

Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program – Diocese of Las Vegas Reading and Writing Assignments – Fall 2008

Here is a summary of the learning objectives and reading assignments for each session during our first semester, along with questions to be answered in the written reflections after each month's session. For updates to these assignments, and direct links to online readings, see <http://www.catholic-resources.org/LasVegas/LEMP.html>.

Except for our first session in September, all **readings** should be done *before* coming to each month's session, if possible. Reading selections will be taken from our textbooks (see the initial bibliography below), online sources, or other books available for purchase through the Office of Faith Formation (or online or in your local bookstore).

Monthly **written reflections** should be done *within one week* after each session, and *emailed* to Fr. Felix Just, S.J. at fjust2000@yahoo.com. Please write *one or two* good paragraphs in response to *each* question listed below, but only about one full single-spaced page in total. Remember that this is not a Ph.D. program (so don't make your paper too academic), but it is not elementary school either (so do spend some time reflecting deeply and personally on the questions). All papers should be typed and include a *brief heading* (name, date, and topic). You may use any word-processing program, but please send your completed paper as a *file attachment*, rather than in the text of your email.

Primary Bibliography: Books to be used throughout this two-year program:

- *Catholic Study Bible* (or another "study edition" of the full Bible).
- *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*. 1962-1965. – available in various editions, from several publishers; full texts online in English & Spanish at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd edition, 2003. – available in various editions, from several publishers; full text online in English & Spanish at <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/>
- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. USCCB, 2006.
- *Catholic Basics*. Series of eight short volumes. Loyola Press, 2002.

Sept. 20-21, 2008 – Orientation; Introduction to Ministry

Learning Objectives:

- To begin to understand the biblical and theological foundations for Christian Ministry, esp. within the Catholic Church.
- To appreciate the wide variety of ministries needed and practiced in the Church, esp. by Lay Ecclesial Ministries.
- To realize that "grace builds on nature"; thus human growth, personal development, and spiritual maturity are all necessary for people to be effective ecclesial ministers.

Reading Assignments:

- No readings in advance; but soon after the session, read "*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*." USCCB, 2005. – available online in both English and Spanish on the website of the "United States Conference of Catholic Bishops" (<http://www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/>)
- "**Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry.**" USCCB, 2002. – online in both English and Spanish at <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.shtml>
- As time permits, also read the prior USCCB documents on Lay Ministry listed at: <http://www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/>
 - "Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions." USCCB, 1999.
 - "Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium." USCCB, 1995.

Written Reflections:

- 1) In which ecclesial ministries am I currently involved? (in my parish, in the diocese, or beyond?)
- 2) What has been my overall experience in ecclesial ministry in the past few years? What have been the greatest highlights for me? The greatest challenges? How has my ministry helped me to grow personally?
- 3) What human qualities and gifts do I have that I can offer in my ministry? In which areas of human development do I need and want to grow in the coming years?

Oct. 18-19, 2008 – Introduction to Theology (esp. God/Trinity)

Learning Objectives:

- To be able to define "Theology," and to become familiar with the *main branches* of Theological Studies.
- To become familiar with the main **sources of theology** (Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium, Experience), and to understand the concept of the "*Hierarchy of Truths*" within doctrinal teachings.
- To more deeply understand and be able to explain to others who/what "God" is and what the "Trinity" is.

Reading Assignments:

- Study the "Table of Contents" and "Prologue" of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and of the *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, to get a sense of the contents of these collections and how they are arranged.
- In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, read paragraphs 26-49 and skim par. 142-324 (on God and Trinity).
- "The Blessed Trinity," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912. – online at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm>
- Elizabeth Johnson, "Honor your Father and Mother." U.S. Catholic, 2008. – online at [http://uscatholic.claretians.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=13014&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=usc](http://us catholic.claretians.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=13014&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=usc)

Written Reflections:

- 1) Who is "God" for me, at this stage of my life? What images or titles do I tend to use to imagine, describe, and/or address God? What images of God surprise me, disturb me, and/or challenge me? Why?
- 2) How best would I explain to a non-Christian what the "Trinity" is and why Christians believe God is a Trinity?
- 3) As I consider the main sources for our theology (Scripture, Tradition, the Magisterium, and Human Experience), which of these is most influential in my own life right now? Which is least influential? How would I like to grow in developing an understanding of the relationship of all of them?

Nov. 8-9, 2008 – Biblical Studies (I)

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the complex historical and literary development of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments.
- To better appreciate the foundational role of the Scriptures for the Christian Church, including such key concepts as "covenant" and "gospel," "sin" and "salvation."
- To become familiar with the basic principles of Catholic Interpretation of the Bible (esp. in contrast to biblical "fundamentalism"), and the use of the Bible in the Church (in liturgy, prayer, theology, etc.)

Reading Assignments:

- Documents of Vatican II: *Dei Verbum* ("Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation"; 1964)
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: paragraphs 50-141 on Revelation & Scripture.
- Margaret Nutting Ralph. *Scripture: Nourished by the Word*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002. – chapters 1-3

Written Reflections:

- 1) How well do I think that I know the Bible? How often, how much, and in what contexts do I read the Bible?
- 2) What do I see as the most important differences between contemporary Catholic Interpretation of the Bible and modern fundamentalist ways of interpreting the Scriptures?
- 3) If invited to teach children in a parish religious education setting, how would I explain the relationship between Revelation, Tradition, and Scripture?

Dec. 5-7, 2008 – Weekend Silent Retreat

Retreat Objectives:

- To grow deeper and closer in my relationship to God, and especially to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- To learn about and practice using various methods of prayer, including biblical meditation, Ignatian contemplation, *lectio divina*, consciousness examen, centering prayer, liturgical prayer, etc.

Reading Assignments:

- William A. Barry, S.J. *God and You: Prayer as a Personal Relationship*. Paulist Press, 1987.
- *Encounter with the Bible*. American Bible Society.

Written Reflections:

- No paper this month, but take some time afterward to reflect upon your own experience of this retreat, esp. your encounter with God in prayer.