



*Association of
Graduate Programs in Ministry:
Celebrating 30 Years*

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AGPIM: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

We've come a long way--into the age of computers and online learning, shrinking resources in Church and Catholic higher education, through difficult decades of polarization and acrimony within Catholicism, and now the surprise of Pope Francis! Diversity, ecological concerns, classroom diversity, broadened understandings of "ministry" and its venues--these challenges have been resourced by AGPIM membership in supportive and fruitful ways.¹

Prologue

In 2017 the Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry (AGPIM) celebrates its 30th anniversary.² This short history of those 30 years is a testimony not only to AGPIM's longevity, but also to its commitment to inform, form, and transform graduate ministry education in the United States through collaboration, networking, and open dialogue. It is in this spirit of shared commitment and dialogue that *Celebrating 30 Years* is offered.

As preparation for this retrospective, current and past members were invited to share their thoughts on AGPIM's impact on themselves, their school, and graduate ministry education. They were invited to complete an online survey³ identifying their reasons for joining AGPIM; the issues impacting graduate ministry education when they joined; and how membership and active participation proved valuable to graduate ministry education in general, to their particular school, to themselves personally as well as in their professional lives. Thirty members completed the survey. Their comments shape and inform what follows.

The Early Years

Growing numbers of lay women and men are also preparing themselves professionally to work in the Church. In this regard religious sisters and brothers have shown the way with their initiative and creativity. ...Ecclesial ministers, i.e., lay persons who have prepared for professional ministry in the Church, represent a new development. We welcome this as a gift to the Church.⁴

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a time of transition for many graduate programs in ministry. Schools found themselves wrestling with changing enrollment patterns and

¹ Bob Ludwig, Loyola University, Chicago, IL

² See Appendix A for a listing of member schools.

³ See Appendix B for a copy the survey.

⁴ *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity* (1980)

alternative delivery models. The six-week summer programs of the late 1960s and the 1970s were experiencing declining enrollments and were less and less sustainable. Ministry programs could no longer depend on a steady flow of students transitioning from religious life and/or seminary formation programs. Diocesan sponsored certification programs were on the increase and in many cases certificates were considered a substitute for a graduate degree in ministry. It was also during this period that the institutional Church was transitioning from a Vatican II emphasis on a God revealed in culture to the more evangelizing spirit of Pope John Paul II and his stress on doctrinal clarity and the need to confront a "culture of death."

The women and men enrolling in graduate ministry programs were a new breed. They were the lay men and women described by the American bishops in their 1980 reflection *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity*. They were enthusiastic, theologically curious and drawn to ecclesial ministry. In 1985 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Laity with financial support from the Lilly Endowment undertook the first broad-based survey of diocesan supported pastoral training programs. The survey results published as *Preparing Laity for Ministry: A Report on the Progress in Catholic Dioceses throughout the United States* reported on two-hundred programs ranging from diocesan sponsored certificates to graduate level degree offerings in one hundred twenty-three dioceses. This report was an impetus for the creation of the Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry (AGPIM).

A Gathering Call

In the early years, the focus was on coming to common understandings of what constituted foundational curricula for graduate ministry education, financial support for lay graduate students, the nature of practical/pastoral theology, and compiling information as an association regarding our common efforts.⁵

In 1987, David Thomas of Regis University, Denver, Colorado, with funding from the Lilly Foundation, took the initiative of inviting 40 representatives from colleges, universities, and seminaries from across the United States to meet at the Julie Penrose Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to consider the creation of an association focused specifically on graduate programs in ministry. At this meeting a Steering Committee⁶ was selected and given the task of planning a second gathering in February of the following year. A second group, designated

⁵ Maureen O'Brien, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA.

⁶ Members included (see 1987 Final Report, page 13): David Thomas, Regis College, Denver, CO; Bob Ludwig, Loyola Institute for Ministry, New Orleans, LA; Tim O'Connell, Loyola Chicago, Chicago, IL; Delrina Clarin, HM, John Carroll University, University Heights, OH; and Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH.

as the Research Committee,⁷ was charged with the task of preparing an inventory of graduate ministry programs, profiling graduate ministry students, identifying competency issues, and developing a data collection instrument.⁸

At the second gathering, in February of 1988, representatives from thirty-one institutions met again at the Julie Penrose Center. The meeting addressed three areas 1) the ideal curriculum for a graduate program in pastoral ministry, 2) personal and spiritual formation in the context of academic programs, and 3) women's role in shaping ministry and other alternative ministry patterns. The major portion of the meeting was devoted to planning for ways in which to address each of these concerns.

In 1989 Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Indiana funded a three-pronged AGPIM project to explore approaches to ministry formation in the United States. The first two prongs included funding for research on the inventory of graduate programs and the profile of ministry students previously mentioned. The third prong was the development of an invitational conference for various providers of ministerial formation from across the country in order "to explore with leaders in the area of ministry formation their understandings of their work, current developments in those understandings, and future possibilities for greater collaboration."⁹ Under the leadership of Bernard J. Lee, SM and in collaboration with AGPIM members, the conference, *Ministry Educators in Conversation: What Kind of Future?*, was held February 4-7, 1993 at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. The publication of the two research studies and the proceedings of this conference highlighted AGPIM's leadership role in promoting and fostering ministerial education throughout the United States and helped ensure its long-term viability.

Articulating a Vision

The truth is that education for ministry programs is unique--different from academic theology programs that serve the core curriculum for undergrads and offer graduate education for scholars, different from religious studies programs, too. AGPIM members have always had a pastoral focus--in their programs, their students, and their faculty. And AGPIM members have mostly had a strong commitment to lay

⁷ Members included (see 1987 Final Report, page 13): Charles Topper, St. Joseph College, W. Hartford, CT; Tom Walters, St. Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN; Barbara Schmitz, OSB, St. Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN; Steve Privett, SJ, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA; Ray Noll, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA; and Marcel Dumestre, Regis University, Denver, CO.

⁸ Charles Topper et al., *A Survey of Graduate Programs in Ministry 1992-1993*, Charles Topper et al. (1993); *Ministers of the Future: A Study of Graduate Ministry Students in Catholic Colleges and Universities*, Barbara J. Fleischer (1993).

⁹ Timothy E. O'Connell. "Preface." *Ministry Education in Conversation: What Kind of Future? Proceedings of the Invitational Conference*. AGPIM (1993).

ministry (different from seminaries). This combination of pastoral and lay has no other professional association to connect scholar-teachers and administrators in this field. ATS, CTSA, CTS, AAR, SBL, REA--all very fine professional groups, but none with the same focus that AGPIM has--this makes it invaluable.¹⁰

It was at the third meeting, in 1989, at the Dominican Conference Center in New Orleans that work began on the formulation of a position statement for the association stating its foundational understandings of theology, education, lay ministry, and graduate education. At the center of the statement is the affirmation of the centrality of practical/pastoral theology,¹¹ which was seen as a new theological paradigm in graduate education for ministry. In 1992 at the sixth annual meeting at the Duncan Center in Delray Beach, Florida, the following statement was approved and still guides the association.

AGPIM POSITION STATEMENT (Approved 2/23/92)

The Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry (AGPIM), an organization of Roman Catholic graduate programs, recognizes and supports the emergence of a new theological paradigm in graduate education for ministry. This theology, commonly referred to as practical or pastoral theology, is a mutually interpretive, critical and transforming conversation between the Christian tradition and contemporary experience. Historical, hermeneutical, and socio-cultural analyses are integral to this method of theology. Pastoral or practical theology takes place in a community of faith, implies a spirituality that is both personal and liturgical, and is directed toward individual and social transformation in Christ.

The Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry asserts the importance of graduate education for leadership roles in the ministry of the Church:

¹⁰ Bob Ludwig, Loyola University, Chicago, IL.

¹¹ The vision of AGPIM in the early years is captured in following statement by Barbara Fleischer: "The shift in graduate ministry education from a classical model to a praxis-oriented approach opens new opportunities for highlighting and focusing on virtues as an integral aspect of pastoral education. Virtue development requires the rhythm of ongoing reflection on praxis that engenders practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, to guide movements toward virtuous living. A praxis mode of education provides such opportunities to a much greater extent than a more classical and didactic approach to education. Virtues themselves need to be highlighted in the curriculum to help students address the questions, 'Who am I becoming?' and 'Who ought I to become?'" Barbara J. Fleischer, "Virtues and Praxis in Ministry Education," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 32 (2012): 171-183, at 181.

1. Graduate programs in ministry provide a level of preparation that society rightly expects of professionals in all fields.
2. Graduate programs in ministry, with their access to the resources of higher education, provide an especially fitting context for ministry preparation.
3. Graduate programs foster in-depth development of students for professional growth in ministry and provide for the long-term health and mission of the larger ecclesial community.
4. These graduate programs in ministry meet or exceed standards developed by appropriate national accrediting agencies.

It is the conviction of the Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry that:

1. Members of the Church have a right to be served by qualified ministers (*Christi Fideles Laici*, Sec. 57, 63).
2. Qualified ministers have a right to just compensation and procedures in return for a responsible exercise of ministry (Canon 231.2 and *Economic Justice for All*, Sec. 351).
3. The Catholic Church, for various historical and cultural reasons, is in a situation where these rights are often not realized in practice.
4. Financial constraints and systemic complexities make changes difficult. However, failure to remedy this situation has long-term destructive effects on Catholic life.
5. The mission of AGPIM includes advocating and facilitating systemic change in this situation.

Giving Form to the Vision

It seems to me that for graduate programs in ministry AGPIM has helped the faculty and staff of such programs develop a language of lay ecclesial ministry, a sense of pastoral ministry as a field that has a significant number of lay ecclesial ministers, a sense of the essential components of the education and formation of lay ecclesial ministers, and ways of evaluating the education and formation of lay ecclesial ministry.¹²

The association's statement of *Corporate Purposes* (2001) concretized the values captured in the 1992 Position Statement. It states that AGPIM exists to:

¹² Bud Horell, Fordham University, New York, NY.

- Promote the quality of graduate ministerial education in the service of the Church and society.
- Provide collaboration and networking and the exchange of information from among its members.
- Foster improved standards for ministerial education throughout the United States.
- Provide increased awareness of ministerial needs and trends.

A strategic plan for the association was developed as part of the 2002 and 2003 annual meetings. Based on a SWOT analysis, members identified the following areas of concentration to strengthen further the organization's leadership in and commitment to the education of ministers:

- Plan for and actively participate in sustained conversation and collaboration with the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA).
- Promote conversations between diocesan leadership and AGPIM member schools by sharing best practices in ministry education, developing a common language and understanding about spiritual formation, and using the national listings of competencies for ministry.
- Promote sustained conversations and research about spiritual formation in the preparation of lay ecclesial ministers.
- Develop and make use of the AGPIM website and other electronic resources to share information more fully among member institutions, their students, their graduates, and others in the broader community.

Implementing the Vision

The need for professionally prepared lay ecclesial ministers in positions of leadership will increase as more priests reach retirement. How do we get the bishops and laity to recognize this as a reality and to invest in preparation of qualified and willing people? How do we hand on a solid tradition to the next generations? How do we interest young people to consider careers in ministry? How do we develop new academic program leadership?¹³

¹³ Eilish Ryan, CCVI, University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX.

Unlike the early years of AGPIM when members' concerns centered on defining ecclesial lay ministry and curricular issues surrounding degree programming, today's members find themselves dealing with lower enrollments and issues of sustainability. They are faced with the de-professionalization of lay ministry with untrained volunteers, the resulting decline in ecclesial ministry positions available to their graduates, the high costs involved in getting a graduate degree, and at times a lack of support or distrust from the diocese for which they are preparing future lay ecclesial ministers. These are difficult issues that impact the future of a number of graduate programs.

While the concerns of graduate programs have changed over the years, AGPIM's commitment to providing the Church with well-informed lay women and men has not. The association under the guidance of elected members continues today to serve as a collaborative forum for addressing the pressing issues of the day.¹⁴

Annual meetings have addressed a number of topics of importance to graduate ministry formation. At the 2005 annual meeting, "Theological Reflection on our Experiences as Ministry Educators," Amy Hoey, RSM, USCCB Coordinator for Lay Ministry, consulted with the membership for input into the bishops' landmark statement on lay ecclesial ministers, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (USCCB, 2005).

In recognition of its twentieth anniversary (2007) and in line with its stated purposes, the annual *Called and Gifted Award* was instituted. Recipients of this award are to have made substantial and lasting contributions to graduate ministry education, such as having conducted research, provided leadership within the association, and/or fostered collegial conversation in organized and helpful ways to further graduate ministry education in the United States. Within the discipline of pastoral theology, the recipient is to be respected for her or his contributions to the field. To date, there have been twelve recipients of this award.¹⁵

In August 2007, the association was invited by Saint John's University and agreed to co-sponsor a symposium on lay ecclesial ministry in Collegeville, Minnesota, a symposium at which sixteen AGPIM-member schools were represented. The symposium was part of a series of initiatives organized by Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary and shaped in part by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth (USCCB-LMFLY). The purpose was to address the initial reception and implementation of *Co-Workers*. An outcome of this gathering was the call for national dialogue in four strategic study areas: Pathways to Ministry, Formation for Lay Ecclesial Ministry, Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministry, and Quality of Life in the Workplace.

¹⁴ See Appendix C for a listing of AGPIM's presidents.

¹⁵ See Appendix B.

In addition to providing a forum for bringing the perspective of graduate school programs to bear on national issues, AGPIM annual meetings also focused on issues of practical importance to graduate programming for ministry on the local level, e.g., "Curriculum, Assessment and Professionalism" (1995), "Hearing Many Voices: Dialogue and Diversity" (1997), and "Practical/Pastoral Theology" (1999).

The theme of the 2009 annual meeting in Tucson, "Confronting Culture and Context in Graduate Ministry Education," focused on the impact of and strategies for institutional and programmatic adaptations/accommodations to a more culturally diverse Church, a topic that was revisited in 2016 – "Ministry Formation for a Multicultural Church." Other topics have included: "Intellectual Transformation for Ministry" (2007), "The Ecology of Calling: The Role of Community in Vocation and Discernment" (2011), "A New Creation: Ministry as Reconciliation" (2013), and recently, "'The Francis Effect,' the Church and Ministry Education" (2015).

Moving Forward

AGPIM operates as a community of peers. Through regular meetings and networking, AGPIM members have drawn strength from open dialogue and shared visions. The following statements from members past and present attest to the association's faithfulness to inform, form, and transform all aspects of graduate ministry programs by nurturing members' minds, shaping their professional identity, and taking an active role in the preparation and promotion of lay ecclesial ministers in today's Church. In their own words:

The annual meeting of the Association of Graduate Programs for Ministry is a collegial and supportive gathering of professional educators passionate about preparing laity for the various ministries to which they are called. This annual gathering allows for deep discussion on issues pertinent to the academic as well as the spiritual and human formation of graduate students. The collegial atmosphere strengthens and supports educational leaders in this field.¹⁶

¹⁶ Aldona Lingertat, St. John's Seminary, Boston, MA.

Supportive AGPIM colleagues always offered helpful advice for accreditation issues, choosing adjunct faculty, planning degree curricula. AGPIM helped me better understand the broader landscape of lay ministry, especially in other parts of the country, and so do strategic planning accordingly.¹⁷

Formation for ministry is all about relationships and collaboration. The AGPIM annual meeting has been a kind of seedbed for cultivating and growing fruitful relationships and enriching collaboration for me and other members. No other annual meeting puts me in the same place at the same time with people who understand, value, and have expertise in the work to which I aspire.¹⁸

Thirty years of service is cause for rejoicing. AGPIM's commitment to its members and to ensuring quality graduate education in ministry has stood the test of time, but the need for quality graduate education remains. This is certainly the case today as the larger Church, as well as graduate programs in ministry, learn how to embrace and adapt to what is popularly called the "Pope Francis Effect." So it is with a sense of pride in what has been accomplished that AGPIM should celebrate its past and draw hope and energy for what lies ahead.

¹⁷ Sharon Callahan, Seattle University, Seattle, WA.

¹⁸ Dan Luby, University of Dallas, Dallas, TX.

Appendix A - AGPIM Member Institutions 2016

Barry University
Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry
Cardinal Stritch University
Catholic Theological Union of Chicago
Chaminade University
College of Our Lady of the Elms (Elms College)
Creighton University
Duquesne University
Fordham University
Franciscan School of Theology
Gonzaga University, Ministry Institute
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
Loyola Marymount University
Loyola University Chicago, Institute of Pastoral Studies
Loyola University New Orleans, Loyola Institute for Ministry
Mount St. Joseph University
National Association of Catholic Chaplains
Oblate School of Theology
St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry
St John's Seminary, Theological Institute for the New Evangelization
St. John's University School of Theology & Seminary
St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology
St. Norbert College
St. Thomas University
Santa Clara University
Seattle University, School of Theology and Ministry
Spring Hill College
University of Dallas, School of Ministry
University of Dayton
University of Notre Dame
University of the Incarnate Word
Ursuline College
Villanova University

Appendix B - Survey



AGPIM Survey 2015

Name and email address

During what years did you attend AGPIM meetings? (Check all that apply.)

1987-1990

1991-1995

1996-2000

2001-2005

2006-2010

2011-2015

What title/position did you hold within your school when you were an AGPIM member?

Why did you join AGPIM?

What were the key issues in graduate ministry when you were an AGPIM member?

What did AGPIM accomplish during the time you were a member?

What impact did AGPIM have on your graduate programming? (What did your school gain from being a member?)

What did you personally gain from involvement in AGPIM?

What do you consider key issues facing graduate ministry programs today?

Is there a story or anecdote about AGPIM that you would like to share?

Appendix C - Presidents

YEAR	PRESIDENT	GRADUATE SCHOOL
1987-1988	Convener - David Thomas	Regis College, Denver, CO
1988-1989	Convener - David Thomas	Regis College, Denver, CO
1989-1990	Coordinator - Gene Scapanski	University of Saint Thomas, Minneapolis, MN
1990-1991	Ruth Eileen Dwyer, SP (RIP)	Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute, IN
1991-1992	Paul Decker	Loyola Marymount, Los Angeles, LA
1992-1993	Tom Martin (RIP)	University of Dayton, Dayton, OH
1993-1994	Mercedes Iannone	St. Thomas University, Miami, FL
1994-1995	Lillian Younkens	Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX
1995-1996	Richard (Dick) Ver Berst (RIP)	St. Norbert College, DePere, WI
1996-1997	Thomas Walters	Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, Saint Meinrad, IN
1997-1998	Sr. Mary Garvin, SNJM (RIP)	Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA
1998-1999	Mary Kay Oosdyke, OP	Ursuline College, Cleveland, OH
1999-2000	Bernard Lee, SM	Loyola University, New Orleans, LA
2000-2001	Maureen O'Brien	Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA
2001-2002	Sharon Callahan	Seattle University, Seattle, WA
2002-2003	Greg Sobolewski	Saint Mary's University, Winona, MN
2003-2004	Sandra Yocum Mize	University of Dayton, Dayton, OH
2004-2005	Harold (Bud) Horell	Fordham University, New York, NY
2005-2006	Mary Elsbernd, OSF (RIP)	Loyola University, Chicago
2006-2007	Eilish Ryan, CCVI	University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX
2007-2008	Gary Pokorny	Saint Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, WI
2008-2009	Kathleen Brown	Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC
2009-2010	Timothy Carmody	Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL
2010-2011	Jean Marie Weber	Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI
2011-2012	Kyle Kramer	Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN
2012-2013	Aldona Lingertat	Saint John's Seminary, Boston, MA
2013-2014	Dan Luby	University of Dallas, Dallas, TX
2014-2015	Barbara Sutton	St. John's University, Collegeville, MN
2015-2016	William H. Johnston	University of Dayton, Dayton, OH
2016-2017	Marti Jewell	University of Dallas, Dallas, TX
2017-2018	Tom Ryan	Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University New Orleans

Appendix D - Called and Gifted Award

The *Called and Gifted Award*, initiated for the Association's twentieth anniversary, is presented to an AGPIM colleague as part of the annual meeting.

Recipient has made a contribution to AGPIM that is substantial and lasting (conducted research; provided leadership; fostered collegial conversation in an organized and helpful way etc.)

Within the discipline of pastoral theology, the recipient is respected for her or his contributions to the field, especially as an educator of ministers.

Recipient represents the interests of graduate education in ministry and AGPIM in the broader ecclesial and academic communities.

Awardees

Jean Marie Weber and Rev. Joseph Merkt (2016)

Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI and Archdiocese of Louisville, respectively

Kyle Kramer (2015)

Passionist Earth & Spirit Center, Louisville, KY,

formerly at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN

Bob Ludwig (2014)

Institute of Pastoral Studies, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL

Marti Jewel (2013)

University of Dallas, Dallas, TX

Edward Mahoney (2012)

St. Michael College, Colchester, VT

Eilish Ryan, CCVI (2011)

University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX

Mary Elsbernd, OSF (2010)

Loyola University Chicago (IPS), Chicago, IL

Maureen O'Brien (2009)

Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA

Sharon Callahan (2008)

Seattle University, Seattle, WA

Thomas Walters (2007)

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN

Mercedes Iannone (2006)

St. Thomas University, Miami Gardens, FL