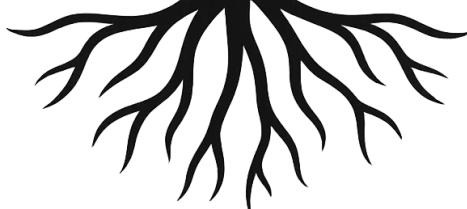


ROOTED & SENT



News, stories, and updates from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Lay Initiative

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Join us at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, WI on Thursday, April 16

Leadership Changes at the Archdiocese

Dear Co-Workers in Christ:

As part of an ongoing effort to strengthen and support parish life across the Archdiocese, Archbishop Grob has established a new Department of Parish and Diocesan Life, bringing together several offices that serve our shared mission. One of these is the new Office of Pastoral Leadership, where the Lay Initiative will now reside.

In my new role as Executive Director of this department, I will continue to support the ongoing development of Archdiocesan lay ministry efforts by working closely with Meg Aspinwall in her role as Associate Director of the Lay Initiative. I am confident in Meg's service and leadership to you and our parishes, and I encourage you to reach out to her with your needs.

The Lay Initiative remains committed to supporting lay pastoral staff serving key ministry roles in our parishes. Our guiding framework to "call, form, and support" our laity and clergy continues to shape our work. We are deeply grateful for the ways you live out this call each day, and we look forward to continuing this journey with you as we strengthen parish life together.

More details on this new department and its offices will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead. In the meantime, know of my prayers for you!

Peace,
Brenda Cline
Executive Director
Department of Parish and Diocesan Life

Come Spirit, Come

Summary of Listening Sessions for the USCCB's upcoming Pastoral on the Laity

In September and October of 2025, we held five sessions across the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, with approximately 100 participants total, including lay pastoral staff, priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and Archdiocesan staff, representing a diverse range of parishes and ministries. Their reflections offered rich and insightful perspectives on the life of the Church, the experience of lay ministers, and the opportunities and challenges faced by both laity and clergy.

This article serves as an executive summary of the results we submitted on November 1, 2025 to the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. We shared this same summary with Archbishop Grob, Bishop Haines, and Bishop Schuerman, and are now pleased to share it with you. Our report is based on the following questions provided by the USCCB for these sessions:

Questions for all participants:

1. How does your *baptismal identity* impact your engagement with Church and society?
2. How do you feel *co-responsible* for the work and mission of the Catholic faith?
3. Where do you see the *Holy Spirit* at work in your relationship/engagement with the Church?
4. What are your *joys, hopes, and visions* for the role of the laity within the Church and in society?

Questions for lay pastoral staff:

1. How were you formed for your service within the Church?
2. What concerns might you have about your ministry or the church workplace?

Questions for priests, deacons, and consecrated religious:

1. How do you primarily interact with lay ecclesial ministers, formators, and lay apostolate leaders?
2. What concerns might you have around lay ministry, formation, apostolates, or the church workplace?

Reflective of the hundreds of responses we received to these questions, we will now provide a broad overview of our listening sessions, followed by a breakdown of key themes and takeaways.

Broad Overview

Lay ministers in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee are deeply committed to the Church's mission, and they are asking for authentic partnership — not just participation.

They want to serve *with* clergy, not just *for* clergy. Across every question, there was a consistent call for:

- Mutual respect and collaboration between ordained and lay leaders.
- Shared leadership rooted in the vision of co-responsibility expressed in Vatican II.
- Formation, mentorship, and sustainability that value both the spiritual and professional dimensions of ministry.

Underneath it all is a profound love for Christ and His Church — and also a longing to see the Church become more inclusive, transparent, and supportive of those who dedicate their lives to her service.

Four Key Themes

1. Formation for Service in the Church

- **Spiritual and Personal Formation:** Most lay ministers report that their initial formation came from personal faith, prayer, family, mentors, and lived experience, rather than formal Church programs. Daily Mass, scripture study, retreats, and parish involvement were key formative experiences.
- **Formal Education:** Many pursued academic programs—Master's degrees in Theology, Divinity, Pastoral Studies, or Church Management—and diocesan workshops or certificate programs.
- **Mentorship and Peer Learning:** Formation is often shaped by mentors, pastors, deacons, and fellow lay ministers, highlighting the importance of relational learning and accompaniment.
- **Ongoing Formation:** Ministry formation is lifelong, combining formal study, ongoing professional development, and lived experience in parish and diocesan contexts.

2. Concerns about Laity in the Church Workplace

- **Clericalism and Leadership:** A recurring concern is clericalism and the lack of collaborative leadership, with clergy sometimes unprepared to manage parishes or work alongside lay staff.
- **Lay Support and Recognition:** Lay ministers often face insufficient compensation, job insecurity, and lack of clear role definitions, affecting sustainability and morale.
- **Formation Gaps:** There is a need for accessible formation for both laity and clergy, including mentorship, professional development, and practical leadership training.
- **Evangelization & Inclusion:** Lay ministers worry about the Church's ability to engage youth, diverse communities, and marginalized groups, citing gaps in inclusion, accompaniment, and outreach.
- **Structural and Administrative Challenges:** Concerns include resource limitations, parish mergers, administrative inefficiencies, and lack of transparency from leadership.

3. Concerns about Lay Ministry

- **Sustainability:** Lay ministry requires fair compensation, work-life balance, and ongoing professional formation to ensure continuity and growth.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Lay ministers stress the need for shared responsibility with clergy, clear boundaries, and co-responsibility in decision-making.

- **Evangelization and Engagement:** Emphasis on welcoming all Catholics, including those who have fallen away, youth, and culturally diverse communities.
- **Seminary Formation:** Concerns were raised about clerical formation being out of touch with contemporary parish realities, with a call for more Vatican II-informed, inclusive training.

4. A Reflection on Hispanic Ministry

Hispanic participants brought forward experiences shaped by immigration, language, and cultural integration. Many shared that the Church became a key source of community and belonging, particularly through Spanish-language Masses and ministries. Formation often came through parish involvement, missionary groups, and family influences, with a strong emphasis on lived experience, service, and faith in action. Participants highlighted both the gifts they bring—such as dedication, resilience, and deep communal faith—and the barriers they face, including the need for more accessible formation opportunities, recognition of cultural contributions, and inclusion in decision-making roles.

Takeaways

- **Lifelong Formation:** Encourage ongoing theological, pastoral, and administrative training for laity and clergy alike.
- **Collaboration and Respect:** Promote co-responsibility between clergy and laity with clear roles, boundaries, and communication.
- **Inclusion and Evangelization:** Develop strategies to welcome diverse groups, reengage fallen-away Catholics, and involve youth and families.
- **Sustainability of Ministry:** Ensure fair compensation, mentorship, and resources to prevent burnout and maintain lay ministry pipelines.
- **Transparency and Support:** Strengthen diocesan support structures, communication, and advocacy for lay staff, particularly in navigating parish transitions or leadership changes.

We are grateful to all who shared their experiences and insights during these listening sessions. Their reflections illuminate the strengths, challenges, and hopes of our local Church, offering guidance for ongoing formation, collaboration, and faithful service. May their voices continue to inspire and inform us. Please pray for the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth as they read and contemplate the feedback received from across the nation, and discern their response.

SPRING 2026

FORMED FOR THE CALL

Workshop Series for Lay Leaders

Register Here**February-May, 2026**

Thursdays, 9AM-12PM, Marquette University

Formed for the Call is a four-part workshop series over the course of four semesters designed for lay leaders working in parishes and diocesan ministries to provide formation through academic coursework, spiritual growth opportunities, and spiritual formation. While each workshop is “stand alone,” completion of the workshop series over the course of two years leads to a Certificate of Completion sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and Marquette University.

Each workshop costs \$25 to attend. Participants may attend in-person or synchronously online.

Participants who complete all ten sessions will receive a Certificate of Completion sponsored by the Marquette College of Business Administration.

Upcoming Workshops:

- **Words That Build: Effective Communication in Ecclesial and Social Environments**

February 19, 2026

- **The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Part I)**

March 19, 2026

- **Gathered in His Name: Understanding the Sacred Liturgy**

April 23, 2026

- **Sacred Listening: Providing Spiritual Support**

*May 14, 2026***For More Information**

Please email Dr. Dan Scholz:
daniel.scholz@marquette.edu
or Alissa Stanley:
alissa.stanley@marquette.edu

The Formed for the Call Workshop Series for Lay Leaders is administrated by the Catholic Schools and Parishes Initiative in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Lay Initiative.

The Catholic Schools and Parishes Initiative

Awaken the Sleeping Christ Within Us

Bishop Donald Hying of the Diocese of Madison was the keynote speaker for our *Advent Day of Reflection* for pastors/priests and their lay pastoral staffs, held on December 4, 2025 at Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center. This was the first event the Lay Initiative held in collaboration with Marquette University and its Catholic Schools and Parishes Initiative, led by Dr. Dan Scholz. Over 150 people attended, with 48 parishes being represented.

Bishop Donald Hying invited parish leaders to rediscover the deep Christian hope that sustains our faith and mission. This hope, he emphasized, is not the same as optimism. Optimism assumes things will work out; hope acknowledges that something in the world—and in us—is not yet right, and trusts that God is at work to redeem it.

Advent, Bishop Hying noted, quietly “sneaks in the back door,” calling us to reflect on the whole Christ event: Jesus’ coming in history, his sacramental presence among us now, and his final coming in glory. Much of life is lived in this sacred in-between space, where waiting, longing, and trust shape our discipleship.

Liturgy stands at the center of this hope. Mass is a foretaste of heaven itself, drawing heaven and earth together. In the Eucharist, God becomes small enough to dwell within us, transforming us so that we can place Christ—not ourselves—at the center of our lives and ministry.

Bishop Hying encouraged leaders to live attentively in the present moment, asking: *Where is the Lord present in my life right now?* From this awareness flows our call to be Christ for others through three postures of discipleship: visibility, availability, and vulnerability. We are called to see with the eyes of Christ, to be interruptible and present to real needs, and to love with a willingness to enter into suffering. Our interruptions, he reminded us, often become our true work.

Finally, Bishop Hying affirmed that Christ meets us most powerfully through our wounds. Like Mary, who was cut to the heart yet responded in loving service, we are called to allow God to awaken what is life-giving within us. Advent invites us to “awaken the sleeping Christ” within our hearts—and to offer that hope to a world longing for light.

Mark your calendar for our Lenten Day of Reflection on Thursday, March 12 to be held at Marquette University. Details and registration are included in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you then!

Save the date *Lay Initiative Summer Event*

Monday, June 1
1:00pm - 3:00pm
Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center

Join us for Mass with Archbishop Grob
with fellowship to follow

[Register Here](#)

LENTEN DAY OF REFLECTION

FROM ASHES TO FIRE: A JOURNEY THROUGH LENT TO PENTECOST

THURSDAY, MARCH 12,
2026

9 AM – 2:30 PM, Alumni Memorial Union Ballroom



Fr. Michael Simone, S.J.

Hosted by Fr. Michael Simone, S.J., this retreat for pastors and their lay pastoral staff offers opportunities for reflection, discussion, and prayer.

[Register Here](#)

Schedule:

9:00 - Mass at Gesu Parish

After Mass, we will walk across the street to the AMU.

10:00 - Welcome and Opening Prayer; Continental Breakfast

10:15-11:15 - Session 1 with Discussion and Q&A

11:30-12:30 - Session 2 with Discussion and Q&A

12:30-1:15 – Lunch and Networking

1:15-2:15 - Session 3 with Discussion and Q&A

2:15-2:30 – Final Comments and Closing Blessing

For More Information

Please email Dr. Dan Scholz: daniel.scholz@marquette.edu or Alissa Stanley: alissa.stanley@marquette.edu

**The Catholic Schools
and Parishes Initiative**



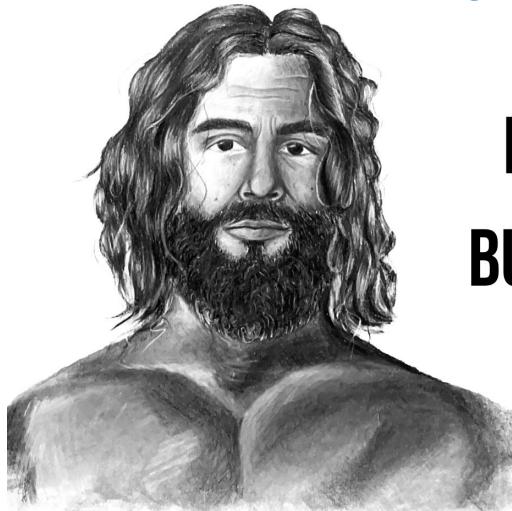
Desert Day | Thursday, April 16, 2026

Giving you permission to rest, be still, and reconnect with the Lord

A “Desert Day” is a short time set aside for silence and prayer. It is an opportunity to step away from daily noise so that we can listen to God with an individual ear. Inspired by St. John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness (Mk 1:3), it embraces simplicity: Scripture, quiet adoration, journaling, and a leisurely walk or rosary. Like John’s call to “prepare the way” a Desert Day invites conversion and clarity - naming what to repent of, what to receive, and where the Lord is sending us next. The tone is gentle-focused: less doing, more abiding, so you can return to your daily life refreshed and re-aligned with Christ.

For more information or to register, click below!

[**Register here**](#)



**HE MUST INCREASE,
BUT I MUST DECREASE.**

JOHN 3:30

Prayer Intentions

We all carry joys, worries, and hopes that don’t always get spoken out loud. If there is something you would like lifted up in prayer, we would be honored to pray with and for you.

Let us know your prayer intentions [**HERE**](#).



Meg Aspinwall

Associate Director of the Lay Initiative

Office of Pastoral Leadership

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