisation is understood to occur when it is ‘not service but power that shapes every form of government in the Church, either in the clergy or in the laity.’\(^5^9\) In such a case, clericalisation of the laity occurs when the commitment of lay persons becomes ‘absorbed by the exercise of “power” within the Church’.\(^6^0\) Thus, longevity in a single pastoral location, or within a particular ministry position, can become corrupted; the occupation of multiple, central roles of responsibility by one lay person can become monopolisation and, the appointment to leadership and paid positions can become a means to ‘career advancement’ or ‘promotion’.

Clericalisation may also occur when pastoral ministers lead alone, without recourse to representatives of the faith community, concerning pastoral ministry and financial affairs.\(^6^1\) This leads the pastoral leader to become a conduit for everything, rather than enabling the faithful, giving them freedom and room to live out their vocations as Christian disciples.\(^6^2\) A further concern for lay pastoral ministers is when they are not enabled to undertake tasks on their own initiative, nor are they strengthened in their sense of responsibility.\(^6^3\) As a consequence, pastoral leadership can become, ‘concerned with fixing holes in the road’, or maintenance, rather than on missionary discipleship.\(^6^4\)

Clericalisation of lay pastoral ministry may result in one person becoming the focus of parish life, limiting the opportunities for others to contribute and having a reactive, insular approach to ministry. Clericalisation of lay pastoral ministry can also place a greater value on ministry within the Church to the detriment of the lay vocation in the world.\(^6^5\)


\(^6^0\) Ibid.


\(^6^2\) McGrath et al. 2016. p. 49.

\(^6^3\) LG 37.


Another feature of clericalisation is the ‘clerical spirit’, which leads some people to expect that lay people, who are gifted and active in the service of their communities, should pursue the permanent diaconate, or ordained priesthood. Pope Francis spoke against such clericalisation, stating that it ‘only hampers things [lay vocations] from developing correctly.’

2.3 Lay pastoral ministry and working life
There are other concerns surrounding a variety of matters which are particularly significant from the perspective of the lay person and his/her working life:

- Uncertainty attached to moving from working in the secular sphere to the ecclesial sphere;
- Instability of pastoral roles, and insecurity of employment arrangements specifically, brought about by the movements of priests;
- Inadequate or no remuneration, inhibiting the individual’s contribution to the ministry because of financial uncertainty;
- Expectation of availability and flexibility in ministry which may conflict with responsibilities to spouses, family, and personal well-being;
- Necessity of engaging in continued inter-personal, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral training programs to sustain effective ministry practice;
- Responsibility of being a public representative of the Church, and the associated obligation of maintaining a morally upright life, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the values of the Gospel;
- Diverse range of responsibilities and the never ending nature of the demands of ministry.

Pope John Paul II observes: ‘The four Gospels bear witness to a certain pluralism within the fundamental unity of the same mission ... the result of the driving force of the Spirit; it encourages us to pay heed to the variety of missionary charisms and to the diversity of circumstances and peoples.’

Challenges can arise when men and women, young and old, people from different ethnic backgrounds and people with varying capacities and experiences work together in ministry. Matters of justice and equity in the ministerial environment, respecting the dignity of all persons, need to be upheld by policies which enhance best practice.

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66 Pope Francis, 2016.
67 RM 23.
2.4 Professionalisation and Attitudinal Change

2.4.1 Professionalisation

The Catholic Church in Australia has developed professional standards and practices which meet the current Australian and State and Territory laws. In doing this, it has responded to the needs of the growing number of lay Catholics who are employed by, or who volunteer in the service of the Church. These sets of standards and practices not only give people confidence in their interactions with Church personnel, but ensure the people of God are entrusted to the care of suitable individuals who are publicly accountable for their ministerial performance. In the Australian ecclesial context, the National Committee for Professional Standards is responsible for developing professional standards among clergy and religious. As a joint committee of Catholic Religious Australia and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, it was established in 2016 to oversee the development of these standards in response to Church-related abuse complaints. It assists in their efforts to prevent violations of professional standards.68

Professionalisation has also occurred in a number of other areas including:

- Codes of conduct, such as *Integrity in Ministry*69 and *Integrity in the Service of the Church*;70
- Accreditation regulation such as the *Accreditation of Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Coordinators Policy*71 in the Archdiocese of Adelaide and the *Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Accreditation Standards* in the Archdiocese of Melbourne;72
- *Working With Children Checks* and Police Checks becoming standardised practice during employment screening for ministry roles.

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For some being ‘professional’ is deemed incompatible with ministry. Others argue that professional standards ‘foster authentic ministry’ and engender trust by making explicit the characteristics and competencies that are expected from pastoral ministers. Candidates are screened according to a defined set of criteria, and standards of practice serve as a check against the misuse of position and power.\(^73\)

_Faithful Stewards of God’s Grace_ recognises that it is the responsibility of the Bishop, as chief shepherd and teacher in a diocese, to strengthen the quality of ministry and ensure lay pastoral ministers are ‘well prepared and competent to carry out their ministerial roles and functions.’\(^74\) Therefore, setting professional standards for the training, selection, and ongoing development of pastoral ministers is necessary to ensure quality pastoral care\(^75\) and to protect the vulnerable.

### 2.4.2 Attitudinal change

The future growth of lay pastoral ministry requires seeing that ‘all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need.’\(^76\)

The challenge of attitudinal change is therefore a complexity which must be faced to increase the participation rate of the laity in lay pastoral ministry and the concurrent growth of lay pastoral ministry. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of this same issue when he acknowledged the need for a ‘change in mentality’ with respect to the role of the laity: such a change in mentality meant recognising lay people as truly co-responsible and not merely collaborators with the clergy; and meant enabling lay people to make their specific contribution to the Church’s mission ‘in accordance with the ministries and tasks each one has in the life of the Church, and always in cordial communion with the bishops.’\(^77\)

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\(^75\) Ibid, n. 56.

\(^76\) LG 32

This change of mentality is consistent with the Vatican II vision of a mature and committed laity, strengthened in personal responsibility and gifted with a renewed enthusiasm to continue Christ’s mission of witness and service.78

78 LG 37, 34.