

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES
AND
VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL IN THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT
PRESENT

THE DISCIPLESHIP OF EQUALS

Saturday March 27, 2010
Oak Room, Campus Center
Fairfield University

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:37-38

9:30 Registration

10:00 Welcome and Opening Prayer
Daniel B. Sullivan, Co-Chair, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport
Marge Hickey, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport

10:15 **The Discipleship of Equals**
Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, Harvard Divinity School

11:15 Comment
Paul Lakeland, Fairfield University

11:30 Discussion
Moderator: Nancy Dallavalle, Fairfield University

12:00 Voice of Compassion Awards
Saint Anselm Award for Volunteer of the Year

12:45 Lunch

1:30 **The Discipleship of Equals: A Changing Laity’s Perspective**
Moderator: Jamie Dance, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport

2:30 Break

2:45 **The Discipleship of Equals: Next Gen Speaks**
Moderator: Richard Maiberger, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport

3:45 **Prayer Service**

PLEASE PRINT (register early to guarantee a space)

Name (s): _____ Address: _____

e-mail address: _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Lunch: Yes [] No [] Phone: _____

Please send check for \$40, made out to "VOTF March 27th Conference,"

Mail to: VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport
191-C Main Street
New Canaan, CT 06840

A DISCIPLESHIP OF EQUALS

A Discipleship of Equals is founded on the notion that all human beings, despite their differences of gender, race, intelligence, and so on, are equal because God created each one. Everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. We are all God's children, loved by God despite our diverse traits of personality, beauty, genius, quirks, and frailties. Christians share a further equality insofar as we are all baptized.

St. Paul affirmed that equality in his Epistle to the Galatians (3:26-28): "For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We, the members of Christ's Body, are the Church. While St. Paul also described the variety of ministries that evolved in service to the Church, his conception of the Church was one of equality based on the diverse gifts of all its members. All were essential to the Church's well-being.

That initial sense of equality gradually gave way, however, as the Church took on many of the characteristics of the Roman Empire, the society in which it developed. Distinctions between clergy and laity hardened. Bishops, priests, and deacons, pushing the laity to one side, assumed the leadership of the Church. Although Vatican II called for more involvement of the laity, Canon law continues to restrict decision-making to the ordained and allows the laity only a consultative, never a deliberative voice.

That is contrary to a principle of Roman law adopted by the medieval canonists and incorporated into the modern Code of Canon Law. The principle states: "Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus debet approbari." What touches all should be approved by all." This has resulted in a great chasm between the male, clerical leadership – the clerical club – and the great mass of the faithful who are denied their baptismal right to participate in every phase of the work of Christ's Church.

As our Church is in the midst of a major transition, with the ageing of priests, the shortage of priests, the lack of vocations to the priesthood, and the closing of parishes, it is our responsibility to reflect on how best to renew our Church so that it can recapture that

original sense of equality and create structures that will facilitate the participation of everyone in the life of the Church.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:27-28

1. Does our Church reflect the ideas expressed in Galatians 3:27-28?
2. What does the expression “A Discipleship of Equals” mean to you? What images of Church does it call to mind?
3. Do you believe in the equality of all Christians?
4. Do you believe that laypeople should have a greater voice in the work of the Church?
5. Does the principle “what touches all should be approved by all” seem to you to be worthwhile for church governance?
6. Do you believe that the Church regards all men and women as made in the image and likeness of God?
7. Is our Church open and welcoming to all people?
8. How can the Church be renewed and reformed to reflect the equality and diversity of all its members?