

Introduction

Among the many signs of change in church life since Vatican II, one of the most evident and most praised has been the emergence of what is now called "ecclesial lay ministry"; that is, the important role played by the many lay men and women in full and part time work within church institutions. This issue of *New Theology Review* explores not so much the facts of that development but the many questions which we as a Church are only beginning to address as the welcome change occurs. Our authors are individuals who have been deeply involved in the emergence of ecclesial lay ministry.

In our opening article Zeni Fox, who has been tracking and commenting upon this exciting trend in ministry for years, offers us her thoughts on one important dimension of lay men and women in ministry, their sense of vocation. Dr. Fox gives us a positive view of the trend even as she raises up a number of unresolved questions for the future.

Brid Long, another scholar who has been deeply involved in the expanding category of ecclesial ministry, gives us an informed reflection on the impact that the new ministers are having on parish life. After surveying the landscape of parish life today she discusses the formation processes for training ecclesial lay ministers and suggests a useful agenda for securing the future advancement of the new generation of ministers. Our third major article on the theme by Audrey Brosnan examines the often difficult discernment process which lay people undergo in deciding about the commitment to ecclesial lay ministry. The practical problems which many people face in making their choice is an important topic for future personnel issues with the Church.

Two shorter but insightful essays wrap up our treatment of the theme. Margaret Costello and Ana Villamil discuss the matter of formal commissioning or recognition of the new ministers within the life of the community. Robert Evans reflects upon the importance of developing a style and structure for a spirituality to support ecclesial lay ministers. The voice of experience which comes through these brief essays provokes deeper thought than we as a religious community have given to these questions.

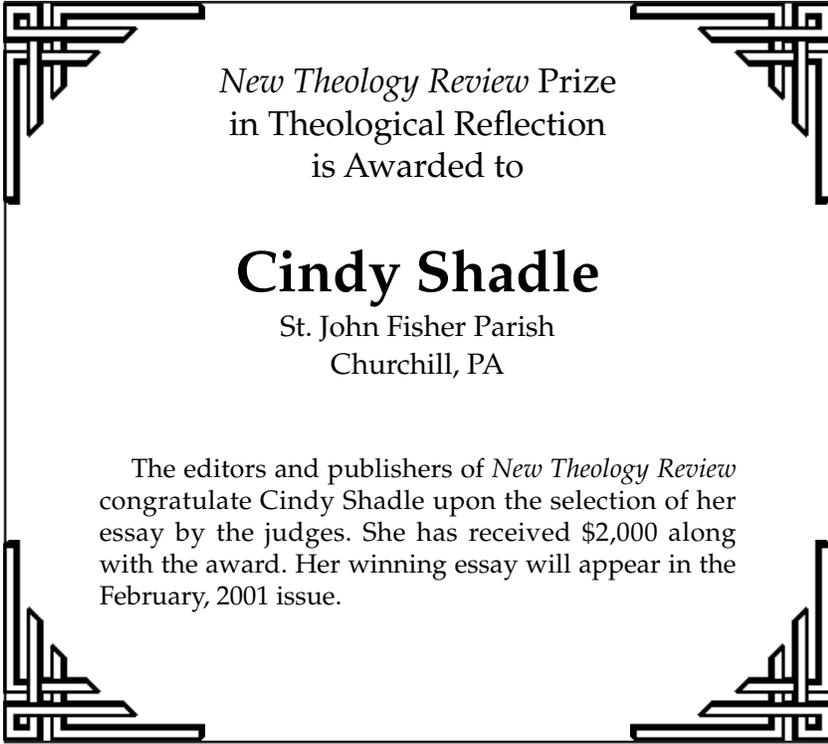
In his encyclical *Ut unum sint* John Paul II acknowledged that the Petrine ministry was itself one of the obstacles to fuller communion with other churches. He invited greater scholarly and ecumenical conversation on the role of the papacy in the Church. Since then a number of fine studies by Catholics and Protestants have taken up the invitation. Our readers will recall that in the August issue John Linnan provided one assessment of the papacy and in this issue Richard Gaillardetz offers

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a second analysis of the topic with specific reference to how John Paul II has exercised his ministry.

Our columns and book reviews fill out this issue with news of interesting ideas, trends, and books which affect our ministries, lay or clerical. May the coming season of Advent be a new beginning for us all as we strive to renew a Church which welcomes the coming of our God.

With this fourth issue of volume 13 our associate editor Edward Foley completes his time on the editorial board of the journal. We thank Ed for his dedicated service, creative ideas and hard work in producing the last twenty issues of *New Theology Review*. And we wish him well in his role on the faculty of the Catholic Theological Union and in all his future endeavors.



New Theology Review Prize
in Theological Reflection
is Awarded to

Cindy Shadle

St. John Fisher Parish
Churchill, PA

The editors and publishers of *New Theology Review* congratulate Cindy Shadle upon the selection of her essay by the judges. She has received \$2,000 along with the award. Her winning essay will appear in the February, 2001 issue.