

SUMMARY OF WORKPLACE ISSUES DIALOGUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final presentation of the symposium dealt with the Ministerial Workplace. Michael Brough, Director of Planning and Member Services with the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, presented a workshop entitled “Raising Expectations in the Ministerial Workplace.” From *Co-Workers* Michael outlined the following as the context of that document for the Ministerial Workplace:

- theology and ecclesiology of communion,
- integration of gospel values and best organizational practices,
- ongoing process of development and dialogue,
- significant degree of preparation, formation, and professional competence,
- mutual and fruitful collaboration
- and comprehensive personnel systems.

In terms of best organizational practices, he proposed that the context of *Co-Workers* translates into: strong leadership and collaboration, open dialogue, planning processes, audits of ministerial workplaces, evaluation processes, and the fostering of employee engagement. The presentation then proceeded to delineate how the six human resource areas listed in *Co-Workers* needed to be developed to meet the standards of best organizational practices in light of Catholic Social Teaching.

Dialogue at the tables surfaced many issues focusing on parish and diocesan human resource policies and practices. Lay ecclesial ministers were exhorted to speak on their own behalf and to raise the expectations necessary for ensuring a just ministerial workplace. Some recommendations named specific issues while others called for complete policies around all issues. Subsequent recommendations related to formation focused on the following three themes.

Personnel Policies: The establishment of personnel policies was a significant area of dialogue by participants. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Establishment of personnel policies by parishes and dioceses that were just in areas of job descriptions, compensation, ongoing formation, benefits, evaluation, and retreats.
- Establishment of clear guidelines for policies during transition times.
- Development of a policy to be developed to assure portability of benefits across diocesan boundaries.

Resources and Programs: Emphasis was also placed on developing resources, training programs and setting up human resource offices in dioceses where they do not presently exist in order to help guide those in supervisory roles. Recognizing that resources are tight all around, suggestions were made for sharing resources, i.e. neighboring dioceses share a centralized human resource department. Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Development of resources by the USCCB and national organizations that could be used by all to assure justice and compatibility among dioceses and parishes.
- Sponsorship of training workshops on human resource issues for seminarians and pastors.

- Education of parishioners regarding the role of lay ecclesial ministers within a parish and the need for just stewardship on the part of all.

Need for Assessment: Recommendations were made that diocesan and parish personnel assess present practices and make the necessary adjustments to assure that they were in keeping with the spirit of *Co-Workers* and in line with Catholic Social teaching.

Generated recommendations focused upon the following specific issues and actions:

- Recognition and increased consciousness of the diverse cultures that are the Church and to make every effort to reflect that reality in our hiring practices.
- Establishment of a national task force to look at the issue of undocumented workers who are called to lay ecclesial ministry.