

**Empowered by the Spirit:
Campus Ministry Faces the Future.
A Pastoral Letter on Campus Ministry.
National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic
Conference, 1986, 52 pp.**

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Southern Baptist campus ministers have much to learn from their Roman Catholic counterparts, despite our long-standing ecclesial and theological differences. The recent pastoral letter on campus ministry of the United States Catholic Bishops provides an excellent point of departure for a meaningful dialogue concerning the goals and shape of contemporary ministry in higher education.

The bishops' pastoral letter offers a model of responsible analysis and involvement by a national religious judicatory in a "denominational" campus ministry. It seeks to interpret Roman Catholic campus ministry "in its historical, sociological, and theological context" and then to "state principles and suggest strategies for carrying out this ministry" (p. 2). Furthermore, the document models how one may be affirming of ecumenical relationships in campus ministry without compromising one's faith commitment and denominational loyalty.

The pastoral letter offers a brief, insightful discussion of the tasks and challenges of professional campus ministers. The bishops declare that, "Today, it is clear that campus ministers must not remain on the margins of the academic community but must accept the call to bring the light of the Gospel to the very center of that world" (p. 18). Of particular value to Southern Baptist campus ministers is emphasis upon a catalytic style of leadership which seeks "to multiply the centers of activity and to unleash the creative power of the spirit" (p. 17). The letter also sets

forth the concept of a team ministry approach in response to the opportunities and difficulties of Christian ministry in the campus community.

The document outlines six functions of campus ministry in contemporary higher education: "forming the faith community," "appropriating the faith," "forming the Christian conscience," "educating for justice," "facilitating personal development," and "developing leaders for the future." While this discussion is largely warranted by and couched in the rhetoric of the Second Vatican Council, considerable moral and pastoral discernment of the current situation of American colleges and universities is displayed. In particular, the sections on intellectual challenges to the faith and moral relativism vividly and perceptively describe the struggles of Christian students, faculty, and staff on campus.

Baptist visions of the ideal relationship between church and campus and Baptist evaluations of the value of "Christian humanism" significantly differ from those described here. Nevertheless, the letter's accurate analysis of the life situation of those involved in higher education and the bishops' creative attempt to describe a response that is theologically grounded and pastorally compassionate call us to greater accountability in the communication of our own calling to minister in Christ's name to persons in the academic community.