Ministry

The word ministry simply means service. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples he exemplified the type of service to which the Christian disciple was called, and he instructed his apostles: "if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14-15)

In the New Testament, the Greek word for service, *diakonia,* not only referred to ordained ministers such as bishop, priests and deacons, but also included service at the table or collection of monies for the poor. For much of the history of the Church, however, the term ministry was confined to ordained ministry. After the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s (SEE: The Second Vatican Council), the understanding of ministry was broadened to include the whole "people of God".

Today ministry in the Catholic Church sees the involvement of both religious and lay people in areas such as teaching, health, parish pastoral and finance committees, St Vincent de Paul, reading at Mass, Communion ministry, altar serving; as well as lay people leading liturgical celebrations in the absence of a priest.