

# Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium

---

Volume 8

Article 8

---

12-1-2014

## **Review – *Emerging from the Vineyard: Essays by Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, edited by Maureen R. O’Brien and Susan Yanos**

C. Vanessa White  
*Catholic Theological Union*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

White, C. Vanessa (2014) "Review – *Emerging from the Vineyard: Essays by Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, edited by Maureen R. O’Brien and Susan Yanos," *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium*: Vol. 8, Article 8.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts/vol8/iss1/8>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium* by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).

*Emerging from the Vineyard: Essays by Lay Ecclesial Ministers.* Edited by Maureen R. O'Brien and Susan Yanos. Fortuity Press, 2014. 225 pages. (paper)

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops voted on guidelines for formation of lay ecclesial ministers in the Church. These guidelines formed the document "Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord". Since this time, many dioceses, parishes, schools of ministry and theology have used this document as a guide for the formation of lay ministers in the Catholic Church. Since the promulgation of the document, a wealth of books has been published addressing lay ecclesial ministry and theology. Such theologians as Zeni Fox (*Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Towards the Future, Sheed and Ward, 2010*), Edward Hannenberg (*Theology of Ministry, Liturgical Press, 2014*) and Aurelie Hagstrom (*Emerging Laity: The Vocation, Mission and Spirituality, Paulist Press, 2010*) have contributed to this landscape bringing much needed attention to the role of lay ecclesial ministers in the Church today.

While the above mentioned books have been excellent resources, what has been lacking has been a book about lay ecclesial ministers from those LEMs who are themselves working in the vineyard. This changes with the publication of the new book, *Emerging from the Vineyard. Essays by Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, (Fortuity Press, 2014) edited by Duquesne University professor Maureen O'Brien and Professor Susan Yanos of Earlham School of Religion. The publication of this book emerged from a grant from Duquesne University in 2010 awarded to the editors for further research on lay ecclesial ministry. The monies used for the grant funded a series of weekend gatherings of 10 lay ministers focused on lay ecclesial ministry. These gatherings in the context of prayer, discussion resulted in the collaborative writing and review of the essays which are included in this book. This collection of essays addresses some of the challenges of being in the vineyard as well as the question of whether there 'has there been any fruit from the vineyard' that can nourish a hungry community?

The book opens with an introduction by O'Brien which addresses the context and the various themes which are the topics of the essays found in this book. As she states, the ten

essays “reflect a blending of ten individual commitments, within the common commitment of the group writers, to explore key theological dimensions of their ministry, for the sake of all lay ecclesial ministers and those who foster their service” (17).

Section One focuses attention on the ministerial identity of the laity and looks at the foundational aspect of the call to lay ministry. Both authors in this section address the lay minister as one whose identity stems from the biblical narratives found in the New Testament. While the ordained minister has used the model of Jesus for an understanding of ministry, Jerid Miller in his article “With Jesus and His Companions: At the Genesis of Lay Ministry” addresses the question of whether Jesus has status as a lay person. As he states “many of the questions about contemporary manifestations of lay ministry ignore a fundamental reality –that lay ministry and lay ministers go back to the very source of our identity as Christians, to Jesus himself (36). This provocative statement is just one of many found in the pages of this book.

Section Two: Ministry of Word and Works focuses on the ministerial actions of the lay ecclesial minister. Essays by Kimberly Lymore, Linda Lee Ritzer and Rodney Blumi address the role of minister as an agent for social change and the peculiar role the lay minister holds as one who is called to preach and proclaim the Good News.

In Section Three: Transformation through Ministry, Dan Frachey, Virginia Stillwell and Vivian Clausing address the spiritual dimensions of lay ecclesial ministry specifically through its baptismal identity, as well as focusing on its Eucharistic aspects and its connection to the Paschal Mystery.

Finally in Section Four: Communal Call and Authorization for Ministry the essays by Julie M. Billmeier and Susan Yanos address young adults’ response to a call to ministry in the church as well as the challenge both financially and emotionally in responding to become a lay ecclesial minister today in the Catholic Church.

Of particular note are the questions for reflection and discussion included at the end of each chapter. These questions specifically invite the readers to reflect upon their own particular

context while engaged in the reading of the material. As a reviewer, one area of concern is the limited voices attached to the essays in this book. Except for two of the articles written by African American scholar Kimberly Lymore and Young Adult scholar Julie M. Billmeier, most of the essays still address a "homogenous" view of church from a white middle class perspective. It would have been a stronger book if the editors had expanded the essays to include perspectives from the African, Latino, Caribbean, Asian or gay and lesbian community in this book.

As a practical theologian of ministry and spirituality who teaches a course on the spirituality and ministry of the lay vocation at a graduate school of ministry, I believe this book will be an invaluable resource for students preparing for ministry in the church. I furthermore highly recommend it for all those who teach, minister with and/or are lay ministers in the church.

Dr. C. Vanessa White  
Catholic Theological Union  
Chicago, Illinois

