

**Lay Claretian Movement**  
*Study Guide #1*

**THE LAYPERSON IN THE CHURCH**

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**COMMONEST ABBREVIATIONS USED**

- AA - "Apostolicam Actuositatem" (The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), November 18, 1965.
- AG - "Ad Gentes divinitus" (Decree of the Church's Missionary Activity), December 7, 1965.
- DV - "Dei Verbum" (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), November 13, 1965.
- EN - "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI on the evangelization of the world today). December 8, 1975.
- LG - "Lumen Gentium" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), November 21, 1964.
- GS - "Gaudium et Spes" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World), December 7, 1965.
- PO - "Presbyterorum Ordinis" (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests), December 7, 1965.
- SC - "Sacrosanctum Concilium" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), December 4, 1963.

## INTRODUCTION

Our faith-based reflection (theology) on the being and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, draws on the Word of God as manifested both in Scripture and in the life of the Church community throughout history (the living tradition of the Church). It also looks to the magisterium of the Church, the authorized guide for the interpretation of the Word of God (cf. DV 10).

In this brief study on the laity, references to the magisterium will center mainly on the teachings of Vatican II, because of that Council's decisive influence on the history of the laity. The Council's teaching on the laity really represents the end-product of the whole Church during many recent decades. In a larger sense it is the fruit of the reflection of theologians and of the life-experience of committed laity throughout the last hundred years. In the history of the Church, Vatican II embodies the fullest and most organized statement of the Church's magisterium on the theme of the laity.

Our reflection on the laity is going to focus on three points:

- their being: their identity and place within the Church, the People of God,
- their mission in the Church: their specific contribution to the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God in history;
- their spirituality: the "life according to the Spirit" which is characteristic and distinctive of the laity.

As anyone can see, these three focuses are closely interconnected:

**the first** defines the being of the layperson,  
**the second** brings out his or her action, while  
**the third** stresses the spiritual dynamism deep at work in the layperson.

All three mutually imply one another -- the laypersons action expresses and concretely embodies his or her being, while the layperson's spiritual dynamism is, so to speak, naturally and irrepressibly demanded by his or her action and being.

Although the need for clarity obliges us to treat these three focuses separately, we should never forget their radical unity. They are not airtight elements that can be taken apart. Right here in the introduction, let us stress the importance of the concept of mission, mission is central to all, this has to be accepted for an understanding of the whole idea of the laity.

The Church itself cannot be understood apart from its mission. The Church is -- that is, exists -- for the mission which the Father entrusted to his Son, a mission which Christ has transmitted to the Church, which is his Body. **The Church's reason for being is its mission.** And the same can be said of all its members. What identifies them is the mission they have received, as a gift and as a task, from the Church.

*NOTE: The author acknowledges his indebtedness for the basic positions in this paper, to an article by Dioningi Tettamanzi, in Dizionario di Spiritualita dei laici, Milano 1981, pp. 393-409.*

## THE LAY PERSON IN THE CHURCH

## I. THE LAYPERSON IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Laicology (the theological study of the laity) only makes sense in the context of ecclesiology (the theological study of the Church). That is, the theological study of the position of the laity in the Church only makes sense in the context of the theological study of what the Church is. Theological reflection on the laity is governed by theological reflection on the Church. Throughout history, the prevailing notion of the laity has depended --for good or bad-- on the prevailing ecclesiology of each epoch. Thus, when the Church is conceived of mainly or quasi-exclusively as a hierarchy, the laity end up being considered as eternal minors and as the passive recipients ("subjects") of the hierarchy's pastoral care.

This fact alone obviously demands that we:

- 1) clarify our assumptions about the concept and reality of Church, whenever we discuss the layperson in the Church;
- 2) define the ecclesial dimension of the layperson on two levels:
  - a) the "common" elements which the laity share with all other members of the one Church;
  - b) the "specific" elements which define the position and role proper of the laity vis a vis the position and role of the other members of the Church.

### *A. The Church -- The Community of the Faithful in Christ*

The Council, in its teaching on the Church as "the People of God," embodies a decided return to a patristic conception of the Church, thus marking a transition from what has been called the "Tridentine phase," during which the Church was mainly and almost exclusively understood as hierarchy.

Vatican II, in effect, views the Church in its totality, and it does so in such a pronounced and radical way as to prevent the separation or contraposition of the parts that make up the Church as a whole. This does not mean that the Council sets the hierarchy off, so to speak, in parentheses. On the contrary, it has made the hierarchy the repeated and explicit object of its teaching (e.g., LG, 18-29). But it does situate the hierarchy within the overall picture of which it forms a part, namely, within the ecclesial community seen as a whole.

Only a vision of the whole can put the just emphasis on each of the parts. As Yves Congar put it, "This does not, of course, involve a jettisoning of the hierarchical structure of the Church, or the objective reality of the means of salvation conferred 'from above' on the hierarchy and the priesthood. It is simply a matter of situating these undeniable realities in a more adequate context. It is a matter of not viewing the hierarchy as a thing apart, or as the unique source of all that there is in the Church. It is an attempt to view the Church more broadly, as an existential reality that is superior to the various elements that make it up; an attempt, so to speak, at a sort of Christian ontology and anthropology, within (not outside or above) which, the hierarchical component has its place and function, namely one of service, a service rendered precisely to the predominant Christian ontology and anthropology" (1).

This is the meaning of the 'principle of the Church's totality' -- an indivisible, compact unity, a community of salvation, in which differences between members, wither in the context of their functions (hierarchy and laity) or in the context of their states of life (religious and lay), are nourished and affirmed on the basis of the elements they have in common. In fact these very differences are intrinsically aimed at consolidating the unity of the Church, while at the same time enriching the Church with their variety. This note is constantly present in the ecclesiology of Vatican II, and finds one of its deepest and most felicitous expressions in the key concept of *koinonia* (communion/sharing/fellowship). The Council applies this concept to diverse aspects of the Church in different contexts. One interesting use of this concept is seen in the way the Council employs it to underline the close bonds that exist between the hierarchy and laity. In *Lumen Gentium*, for example, n. 32 presents the hierarchy-laity unity on the "ontological" level, that is, describing the persons as we have them in this real make up of Church. While n. 37 translates this unity on the "dynamic" or "operational" level, calling attention to the living relationships that should exist in both directions -- laity to hierarchy and hierarchy to laity.

Here are both of the texts for your reading and study:

***32. "By divine institution holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:4-5).***

***There is, therefore, one chosen People of God: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5); there is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common grace as sons, a common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope and undivided charity. In Christ and in the Church there is, then, no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or***



*sex, for "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28 Greek; cf. Col 3 :11 ).*

*In the Church not everyone marches along the same path, yet all are called to sanctity and have obtained an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:1). Although by Christ's will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for the others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ. The distinction which the Lord has made between the sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God involves union, for the pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship: the pastors of the Church--following the example of the Lord ..should minister to each other and to the rest of the faithful; the latter should eagerly collaborate with the pastors and teachers. And so amid variety all will bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ: this very diversity of graces, of ministries and of works gathers the sons of God into one, for "all these things are the work of the one and the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11 ).*

*As the laity through the divine choice have Christ as their brother, who, though Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28), they also have as brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ so nourish the family of God that the new commandment of love may be fulfilled by all. As St Augustine very beautifully puts it: "When I am frightened by what I am to you, then I am consoled by what I am with you. To you I am the bishop, with you I am a Christian. The first is an office, the second a grace; the first a danger, the second salvation."*

*37. "Like all Christians, the laity have the right to receive in abundance the help of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially that of the Word of God and the sacraments from the pastors. To the latter the laity should disclose their needs and desires with that liberty and confidence which befits children of God and brothers of Christ. By reason of the knowledge, competence or preeminence which they have the laity are empowered --indeed sometimes obliged-- to manifest their opinion on those things which pertain to the good of the Church. If the occasion should arise this should be done through the institutions established by the Church for that purpose and always with truth, courage and prudence and with reverence and charity towards those who, by reason of their office, represent the person of Christ.*

*Like all Christians, the laity should promptly accept in Christian obedience what is decided by the pastors who, as teachers and rulers of the Church, represent Christ. In this they will follow Christ's example who, by his obedience unto death, opened the blessed way of the liberty of the sons of God to all. Nor should they fail to commend to God in their prayers those who have been placed over them, who indeed keep watch as having to render an account of our souls, that they may do this with joy and not with grief (cf. Heb. 13:17).*

*The pastors, indeed, should recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church. They should willingly use their prudent advice and confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for acting. Indeed, they should give them the courage to undertake works on their own initiative. They should with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. Moreover the pastors must respect and recognize the liberty which belongs to all in the terrestrial city.*

*Many benefits for the Church are to be expected from this familiar relationship between the laity and the pastors. The sense of their own responsibility is strengthened in the laity, their zeal is encouraged, they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors. The latter, helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as in temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfil her mission for the life of the world."*

What is perhaps most interesting about this notion of *koinonia* or "incommonness," is that it gives unity a distinct priority over diversity. Examples abound in the fourth chapter of Lumen Gentium:

"Therefore, the chosen People of God is one" (LG 32);

"All share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ" (LG 32);

"The laity are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one Head" (LG 33);

(The laity) carry out "their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world" (LG 31), and so on.

It is precisely this principle of the Church's totality which demands that both hierarchy and laity be considered in their relationship to the "whole" which is the People of God. A laicology that swallowed up all ecclesiology in exclusively lay terms would only be repeating the same sort of error committed by the 'hierarchology' of the Tridentine phase of ecclesiology.

In the interests of translating this 'principle of totality in the Church' into theological terms that refer to the Christian as such (independently of his or her specification as layperson, religious or priest), we might state the matter in something like the following:

*The Christian, antecedently to any differentiation into state of life or of mission, is originally and indestructibly characterized by his or her condition as a "member" of the Church. The most radical characteristic of every Christian, the deepest reality of his or her being, is precisely that of being a member of the Church, of the People chosen by God, of the Mystical Body of Christ, of the living Temple of the Holy Spirit.*

It is a matter of fundamental and decisive importance for laypersons to deepen their awareness of the essential structure of that "membership in the Church" which is proper of every Christian as such.

#### *B. The Laity in the Church*

Vatican II did not offer a theological definition of the laity. Rather it offered a typological description of laypersons, involving three fundamental elements: (1) laypersons are members of the people of God and exercise the mission of the whole Christian people; (2) laypersons are distinguished from clergy and religious; (3) laypersons are called to sanctify the secular aspects of life.

The immediate result of the principle of the Church's totality, is the ecclesial dimension of the layperson's being. "The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world" (LG 31).

**The layperson is Church.** This is the source-affirmation from which all other values and responsibilities characterizing the being and action of the layperson in the Church and in the world, derive. Laypersons incarnate, in their way, the reality of the Church, by what they reflect in themselves of the mystery of the Church.

When one attempts to define the layperson by contraposition to clergy or religious, one always comes up with a negative definition, at least in its formulation. Within the People of God the layperson always ends up being viewed as a non-cleric or a non-religious, if this procedure is followed. But every layperson can and should be considered in his or her own deep reality, as a "living image" of the Church itself.

This negative sort of focus has had terribly impoverishing consequences for the definition of the ecclesial reality of the layperson. Viewing laypersons as non-clerics or non-religious has led to a forgetfulness or attenuation of the "common priesthood" of all Christians and, as a further consequence, to the overlooking or downgrading of the laity as such.

The Council's affirmation of the essentially ecclesial nature of the layperson has been a call and a challenge to all of us, to work for the overcoming of these negative attitudes and their consequences. In effect, if the layperson is a member of the Church and if the laity are the priestly-prophetic-kingly people of Christ, then the layperson, too, really participates in the priesthood, prophetism and kingship of Christ and his Church. This participation is born of the layperson's being Church, of his or her being incorporated by baptism into Christ the Priest, Prophet and King. The Council's descriptions of the laity always underscore this aspect --

*"The faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ" (LG 31).*

Elsewhere the Council states:

*"For by its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate...The laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world" (AA 2).*

When the Council speaks of the laity's sharing in the threefold function of Christ, it stresses that they do so "in their way." This simply means that it does not belong to the laity to exercise hierarchical service in the fields of ministry or cultus, or magisterium of the proclamation of the Word, or of governance or guidance of the Christian community. This threefold hierarchical service is based on the Sacrament of Orders. This, however, cannot be construed to mean the denial of all sacred power to laypersons. By the mere fact that they are baptized, they enjoy a common sharing in the priesthood, prophetism and kingship of Jesus Christ and the Church. It should be added, moreover, that the laity's lack of hierarchical power serves not simply to distinguish the priest from the layperson, but also at the same time affirms the close body that interrelates them. In effect, hierarchical power in the Church finds its reason for being in its relationship to the

People of God, that is to say, in its being a "*diakonia*" or service to all the brothers and sisters of the Lord.

*"Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers who are endowed with sacred power are servants of their brothers and sisters, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, can work toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, and arrive at salvation" (LG 18).*

The practice of contraposing laypersons to religious has also led to an impoverished notion of the being and mission of the layperson in the Church. It has led many to think that the living out of the essential eschatological dimension of the Church is something reserved to religious, and that only the latter are called to live a life according to the spirit of the Beatitudes and of the evangelical counsels. And this is by no means true. Laypersons, too, live both these dimensions in their own lay manner.

In effect, the following of Christ is indeed a vocation, but it is a vocation that is common to all Christians. In the Gospels, the following of Jesus --which means a total adherence to his person and message-- is the determining factor for every form of Christian existence (2).

Not just religious and priests, but all Christians, are called to holiness. We have all been chosen by God in Christ before the creation of the world, to be holy (Eph 1:4). This is God's will (1Th 4:3). "Therefore, all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are led by it, are called to holiness" (LG 34). Holiness, it is true, "in a particularly appropriate way...shines out in the practice of the so-called "evangelical counsels" (LG 39). The religious life is one way of holiness and a form of following Christ which more literally reproduces the celibate way of life that Jesus led, but it is only one way among many.

The religious man or woman is not characterized by a flight from the world, nor is the lay man or woman characterized by such an immersion in the world that he or she loses every vestige of the eschatological dimension of Christian existence, that is, in relation to the end of time, the last days, when all will be called to an accounting of life's actions. Neither the layperson nor the religious is "of the world," although both are "in the world," each in his or her own way.

"The lay Christian fully undertakes the role and tasks entrusted by the Creator to the human race: procreation, the dominion over creation, matrimony and work, directly aimed at making the world more human. However, as a Christian enlivened by faith and eschatological hope, a hope of an eternity of happiness, the layperson transcends mere temporality. The layperson's existence, too, is an eschatological existence. St. Paul

reminds all Christians that they so to speak carry a heavenly passport and that, as such, they should live to some extent as strangers in the here and now" (3).

The Church enjoys a special eschatological witness in the form of life led by religious:

*"The religious state by giving its members greater freedom from earthly cares more adequately manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below. Furthermore, it not only witnesses to the fact of a new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ, but foretells the resurrected state and the glory of the heavenly kingdom" (LG 44).*

But this is not to be taken to imply that laypersons do not manifest and live the eschatological dimension of the Church. "The Christian is an eschatological being, a citizen of the heavenly city and, by that token, a stranger in this world and so to speak an exile on earth. But the earth and all its tasks have been given to the layperson by the Lord, as a possession to be stewarded or rather, as a work to be completed and directed toward its goal" (4).

It should be stressed that the Council has taken great care in underlining the eschatological dimension of lay life, precisely in those areas where it deals most closely and openly with temporal realities, which are directly affected by the being and action of the laity. The laity are asked to make their Christian hope visible and to incarnate it in the very structures of their everyday life --

*"Let them not, then, hide this hope in the depths of their hearts, but even in the framework of secular life let them express it by a continual turning toward God and by wrestling 'against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness' (Eph 6:12)" (LG 35).*

The temporal order must be set in order according to a precise plan, that is, it must be ordered toward God through and in Christ. In this way, the world's referral toward its ultimate goal becomes an essential part of the temporal activity that is proper of laypersons -- "Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice characteristic of God's kingdom" (AA 7).

Closely bound up with this eschatological dimension is the "cosmological" or world dimension. The full scope of the human and Christian meaning of temporal realities is closely connected with a vision of the "Last Things." In fact, the human and Christian ideal of commitment finds its norm in the work of "preparing a new heaven and a new earth," in readying creation for the transformation that will come with God's final intervention in world history.

### *C. The "Layness" of the Laity*

The specific difference that characterizes lay Christians is their secularity, their "worldliness." "A secular quality is proper and special to lay persons" (LG 31).

And what is secularity? Secularity cannot be defined solely, or even predominantly, by the fact of being totally immersed in the world, which is a characteristic of some (indeed, most) of the members of the People of God. Christian secularity, rather than being a full immersion in the train of worldly events and of the normal conditions of family, social, political and economic affairs, is a gift of God, a vocation for mission. This mission defines Christian secularity and determines the mode of being-in-the-world which is proper of a lay Christian.

It is necessary once and for all to abandon the notion that only those called to the priestly or religious life have a "vocation" in the Church. According to this misguided way of thinking the laity, in contrast with these two "privileged" classes, would appear as the masses of all those who are not called. We must roundly affirm that Christian secularity is also a vocation.

In order to understand the various concrete forms that Christian life can and should take, one must once again advert to the principle of the Church as a totality, as a People of God enlivened by the same Spirit, as a Body of people who have a saving mission to accomplish in history.

The origin of the diverse vocations and hence of the distinct forms of life in the Church, must be sought in the gifts and charisms which the Spirit distributes to the members of the People of God, to enable them to cooperate in a more "specialized" manner in upbuilding the Church and in carrying out the mission that Christ has entrusted to them.

*"The Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the People of God and enriches it with virtues. Allotting His gifts 'to everyone according as He wills' (1Cor 12:11), He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle, 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good' (1 Cor 12: 7)" (LG 12).*

In Lumen Gentium, the Council describes the specialness of the lay vocation as follows:

*"The laity, by their special vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. Thus, by radiating faith, hope and love, they manifest Christ to others mainly by the witness of their*

*lives. In a special way it is their task to illumine and organize those temporal realities that are closest to them, so that these realities may always start out, develop, and persist according to the mind of Christ, to the praise of their Creator and Redeemer" (LG 31).*

This is a particularly rich text. In it, **three elements** stand out as being especially useful in formulating a more accurate and nuanced picture of the layperson in the Church.

**In the first place**, there is the theme of a calling from God. Human being and action in the world are not merely human phenomena. They possess a deep religious meaning inasmuch as they enter into a precise divine plan which God calls laypersons to carry out. The Council states categorically:

*"The laity, by their special vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God...They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven."*

It is possible, then, to find in one's situation in the world a clue leading to a proper theological definition (or at least a description) of the Christian layperson.

*"The lay character that specifies the Christian layperson is derived not from its merely material aspects (situation in the world, work, family and social relations, etc.), but rather from its formal aspect, that is to say, from the relationship which the Christian being of the baptized layperson has with all the "mundane" realities in which he or she is immersed" (5).*

**In the second place**, there is a stress on the human dimension of the lay condition. The text insists on underlining the full and complete immersion of laypersons in the world --

*"in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven."*

The faithful should *"illumine and organize those temporal realities that are closest to them."* In other words, the "world" is not just the environment in which the layperson is situated. Rather, the layperson --a living synthesis of spirit and body-- is intimately related to the world through his or her bodiliness and likewise through his or her baptism.

*"The Christian character shaped by baptism, which puts us in perfect communion with God, does not take us out of the ordinary circumstances of life in the world. Not only does our new birth in virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord nor annul our first birth, but rather, it respects that first birth, in virtue of which each human being acquires a secular place and mission in the world in which he or she is called to live. The charisms which derive from our consecration to the*



*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in baptism, empower and differentiate our dedication to earthly duties" (6).*

In other words, baptism doesn't just 'leave' laypersons 'there' in the world, but stamps and enriches their situation in the world with new values and a new mission.

**The third element** should be accentuated; it is practically a consequence of the preceding two, namely, that we are all required to belong to both the Church and the world. Laypersons are the Church existing precisely where the world is. In the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, the Council states:

*"The lay faithful belong at one and the same time both to the People of God and to civil society. They belong to the nation in which they were born. They have begun to share in its cultural treasures by means of their education. They are joined to its life by manifold social ties. They are cooperating in its progress by their individual efforts, each in his or her own profession. They feel its problems as their very own, and they are trying to solve them. They also belong to Christ, because they were regenerated in the Church by faith and by baptism. Thus they are Christ's in newness of life and work (cf. 1Cor 15:23) so that in Christ, all things may be made subject to God, and finally God will be all in all (cf. 1Cor 15:28)" (AG 21).*

On the basis of the foregoing, it is not too hard to put together a summary working definition of the layperson. As the Council so beautifully points out,

**the layperson is a member of the People of God, who is fully inserted in the world. In particular, because of the distinct vocation which the laity have received from God, their situation is specified and differentiated from that of members in holy orders or in the religious state.**

The content of the lay vocation will appear more clearly when we address the mission of laypersons in the Church and in the world.

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## II. THE MISSION OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD

### *A. Laypersons Share in the Saving Mission of Christ and of the Church*

In order to define the being of the layperson we were obliged to refer to the Church. We will also be obliged to define the mission of the layperson in terms of the Church, since the mission of the laity is nothing more than one expression of, and one way of sharing in, the saving mission of the Church of Christ. This is restated in many forms by the Council the laity "carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world" (LG 31). "The lay apostolate is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself" (LG 33).

Hence it follows that it is only by understanding the mission of the Church that one can adequately understand the mission of the laity. In, an understanding of the mission of the Church requires a prior understanding of the mission on which it is founded and justified, namely, the mission of Christ himself.

### 1. THE MISSION OF CHRIST

Christ is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1:14). He is the envoy (apostle) of the Father (cf. Jn 14:34), and is sent by the Father on a religious mission, namely, to communicate supernatural salvation to humankind, for the glory of God (cf. Jn. 3:16-17). The Messiah's threefold function of priest, prophet and king is the means whereby the work of glorifying the Father and redeeming humankind is carried out. In effect, Christ is the One who was anointed (Mt 3:13) by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, to be the high priest and glorifier of the Father, the prophet par excellence (Jn 6:14), the revealer of the mysteries of God, the king and shepherd of the people who believe (cf. Mt 2:2; Jn 12:13).

The mission of Christ consists in proclaiming and effecting the salvation of all humanity, for the glory of God. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy describes the mission of the Lord Jesus as follows -- "God, who `wishes all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' (1Tm 2:4), `in many and various ways spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets' (Hb 1:1). When the fullness of time had come He sent His Son, the Word made flesh, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart (cf. Is 61:1; Lk 4:18) to be a `bodily and spiritual medicine,' the Mediator between God and man (cf 1Tm 2:5). For his humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation. Thus in Christ `there came forth the perfect satisfaction needed for our reconciliation, and we received the means for giving perfect worship to God.' The wonders wrought by God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved His task principally by the paschal mystery of His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby `dying, he destroyed our death, and rising, he restored our life'" (SC 5).

If we were to pick out one theme that is key and core throughout the Gospels, we would probably choose the statement that the mission of Christ consists in announcing,

witnessing and effecting the kingdom or reign of God. He himself tells us over and over again that this is why he has come (cf. Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:17, 12:28).

Christ is not just the herald who proclaims the arrival of the reign of God, rather, he is the One who in himself introduces this kingdom into the world. He himself, in person, in his life utterly-for-others, in his death and resurrection, is the most perfect embodiment and manifestation of God's reign. He proclaims salvation, brings salvation, and is the total salvation of humankind. We are saved by being incorporated into him, who is salvation in person. We enter into the kingdom and into the dynamism of the Kingdom, by entering into Christ the Savior.

## 2. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In the mission of Christ, two "moments" should be distinguished:

**First**, the achievement of supernatural salvation for the whole human race, which he himself obtained once and for all through his death and resurrection.

**Second**, the work of bringing this salvation to reach each and every human being.

The **first "moment"** is the personal work of Christ the Redeemer (cf. 11b 10:14). The **second "moment"** is initiated by him, but continued even now, in and through the Church, which is associated with Christ in his work of salvation. As the Constitution on the Church states,

*"Christ, the one Mediator, established and ceaselessly sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible structure through which He communicates grace and truth to all" (LG 8).*

The Church has the same mission as Christ, because it is the continuation and representation of the Lord Jesus (cf. EN 15c). It is the mystical Body of Christ, his fullness (Eph 5:22), and is, indeed Christ himself (Gal 2:19; 1Cor 12:12). In its imitation and, more deeply yet, its derivation from and continuation of Christ, its Lord, the Church is the 'envoy,' the 'apostle' of Christ (cf. Jn 17:18; 20:21). The Church's being is a priestly-prophetic-kingly being, which has its living manifestation through its carrying out of the saving mission of Christ himself. But this mission of the Church entails the exercise of sanctification, evangelization, and pastoral charity,

*"Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of all, involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring to all the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the gospel" (AA 5).*

The Church does not exist for itself, but for the world. The Church's reason for being is its mission, which is concretely embodied in evangelization. **The Church "exists for evangelization" (EN 14).**

"The Church's specific service to the world is evangelization,  
*An evangelization which is not fully accomplished merely by the proclamation of the Gospel. Part of evangelization consists in promoting the humanity of human beings, their dignity, and their integral liberation from sin, injustice, suffering and oppression. The Church can only evangelize, or proclaim and establish the reign of God, when the Church itself is bent on performing works that liberate human beings from the slaveries that oppress them, and on promoting their dignity" (7).*

The Church's mission is specifically religious, but from within its religious standpoint, it embraces all humanity and all those temporal realities in which all men and women live. Its mission is the integral salvation of the human person "which is not a being in the abstract, but a being subject to social and economic problems" (EN 31).

The essential core of the Church's mission is the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Savior, in whom salvation is offered to all humanity as a gift of grace (cf. EN 27), as well as the work of bringing all people to encounter the Savior through the sacraments and prayer (cf. EN 28). The Church is called to promote the integral salvation of human beings and to extend fraternal love among them. Therefore, the justice, liberation, development and peace of the world are part of its mission (cf. EN 31).

*The Church "does not restrict its mission merely to religious areas, nor does it look with disinterest on the temporal problems of humanity" (cf. EN 34). But neither is the salvation it proclaims and strives for reduced "to the simple and narrow economic, political, social or cultural dimension. Rather, it embraces the whole person, in all dimensions, including his openness to the Absolute, who is God" (EN 33).*

One conclusion is self-evident from what we have said -- To the extent that laypersons are in the Church, or better, are Church, the saving mission of the Church will be expressed and carried out not only through the members of the hierarchy, but also by the laity. The Council reminds those who offer hierarchical service, that

*"they have not been instituted by Christ to take upon themselves alone the saving mission of the Church in the world, but rather, that their eminent function consists in guiding the faithful and acknowledging their services and charisms in such a way that all, in their own way, cooperate unanimously in the common work" (LG 30).*

*"Consequently, let every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church" (LG 33; cf. AG 21).*

*B. Foundations of Lay Participation in the Mission of the Church*

The mission of the laity in the Church, precisely because it is a mission, is something entrusted them by God. It has its origin in a call from God himself, a "vocation." The foundation and efficaciousness of the lay ministry in the Church and the world resides in this vocation. This point is strongly underscored by the Council. In fact, the Council does not limit itself to stating that laypersons have a mission, but offers true and distinctive justifications for this mission, indicating also the sources from which this vocation arises and is nourished. In a word, it presents the deep reasons that enable and oblige the laity to offer their service in the Church and in civil society.

One "tradition" of the past, while it did not deny the intrinsic motives associated with the being of all Christians, justified the participation of the laity in the Church's apostolate by stressing motives that were intrinsic, historical and contingent, **especially these two- (1) the scarcity of priests, and (2) the fact that certain environments were closed to priestly ministry.**

Obviously, this attitude was an inevitable consequence of an almost total hierarchical-clerical stress in the Church's pastoral practice.

We do not mean to imply that these motives were not valid, or that they do not apply in our present situation. In fact, the Council refers to them expressly, either in general statements:

*"Our times require of the laity no less zeal. In fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be thoroughly broadened and intensified" (AA 1);*

or in more detailed comments:

*"The constant expansion of population, scientific and technical progress, and the tightening of bonds between people have not only immensely widened the field of the lay apostolate, a field which is for the most part accessible only to them, but have, moreover, themselves raised new problems which cry out for the skillful concern and attention of the laity. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become very largely autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a certain withdrawal from ethical and religious influences and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few or, in some instances, are deprived of due freedom in their ministry, the Church could scarcely be present and functioning without the activity of the laity " (AA 1).*

Not only are these still valid motivations, but they can be read theologically as the voice of God calling us through the historical situations in which we live (cf. the Council's

theme of the 'signs of the times' in (GS 4, 11, 44). The text we cited in the preceding paragraph continues:

*"An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit in making the laity today even more conscious of their own responsibility and inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church" (AA 1).*

**But in order to lay a foundation for lay participation in the mission of the Church, the Council rightly chose to base itself on the very being of the layperson as a member of Christ and of the Church, stating as its fundamental thesis that "by its very nature, the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate" (AA 2).**

This signals the beginning of a new chapter in the Council's laicology, namely, its recourse to the being of the laity, in order to define their intrinsic and unsuppressible apostolic dimension -- missionary, ministerial and pastoral. This trend can be found in numerous texts and significant statements of the Council. In the first place, the Council stresses the union of the laity with Christ the Head of the Church:

*"The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head" (AA 3).*

Later, this union with Christ is considered on different levels, in relation with the Sacraments of the Church, the Christian virtues, and the gifts of the Spirit. All of them are sources for the apostolic mandate of the laity.

As regards the Sacraments, the text cited continues:

*"Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism, and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by Christ Himself. They are consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people (cf. 1Pt 2:4-10) in order that they may offer spiritual sacrifices through everything they do, and may witness to Christ throughout the world. For their part, the Sacraments, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate" (AA 3; cf. LG 33).*

In this text we see a twofold sacramental basis for the mission of the laity: **one**, *in the line of consecration*, is connected with those sacraments which impress a character (Baptism and Confirmation), **secondly**, *in the line of sanctification* is connected with each of the other sacraments. In consecration, the very being of the Christian is conformed to Christ, the priest-prophet-king and as such is ontologically enabled and committed to the priestly-prophetic-kingly mission in the Church and in the world. In sanctification, the action of the Christian is conformed to the saving action of Christ, through a participation in his filial life and, as such, in his charity.

All the Sacraments should be regarded in this apostolic dimension, including Penance (which reconciles us both with God and with the Church that has been wounded by our sins, (cf. LG 11), and also Matrimony. The latter, obviously, has a special value for the mission of the laity. Hence the Council says,

*"Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church (cf. Eph 5:32). The spouses thereby help each other to attain holiness in their married life and by the procreation and education of their children. And so, in their state and order of life, they have their own special gift among the People of God." (LG 11).*

Union with Christ the Head of the Church is also expressed and effected by means of the Christian virtues, starting with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which are above all gifts of the Spirit. These virtues, too, of their very nature and finality, have an intrinsic power which enables and commits the layperson who possesses and lives them, to take an active and responsible part in the saving mission of the Church. "The apostolate is accrued on through the faith, hope and charity which the Holy Spirit diffuses in the hearts of all members of the Church. Indeed, the law of love, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, impels all the faithful to promote God's glory through the spread of His Kingdom and to obtain for all that eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God and Him who He sent, Jesus Christ" (cf. Jn 17:3).

*"On all Christians therefore is laid the splendid burden of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all throughout the world" (AA 3).*

As regards the mission of the laity, we believe that it is important to stress that Christian laity is the soul of all virtues, even the so-called moral virtues, which affect a person's relations with self, with other persons, and with earthly and temporal realities.

In this perspective, a special role is played by the cardinal virtues, the faithful fulfillment of which is not only an exercise of the lay apostolate, but also an inward, permanent stimulus to the practice of the apostolate.

There is yet more to be noted in this connection. Union with Christ is assured by the Holy Spirit, who acts not only by way of the Sacraments and the Christian virtues, but also through the many other gifts which it distributes. These gifts or charisms are new dynamisms that enable and commit the layperson to lay ecclesial mission in the Church and the world.

The Decree on the Laity goes on to say:

*"For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments, gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1Cor 12:7), 'allotting to everyone according as He wills' (1Cor 12:11), so that each and everyone, 'according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another' and become 'good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1Pt 4:10), and thereby build up the whole body in charity' (cf. Eph 4:16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church. In so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit who 'breathes where He wills'(Jn 3:18). At the same time, they must act in communion with their brothers and sisters in Christ, especially with their pastors. The latter must make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts, not in order to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1Th 5:12, 19, 21)" (AA 3).*

These gifts make the laity experience their belonging to the great people of charisms, wherein the diversity of charisms proceeds from the one Spirit and leads toward the one mission, although they differ in certain aspects which are, nevertheless, complementary. In this way the Holy Spirit makes lay people ever more conscious of their responsibility (cf. AA 1), calling them to an apostolate which is "a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself" (LG 33).

And because they are enlivened by the Holy Spirit and endowed with his charisms, they need no further mandate in order to unfold their Christian mission in the Church and in the world. All they have to do is to incorporate their own spiritual gifts into the context of the community's charisms and ministries, in ecclesial charity, and to accept the definite discernment of charisms which belongs to the bishops of the Church (cf. LG 12; AA 3)" (8).

It is not hard to point out how the foundations of the mission of the laity, as individualized in the Sacraments, the Christian virtues and the gifts of the Spirit, are closely interconnected. It is Jesus and his Holy Spirit who call and send the layperson, with a call that is imprinted in the layperson's very being and action by means of that radical and original transformation that comes about in his or her consecration and sanctification (precisely by means of the Sacraments, the virtues and the gifts).

**Rounding out this section, we may say that vocation clearly involves a twofold element of call and response.**

The Lord calls the layperson (with a call that is a grace, favor, gift and dignity), and the layperson can and should respond to this call from the Lord (with commitment, work, a sense of duty and responsibility). In this sense the Council speaks of the "right and duty"



of laypersons, and characterizes their apostolate as a "splendid burden" (LG 33) and a "noble commitment" (AA 3).

Moreover, vocation also touches on another twofold but unified element, namely, universality and individuality. All are called and none is excluded, because the call to enter the Church is, of its very nature, a call to share in its mission. At the same time, each individual is called by his or her own name, and receives his or her own gifts and charisms for the good of all.

### *C. The Participation of Laypersons, as Laypersons, in the Mission of the Church*

#### 1. WHAT IS PROPER AND PRIMARY IN THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

The Council has clearly stated that laypersons have their own special role in the mission of the Church. The Document on the Laity opens with these significant words,

*"Wishing to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God, this most holy Synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church it has already called to mind in other documents" (AA 1).*

The Council had already spelled out just what this role of the laity is, and had explained it in perfect accord with the distinctive nature of the layperson, beginning with the secularity, the special situation-in-the-world, of the layperson.

*"The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God" (LG 31).*

Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation on Evangelization, summarizes the Council's teaching as follows,

*"Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization. Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community --this is the specific role of the pastors-- but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in*

*Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content, but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded" (EN 70).*

The specific, primary and immediate role of the hierarchy and of the ordained ministries is the formation, encouragement, development and guidance of the ecclesial community. This does not mean, however, that the mission of the hierarchy and clergy does not include the Christian animation of temporal realities and a commitment to the transformation of the world according to the demands of the charity and justice that are proper of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, they are involved in this mission in the context of their ministry and they must carry them out in the context of their specific being and vocation within the Church.

Alongside the preceding statement, we should note that the specific, "primary and immediate task" of the laity (EN 70) is the Christian animation of temporal realities and affairs. This does not mean, however, that the mission of the laity does not involve the formation, encouragement, development and guidance of the ecclesial community. It does involve the mission of the laity, although not as their primary and immediate task.

*"The layperson contributes to the upbuilding of the Church as a community of faith, prayer and fraternal charity, and it does so through catechesis, sacramental life and aid to brothers and sisters" (9). "But it is in the world that the laity find their specific field of action" (10). "Secular duties and activities belong properly, although not exclusively, to laypersons" (GS 43).*

Two elements seem to characterize the mission of laypersons in a special way:

- (1) a 'lay style' in the exercise of their service to the Church, and
- (2) a specific field of action in the 'Christian animation of temporal realities.'

Let us look at each of these points.

## 2. PRACTICE OF THE 'THREEFOLD FUNCTION' IN A 'LAY STYLE'

It would be a mistake to limit the participation of the laity in the Church's saving mission exclusively to the field of earthly and temporal realities. The laity's essentially ecclesial character makes them sharers in the threefold function (priestly, prophetic and kingly) of Christ and of the Church, and hence enables and commits them

**! to truly priestly activity** (related to worship and sanctification),

**! to truly evangelizing activities** (related to proclaiming God's word) and

**! to truly pastoral activities** (related to services of charity and Christian community).

But all of these activities should be carried out within the context of their lay being and in a lay style, that is, within the ambit of their total insertion in the realities and activities of the secular city.

Of course, they can carry out the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions common to all Christians, by engaging in tasks which belong properly, but not exclusively, to ordained ministers (cf. LG 33c. 35d), but their most properly distinctive aim is to carry out this triple function in the heart of temporal realities and through them.

There is ample room here for pointing out the diverse concrete forms according to which the laity, in keeping with their characteristic style, can take part in the priesthood, prophetism and kingship of Jesus Christ in the Church. The Council offers us some succinct and deep insights on this, especially in numbers 34-36 of Lumen Gentium.

- **The laity exercise their Christian priesthood** by consecrating temporal realities and tasks to God. "For all their works, prayers, and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labor, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne - all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1Pt 2:5). During the celebration of the Eucharist, these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus, as worshipers whose every deed is holy, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (LG 34).

- **The lay prophetic function** -- Christ carries on his prophetic function today "not only through the hierarchy..., but also through the laity. For that reason He made them His witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Apoc 19:10), so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life" (LG 35a). "So too the laity go forth as powerful heralds of a faith in things to be hoped for (cf. Hb 11:1), provided they steadfastly join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world" (LG 35c).

*"There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of making the gospel known and helping persons be holy. The very testimony of their Christian life, and good works done in a supernatural spirit, have the power to draw people to belief and to God; for the Lord says, 'Even so let your light shine before all, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven' (Mt 5:16). However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way life. A true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to believers with a view to instructing and strengthening them, and*

*motivating them toward a more fervent life. 'For the love of Christ impels us' (2Cor 5:14) and the words of the Apostle should echo in every Christian heart, 'For woe to me if I do not preach the gospel' (1Cor 9:16)" (AA 6).*

**- The kingly function**

*"Now Christ has communicated this power of subjection to His disciples that they might be established in royal freedom and that by self denial and a holy life they might conquer the reign of sin in themselves (cf. Rom 6:12). Further, He has shared this power so that by serving Him in their fellow humans they might through humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign. For the Lord wishes to spread his kingdom by means of the laity also, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace" (LG 36a, b).*

*"Therefore, by their competence in secular fields and by their personal activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them labor vigorously so that by human labor, technical skill and civic culture, created goods may be perfected for the benefit of every last person, according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. Let them work to see that created goods are more fittingly distributed among all, and that such goods in their own way lead to general progress in human and Christian liberty. In this manner, through the members of the Church, Christ will progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light" (LG 36c).*

Mentioned above (see page 26, 29) was that the formation, development and guidance of the ecclesial community is the proper function of the ordained ministries. This statement needs some few clarifications.

In reality, all ministries and all charisms based on them, are given by the Spirit (both to clergy and religious, as well as laity), for the good of the whole community. Therefore, also the charisms given to laypersons are for the upbuilding of the ecclesial community, but within a typically lay dimension. The field of "new ministries" or non-ordained ministries offers many possibilities for the action of the laity, especially in connection with the animation of the ecclesial community.

What needs to be pointed out here is the importance of **Basic Ecclesial Communities** and the role that belongs to the laity in them. These communities are not just another means or method of evangelization -- **they are a model of Church.**

Better put, **they are "the one Church of Jesus on a nuclear or cellular level -- the place where the local experience of the Universal Church occurs" (11).**

In deep communion with the larger local Church, they are the concrete expression and embodiment of the Church-as-communion.

*"In Basic Ecclesial Communities, people are enabled --on the level of human experience-- to live intensely the reality of the Church as the Family of God" (12).*

The laity have a very important role to play in the life of these ecclesial communities, but it is a lay role. In them, they undertake evangelizing tasks without losing their distinctive lay character, and they dynamize these tasks by inserting them, thanks to their secular condition, into the realities and needs of the people, and in a commitment to their advancement and liberation.

### 3. PARTICIPATION IN CHRISTIAN ANIMATION OF THE TEMPORAL ORDER

The participation of the laity in the Church's saving mission is carried out in a "proper, primary and immediate" manner (EN 70), through Christian animation of the temporal order, that is, in ordering earthly and temporal realities according to the plan of God, the Creator and Redeemer.

Through this task, the laity cooperate in carrying out that aspect of the mission of Christ whereby He must subject all things to himself and to the demand of the kingdom of God. In this sense it is also an exercise of Christian kingship, whereby one makes a personal commitment of the petition in the Lord's Prayer -- "Thy kingdom come."

The Christian animation of the temporal order is an ecclesial mission in the sense that it belongs as a grace and as a responsibility to the Church as such -- the whole Church. "It is the task of the whole Church to labor vigorously so that all may become capable of constructing the temporal order rightly and directing it to God through Christ" (AA 7). It is clear, however, that the principle of unity and diversity in the Church demands that we specify the part that belongs to pastors, and that which is proper of the laity. We say "the part that belongs to pastors," since they too, in their own way, have the grace and responsibility of giving living expression to the kingship of Christ in the temporal order. But their function is mainly one of enlightening and encouraging the commitment of the laity. "Her (the Church's) pastors must clearly state the principles concerning the purpose of creation and the use of temporal things and must make available the moral and spiritual aids by which the temporal order can be restored in Christ" (AA 7).

*The Church "is trying more and more to encourage large numbers of Christians to devote themselves to the liberation of men and women. She is providing these Christian 'liberators' with the inspiration of faith the motivation of fraternal love a social teaching which the true Christian cannot ignore and which he must make the foundation of his wisdom and of his experience in order to translate it concretely into forms of action participation and commitment" (EN 38).*

It is imperative however that

*"the laity accept as their own obligation the task of restoring the temporal order and of acting directly and concretely in that order led by the light of the gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian love. As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens using their own particular skills and acting on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice characteristic of God's kingdom" (AA 7).*

The motivation for this distinctive duty of the laity is not hard to find. It resides in the secularity which as it characterizes the laity's Christian being also marks their ecclesial action and mission in the Church. The laity in effect

*"live in the world...They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function and by being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within in the manner of leaven" (LC 31).*

Without the laity the Church could not fulfill this aspect of its mission. **"In the final analysis the Church acts and speaks in the world through the laity. Without a dynamic laity conscious of their own personal ministry in the world the Church would virtually cease to speak or act in the world" (13).**

In this aspect the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church is embodied in two inseparable commitments -- the Christian animation of the temporal order and human advancement.

Through their efforts at Christian animation of temporal realities the laity infuse a Christian soul, a gospel spirit, into those worldly realities and values that are subject to the distortion of sin. As the Council reminds us "what the soul is to the body let Christians be to the world" (LG 38).

And just what realities should the Christian spirit animate?

*Especially "the vast and complicated world of politics society and economics but also the world of culture of the sciences and the arts of international life of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents professional work suffering" (EN 70).*

In similar terms John Paul II has reminded us:

*"The great forces that rule the world --politics, mass media, science, technology, culture, education, industry and labor-- are precisely the sectors in which the laity are specifically competent to fulfill their mission" (14).*

The Christian animation of temporal realities which aims at ordering all things according to the justice of the kingdom of God necessarily tends to promote human advancement and to undertake a commitment for liberation since humanity is subject to many kinds of enslavement which delay or deny the kingdom of God and its values. The Church feels a duty not only to proclaim liberation but

*to "assist in its birth and ensure that it is complete," among those peoples who are "engaged with all their energy in the effort and struggle to overcome everything which condemns them to live on the margin of life -- famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism" (EN 30).*

And in this task the laity have a place in the vanguard. **"The promotion of justice is an integral and indispensable part of the Church's mission the part which most directly corresponds to the task of the laity."** (Latin American Bishops at their Puebla conference. n. 827.)

**"It is not enough for Christians to denounce injustices; they are required to be true witnesses and agents of justice."** (Pope John Paul II, Address to Workers, Guadalajara, AAS 71, p.223.)

The efforts of Christians to contribute to liberation are born of their faith and of their option for the Gospel and Christian fraternity which make up their central nucleus. In virtue of this option they bring an original contribution to human projects for advancement in liberation.

*"The effort of Christians in union with all women and men of good will to build a more just and more human society concerned with bringing to the poor and the marginated the position and dignity which is their due is an evangelical (and evangelizing) work... In this manner the laity can also bring Christ to blossom in the conscience of those who promote the most genuinely human values" (17).*

#### 4. RELATIONS BETWEEN HIERARCHY AND LAITY

Everyone --clergy religious and laity-- are above all "members" of the People of God that is "brothers and sisters" in the great family of the Church. All together fulfill in a complementary way one and the same mission of the Church. From this arises a mutual collaboration in the dynamism of ecclesial life and in the carrying out of the Church's mission. There is an essential equality among all the members of the Church but they

have different gifts aimed at rendering different services to the Church's community and mission. But despite this fact and despite the importance given the lay vocation by the Council, still today, 18 years after the Council, there persists in the Church a clerical mentality among some bishops priests and even laity, that looks upon the laity as minors.

We must overcome this mentality which would divide the People of God into two categories -- pastors and faithful with the latter playing a purely passive role as consumers of what their clerical pastors provide for them. The laity must also be agents and protagonists in the ecclesial community on the basis of their own gifts.

Often the clerical position has overtones of "power" with regard to the laity. No ministry is power; all ministries are essentially service.

The Council asks priests to "acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity" (PO 9). Acknowledging their charisms and respecting their autonomy is a first step toward collaboration.

The temptation to paternalistic managership affects even those clergy who are most abreast of and involved in temporal affairs. In 1978 the manifesto of the Chicago laity denounced this tendency:

*"During the last ten years in particular, many priests have acted as if the main responsibility in the Church for uprooting injustices ending wars and defending human rights rested upon them as ordained ministers. The result has been to prevent the laity from direct involvement in social questions instead of giving them an opportunity to undertake their proper responsibilities. These priests and religious have tried to impose on the laity their own programs for the world. In short, in the past the Church suffered from a clericalism of the right, but is now threatened by a clericalism of the left." (Chicago Declaration, p. 278.)*

The Council reminds priests that they "should preside in such a way that they seek the things of Jesus Christ not the things which are their own. They must work together with the lay faithful and conduct themselves in their midst after the example of their Master who among those of this world 'has not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mt 20:28)" (PO 9).

Nevertheless we should point out that the bond of union between laity and pastors in the common task of upbuilding the Church does not imply either clerical investiture or the delegation of hierarchical powers. The laity have, in effect, a truly ecclesial and typically lay mission, one that is so proper of the laity that it belongs only to them and, as such, cannot be supplied by others. Hence the apostolate of the laity cannot be thought of as a "supplying" for the apostolate of the hierarchy. In fact the apostolate of the laity is often presented as a help offered to priests -- "In many places where priests are very few or in



some instances are deprived of due freedom in their ministry, the Church could scarcely be present and functioning without the activity of the laity" (AA 1).

One might perhaps speak of the subsidiarity of lay action with regard to the action of the hierarchy. There is also a supernatural subsidiarity rooted in and enlivened by ecclesial charity. But even in these cases, the laity can and should intervene and act as laity, developing a "special" mission not reducible to that of the hierarchy.

*"Bishops, priests of parishes, and other priests of both branches of the clergy should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise the apostolate is common to all the faithful both clergy and laity and that the laity also have their own proper roles in building up the Church" (AA 25).*

The Council reminds the laity, in turn, that "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule God's Church (cf. Acts 20:28) is an essential element of the Christian apostolate" (AA 23).

Pastoral collaboration among the different members of the Church is made possible by the working of one and the same Spirit who, as the soul of the Church, distributes to each and every one gifts and charisms services and tasks for the common good of the Church. We are dealing here with a source of grace which calls for conscientious and responsible fidelity on the part of both pastors and laity. Both are situated not only in the charismatic, but also the institutional dimension of the Church. Consequently it is possible and necessary to have recourse to precise and well defined pastoral instrumentalities to serve as a help and stimulus to better collaboration between pastors and laity. Among the new lay ministries, consider the diocesan and parish pastoral councils (19).

*"The diversity of the organized forms of the lay apostolate requires their presence and participation in the overall coordinated pastoral effort... The participation of the laity is needed not only in the execution of the overall pastoral effort but also in its planning and in the decision-making organisms involved" (21).*

As regards associated apostolates, the Conference of Bishops gathered at Puebla expressed their confidence and support for it because:

*"Such organization is a sign of communion and participation in the life of the Church. It allows for the growth and transmission of experiences and the ongoing training and preparation of the members. The apostolate often requires joint action, both in church communities and various milieus. In a society where planning and structure is constantly increasing, the efficacy of apostolic activity will also depend on organization" (22).*

In associated apostolates it is not enough to bring out the external value they derive from the need to ensure the fulfillment of the Church's saving mission with a greater effectiveness and deeper impact. Doubtless this is a real value as the Council itself reminds us:

*"In the present circumstances, it is quite necessary that, in the area of lay activity, the united and organized form of the apostolate be strengthened. In fact, only the close pooling of resources is capable of fulfilling all the aims of the modern apostolate and firmly protecting its interests" (AA 18).*

But there is another more decisive value namely the internal value that derives from the essentially communitary nature of the human being and of the baptized. If action is a living reflection of being, then the action of a member of the People of God really reflects his or her original and natural communitary dimension. The laity are enlivened by a "community spirit" which tends to translate itself into the external order by way of "community action" and, in the field of the apostolate, through an associated apostolate.

From a properly theological point of view, the associated apostolate constitutes a sign of ecclesial communion and unity -- "The faithful are called upon to engage in the apostolate as individuals in the varying circumstances of their life. They should remember, nevertheless, that men and women are naturally social and that it has pleased God to unite those who believe in Christ in the People of God (cf. 1Pt 2:5-10) and into one body (cf. 1Cor 12:12). Hence the group apostolate of Christian believers happily corresponds to a human and Christian need, and at the same time signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ, who said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them (Mt 18:20). For this reason the faithful should exercise their apostolate by way of united effort. Let them be apostles both in their family communities and in their parishes and dioceses which themselves express the community nature of the apostolate, as well as in voluntary groups which they decide to join (AA 18).

With regard to the group apostolate, one must point out the legitimacy --and in a certain sense the necessity-- of pluralism. This pluralism is justified by the complexity of the apostolic goal of the Church and by the fact that it reflects the different functions that exist in the Mystical Body of Christ.

However this pluralism, which reflects the variety of the Church, cannot disobey the very nature of the Church, that is, its communion and unity (cf. AA 19). It should be added, moreover, that the judgment on the opportuneness or inopportuneness of the need for determined forms of group apostolate must not be formed in the abstract, but in the light of concrete, historical circumstances. The scattering of energies must be avoided. This waste occurs when new associations and projects are promoted without sufficient reason, or if antiquated associations or methods are retained beyond their period of usefulness.

Nor is it always fitting to make an indiscriminate transfer to other nations of forms of the apostolate that have been used in one nation (AA 19).

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### III. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAITY

This final theme of spiritual theology also derives from and develops all that has been said above about the being and action of the laity in the Church and in the world. It tends to underline the intrinsic dynamism that enables and commits the laity to walk in the Spirit, in order to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48) and to arrive at full maturity in Christ (Eph 4:13), precisely in fidelity to the being they have received and to the mission that has been entrusted to them. Here again, we shall follow the thread of the Council's teaching, especially as expressed in the Constitution on the Church (LG) and the Decree on the Laity (AA).

#### *A. In the Church All Are Called to Holiness*

As is well known, a whole chapter of Lumen Gentium, Chapter 5, is devoted to the theme of the holiness of the Church:

*"The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this sacred Synod, is holy in a way which can never fail" (LG 39).*

The fact that the theme of holiness, which could have been set and developed in other contexts, was dealt with in the context of the Church, discloses an important truth. The Council chose to bring out the essentially ecclesial dimension of Christian holiness, which can be rooted only in the holiness of the Church and cannot develop except in close relationship with the holiness of the Church.

The Church, as the People of God (chosen by Him and consecrated to Him) and as the Spouse of Christ, participates by grace in the very holiness of God, of Jesus Christ of whom we say "you alone are the holy One," and of the holiness of the Spirit who fills it. But the Church is not a mere abstraction. It is a concrete reality and lives in its members. Hence the statement of the Church's holiness stands on the statement of the holiness of the holy Christian people -- "Therefore in the Church, everyone belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Th 4:3; cf. Eph 1:4)" (LG 39).

But this holiness of the Church and of Christians is alive, it does not remain hidden, but is daily visible, manifested in "the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful." It is from this that the main lines traced in Chapter 5 of Lumen Gentium derive:

*"The Church is holy, Christians are called to holiness, Christian holiness should be manifested in all Christians according to the gift and task they receive. Thus, from the various numbers in this chapter, one prime datum clearly and constantly emerges -- Christian holiness constitutes a vocation not only for priests and religious, but for all the faithful members of the Church. The Council never tires of referring to the universality of the call to holiness, "The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples, regardless of their situation... For He sent the Holy Spirit upon all that He might inspire them from within to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul" (LG 40).*

Hence it explicitly concludes:

*"Thus it is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40).*

The Council makes an important point -- Holiness, before it affects the concrete action of the person, affects the very being of the person by means of a radical interior transformation. First comes the call to "ontological holiness," a holiness which as the fruit of God's love, makes a person into a new creation.

*"The followers of Christ are called by God, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, and through baptism sought in faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy" (LG 40).*

In this passage, certain traits which unmistakably characterize Christian holiness are delineated -- the feeling of a "novelty" so great (being "sons of God") that it surpasses all human hope; the "realism" of the supernatural in man or woman (made "truly" sons and daughters of God); the "interiority" of Christian holiness (which changes our being in its depths -- "really" holy); the absolute gratuitousness which brushes aside any pretense at self-justification ("according to His own purpose and grace").

But this grace, which is a gift of the utterly free love of God, demands on a person's part a response of consistent and committed love. Ontological holiness enables and commits us for moral holiness. Also by grace, but with the full weight of his own unrenounceable responsibility, the Christian must invest the gift he has received:

*"Then, too, with God's help, they must hold on to and perfect in their lives this holiness which they have received" (LG 40).*

This newness of being should lead to a newness of action. Those who are sons of God should live like sons of God. In stressing the universality of the call to Christian holiness, the Council does not limit itself to the expression "all," but goes on to list a number of concrete life situations in which holiness should be manifested and lived. In this way there emerges a twofold but convergent trait of ecclesial holiness -- its unity and multiplicity. It is within the trait of multiplicity that the holiness proper of the laity -- their specific spiritual life-- is placed. The Council offers various example -- spouses, Christian parents, widowed or single persons, the poor, the sick, the persecuted. It especially adds:

*"Finally, laborers, whose work is often toilsome, should by their human exertions try to perfect themselves, aid their fellow citizens, and raise all of society, and even creation itself, to a better mode of existence" (LG 40).*

*"All of Christ's faithful, therefore, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives, will grow in holiness day by day through these very situations, if they accept all of them with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father, and if they cooperate with the divine will by showing every person through their earthly activities the love with which God has loved the world" (LG 41).*

### *B. The Specific Traits of Lay Christian Spirituality*

The teaching of the Council aims at overcoming **the twofold impoverishment** which, at least in the past, has vitiated the notion (and partly also the practice) of the spiritual life of the laity.

**The first impoverishment** consists in doubting the possibility of a full and perfect spiritual life for the laity, who are immersed in worldly realities and committed to temporal activities.

**The second impoverishment** consists in the attempt to apply to the laity certain traits which are proper of a priestly or religious spirituality.

The Council, in the context of the one holiness of the Church, states the legitimacy and even the necessity of recognizing a multiplicity of modalities in the spiritual life, among them, the specifically lay modality. This is an objective result of the inexhaustible riches of Christ, whose Spirit enriches the Church.

Lay spirituality flows as an indispensable result, even as a natural demand, from the being and action that are distinctive of the layperson. The note of "secularity" which

characterizes the being and action of the laity in the Church and in the world, also characterizes in a special way the dynamism of their moral and spiritual life.

Before going on to a more ample description of the distinctive traits of lay spirituality, it is necessary to point out that it does not deny, but rather, it presupposes and specifies the relationship with Christ and the Church which is common to all Christians, to all members of the Church. In this perspective lay spirituality is above all "Christian" spirituality, with all those elements and all those means at its disposal that are common to all Christians as such. As we read in the Decree on the Laity:

*"This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aid which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy" (AA 4).*

This observation is very important. Just as when speaking of the profile of the layperson in his or her essentially ecclesial makeup we referred to the eschatological dimension of the layperson as such (although with modalities proper of the religious), so also now, in speaking of the spiritual life of the laity, we should recall that some spiritual aspects which a certain mentality in the past referred exclusively to priests and religious, correspond legitimately to the laity as well, for example, contemplative prayer and the so-called evangelical counsels.

Of course, here again, these aspects too would have to be treated in a lay mode, but their content, as Christian, is shared by all Christians. The Council states in this respect:

*"The charity of God, which 'is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rom 5:5), enables the laity to express the true spirit of the beatitudes in their lives. Following Jesus who was poor, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor puffed up by their abundance. Imitating Christ who was humble, they have no obsession for empty honors (cf. Gal 5:26), but seek to please God rather than human beings ever ready to leave all things for Christ's sake (cf. Lk 14:26) and to suffer persecution for justice' sake (cf. Mt 5:20). For they remember the words of the Lord, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Mt 16:24)" (AA 4).*

From these aspects common to all Christians, we should go on to identify the specific traits of the spiritual life of the laity. The Council points to them as follows:

*"The layperson's spirituality should be stamped by a characteristic quality deriving from his or her status as a married or family person, as single or widowed, as in good or ill health, as a person engaged in some professional and social activity. Laypersons should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and should make use of the gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit... They should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social behavior,*

*namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which there can be no true Christian life" (AA 4).*

In a more general way we can say that lay spirituality is precisely lay, to the extent that it takes into account the situation-in-the-world that characterizes the layperson, and brings out the Christian animation of the temporal order, which is a distinctive task of the laity as a concrete mode of growing in the newness of love that the laity are called to have toward God and toward their brothers and sisters.

Spirituality is coextensive with our being and action, because it is our generous response to the gift and mission we have received. It is the practice of perfect charity (in relation to God and people) in the circumstances and activities of the secular city, and by means of them (cf. LG 41).

The Puebla Document points to the following traits as essential dimensions of lay spirituality:

- ! Lay people are not to flee from temporal realities in order to seek God. They are to remain present and active amid those realities, and there find the Lord,
- ! To this presence and activity they are to add the inspiration of faith and a sense of Christian charity;
- ! Through the light of faith, they are to discover the presence of the Lord in that reality;
- ! In their mission, often riddled with conflict and tensions for their faith, they must strive to revitalize their Christian identity through contact with the Word of God, intimacy with Christ in the Eucharist, celebration of the other sacraments, and prayer.

The lay living of Christian spirituality demands a threefold fidelity:

- 1) fidelity to natural values, by means of their competency;
- 2) fidelity to moral values, by means of observing the moral law;
- 3) fidelity to supernatural values, by means of the life of grace.

## **1) FIDELITY TO NATURAL VALUES**

An authentic moral and spiritual life—demands of the layperson, above all, a fidelity to natural values, that is, the full and heartfelt acceptance of the values which God the Creator has placed in created things, and a continual striving for technical and professional competency. Christians feel a commitment to this not only by the demands of their human being, but also in virtue of their specifically Christian being. In effect, they have a "new vision" of earthly realities as proceeding from the creating and loving hands of God in Christ, and their commitment to respect natural values is transformed into a respect for the laws which God has enclosed in created realities. On a more personal level, this respect is transformed into a loving "Yes" to God the Creator and Lord of the world.

The Council constantly asks laypersons to foster this fidelity to natural values -- "The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation" (LG 36). "The temporal order must be renewed...without the slightest detriment to its own proper laws" (AA 7). Therefore, acting as citizens of the world, whether individually or socially, they will observe the laws proper to each discipline, and labor to equip themselves with a genuine expertise in their various fields" (GS 43).

Competency and efficiency are demanded by the quality of service that should be rendered by Christians, and by their vocation in life:

"If a man or woman wants to practice science for God's sake, the first condition is that they practice it for its own sake... We are told that it was faith that built the great medieval cathedrals. Doubtless this is true, but nothing would have been built if there hadn't also been architects... Nobody or nothing obliges a Christian to be involved in science, art or philosophy, because there are plenty of other ways of serving God. But if this is the way one has chosen, then one is condemned by the very intention one is led by, to be a good scientist, a good philosopher or a good artist. For such a person, this is the only way to arrive at being a good and faithful servant" (24).

## **2) FIDELITY TO MORAL VALUES**

Fidelity to moral values demands that the behavior of the laity in temporal activities be "moral", that is, that it be in conformity with the dictates of the moral law, both revealed and non-revealed. The Council states this clearly, "The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that...it can be brought into conformity with the higher principles of the Christian life" (AA 7).

The laity are called to remedy "any institutions and conditions of the world...so that all such things may be conformed to the norms of justice" (LG 36). They are called to "imbue culture and human activity with moral values," and by so doing "they will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God" (LG 36).



The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) sums up the demands of the moral law in the commitment to defend and promote dignity of the human person. We could express this aim by saying that the laity are called to order all temporal realities and activities toward the integral development of the person, especially the liberty of the person.

The fundamental value that must be saved and promoted in any temporal activity is the value of the human person. Only in the light of this value can we judge or discern the goodness or evil of earthly and temporal realities, whether it be in economics or politics, the sciences or the arts, etc. But in the concrete, developing the integral value of the human person means assuring for each and every human being the maximum of freedom. A person is able to develop when he or she is really free, because only liberty will render him or her capable of saying his or her own "Yes" to the God who calls us by his grace. In this sense, making persons free means offering them the possibility of being saved and sanctified.

### **3) FIDELITY TO SUPERNATURAL VALUES**

Finally, fidelity to supernatural values demands that laypersons wholeheartedly work in grace, even in the field of temporal activities. The Council asks the laity to love the world of things with Christ's own heart, because it is only in Christ that the temporal order finds the ultimate meaning of its development throughout history. The Council speaks of the dignity both of the layperson as such and of the lay apostolate as a sharing in the saving mission of Christ and his Church, especially in various passages of LG 30-34.

In terms of great simplicity which are particularly rich in the new vision of faith, Vatican II asks that the laity "manifest to every person, through their earthly activities, the love with which God has loved the world" (LG 41). This is why Christ "taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation" (GS 38). In other words, only one who is not a slave to sin can rescue the material and human world from the influence of sin and Satan. Only one who by a life of grace is oriented and united to Christ in his or her own life, can stamp temporal realities with the seal of Christian kingship and give them a supernatural orientation:

*"To impregnate the human with the divine task of the layperson, a task which has been called the 'consecration of the world.' Now, only one who lives the divine life can divinely animate, and only one who is consecrated can consecrate, and it is precisely the living of one's own consecration that makes a Christian capable of consecrating to God the works of his own hands" (G. Lazzati).*

*"It is a matter of consecrating the world by sanctifying its use... This sanctification consists in placing all the horizontal activities and relationships of life under the sovereign vertical relationship to God in Christ through the Spirit. It consists in*

*letting God be God, and in acknowledging Him as such, not only in Himself but also in His creation and in the free activities of the human person. It is in doing this that His Name may be held in holiness, that His Kingdom may come, and that His Will may be done on earth as in heaven."*

*This calls for "specific religious activities and for putting our divine life into practice...This will be nourished and expressed in prayer and in the praise-filled action of the liturgy; it will unify contemplation and action, and transform it into union and cooperation in the mystery of Christ" (Yves Congar, op.cit. p. 105).*

We would like to close by stressing that this threefold --natural, moral and supernatural--fidelity, as well as any other authentic demand of the Christian life in the Spirit, is always carried out under the sign of the Cross of Christ. Christian animation of the temporal order is an aspect of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus and his Church. This means that the layperson must share in the blood that is inseparable from the work of our Redeemer. So also, specifically in earthly activities and temporal affairs, the layperson takes part in the Paschal Mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, enlivened by a hope that makes him or her look forward to, long for, and anticipate a new heaven and a new earth (cf. GS 39).

*"Such a spirituality should be able to provide the Church and the world with "Christians who have a vocation to holiness -- solid in their faith, secure in the teaching proposed by the authentic magisterium, firm and active in the Church, grounded in a deep spiritual life... persevering in evangelical witness and activity, consistent and courageous in their temporal commitments, constant as promoters of peace and justice in the face of all violence or oppression, keen in their critical-minded discernment of situations and ideologies in the light of the social teachings of the Church, and confident in their hope in the Lord" (John Paul II, Address to Lay People, 1/29/79, Puebla)."*

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## A SHORT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

We offer here the meaning of some of the terms used more frequently in this paper. Since there are so few of them, we have not put them in alphabetical order, but in the order of their interrelatedness.

### 1. CHARISM

A special gift of grace which the Holy Spirit gives to whomever He wills. It is not directly aimed at the sanctification of the person who receives it, but rather at the performance of some special service to the People of God (the Church). It is the needs of the People of God that require a diversity of services. A charism implies a spiritual enabling or capacitation, a direction toward a service, and a special empowering to carry it out. It belongs to the hierarchy to discern the authenticity of charisms, but not to prevent them.

### 2. MISSION

This term can have very different meanings.

a) Sometimes it refers to a geographical area or a people, in which the gospel has just begun to be preached. In this sense, we speak of the "missions", "mission territories," or of the evangelizing activities being carried out there.

b) At other times, "mission" refers to "popular or parish missions" preached in already Christianized lands. "Missions" in this sense were very popular and widespread in the 18th and 19th centuries and in the first half of the 20th century.

c) In a broader sense, "mission" means the service each person has to render. Thus, the mission of Christ is the service to humanity through and for which the Son became man; the mission of the Church is the service for which the Church exists, the service it must offer humanity, its reason for being.

d) In this paper "mission" is often used to signify the service we are destined to by the charism we have received. In this sense, "mission" is the other side of "charism." A charism points out a task that needs to be done, a service to be rendered to the People of God. This is our mission.

### 3. EVANGELIZATION

Gospel means Good News, and evangelization means the proclamation and spread of the Good News by way of witness and word.

### 4. APOSTOLATE

Practically synonymous with mission. An apostle is one sent on a mission, to render a service to humankind. Christ is the envoy, the Apostle of the Father; the Church is the envoy, the Apostle of Christ. The apostolate is the task (mission) to be accomplished, and also, by way of extension, the concrete actions whereby we carry out this mission.

Mission-evangelization-apostolate

Are three words that are practically synonymous, but each of them accents a distinct nuance of expression.

- ! Mission and apostolate accent the fact of being sent, and highlight the fact that the service we render is not born of our personal initiative, but is something we receive from the Church, as the Church in turn receives it from Christ.
- ! Evangelization--which is the Church's mission and our mission-- accents the content of our service, which is the Good News, announcing Jesus Christ, announcing and establishing the Reign of God.

## 5. MINISTRY

Means "service" -- a concrete service to the ecclesial community and to the mission of the Church. Until Vatican II, the word "ministry" was practically limited to ecclesial services rendered by the hierarchy and clergy. Today it has a broader meaning that includes services that can be rendered by all members of the People of God.

a) There are ministries that form part of the institutional structure of the Church and as such must be conferred expressly by the hierarchy:

- ! some of these are ordained ministries, which require ordination -- episcopal, priestly or diaconal. Those who receive these ministries cease to be laypersons and become clergy;
- ! others are non-ordained ministries. They too are conferred by the hierarchy, but not by means of "sacred ordination." They empower those who receive them to special services in the Christian community, without causing them to cease being laypersons, e.g., services of the Word, of worship, of the Eucharist, of charity.

b) There are other ministries or services rendered to the ecclesial community that do not need to be conferred by the hierarchy; they stem from the very being of a Christian and from his or her personal charisms.

## 6. LAITY

This is another word that has or has had many meanings:

a) In many established Catholic countries, above all in Latin Europe, "laity" has an antireligious implication. Thus, they speak of "lay parties," "lay schools" and "laicism." Lay people in this sense strive to eliminate religion from life. In this paper, the word "laity" is never taken in this sense.

b) Even in the ecclesial context, there are some negative descriptions of "laity":

- vis-a-vis the clergy, the laity are non-clergy;
- vis-a-vis those who have opted for a consecrated state of life, (i.e., religious or secular institutes), the laity are non-religious.

c) A positive definition of a layperson, in terms of Vatican II:

A member of the People of God who is fully inserted in the world. Or perhaps -- "A Christian who lives his or her faith amid the full exercise of the activities of the secular city" (Yves Congar). In this paper, "laity" is always understood in this sense.

## 7. SECULAR

In this paper, "secular" is always a synonym for "lay." In other contexts, "a secular" means one who does not belong to the religious state. Thus we speak of "secular priests."

## 8. WORLD

This is a very ambiguous word, which can have many meanings. Let us point out just three of them:

a) in a cosmic sense, the "world" is the whole material universe, all that exists;

b) in a human sense, the "world" is the whole human family, with its values and anti-values, its situation and its culture, etc.;

c) in a religious sense, the "world" may sometimes mean God's creation, but it more frequently means all that is opposed to God and His kingdom (this is the sense most often meant in the gospel).

In this paper, the context will indicate the meaning we give the term in various settings.

## 9. EVANGELICAL LIFE

In former times this expression had a very restricted sense, which has gone through a process of progressive broadening.

a) First it was applied only to the monastic form of life.

b) Later it was extended to include all forms of religious life and the form of life led in Secular Institutes.

c) Since the Council it is often applied to any authentic form of Christian life, since all Christian life must be "animated by the spirit of the Gospel" (LG 31), and must be impelled by Christian love (agape), which is the essential core of the Gospel, without which no one can achieve holiness. This Christian love finds expression in a life lived according to the "evangelical counsels."

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## FOOTNOTES

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3. Lozano, J.M., op. cit., p. 83.
4. Congar, Yves, in "Dictionnaire de Spiritualite", vo.X, Paris 1974, art. "Laico", p. 104.
5. Barrufo, A., "I laici nolla costituzione conciliare sulla Chiesa", Milano 1965, p. 57.
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7. John Paul II, Allocution of May 6, 1979.
8. Baruffo, A., in "Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualita", Roma 1979, art. "Laico," p. 819.
9. Puebla Document, n. 788.
10. Puebla, n. 789.
11. Marins, J., "Las CEB en Puebla, " in "Medellin," nn. 17-18 (1979), p. 239.
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15. Baruffo, A., art. cit. p. 821.
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