

Supplement # 59



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Laity - Christ's Missionaries

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of the role of the laity in the modern world is crucial for us as Christians. We have been led to prepare this supplement of *Progressio* by our awareness that we are members of CLC, that we belong to the Church as an Association of the Laity renewed,

according to the Second Vatican Council, and desirous of participating in the mission of the Church. We offer some interesting contributions on this topic. Our intention is to promote a certain sense of uneasiness and to invite our communities to meditate on the significance of being a lay person in this new millennium. Let us recall that in their Ordinance 13, the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus declares that this millennium will be "the Church of the laity."

The first article is entitled "The Laity in the Church." It offers a wide, objective and historical vision of the doctrine of the laity presented by the Church in various documents starting with the Second Vatican Council. The author, Josefina Errázuriz, is a theologian and a mother, a former world vice-president of CLC and a former member of the Pontifical Council of the Laity. At the end of this work, she outlines the challenges which "participation, joint responsibility and the necessary autonomy of the laity" imply for the Church and her apostolic strength.

Next we present some items which are related to "The Church of the Laity," by José Reyes, current world vicepresident of CLC. Some of these works were prepared especially during the last intensive course of the Magis Program held in Quito, Ecuador in 2004 and also for a CLC Mexico gathering that same year.

These documents throw light on the following topics: 1) identifying and deepening the challenges posed to the Church today from a lay perspective, 2) formulating some methodological orientations concerning

the apostolic life of the laity and 3) situating CLC in the framework of the ecclesial and apostolic challenges that have been identified.

The titles of the articles included are: 1) The Church of the Laity, 2) Helpers of Christ, Companions in Work and Adults in the Church, 3) The Mission of the Laity - A Contribution from CLC that includes two Annexes: Synthesis of Itaici, 1998, and The Apostolic Polynomial of CLC: Discern, Send, Support and Evaluate. 4) Being Laity, Vocation and Mission, Intimacy and Extroversion and 5) Prophets of Hope and Justice: a Vision of Lay Christians' Mission.

Next, we present a contribution by Goran Kühner, a member of CLC who is completing biblical studies in Rome. He offers a vision of the mission of a CLC member in the modern world from the perspective of the Ignatian Magis as a spirituality for the modern world.

José María Riera, former world president of CLC and current member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has written his impressions of last meeting of the Council, held in October of 2004 in Rome. He gives us a vision for the future, fruits of the visions shared by members of the Commission from all parts of the world.

We hope that this material stimulates reflection concerning our lay spirituality. If we are to proclaim our faith to a dissenting, ever-changing world, a world which no longer has any certainties, a world which has no fixed norms, then we must proclaim this faith at the heart of such a world. We must learn how to love all people with a love that is active, present, and transforming; we must open our arms to welcome them and to invite them to meet Jesus with us in the most far flung and obscure corners of the world.

Ana María Aguirre

Progressio Editorial Committee

Translated from Spanish by *Theresa Cademartori*

The Laity in the Church



1. Today's Challenge

Today, almost 40 years after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, a beautiful 'dream of a church' has spread widely - a vision which the Council itself accepted, supported and presented to the world as God's dream for the church. We dreamed of a church in which all of us, laity and clergy, should make up this church, be live and life-giving members of the Body of Christ, and be an evangelising and a missionary community. And this should occur at all levels of being and belonging to the Body devoted to Christ, from the Holy Father and the Bishops who guarantee the unity, down to the faithful laity of the most lowly parishes and chapels where the

redemption of the world is played out. With regard to this 'dream of a church' we also live out a deep 'pain for the church' because we are aware that in recent years there have been steps back as far as being and feeling that we are 'Church' is concerned. This occurs both in the way in which we relate within the church and in how we see and relate to the world which is all around us. At some levels we can observe certain signs of 'clericalism', meaning by this that the

We dreamed of a church in which all of us, laity and clergy, should make up this church, be live and life-giving members of the Body of Christ

centre of gravity of the Church is not so much rooted in the 'community' but is to be found in the clergy. The language we use every day gives us away at each turn: almost every time when we refer to 'the Church' we are referring to the hierarchy and not to the entire community of the baptised - this community who both believe and hope in Christ.

However, the 'dream' lives on and it is a powerful one and a dynamic one. I give but two examples: the most recent Latin American Bishops' Conference in Santo Domingo in 1992 called for a 'necessary and constant promotion of the laity' and called for the laity 'to become protagonists of the New Evangelisation' of the continent (No.97). In its turn, the General Congregation No. 34 of the Society of Jesus announced in 1995 in its decree No.13, 'there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Church of the next millennium will be called the "Church of the Laity." ' These declarations sound like promising prophecies which, like all prophecies can be realised through the power of the Spirit which calls them into being. They sound like prophecies for a brighter and a more fulfilling future for the entire Church, a future more in accordance with this general dream which can be felt at each step and which can only be realised through the Spirit which moves the Church to grow.

In a Church which begins the Third Millennium asking forgiveness for its many past sins, there is no doubt that it is important to recognise that for centuries we have not lived within the church joined together in

a structure of communion and participation as the missionary 'we' of the Fathers of the Church had demanded; instead, we have lived a structure of distancing, of clericalism which continues to promote passive attitudes and a lack of identity among lay Christians. For centuries now the laity have been somewhat anaemic cells in the Body of Christ and they have not felt part of the Church, they have not had sufficient strength to feel that they were Church. Living stones of the Body of Christ without a sense of mission, as though there was nothing important to do in this vast world which surrounds us, a world into which all of us who are baptised are sent to bring the good news... In spite of the fact that almost 40 years have passed since the beginning to the Second Vatican Council, inside the Church itself, instead of highlighting that which unites us - *mission and evangelisation*, often we emphasise that which separates us - *being either a lay person or clerical one*. And here we do not use the noun but the adjective. *The noun is to be a Christian; the adjective is to be clerical or lay.*

The truth is that we are a long way away from living in a Church of Communion and Participation such

as was proposed to us in the Council decrees and afterwards in the Roman Synod of 1985, in the Laity Synod of 1987, the Christifideles Laici in 1988, the Latin-American Episcopal Conferences and also in the New Canon Law Code. And this is, from my point of view, the great challenge faced by the Church in the Third Millennium: to ask forgiveness for our lack of faithfulness to the Church about which Jesus dreamed and to which he sent His Spirit of the Resurrected Lord, that Church which God Himself needs for the salvation of the world. And, apart from seeking pardon for our errors and sins as a Church, we need to decide, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, to bring about and to transform into reality those calls of Jesus to be very close to Him as a community so that we may work with Him in bringing about His Father's Kingdom in this world. And we are to do this with His simple, direct style and one which is detached from riches, 'showiness' and power.

2. Some History

In order to clarify exactly what I am saying it is necessary to undertake a short historical

overview which will help shed some light on the problem.

a. The Primitive Church

The Church in the first centuries of its existence was very different from the Church as we know it today. In those times the church itself and all who belonged to it felt as though they were a community which was structured to bring good news to a world which did not know Jesus Christ. This community was happy that it had been given many charisms, all to do with service. The Church and its communities saw themselves as a single Body in



which each part had its own special function (see, for example, 1

Corinthians 12, 4-31); each Christian, because of a vocation which was personal, concrete and

**If I am afraid
of what I am
for you I am
also consoled
by what I am
with you.
For you I am
a Bishop,
with you I am
a Christian**

unable to be transferred, possessed a unique place of his/her own for the good of others and going along that way, whether s/he belonged to a religious order/

was a priest, s/he could become a saint and to this s/he was called.

The Church was a *community of believers* rather than a *hierarchical body* because communion was its most important feature, this being the common union of all those who were baptised in Christ. This communion too was founded upon the identical dignity as baptised people which all possessed. This dignity implied, both as a privilege and a responsibility, an active participation in the mission of the Church. Saint Augustine is one of the Fathers of the Church who places most emphasis on the common dignity between clergy and laity: 'If I am afraid of what I am for you I am also consoled by what I am with you. For you I am a

Bishop, with you I am a Christian. The former title expresses my duty, the latter is a grace; the former, a danger, the latter - salvation.' (Saint Augustine, Sermon 340,1. Quoted by the Second Vatican Council in L.G. 32). Many Fathers of the Church express similar thoughts as do, for example, Saint Cyprian and Saint John Chrysostom. Despite the fact that Saint Cyprian was one of the most authority-oriented Bishops in the Catholic Church he confessed as follows: 'From the outset of my time as a Bishop I decided that I would not take any resolution alone without your advice and the consent of my people'.

In the early Church the conviction that the fundamental equality of all believers was lived out in a profound manner due to the immense gift of baptism and this equality came before any roles which people might play in the Church. The Church of the first centuries of its existence appeared united as a whole and it presented itself to the eyes of the world of that time as '**a meaningful alternative**' to the values and other criteria which characterised lives and actions of that society.

The Church was outward-looking, its gaze focused on towards mission.

For this reason a distinction was not made between clergy and laity but between Christians and non-Christians. The important distinction resided between *the Christian Good News which was common to all those who had been baptised and the society which had still to be evangelised*. The early Church was a **community of believers** in which there were various ministries and services but there was only one common mission, although this had variations; mission was a commitment for all since it was an unavoidable demand of baptism.

What was really important was to present a united front around the Bishop, who guaranteed unity and communion, as *a new option* for a pagan world, as yeast which could make humanity rise, like a seed of the Kingdom of God. 'The tension which existed was an outward one towards the pagans and those who persecuted the Church - they had to be evangelised - rather than any inner tension between hierarchy and laity' (Bruno Forte in the article 'Laity' in *Interdisciplinary Theological Dictionary*, 111, ed. Sígueme, 1982, p. 256).

The biblical doctrine regarding a common priesthood and responsibility for all baptised

Christians is expressed in particular in 1st Peter 2, 5, 9-10 and in the Apocalypse 1.5-6 and 5, 9-10 and it finds an important echo in the Church of the Fathers. A sense of sharing responsibility with the laity was for them a demand of their baptism and it was exercised at all levels, both within and outside the community. This sense of shared responsibility is also apparent in the election of clergy, in the Synods of the local Churches and in the Councils. Of course, this is a retrospective vision which simplifies a great deal when the main focus is placed on the predominant ecclesiological line.

b. An identity which gradually loses its salt

After Constantine, this situation began to change. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman State and people converted to Christianity because it was in their interests to do so. There was no longer an urgent need to evangelise because it seemed that there were no pagans left... The Church begins to have possessions and privileges and for that reason it becomes Atamed@ and loses its eschatological power. Since it no longer ran contrary to the prevalent culture, that it to say, when it lost its dimension of being a meaningful alternative for a non-

Christian culture, it gradually lost its prophetic dimension too. A tension no longer existed within an adverse culture in which it was necessary to

The tension was no longer with an adverse culture in which it was necessary to offer a testimony with one's life; instead this tension became centred in differences within the Church itself, that is to say, between the clergy and the laity

offer a testimony with one's life; instead this tension became centred in differences within the Church itself, that is to say, between the clergy and the laity.

The Bishops were now on a level with the high-ranking officials of the Empire and they dressed

and lived in an opulent manner just like those officials (this is something which still exists and which has not been totally eliminated.) The clergy acquired a privileged status and those of highest rank gained much power. And the majority of Christians, that is to say the laity, now became the 'simple people' (plebius). In this manner the distinction between 'clerus et plebs' came about and gradually became

consolidated. In addition, in the early Middle Ages the clergy received the privilege of formation while the 'people=laos= laity' did not receive this because it was felt that they did not require such formation. In this way they became transformed into 'illiterati' and the identity of the Church as a 'community for mission' was gradually lost.

The centre of gravity of the Church shifted towards the clergy and the monks who now held a monopoly of culture and power. The Church as a 'being' concentrated on them and the laity became 'second-class' Christians. This tendency to equate 'Church' with 'clergy' was increased even more in the 9th century and in the 11th century as a result of the Gregorian reform. Then in the 12th century, after the Decree of Graciano (1140) the duality was established – laity (=world) versus clergy (=the Church). Two classes of Christians were established, the spiritual and the carnal. From that time onwards the idea that the clergy could have a secular profession was rejected and any rights in the election of the clergy was denied to the laity and they now were catechised and were not considered capable of 'bringing the good news'.

Under these conditions ecclesiology became more and more hierarchical and the Church began to structure itself more and more as a body of hierarchy rather than as a community of believers. This was a



vision of the Church like a pyramid as opposed to the ecclesiology of the missionary communion of the Sacred Scriptures and of the early Church. There were no longer any theological reflections on 'communion' and the 'common priesthood' of all baptised and thus, little by little, the tremendous richness of our faith became forgotten. The obvious alternative for a good Christian who wanted to

live his/her dedication to Jesus Christ to the full was to become a monk/nun or a religious; as a lay person there was no future for any kind of explicitly recognised sanctity.

The relationship Church-world became one of a 'Christianity' which looked down on the world from above and considered that it could receive nothing of value from it. The Church knew without even listening to it exactly what the world wanted and it held all the answers. The world outside the Church seemed to have nothing to offer; it could but receive what the Church wanted to give it. The world regarded the Church without respect, with mistrust and even with fear.

Of course this is a vision in part only and one which, while it focuses on the human failings, does not reflect all the richness which the Holy Spirit has always bestowed on the Church without ceasing. There have always been bishops, priest and holy lay people who imitated Christ and who proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom by their lives. The Lord has always been with His Church and He will be with it until the end of human history. But this is a vision which describes, and at the

same time offers a caricature, an ecclesiological tendency which was predominant in the Second Millennium and which may help us to 'diagnose' the challenges for the Third Millennium.

c. The recovery of a lost identity.

At the start of the 20th century, after the First World War, there was a distinct feeling that the clergy could not represent the only presence of the Church in the world. Contrary to the position of Pio IX and his fear of the world and modern times, as presented in 'Quanta Cura', there arose in opposition a more positive view of the secular world and one with its own autonomy. Pio XI was in favour of the separation of the Church and state, he removed the clergy from politics and with the publication of his encyclical 'Ubi arcano' (1922) an apostolate of the laity came into being. His vision was one of 'the participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate' through Catholic Action; the danger of this was, however, that the laity would continue to be a prolongation of the clergy, without a missionary identity of its own. But this was an important step which was a landmark in the change of vision as regards the identity of lay Christians and which prepared the way for the outstanding ecclesial movement

which preceded the Second Vatican Council.

In such a way, then, in the period after the Second World War there arose what we may call lay theology. The following points were of special significance:

- the mission of the laity did not consist of an extraordinary participation in the hierarchical apostolate but it had its own roots in baptism, confirmation and marriage.
- secular places of work, politics, the economy etc, as part of the order of things, have their own legitimacy which should be recognised and respected if these are to have a Christian formation. In these spheres lay Christians are the experts.

In this way we reached the SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, as a call from Pope John XXIII to let in new winds, to 'decipher' in their entirety the new calls of the Spirit to the Church and to respond with fidelity to these, searching for ways to realise them so that they can bring salvation.

3. The Ecclesiology of Vatican II

The second Vatican Council marked the end of a 'pyramid'

ecclesiological vision of the Church which had existed for almost the entire 2nd Millennium. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, by placing the chapter entitled 'The People of God' before the one which deals with 'The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church and the Episcopacy' made a Copernican change in the way the Church both thinks and feels.

A change of this magnitude brings with it great pain and upheaval but at the same time great hope that Our Lord desires to start something new in His Church. This is what we lived through in those post-Council years during which time the Church has tried, with greater or lesser faithfulness, to implement what the Holy Spirit provided and gifted in that great ecclesial event. The same might be said about the attitudes proposed in the council for the relationship Church-World with the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.

A. The Second Vatican Council and its Main Directions

Church, People of God. A major direction in the ecclesiology of the Council is that of the People of God: "That Messianic people has as its Head Jesus Christ... The state of

this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God.... Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us... Its destiny is the Kingdom of God. Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth... is a visible sacrament of this saving unity." (L.G.No.9) The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council proposes that the People of God, born through baptism as a totality, are destined in this totality to continue the mission which has been entrusted to them by Jesus Christ. They are all responsible for the fulfilling of that mission. All its members, each one in his/her own way, continue the triple function of Christ - the priestly function, the prophetic function and the kingly function. In presenting itself in this way the Church corrected in a radical way the vision of a Church divided into two types of Christians in which the laity resembled a passive and lifeless herd.

Church Mystery of Communion.

Underlying the Council's idea of the People of God there lies another of its main directions: the Church as mystery of communion. "The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all

men..."(L.G. No.1). The Church is like the "Body of Christ" which is one and in it all the members are important: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification. Through



baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ..." (L.G. No.7) This is a return to the deepest roots of our faith. The Council Fathers put emphasis on the Church as the 'we' of all those who are baptised, as the 'communion of saints'. In this way they returned to the idea of feeling part of the Church which had filled ecclesiological awareness during the first centuries and which continues to be very alive in the tradition of the oriental Churches. This model of the church emerges from the Writings and from the Fathers and also from the pastoral action which already in the middle of the 20th century was making itself felt with the incorporation of the laity to Catholic Action and the running of

the Church; this was all very important for the Council Fathers and it allowed them to turn things around and present the Church in this key function of *communion*.

The Church is mystery of communion because it is born from the mystery of the Trinity. The Church has its roots in the Trinity, in the love of God Our father, in the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in

The Church is mystery of communion because it is born from the mystery of the Trinity

the communion of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor., 13,13). The Church comes from the very mystery of God, it feeds on Him and it moves towards Him. Therefore, the centre of the Church is in communion which is its most intimate essence and that which makes it be Church. Its being 'a communion for mission' is its very essence and from this there emanates all the rest - the different services, whether these be carried out by the clergy or not. The Church proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God and it lives for this Kingdom: mission belongs to the very essence of its being and it is its great privilege.

The Bishops, Pastors of the Church. The immense importance of the gift of God which the service the Pope and the Bishops bring to the Church is expressed in Chapter 111 of the Constitution of the Church. AIn order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its number without cease, Christ the Lord set up in His Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body... Jesus Christ, the eternal pastor, set up the Holy Church by entrusting the apostles with their mission as he himself had been sent by the Father. He willed that their successors, the bishops namely, should be the shepherds in his Church until the end of the world". Led by the successor of Peter in whom He set up "...a lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion", the Bishops rule the Church (see L.G. 18) and they guide it and feed it' and they dispense the mysteries of God because they have received the plenitude of their Ordination (see L.G. No. 21). "The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches, which are constituted after the model of the universal Church... All the bishops have the obligation of fostering

and safeguarding the unity of the faith and of upholding the discipline which is common to the whole Church; of schooling the faithful in a love of the whole Mystical Body of Christ and, in a special way, of the poor, the suffering, and those who are undergoing persecution for the sake of justice; finally, of promoting all that type of active apostolate which is common to the whole Church, especially in order that the faith may increase and the light of truth may rise in its fullness on all men" (L.G.No. 23).

The relation Church - world is presented anew in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. There it is affirmed that the Church not only has much to give to the world but that the world has much to bring to the Church. As far as this relationship is concerned is stressed that it is important to listen and to have respect towards the different cultures, searches and plans of the laity. Instead of looking at the world as the place of evil which is in opposition to the Church it is referred to now as the world which God is continually creating and upholding and to which the Church is offering the treasure which it has to bring - namely the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

This change in vision caused a revolutionary upheaval which brought hope but which was difficult to live out in a balanced way. It brought with it certain conflicts and we are still searching for solutions to these, conflicts which continue to challenge us and which oblige us to discern the paths to take and not attempt to simplify matters. In this new relationship Church - world the presence and the contributions of lay Christians who are immersed at a deep level in the world and who are attracted to it, are very important.

B. The Roman Synod of Bishops 1985 which was held twenty years after the Council, made it clear that the Ecclesiology of Communion is the central idea and the key to the Council documents. Since that date the 'ecclesial communion', so fundamental in the ecclesiology of the Council and towards which the Bishops felt insufficient attention had been paid, became the focus of attention in the reflections subsequent to the Synod.

The post-Council implementation of these central directions has not been easy in the Universal Church because they signify a very profound change in the Church's way of living and feeling; they

imply a quite radical conversion which affects ways of looking at things, of feeling, and of thinking which have acquired very deep roots over the years. Steps have, however, been taken, sometimes attention being given to certain aspects and devoting less attention to others; sometimes this occurs with joy and strength, sometimes with fear of the unknown and with



difficulties in understanding how to live out situations of power and authority. Two steps forward, one step back... There has been a struggle and pain due to difficult changes in inner attitudes both for the hierarchy, who are accustomed to decide unilaterally because they believe they have all the answers, and for the laity, who are used to being told what is good, what to do and how to do it without the need to

discern new ways that rise up to challenge us. But we are making our way along these paths which the Lord continues to indicate clearly to us in spite of the obvious backsliding which may cause scandal and suffering.

4. The Laity in the Documents of the Church

A. The Second Vatican Council

Within the Communion Ecclesiology for Mission the Dogmatic Constitution **Lumen Gentium** does not attempt to give a definition of the lay person but, in the chapter devoted to the laity, refers to their place in the Church (31), to their dignity (32), unity in diversity (32), call to sanctity (32), the apostolate of the laity (33), dedication to the world (34), testimony of life and word (35), rule over structures, prophetic and priestly function (36). I shall refer here to only three of these aspects since these seem to throw greater light on topics which have been discussed heatedly since the Council:

Participants in the mission of Christ. In No. 31 it states that the laity "by baptism are incorporated into Christ" "placed in the People of God" "and in their own way share

the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world". This sums up the immense dignity and importance of each person in the Church. It is specified that the laity should carry out mission "**in their own way**". We thank God that this 'way' has not been defined clearly... From my point of view, this cannot be defined in either general or rigid ways; to do this would be to limit God's freedom because He is the one who gives the various personal vocations to the laity within the Church. The way of exercising one's authority, one's prophetic gifts or one's priestly dimension is unique for each Christian and s/he has to find out what this is, to discern and to incorporate it into his/her daily life and to the service to which the Lord is calling him/her both in the Church and in the world.

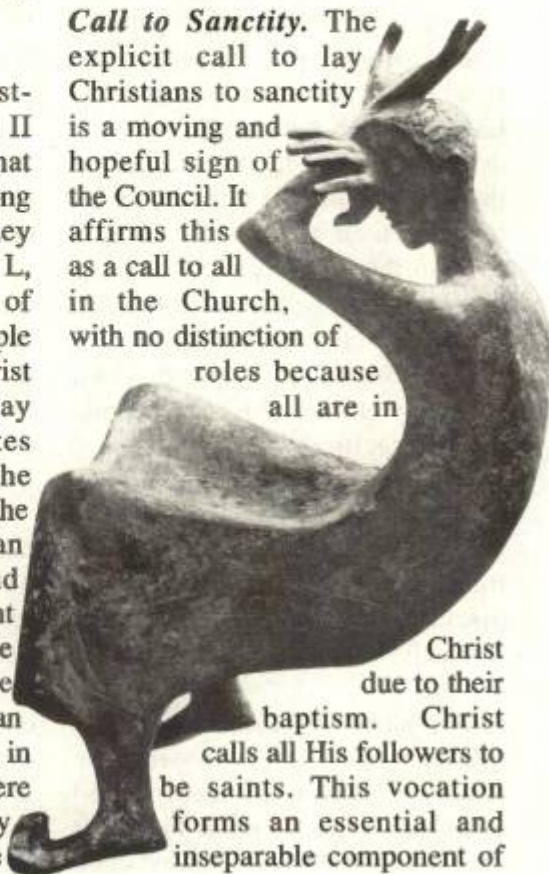
Secular Qualities. In this same No. 31 it is noted that "Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity... It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will." This is another point which is not too clear because secularity is a dimension which belongs to the

whole Church. I think that what we have here are vague and hesitant attempts to express what for centuries was kept silent. After these Council declarations there has been a great deal of thought about the serious difficulty which is implied in trying to clarify lay qualities from a secular point of view. This would leave priests, deacon and bishops 'out of the world'... And if they are not in the world, in our times then where are they?

As a product of years of post-Council reflection, John Paul II remarks: "There is no doubt that all members of the Church belong to its secular dimension but they do so in different ways." (ChF L, 15). Secularity is a dimension of the whole Church, of all the People of God, of all the Body of Christ which makes its pilgrim way through this world and creates history within it. Since the incarnation (=secularisation) of the Word of God, no Christian can abdicate from secularity. And from the time when we are sent out by Our Lord to bring the Good News of salvation to the very ends of the earth nobody can be content with only taking part in the affairs of the world but there s/he must proclaim the mystery of salvation. The world is the

theological place of the response of God to all Christians and in it they are called to exercise His sending out on mission. The transformation of the world is the greatest undertaking to which the Lord can call us and nobody can be left behind here. We must work on this task together, side by side, priest and laity - all Christians as a Church community.

Call to Sanctity. The explicit call to lay Christians to sanctity is a moving and hopeful sign of the Council. It affirms this as a call to all in the Church, with no distinction of roles because all are in



Christ due to their baptism. Christ calls all His followers to be saints. This vocation forms an essential and inseparable component of

the new life after baptism. This is one of the great successes of the Council, namely to reaffirm with such emphasis something so central but which had somehow been lost in the superficial 'conscience' of the Church- we are all called to sanctity. This is, moreover, fundamental. If we look back over the history of the Church we realise that sanctity is the secret and the strength of her apostolic and missionary dynamism. And now it is clear to us that one does not have to be a priest or a religious to be a saint; there opens before us a clear possibility of lay sanctity within the world, able to transform the world from within, with no need to flee from it.

B. Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles Laici", 1988

After the Roman Synod of 1987 on the Laity, Pope John Paul II presented the following apostolic exhortation which came to be something like the "Magna Carta" for the laity.

The exhortation reveals the Church as MYSTERY OF MISSIONARY COMMUNION in which all the baptised are of equal importance. And it take a step forward as far giving a profile of the ecclesial situation of the lay Christian is

concerned, dealing with the call to sanctity of the laity and their secular insertion. It proposes in an absolutely new way the world as the Vineyard of the Lord from where God calls all the faithful, the ordained and the lay, to work (No.1). Previously this title of the 'Vineyard of the Lord' was only used for the Church.

It recognises the great force for renovation which the wider, conscious and more responsible participation of so many lay Christians, men and women, has had for the Church. This is seen as a rejuvenation of the Church which is carried out by the Holy Spirit Who is bringing about a new style of collaboration between priests and the faithful laity. Also the flourishing of lay groups, spiritual associations and movements of apostolic commitment are seen as a gift for the Church. It highlights too the wider and more meaningful participation of women in the life of the Church and in the development of society. Two main dangers are stressed which have been detected amongst the laity in post-Council times: these are the temptation to neglect the tasks which belong to the world because of becoming too absorbed in Church matters and "the

temptation to make legitimate an incorrect separation between faith and life, between the acceptance of the Gospels and concrete action in the most varied temporal and earthly realities." (No 2).

This document goes more deeply than the Council did as far as the identity of the laity by baptism (No 9 to 14) is concerned, their secular nature (No.15), their call to sanctity (No. 16 and 17). It goes profoundly into the ecclesiology of communion (No. 18 to 20) and into the ministries and charisms which the Spirit instigates (21 to 24). It demands the search for ways that will allow a more real participation of the laity at the different levels of the life of the Church (25 to 27) and it reflects upon the personal and group ways of participation (28 and 29). Criteria of ecclesiality are formulated for the lay Associations and Movements (30) which I shall discuss later and it speaks about the service of the pastors to the communion (31). It reflects at great length about the co-responsibility of the laity in the Mission of the Church (32) and upon the sending out of the laity to proclaim the Good News (33) and it calls for a New Evangelisation (34 and 35). It

searches for the synthesis faith-life and for that purpose it calls for a living out of the Gospels in serving people and society (36-43) and for the evangelising of the culture and the cultures of mankind. (44) In chapter IV it speaks of the workers in the Vineyard of the Lord (which is the world) and of the variety of vocations which the Spirit awakens in the Church. The relationship man-woman is treated with great beauty as a marvel which is gifted by God to humanity and it urges a living out of this with more prominence in the Church (49 to 52). Chapter V deals fully with the formation of the faithful laity for mission.

How to become a Church which is a Communion for Mission is the great question we all need to face. And as associate laity we need to discover how we become that "sign of communion and of the unity of the Church in Christ" which is presented to us as our most intimate reason to be the *Christifideles Laici* in No.29. And we need to absorb fully the criteria of discernment of our ecclesiality which is proposed to us in No.30. These criteria of ecclesiality are like the deep channels in which our fertile development within the

Church are played out and the strength of our missionary impact in the world. These may be described as follow:

- The first place which has to be given in each person's vocation is to **sanctity**. This favours and encourages a more intimate union between the faith and the concrete life of its members. It is hoped that those who participate in a community or an association of lay faithful will be witnesses of Jesus Christ today, here and now, with the same reality, with the same newness, with the same force of attraction and conviction as the apostles and the first Christians had or, for example, as Santa Teresita de los Andes or Father Alberto Hurtado displayed. It is hoped that they will in this way attract, because of the evangelical force which emanates from them and from their way of life, a renewal of the Christian experience in all the radicality and beauty of its mystery. The encounter with Jesus Christ will always be the fountain of all sanctity and the never-ending source of apostolic efficiency which is at the service of mankind and the world. All authentic renovation of the Church is born from sanctity.

- **Responsibility to confess the faith.** Our communities can be true places where the truth of Christ, of the Church and of human beings who are in conformity with the teachings of Christ can be announced and proclaimed because here Our Lord makes us feel the newness of a different life. This is the newness of a style of life which strengthens and helps us change our attitudes, behaviour and criteria of judgement to conform with those of the Gospels. Thus, faith is proclaimed not just with words, but also with attitudes.

- The third way to discern our ecclesiality points to the necessity of our associations being **signs of**



communion and unity reflecting the mystery of the Trinity. The communion which is lived in them will only be an evangelical reality if it is centred on the Eucharist, if it is nourished by the Word of God, if it recognises the Pope and the Bishops as guarantors and servers of that unity. Communion shows itself in the union and friendship which is kindled among the members and in their willingness to collaborate with other ecclesial bodies and associations. Communion comes into being and is enriched by accepting the plurality of charisms and vocations. Communion is the most wonderful gift which God gives for the conversion of people and for the transformation of the world.

- A fourth way is that of the ***participation in the apostolic aim of the Church.*** All associations are called to a more intensive, extensive missionary dynamic and they are all responsible for the announcing and declaring of the Good News. We must be overcome by this missionary zeal so that we can cry like St Paul 'Woe is me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!' This requires commitment as associations with the evangelisation process, with the sanctification and Christian

formation of consciences so that the spirit of the Gospels may be firmly fixed into various cultures and contexts.

- The fifth way of discernment of the ecclesiality of the associations is the commitment to a ***presence in human society, which in the light of the social doctrine of the Church, will be at the service of the basic dignity of each person.*** As association we have to be living sources of solidarity to build new conditions of justice and fraternity for our life together. We are called to generate new forms of life, new ways of living together, new mentalities and relationship structures among peoples, nations, ethnic groups and races. Today we have to go beyond ideologies, dreams and utopias. We must live our faith with a new realism which reveals social and historical richness. And we are sent to do this trusting in the power of the Risen Christ, Lord of history and in the light of the new patrimony of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

The remit of the Pontifical Council for the Laity is the support the implementation and the living out in a profound way of the Christifideles Laici which expands and deepens the teachings of the Council for the

universal Church. This Pontifical Council seeks its responses in the Lay Councils at Bishops' Conference level and in the diocese. In the almost 40 years since the Council these lay councils have had an uneven and difficult path to tread in different places in the world. From my point of view, these Lay Diocesan Councils are very important in order to seek new ways of accompanying and reinforcing the Christian life of so many baptised people who have lapsed; they also help so many Christians to express their faith: otherwise they would not have known how to live this in the world of work, politics, economics, etc. They are also a valuable source of communion between the Lay Associations and Movements and their relationship with the Pastoral Diocesan Groups. They also direct and support all Our Lord wishes to accomplish in His Church outwith the parishes. If we were really expressing in a creative way all that this Apostolic Exhortation proposes, the Church would flourish in a wonderful new way and we would be amazed witnesses at what the Holy Spirit can do if we would only decide to organise ourselves and be a Church Communion for Mission. We are a long way off living this and the problems come from both clergy

and laity - there are misunderstandings, excesses on both sides, childish attitudes, lack of commitment from the laity, superior and overbearing attitudes by the hierarchy. At least we can dream of this and feel the challenge of looking for ways to take the appropriate steps to bring about this richness.

C. Episcopal Conference of Santo Domingo, 1992

The documents of this Latinamerican Conference bear witness to the fact that our Bishops believe that New Evangelisation, human promotion and penetration into various cultures with the force of the Gospels, make up the global plan of the Church as a response to the Risen Lord who wishes to continue His incarnation and to extend the Father's Kingdom in this America of ours. Among the various topics that were discussed I'd like to highlight the following:

a. Lay Protagonism. The way the laity were treated in this conference is, in my view, a new step forward because it affirms that in this New Evangelisation the lay faithful are in the front row, so to speak, they are the protagonists. And this is not just a

call to evangelise our Latinamerican reality - we are to take the Good News far beyond our frontiers and these are not only geographical frontiers but ideological ones too. We are to take the 'Good News' to people as a 'different way' and we are to spread this to different cultures. This will be spread with respect, as a response to anxieties and troubles and not imposed from a position of power; we are to carry this out in the same way as was done in the early church. And having decided to centre attention on the world to be evangelised, the tension between clergy and laity can be reduced so that together they can take on these new challenges of evangelisation. (Cf. No.97) To make this new way of evangelisation possible they propose *lay protagonism*. It is worth clarifying the meaning of this lay protagonism. A protagonist goes ahead, starts the fight and bears the effort, the push forward. And this is the reality in all spheres of life nowadays where we lay Christians are out there at the frontiers, in the front positions- we are there in the family, at our places of work, in politics, in the economy, in our trade unions, in cultural life with all its ramifications.

To make possible a truly evangelising lay protagonism they recognise that 'we must have a constant promotion of the laity, free from all clericalism and one that is not reduced to an intra-ecclesial presence (97). This declaration is new and important: it points to an explicit desire of the hierarchy of the continent to overcome past clerical excesses both in terms of the hierarchy and the laity which produced and still produces an immaturity in the laity and an existential displacement of the clergy. How can we do this? I think it is a challenging and long path which has to be undertaken day by day in a creative and real way, by gesture and attitudes which help us get used to working together and listening to each other, trusting each other and feeling that Church matters and those of the world are 'ours' and challenging each other to live out communion in a diversity of vocations. If this is put into practice the face of our Church would change dramatically as would its missionary impact on the structures of our society. What a huge challenge!

b. Sanctity and formation. They highlight that 'urgent efforts are needed within the framework of

ecclesial communion, to seek the sanctity of lay Christians and the carrying out of their mission' (97) because the call to sanctity is directed by Our Lord to all Christians in an equal way. Sanctity and mission are inseparable and they nourish each other. Mission sanctifies and sanctity gives dynamic and makes mission bear fruit. To support this, they call for the implementation of suitable means which will promote gradual and permanent *formation* in lay Christians. Also an authentic *experience of God* which is the only thing that can convert them into protagonists of this new Evangelisation with the force of the Risen Lord.

c. Lay Organisation. Since they believe that an organisation of lay faithful to reinforce the life of the Church - Communion - is very important and which will lead to co-responsibility in Mission they propose:

- **Pastoral Councils** which encourage the participation of the laity at different levels of the ecclesial structure so that they are not just acting at intra-ecclesial levels and which will encourage them to move into various socio-cultural

environments so that they can be protagonists of the transformation of society in the light of the Gospels and the social doctrine of the Church. (No.98)

- **Lay Councils** which are in full communion with pastors and which have sufficient autonomy; these will be places of meeting, dialogue, formation and service which will help strengthen the unity, spirituality and organisation of a vibrant laity. According to *Christifideles Laici*, these councils should be established in each diocese and in the Episcopal Councils and that they should take in the Lay Groups and Associations and also the laity who are not in such apostolic groups (No.98). However, the formation of these Councils has been difficult, in spite of the fact that they were deemed necessary. In many places they are in their infancy and not sure what to do and in others they have fallen apart due to a lack of interest by the clergy; in other places they provide good service to the local Church.

d. Lay Movements and associations. They recognise that these lay Associations and



Movements in the Church are a gift of the Holy Spirit— so that the Church can meet the challenges of the modern world in a more effective way. They recognise, with the Second Vatican Council and *Christifideles Laici*, that these groups are legitimate and necessary for the life of the Church. They declare it is important to accompany them in a more clearly defined process of inculturation into the local Churches and encourage them to live with a more clearly defined Latinamerican profile. They express the desire that they are coordinated into the Pastoral Councils and that they respond to the need for a greater presence of the faith in social life. (No. 102) These directions are very important and must be taken into

account by the lay Movements and Associations. Each one of them could open new ways towards a greater ecclesial communion which could revitalise the Church and make it more holy and missionary.

In the Santo Domingo Conference the Latinamerican Church announced that it wanted to begin a new era under the 'sign of hope'. This hope implied an active defence of the future of life amid the many areas of need in our peoples. And the Lay Movements and Associations are invited by God and by the Bishops to work so that this hope may come alive, that it might become a truth in this life. We are called to be agents of evangelisation and incarnation of Jesus Christ in all the countries which make up our continent and beyond it too. This is a wonderful invitation - it is one to convert the personal and collective consciences of men and women of our times. And personal and collective conversion is, in actual fact, one of the main objectives of the Lay Movements and Associations.

The apostolic witness of an Association or Movement can be much more visible and influential

at the level of society than at the level of one person only. And the union and collaboration of various Movements in a common task and a public one could be an ecclesial service of enormous richness. This could have endless and unsuspected possibilities for cultural, social and political changes which are desirable - for the conversion of modes of judgement and collective customs. Lay Movements and Associations could become a very rich source of seeds of evangelisation for cultures and the spreading within various cultures of the Good News which is the Risen Jesus, Who wishes to spread His Kingdom by using us. The Bishops note that 'there are cases when a shared faith can bring about a Christian sharing of goods and this can be the first step towards an economy of solidarity.' (102) What a challenge for the Movements and Associations!

They conclude that 'a well-structured laity and one that has

Lay Movements and Associations could become a very rich source of seeds of evangelisation for cultures and the spreading within

permanent formation and is mature and committed is a sign of special Churches which have taken very seriously the commitment to the New Evangelisation' (no.103).

5. Communion Church for Mission

After Vatican II and with the drive to revitalise the ecclesiology of the Communion in the Church of the People of God, the flowering of lay conscience has been lived out with great passion at world level. Sometimes there have been great sources of emotional energy which have blocked discernment. With the euphoria of these new emphases there has been joy and sorrow, there has been a rebirth which is both real and at the same time difficult, which has passed through each Parish, each Movement or Association and each diocese. It has been hard for some Christians, both clergy and laity to overcome former attitudes towards the clergy and many people try to overcome these in too simplistic a way and fall into an over-emphasis on the laity and there distances can be formed, trenches can be dug which separate us. You often hear words such as 'this belongs to the clergy and this to the laity' and these words express a hidden

desire to perpetuate this separation. We focus more on what divides us than on what unites us at the enormous cost of lessening the force of our missionary community and leave the world without the Good News which God Himself had entrusted to us.

Society today greatly needs that our word of hope bursts forth as a response to the reality in which our world is living and that it should express needs which have been discovered, reflected upon, prayed about and discerned. In order to speak this word to the world we, the laity, must hear the voice of our pastors within the church and the pastors must hear the voice of the laity because the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit are present in all who have been baptised. And if we truly desire to evangelise the world with the Good News which Our Lord had entrusted to us, let us not silence His voice within the church by not listening to each other when we speak out.

The apostolic force of the whole Church depends on the deep living out of communion which implies in turn participation, co-responsibility and the necessary autonomy of the laity within it. And it is essential that we seek out

the structures which will bring about a greater and better ecclesial communion. It will be necessary to become, as a result of the ties of communion which we set up, a loving place where the incarnation of the Son of God is more visible and this to save the world. And it will be necessary to respond to the calls of the Spirit taking all the steps which will lead to the forming of a 'body' which will be able to serve in a more evangelical manner.

It will also be necessary to reflect upon the role which suits the various possible communion structures and how we will give incentives to and encourage the formation of mission of all in the church, pastors and laity who, when they interact, can evangelise each other. The vitality of the Church as the Body of Christ depends on the vitality of its cells; the church, as a social body must continually seek out the structures which will help it to grow in communion and in service of the world. And in this search it is very important that we all take part with great conviction - those of us who belong to associations, communities, and pastoral groups etc. It is only by organising ourselves in close communion of

hierarchy-laity that we will be able to face up to the numerous needs and challenges which the world will put our way. But we will never forget that organisation only serves if it is at the service of a better and more missionary ecclesial communion; if that is not the case, it has lost its significance.

The needs for the organisation of lay Christians in order to carry out mission have not always been well presented due to pressures to change everything and have not always been properly understood by the hierarchy and this has also been a source of friction and pain. Also, lack of trust among the laity themselves and also among the various Associations and Movements have produced bitter divisions which are often caused by those who feel that the only way to respond to Our Lord is the way that they propose.

As far as the Lay Associations and Movements are concerned, the great call of God Our Father is to evangelise the millennium which is beginning under the leadership of our pastors. Today, this call is, for the Lay Movements and Associations of Latin America our deepest reason for living, our privilege and that which justifies

our existence. As we evangelise, we will evangelise ourselves because our faith grows the more we share it. And we share it with an evangelical way of life, with a word which proves our hope, with a loving and imaginative service which goes out to meet the needs of the people and of the society we encounter every day. We do it imitating Christ, having a clear option for the poor and at the service of what life brings us and of our families.

Regarding how we will deepen our missionary communion in the future, today we have more questions than answers. And it is quite normal to have more questions than answers in a world that is constantly changing and in a Church that is called to bring the good news to that world. If these questions were not rising up that would mean we were stagnating, we were 'cosy', nothing disturbed us. We thank God that things are not like that and that we have lots of questions to ask and that in spite of all our ambiguities and infidelities we feel the challenge to grow as the Body of Christ in mission.

Some of the ways that we can express our co-responsibility and

autonomy as lay-associates in the Church would be organising ourselves in a more efficient way to live out missionary communion, to proclaim the good news and to take into our own hands all that evangelising cultures and bringing the Gospels deep into these cultures entails. In that way we can be the protagonists - that is to say we can be in the front positions to bring the Gospels to all frontiers of human existence and to all frontiers of society.

In Chile, the Church of Santiago ended the century and the millennium with a Synod at which the presence of the laity was important and dialogue was present during all stages and where the responsibility of the Bishop as guarantor of communion was highlighted. I think that this was a serious attempt to search together for a way to bring about a community for mission, a serious attempt to become a Church more in keeping with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and for that reason a church with greater potential for dialogue and a missionary church both within itself and within today's world. And we listened to the cry of the poor and the outcast, we listened

to the call that we should not remain as a 'cosy' community safely wrapped up in our traditional ways of doing things but that we should open our hearts with greater pity towards all those in need. We should dare to denounce with the prophetic word all injustices and inequalities of our society. We should do this with a style that is more evangelical and less clerical.

All the documents of our hierarchy encourage us to consider ourselves to be and feel that we are Church and to be responsible for this.

Nevertheless in the day-to-day running of things there will be all kinds of tensions which we will all feel and suffer within the church. These are birth pangs which will later give birth to a more evangelical Church, one which is more in keeping with the heart of our Lord. We must be alert in the midst of those tensions and listen, evaluate and discern the ways and life forces which lie behind the tensions. Some of these tensions are:

We listened to the cry of the poor and the outcast... we should open our hearts with greater pity towards all those in need

- Hierarchy-laity tensions, which can lead to clergy and lay excesses.
- Man-woman tensions which can lead to excessive behaviour from both sexes.
- Tensions which arise from different ecclesial emphases.
- Tensions which arise from different apostolic approaches
- Tensions between pastoral territory and lay associations
- Tensions between too much authority and shared responsibility.

It is good to be aware that these tensions and any others which might present themselves to us can be means of growth if they are well directed and that they can be causes of stagnation and division if they are badly directed. Serious discernment of these forces must be carried out and they must be viewed in the light of the Gospels and the Teachings of the Church so that there is no room for error. It is important to

highlight that which unites us - **EVANGELISING MISSION** - that we do not get tangled up in what divides us. It is important to recognise that our message will always be 'countercultural' or it will not be Christ's message and it will lose its prophetic force. We must be illuminated by the Spirit which led the Church of our times before, during and after the Second Vatican Council and will continue to do so if we are attentive to His inspirations and leading. It is important to remember that, as a Church Communion for Mission, we are sent to proclaim the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ and to seek for ways to live out and make reality our calling as brothers and sisters in Christ and sons and daughters of our One Father God; we are called to show a **meaningful and hopeful alternative way of life** for society and for today's world.

Josefina Errazuris



Translated from Spanish by *Margaret Tejerizo*

The Church of the Laity



Introduction

Many insist in today's world that the Church of this millennium is 'The Church of the Laity'. This description has been coined by religious starting from the teachings of the Church and it has for them many meanings and implications. In this present article I would like with humility and liberty to interpret that description from my own lay experience, an experience which has matured within the vocational and associative context of the Christian Life Community. I say with humility and liberty because I do not attempt to represent the laity nor do I wish to impose my particular vision or experience but I want my contribution to flow out

from my experience and reflection without having any methodological inhibitions or any paralysing fears. I am convinced that a first meaning of the expression 'The Church of the Laity' is precisely that we, the laity, have found the way and the opportunity to express ourselves in the Church, as Church, as 'Church which has become motley, one which has gone beyond herself and which has been challenged by life itself. I also take on board that the expression 'the laity' is a very wide one and it includes very different people and people who bring with them very diverse histories of their faith. That which they have in common is the Christian seal of their baptism which draws us into paschal life and into the mission of Jesus Christ through His Church. Also what is common to all, albeit with different degrees of intensity, is the recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord and Master and a sense of belonging or of strong connection to the Church. The union with Jesus is born and grows within us by means of the Church and the union with the Church matures and is nourished from union with Jesus. If

at times we feel distanced from or cold in our relationship with the Church it may be because the Church has not led us closely enough towards Jesus and in that case He has not

been able to send us back empowered towards the Church. The indissoluble union between Christ and His Church is not a matter of words; it is an undertaking which as

Christians we live out in our struggles and contradictions, in our acts of rebellion, in our searches for farther-flung frontiers and in our apostolate. It is also a grace which we live out with joy and plenitude in the liturgy, in prayer and in mystery.

**Jesus Christ
wants to call all
peoples to
Himself, men
and women
of all ages
and social
conditions to be
with Him
and to work
with Him**

1. The Challenge of Including

The Church of the Laity means, to a certain extent, 'The Church of Including', or, to put it another way, 'The Church of not Excluding'. Jesus Christ wants to call all peoples to Himself, men and women of all ages and social conditions, to be with Him and to

work with Him. Ecclesial communion cannot be constructed as something which excludes many people or which allows many people to feel excluded. We have to live out a Church which surprises itself, a Church which is recognised not only by the brilliant and shining fruits of sanctity but, above all, in the day-to-day struggles of the poor, of the young, of women who are alone, of families experiencing difficulties or which are broken etc. We, the laity, who are the Church, we have to be able to recognise and to proclaim Jesus Christ and His Gospel not as set of prohibitions, interruptions, regulations, dictates or marginal statements but as a word of life in a real situation which is being lived through, like a discrete and unconditional means of being there, of accompanying. The image of the good Christian – and of the Church – must be less stereotypical, more dynamic and capable of discovering the good within people even in the midst of the darkest situations. We have to be able to live out a greater pluralism and display a greater tolerance but with a positive note; the more restricted our sphere of operation becomes, the more we marginalize. I also believe that our

education, Church education, should be less segregated, more plural and vulnerable and produce fruits of greater social integration. One of the great virtues of the Gospels is that they include and integrate and we must do so too. We must convince ourselves that each one of us 'becomes' more Church and 'makes' more Church when we move out to meet those who are different, when we welcome and do not judge. The image of 'the rotten apple' holds no weight among human beings and so we should rather cultivate that of 'the damaged icon'. We have to feel a happiness when, as a team, we restore damaged icons, icons which, albeit hidden behind the degradation produced by many trials and tribulations, retain their original beauty; this may be recuperated after much delicate and painstaking work, with brushstrokes which remove the dirt and give back the original form.

When we do this, we ourselves will also grow, the Church will grow and Christ's Kingdom will move forward. What a different image this is to the one of 'the rotten apples'! May God find us inviting, including and restoring

and not choosing the nice apples while rejecting the 'rotten, ugly ones'! In situations of sin we must not see only the individual sinner but also the social and ecclesial sin just as Ghandi punished himself when his son fell into sin. Our penitential acts must take all that has been noted above into account.

2. The Challenge of a Change of Mentality or Paradigm in Formation

The Church of the Laity to a certain extent signifies a change in



direction and of focus as regards access to the truth and therefore in the exercising of the teachings and in the styles and plans for formation. Truth exists, we long for it, we seek it out and we are not satisfied with some relativism or

opportunism which distorts the truth as it pleases. And so we need teachings. But this is not about some truth which descends heavily towards people from above, like some excellent preaching, and with the movement 'from above to below' which might be experienced by a person as a kind of pressure. It is the person who moves upwards, from his/her situation, towards the truth, having been attracted by it and not pressurized by it; this movement will be 'from below to above' by means of experience, reflection and in company. What we therefore need are not good preachers or defences but good companions along the way to truth; these companions will offer their unconditional presence, empathy and solidarity.

God's definitive strategy was not that of the tablets of the Law given on the top of a mountain to a man who would then bring them down to the people. No; the definitive strategy was that of the incarnation of God Himself, to come to seek the human experience and to make this grow, to make it climb the Mountain of the Transfiguration but not stay there. And, in addition, the strategy was that of the total death of the word and of the total eloquence of the cross and the resurrection.

3. The Challenge of a Lay Teaching which invites Dialogue and becomes Incarnate.

As a corollary of what was noted above, Church of the Laity means the appearance or recognition of lay teaching. I do not wish to establish any kind of opposition between the hierarchy and the laity. I simply affirm that we, the laity, do have our own teaching which does not ignore that of the hierarchy but which complements it, humanizes it, brings it closer to life, makes problems for it, enriches it with wise advice which comes from life itself. Maybe there will be some who might wish to say to me that it might also degrade it, water it down or confuse it, etc. And yes, that may be so, but in general, among Catholics the first description predominates because our judgements will always be positive and our efforts will be to integrate and not to seek confrontations. But, as I have commented above, integration does not mean letting a philosophical-theological-spiritual 'brick' fall down on everyday life from above to below to pressurize and to oppress. It means, rather, attracting both intelligence and affections towards new possibilities and this can only arise from real experience, from dialogue, from the

evaluation of difficulties, from listening to criticisms both from without and from within. I would like to share with you an example which I experienced once with my son, such a great critic of the liturgy, the commandments, morality etc. I said to him: 'Son, the Church needs a Pope who keeps us united and who leads us. It needs a teaching which directs us and makes us study and reflect on matters which are not so easy that you can resolve them by yourself. It also needs a dad who can help his son to understand and who can say "Don't worry, you are exempted from this by these reasons" Yand the Church is made up of the Pope, the teaching, the dad, the son, not of only one of these alone. And also, the Pope cannot be a dad and the teaching of your dad doesn't want to turn its back on the teaching of the hierarchy of the Church... but your dad would be very opinionated if he tried to talk to you like the Pope'. In this way I have said things which might seem to go against the traditional teachings but which are very necessary and empowering from the ordinary everyday teachings of the faithful. For example, I feel that it is permissible to look at the notion of Sunday duties in a different way for young people; it's sometimes hard

for them to go Mass and get anything out of it. And so, as a dad in the Church, and not as a Church 'official', instead of going on and on about 'going to Mass on Sundays' to the point where it becomes a family conflict, I can say instead 'each time you go to Mass it is a Sunday, the Lord's Day and I wish you many Sundays in your life'. I'm telling you this not so that everyone should imitate me but to illustrate a deeper truth which each person knows how to live out.

I am helped in all of this by a conversation I had recently with an engineer who had graduated two years previously. He mentioned to me that the more he got involved with his work, he found all he had learned at University to be more incomplete and abstract. He told me that he frequently returned to matters he had studied during his University course but he now looked at these from the perspective of some real problem and that always 'something was wrong'. Sure, I said to him; now

**Lord's Spirit
is also present
in the laity
when try to live
out the
Christian life
just as this
Spirit is present
in the hierarchy.**

you are the one who is responsible for solving these real problems, drawing on your own knowledge but also using your creativity, your practical sense, judging the resources you have at your disposal, the limitations imposed by the environment and, finally, you have to take decisions. The same thing happens between the teachings of the hierarchy and that which I call the teachings of the laity. There is no opposition – they complement each other and they need each other. This becomes even stronger if we accept that the Lord's Spirit is also present in the laity when we try to live out the Christian life just as this Spirit is present in the hierarchy when they teach. In addition, one may affirm in general that neither the hierarchy nor the laity is infallible but that together we are less fallible than when we are apart and that fidelity is more important than infallibility.

4. The Challenge of the Laity as Greater Protagonists in the Church

The Church of the Laity means that the Church is also a sphere of action for the laity. The role of the laity outwith the Church is frequently highlighted - the role of the laity in the world, for example

- and this is something which is of great importance and something with which I will deal in my next article. But there may be a certain temptation lurking under the guise of goodness as regards emphasizing the role of the lay person in the world. In actual fact, one might exaggerate and say that the world belongs to the laity and the Church to religious; but we have already offered ample proof of the important role of the laity in the Church, not to mention the important contribution which religious bring to the world.

Thus, the topic of the key leading role of the laity in the Church arises



and it is Mystery, Communion and Mission. Apart from our crucially important participation in the mission of the Church to the world

- and this is something we must not give up - there is also a serious, unavoidable and inescapable responsibility of the laity within the ecclesial community. It is for this reason that we have the lengthy title of the post-synod exhortation, namely 'The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World'. It is up to us to work for a Church which is more faithful to its Founder and we must bring our teachings, our simple style of life, our gifts of prophecy, our sense of being a royal priesthood right into the very heart of the Church. We must help in the building of a Church which participates, which encourages dialogue at its centre and one which has sufficient spaces so that all the riches of the Spirit which the Lord grants to the laity may be made manifest. It is our business to bring back to the Church the criticisms we receive, together with the difficulties and contradictions we encounter in our contacts with non-believers, with the lapsed, with young people and with those who are marginalized. It is up to us to help make the organization and finances of the Church healthy, transparent, efficient and coherent. It is essential that the clergy should see the laity as adults in the faith, whose participation in the Church

should not be limited just to being participants in catechesis or in the liturgy as recipients or as monitors. And we must be fully aware too that upon this adulthood and role of protagonists which we live out at the heart of the Church will depend, for the most part, our credibility in the eyes of the world, at the heart of which we live out our special situation as lay Christians; we cannot witness to the world about things which we avoid or put off in the Church. All of this supposes not only the creation of new spaces and new styles of doing things and a new sense of life in the Church but it also supposes the we, the laity, assume our adulthood and role as protagonists within it and that we devote our energies, efforts, talents and resources etc to the Church. However, all these statements I have made cannot be analysed or lived out either from the standpoint of adolescents who seek self affirmation or from the standpoint of social vindication. All of this should arise from a love of the Church which we see as joined to Christ in a way that can never be dissolved. There is no sense of a destructive haste but one of a process, a sense of growing with Christ. And we know very well that the Church moves slowly and that

her pace does not only depend on us. Closely bound to the very heart of the Church, we, the laity must rise and walk forth to explore its frontiers and to open out new possibilities. We must also bring our dreams for our Church and work within it so that these might come true. We already do this partly in some of our associations and in some parishes but these

must be subjected to permanent discernment to be certain that they are genuine expressions of Our Lord's Spirit in the Church and that they have sufficient means of communication with the wider 'fabric' of the Church.

José Reyes

Translated from Spanish by
Margaret Tejerizo

Helpers of Christ, Companions in Work and Adults in the Church

We are lay Christians, in the Church of Jesus Christ and trying to share in His mission. We are laity not only because we have a relationship with Jesus Christ but because we have a relation with the Church and because the quality of our presence in the world is marked by this double relationship.

The Relationship with Jesus Christ

As lay people we are, above all else, partners, friends, helpers and companions of Jesus. In the words of St. Paul we can express this as follows: 'You ought to consider yourselves simply as Christ's helpers, who have been instructed to teach the secrets of God's plan' (1 Corinthians 4,1). Or, to borrow another Pauline expression, we can say that we are 'companions in work who are in the service of God'. (1 Corinthians 3,9)

We, as lay Christians, are disciples of Christ who long to be with Him,

to contemplate Him, to listen to Him, to understand His message and to spread this everywhere. We want to be His helpers, to assist souls, as St. Ignatius would have it, so that many people, ourselves included, may get to know and go deeply into those 'secrets of God's plan'. In this way we are encouraged to teach others - to teach our children, our friends, our colleagues, our brothers and sisters in the faith, our partners, our bosses, our workers, our patients, our clients etc. We do this with gestures, with our style of life, with the careful, quiet word. Together with Jesus, we gradually

You ought to consider yourselves simply as Christ's helpers, who have been instructed to teach the secrets of God's plan

learn that the secrets of God are not taught in a vacuum but to real people whom we encounter by chance or whom we meet in special places moving out from a complex

and dynamic reality. Jesus knows that with time, a rich tradition is accumulated which includes the purest secrets of God but He knows too that with time 'rubbish' can be collected, extra things which are not needed and useless additions. His

style and His teachings, therefore, are sober, basic, discrete and free. As lay people, if we want to be His helpers, we must put His style into practice; there is no need of lengthy discourses, we must be with people in their real settings. We must contemplate a Jesus Who did not turn His back on any human reality; He freely took part in celebrations, feasts, outings, journeys, funerals, polemics, fasts, ceremonies and many other activities. He mixed and mingled with all sorts of people and this fell outside of the main ideology of His times, showing a special preference for the poorest and those in greatest need. For those of us who are teachers, the word 'helper' which St. Paul uses has a very special and precise meaning: it means to try to illustrate and make available to the learner the complex truth which the Master teaches. For Ignatius of Loyola 'helping souls' signified helping real people on their way to God. I really like this Pauline definition which I apply to the laity; we are 'simply Christ's helpers' in the knowledge that He is the Master, He is the one who changes hearts - we do not do this.

Taking now the other quotation from St. Paul mentioned at the beginning we can say that as lay Christians we are also apostles: we walk with

Jesus through modern 'synagogues, towns and castles' (Spiritual Exercises 91), as 'companions of work in the service of God'. In the words of today we would say that we walk with Jesus in the midst of temporal things (LG 31) and in the midst of the ecclesial community (LG 32). In actual fact Jesus walked through towns and castles - today we'd say through cities, suburbs and



townships, shopping centres, places of work, civic centres etc. - and those who encountered Him were not left indifferent as a result of it. He also entered into synagogues and into the religious structures of His times, He came into contact with the authorities and the religious customs and here too he did not leave anyone indifferent. The great contribution

Jesus makes is to transform people, to heal all their different wounds and to change the focus of their attention, to make them move and make them believe. We, today's lay Christians, want to be His companions in His work of healing, of giving a meaning to life, of listening to the poor, of loosening ties which bind and of stirring people at the deepest level of their being and of challenging civic and religious authorities etc. And, in particular, when we contemplate Him on the

Cross, dying so that we might live and taking His mission of service to the ultimate limits, we accept with reverence and humility that this identity which He bestows on us may seem to contain elements of madness, of folly - but we are called to share in it (1 Corinthians 1, 18-21).

Relationship with the Church

In this journey we become brothers and sisters and we become Church. Once more, together with St. Paul, we can say that as laity we are 'those who have been consecrated to God in Jesus Christ and called to form part of His People, together

with all those who all over the world proclaim the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs' (1 Corinthians 1, 2). By our baptism we have been incorporated into the mystery of the life of Christ, which



is a Paschal mystery, and of the life of the Church which, likewise, is a Paschal mystery. Through our confirmation we have been empowered by the Spirit to participate more fully and with greater awareness in the missionary communion, which is the Church of Christ and that which continues His mission. Our experience teaches us that it is not always easy or gratifying for us to be in the Church, to love it, to respect it and to serve it. We will also see that many people tend to repeat the words which have tempted so many modern Christians: 'Yes to Christ but no to the Church'. Or, we might follow the logic of the eminent Italian author Ignacio

Silone who defines himself as '*a Communist without a Party, a Christian without a Church.*'

Lay Catholics consist of those of us who through our awareness, desire and will, want to belong to the Church alongside its hierarchy, its ordained ministers, its male and female religious and all of this together with those who have gone before us, with all the saints, male and female, including many who are unknown to us but who mysteriously are with us in the Church. We are also together with those who make us feel uncomfortable, with those who scandalise. This awareness, desire and will are all fruits of the Spirit's actions and we have been led to see and love that union which exists between Christ and His Church, a union which cannot be broken. In this way we increase our line of vision, and together with the wide, yet all-embracing image of the people, which is the one which attracts us most of all, we also know that we are body, we are structure, that we have hierarchy, teachings and an impressive diversity of charisms and ministries etc. We also know full well that a spontaneous opinion voiced suddenly by one of us does not have the same authority as a Council affirmation. We love

the Pope, we are moved by the liturgy and by some traditional devotions. Following the advice of Ignatius and although these things might go against our cultural sensibilities or our personal preferences 'we praise processions, relics, ceremonies etc'. (Spiritual Exercises 354)

All of this does not deny that as lay people we are also the ones who 'suffer' the Church most of all. We refuse to remain like children who do not grow up alongside a mother who does not grow old. With a basic sense of confidence which forms the foundation of our spiritual health we relate to Holy Mother Church like a child who is growing up and becomes an adult and we know that the mother needs her children more and more in order to live and satisfy her needs. In the initial stages, in our spiritual infancy, we listen and we believe, we accept and we do not doubt. But it is not enough for confirmed lay people (and it even annoys us) just to listen to the catechism and to sermons. We call upon the right of our adolescence which makes us rebel and lose our balance, which tends to move away from infantile certainties and go out and dare to explore new horizons and possibilities. We call upon our rights as adolescents to have a

tenacious intelligence before our mother, affections which are in disarray, emotions which quickly turn to boredom, feelings which are extremely sensitive and a sense of aesthetic dissatisfaction. In this way the moment of adulthood arrives to which we have a right, a time during which adolescent tensions will be resolved because these have been lived out fully and they have found their limits and we will be able to love this mother although we are aware of certain contradictions, exaggerations, excesses of authority and dogma etc.; we will be able to make our own decisions about our own lives without straying from fundamental things and we will be deeply reconciled with our past history and with what we have lived through and we will be able to exclaim with St. Paul that 'Christ came to set us free' (Galatians 5,1).

And the mother will become young again, she will rejoice and marvel at those adult children who love her, respect her, care for her, serve

her, ask for her advice and ask her about her past and her origins and who listen to her words. She will be happy as she sees the unbelievable fruits of her children - sometimes these fruits will be unexpected, unconventional- and she will recognise in them the same seeds, the same roots and, above all, the same potter, the same master.

And as far as the unpleasant side, the sinful side of the mother and the children is concerned, mother and children will pardon each other and this forgiveness will rise up in a spontaneous and a never-ceasing way - there will be acceptance, a healthy and real vision of things which will be tinged with humour, humility and the necessary transparency so that we ourselves and the whole world may believe in them.

José Reyes

Translated from spanish by
Margaret Tejerizo



The Mission of the Laity A Contribution from CVX



Because of the common dignity of baptism, the lay Christian has a joint responsibility, together with the clergy and religious, for the Church's mission¹. There is a starting point and a foundation which is our baptism and this brings us into the life of Christ and makes us participants in His mission. But, we all know that today we receive baptism in an unconditional way; for the most part, we are baptised in our earliest infancy and this comes to fruition in our later Christian life, in the other sacraments which belong to our more adult life and in particular through our confirmation which is the sacrament of mission and sending

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out. Thus, the laity, which has become aware of and committed to the mission of the Church and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate fully in this, need to engage in continuous reflection as to how we may live out our missionary or apostolic vocation and we also need to find help and means which will allow us to collaborate with each other and with the ordained clergy and religious.

The CVX General Principles have been written following this line of thought, in particular No. 8 which contains an excellent summary and exposition of what the Second Vatican Council teaches with regard to the apostolate of the laity. Although this text is written within the context of a special community as are many texts of the Church, nevertheless following this text might help all the laity in a general way and in particular those who follow the Ignatian way. It could also help the hierarchy and

¹ Christifidelis Laici, 15.2

religious to a greater understanding of the lay approach to the theme of mission. We shall then follow General Principle No. 8 and we will add certain pedagogical elements and directions, the fruits of discernment processes over the past years, and in this way we will enrich it.

1. In the Church we Share in the Mission of Jesus Christ:

Our mission is the mission of Jesus Christ and He Himself makes us participants in this. This is all about spreading the Good News, announcing freedom, freeing things that bind, making the blind see, proclaiming the Love of God Who fills all things with His Grace.

And we must try to do this among the men and women of today's world by our lives - preferably among the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed. Christ gives us mission, we receive it from Him, we are first and foremost His



witnesses. We are not spreading propaganda or being active about some project of our own. But we cannot 'take upon ourselves' the mission of Jesus in a triumphant and powerful way. No, Jesus enters into our lives to inspire them in a permanent way². Our life will be apostolic if '*it finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of Jesus, poor and humble*'³.

All this dynamic of knowing and loving Jesus in order to receive from Him His mission and to share in His radical options we live it as a people who are equal, as Church.

We do not live this 'in the Church'. We live this 'as Church'. We live this 'as people, becoming Church as we journey together. Communion and mission cannot be separated, just as in our spirituality contemplation and action are inseparable. And so as laity, we live out our mission '*as members of the People of God on our way*'⁴, that is to say in the company of others and within a process which has no end, a

² I expand on this theme in my article 'To be a Lay Person: Vocation and Mission, Intimacy and Extroversion'

³ CLC General Principles, No.8

⁴ *ibid.*

process or a way which has its ups and downs, its struggles, its moments of weariness, its successes and its failures, in four 'weeks' which go and then return with all their graces.

One central concern which we have is that our union with Christ and His mission brings us together as a People and does not set us apart from other men and women but, in fact, going beyond our limitations and statutes, we will be of a mind to *'collaborate in initiatives which work to unite Christians'* and to offer *'our active presence in secular or religious organisations and efforts which already exist'*⁵, united with many leaders and following the Spirit of Our Lord.

2. There are no limits or fixed territories

The field of our mission has no limits, it does not confine us to set circles or areas. In this way we are able to act both in the Church and in the world and we are even aware that the limits are not so fixed and that in today's world we are more

and more involved in our identities and relationships. There might be a slight temptation, masquerading as 'goodness', when we emphasise the role of the laity in the world. The Bishops who set up the Synod on the Laity repeated that 'the correct field of evangelising activity of the laity is the vast and complex world of politics, of social reality, of the economy; this also includes the field of culture, the sciences and the arts, international affairs, organs of social communication; there are also other realities which are especially open to evangelisation, for example, with those we love, with the family, in the education of children and adolescents, in professional work and in suffering.'⁶ But it would be an error to confine those headings to the world since they are also very relevant to the Church. Just think how in the Church we encounter serious problems about the use of money and power, about international affairs, education etc. It is a fact that the terms Church and World, while they are certainly different, cannot be kept apart because the dividing lines between them are not clear cut and they have

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

'shared areas'. The family, for example, is the 'domestic Church'...while at one and the same time it is the basic 'cell' of civic society. A Catholic School is a Church community but it is also an economic unit set within the market. A Lay Rector of a Pontifical University is an official of the Church and much more so than a priest who teaches economics in a Private University. Thus, the statements made by the Council to the effect that 'the laity have to search for the Kingdom of God through their own vocation while dealing with and ordering things of this world in God's way' or that 'the secular character belongs only to the laity and is theirs alone'⁷ (LG 31) can and should be slightly altered and completed by other statements such as: 'all that has been said about the People of God applies to the laity, to the clergy and to religious' or 'consecrated pastors are very well aware of the contribution made by the laity to the good of the whole Church'⁸.

Nor do other dichotomies, such as serving people or transforming structures, really work either. We

must see ourselves as helpers of Christ in all these things, according to our talents and discernment, collaborating with others and in the full knowledge that our action is not the definitive one since it is Our Lord who makes the conversion and Who multiplies our efforts and brings them to fruition. Lay apostolic action brings with it a dynamic of reciprocal 'appeal' between Church and society, between personal relations and social life, between science and discernment. That which truly belongs to the life of the laity is the integration of different elements and environments, a certain bilingualism which we possess when we speak the language of faith and that of science, or the language of the spirit and that of real, concrete and material 'society'.

3. There is an individual dimension which cannot be surrendered.

First and foremost we live out our mission in that which makes up each one of us and in what we do with and for others in their daily run-of-the-mill environments. Christ

⁷ Lumen Gentium, 31

⁸ Lumen Gentium, 30

calls each one of us in a personal way and our response - although it may be thought through with and empowered by the community - is always a personal one in the same way as, in the final instance, our process of growth and our vocation are. We are all individually servers ('ministers') in the mission of Christ. Generically the word 'ministry' means service and so it may be applied in a wide sense to what Christians do for the good of others both within the Church community or outside it but always moved by our sense of joint responsibility in the mission of the Church. But it is a mistake to speak only of 'doing' because in a definitive way this is about the quality of our presence and not only of our actions. For example, within our families we could live out the fact of being parents like a ministry, that is to say as a service to the mission of Christ and this will not only have to do with how we act as parents but with the entire quality of our presence and our attitude within the family, including at times what we do or even in spite of what we do (or fail to do). In education it is common to speak of 'the ministry of education', which, naturally, has

more to do with the quality and the awareness of the educator rather than with his/her specific task which is more instrumental. In a similar way we might say that in the Church we have to develop more the quality of our presence and not only what we do, what we can do or that which we are allowed to do or entrusted to do. Thus, our personal life is essentially an apostolic one even in its most humble and every day manifestations.

This personal dimension of mission is absolutely essential; it is the basic condition from which the Gospel can be spread and through which credibility may be acquired for Christians.

Our personal life is essentially an apostolic one even in its most humble and everyday manifestations

4. There is a call to action together or collaboration

Apart from this individual dimension of our mission we are called to exercise '*an organised or a group apostolate*'⁹. This is especially valid today because of the

⁹ CLC General Principles, No. 8.

complexity of the world in which we live and the problems which we face and because of the sense of impotence which often accompanies our individual efforts. But this is not just a matter of achieving a greater efficiency but of acting in the best possible way as 'being Church'. The Church - community - is built up and expresses itself through an apostolate which is made up of groups; in this way it becomes visible, believable and it becomes attractive to others. It is 'constructed' by means of that missionary communion to which Christ calls us, in that sacrament or sign which we wish to be. This is something which might seem obvious to us but which, nevertheless, is difficult because an organised apostolate supposes agreed connections with others, with structures, with long-term projects. It also supposes a sense of perseverance which goes above and beyond our personal situations, a certain amount of contact with institutions and means of participating in apostolic discernment etc. Lay people who participate in associations try

through these to develop this dimension of cooperation and organisation in our mission '*in a great variety of forms*'¹⁰. But we have to admit that not all are called to this type of association. There are two kinds of 'group' apostolate: '*to initiate and to sustain*'¹¹ which are special corporate actions or to add '*our active presence to organisations and secular or religious efforts which already exist*'¹². In the first case we will bring our leadership, we will take on as a community the full responsibility for projects or initiatives, setting up '*the adequate structures*'¹³ to guarantee their successful progress; we will engage in continuous discernment, provide sustainability and fidelity to the original apostolic criteria and values. In the second case we will bring instead our capacity for work, our time and our apostolic spirit but we will not have the final responsibility. Both cases mentioned above may be described as 'group' apostolates if we deliberately set out to work or collaborate with others and all those involved display a kind of 'lay' obedience which is not the

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

same as canonical obedience to a superior but fidelity and perseverance within an apostolic life which does not begin or end with oneself but which is lived out within an apostolic body which has great meaning for my life.

5. There are apostolic priorities and directions, a shared mission.

At this stage we might return for a moment to the question regarding the sphere of our mission as lay people. At the start we said that there are no limits, there are no frontiers and we continue to emphasise this. Now, however, after having demonstrated that the individual dimension has its prolongation in organised group action and just before we investigate more fully the meaning of being an apostolic community we can affirm that indeed certain apostolic priorities and directions can exist at the heart of a Christian community. In the case of CVX, the General Principles introduce certain priorities although some delegates at the Assembly which approved these would have preferred that they had been expressed in a wider

and less specific way. Thus, quite correctly the following priority or direction was formulated, that of *'proclaiming the Word of God to all people and to work for the reform of structures in society taking a part in the efforts to free all those who are victims of any kind of discrimination and, in particular, the suppression of all differences between the rich and the poor. We want to contribute from within to the evangelisation of cultures'*¹⁴. (GP 8) But, in addition, it has to be said that even before referring specifically to the theme of mission, the CLC General Principles at the same time as they insist upon the freedom of the Spirit, upon permanent renewal, upon the individuality of each vocation, they let slip in a few areas of mission which some would have preferred to see left out, not because these were of little importance but so that the whole area of mission could have been left open. I refer to *'progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all'*¹⁵. Naturally these are not declarations which seek to exclude or to be laborious but they are apostolic directions for the

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ CLC General Principles, No.2

community and for individuals. Quite correctly and after the experience which has been lived out, the same community would ask after 8 years have passed (Itaici 1998) about 'common mission'. Some objected to the question being posed, that is to say they challenged the possibility that a universal community could ever formulate a common mission. But nevertheless there was a movement of the Spirit in the community which asked for that step to be taken and encouraged us to discern at universal or world level a common calling. We did not know what would come of this but we did know that we might face a crisis and reach the conclusion that a common apostolic direction was not possible. We entered the process of preparation and during the Assembly a direction gradually emerged which was described as 'our common mission'¹⁶. But how to formulate a common mission for a universal community? The Spirit allowed this

to be expressed as 'three areas of mission and the supply of necessary means to accomplish them'¹⁷. When I make my own summary of this and taking into account pedagogical aims, I prefer to speak of *priorities, options, lines of action and spheres of action*. There is a diagram included at the end of this article which shows how these four components make up shared mission, one for which we are all responsible but one which does not 'tread on' either individuals or cultures. As once the Jesuits described their mission as 'the



service of faith and the promotion of justice', this world community of lay people following the Ignatian way may express itself as follows:

¹⁶ It might be useful to see the complete report from the Assembly in PROGRESSIO, No. 1-2-3-4 of 1998. 'Our Common Mission'.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.131.

- We want to bring to our social reality the liberating power of Jesus Christ
- We want to find Jesus Christ in all varieties of cultures allowing His Grace to illuminate all that needs to be transformed
- We want to live united to Jesus Christ so that He can enter into all aspects of our daily life in this world.

The similarity with what is expressed in the General Principles which we have already noted and the enormous capacity to bring together and activate movement which these three apostolic priorities possess; they, in fact, form our common mission. In another article I offer a fuller vision of the first priority and I develop from it a whole lay style of life which is founded on apostolic choices.¹⁸ And therefore, both the individual dimension and the group dimension of lay Christian mission is challenged, empowered and directed by this common mission which also sets

us up as an apostolic community in the Church.

6. There is a community function

And so in this way we reach the topic of the Apostolic Community. The individual dimension of apostolate which is a result of our union with Christ, sets us up as apostles. If, in addition, we take part in a community of faith in which we find motivation and strengthening for our individual apostolate, then we are being part of a 'community of apostles'. If we allow that community to '*spur us on*'¹⁹ and '*to help us*'²⁰ and we are involved in it '*to live out this apostolic commitment in all its different dimensions and to open ourselves up to the most urgent and universal calls*'²¹ and all this with an awareness and a wish to share responsibilities in a shared mission or in a 'common' mission, then we are being an apostolic community. The classical ways of '*examining life in common and personal and community discernment*'²² will

¹⁸ PROPHETS OF HOPE AND JUSTICE: A Look at Lay Christian Mission. (In this same series)

¹⁹ CVX General Principles, No. 8, note d

²⁰ *ibid.*, note c

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

become more and more meaningful and profound until we enter into a process in which the community at its different levels fulfils the functions of discerning - sending - supporting - evaluating. Today we have discovered that these four functions are the ones which confer both an identity and a gravitation of the apostolic community.

When a World Assembly with delegates from more than 60 countries formulates a common mission then it is the community at its world level which is fulfilling the function of discernment. When a small group of Christians in some specific city gives itself time so that each person can relate what s/he is doing and how s/he is doing it and what difficulties are being experienced then we have that same world community, now at local level, fulfilling the function of supporting and evaluating. When in one country an apostolic project or place is chosen, be this a local one or in another area, and various people are asked formally to devote both time and energies to this project or place in a systematic way, then it is the same community, which at a national

level is fulfilling the function of sending out. When after an examination of his life in the community, a young man feels confirmed in the options he has chosen and in his style of life and eager to progress and grow then it is the community at its local level which is sending this young man out to live out those options in that particular style. In a diagram recently published in *PROGRESSIO*²³ various ways are suggested through which the community at its various levels can fulfil these 4 functions of discerning - sending - supporting - evaluating, in order to live out its common mission and to integrate itself within the Church with heart and method.

When I spoke about the individual dimension of the apostolate I said that the term 'ministry' meant 'service'. Now when I speak of the function of the community from the perspective of a common mission I recall that the expression 'ministry' also carries with it the idea of a 'commission' which has been received from someone who has conferred it upon us with a certain formality, stability and

²³ *PROGRESSIO* No. 2/2004, 'The Apostolic Polynomial of CLC'

ritual. Members of CVX should have no problem in saying that *the ecclesiastical authority which sends us out is the World Christian Life Community*²⁴ through its structures and which has been adequately integrated into the Church at its different levels.

7. The Challenge and Renewal of Collaboration especially with the Society of Jesus.

A critical eye cast over what has been said thus far might observe a certain presumption or self-sufficiency. Nothing was further from my intentions and from those of the community which nurtures

As lay people we want to participate in the discernment of mission in the Church, together with others

and inspires me. The same that has been said about the individual dimension and the community dimension of lay mission has to be said in a similar

way taking a particular community as individual in relation to the Church as universal community. In

the same way as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a dimension of individual apostolate are indispensable, it is also indispensable that each community should have a group life together with its own commitments. In the same way as individuals come together through a sense of spiritual affinity in order to express the reality of the Church as the body of Christ in a more effective way and to be more efficient in their mission so too communities which have a spiritual affinity should come together to become 'more Church' and also to become more efficient in their service. As noted above, something which appears obvious is not so easy. Delicate subjects are touched upon in a tangential way, such as those of authority and power in the Church, that of the tension between the missionary community and the 'organic' community, that of the collaboration at the heart of the church between and among the various charisms. As lay people we want to participate in the discernment of mission in the Church, together with others and

²⁴ I am summarising General Norm 32 which refers to the authority which officially approves a national community.

also to assume the consequences of this discernment in terms of receiving commissions from or being sent out by the apostolic community in its multiple forms. One does not function without the other and we have to move forward with this knowledge.

We have a special interest in particular as regards the relationship with the Society of Jesus. This is a matter of loyalty, coherence, affection, efficiency - all of which are linked to the very best of our shared traditions. It is a matter of Church, of what we bring to the Body of Christ from the specific grace which we share - namely that of the Spiritual Exercises. There are many ways through which this collaboration can occur and develop, and we are learning about these from our experiences. In some places the Society of Jesus is talking of 'a new apostolic subject' in order to refer to what might happen if the theme of collaboration were to be taken seriously. Although this term has not yet been well defined, some lay people - those who have been called together - see this as a new point of reference which, in a certain manner, would link the laity to the Society of Jesus as regards mission and apostolic planning of the

Society, fulfilling in this the functions of discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating. We know from what has already been discussed in this article and in others in this same series that the mission of lay Ignatian individuals or of the Ignatian Community CVX cannot be defined through or as a function of the mission of the Society of Jesus. Nevertheless, because of our shared identity and because we believe in collaboration, we are called to participate as community with lucidity and generosity in order to build up and develop this new point of reference in the frame of mission of the Church in which we are all participating. In practice, what has tended to predominate has been a somewhat individual participation of the laity - some CVX members - who have discovered here a way to empower and fill with meaning their work with or voluntary attachment to some apostolic work of the Society of Jesus. Also, as individuals, some lay people who have been chosen by the Society are linked to them in a closer way - even in a legal way - and the point is reached where they are accepted by the Society in a special way while they are not members of the Society and they are open to receiving 'commissions' from the

superiors. Other lay people who carry out their apostolic work out with specifically Ignatian works and without being members of any special community, can receive support, inspiration and even sending out from this new point of reference mentioned above. Many of these lay people are members of the Christian Life community but their membership acquires new nuances which we still have not been able to take in and assume in a satisfactory way but I believe that these things have been prepared for CVX in their Principles and General Norms. They too have to continue bringing their experience as members of CVX to these new possibilities although it has to be recognised that for some people this will mean the end of their belonging to CVX.

When we generalise this movement we could state that in a new and different and promising manner - if this is all carried out in a mature way - emphasis and leadership are again being placed on to the religious communities who are, in the final instance, the ones who will control and develop the greater part of the initiatives and who will take the greatest number of decisions and the laity can be seen in relation to them but not necessarily grouped

amongst themselves or grouped in a functional way around apostolic works or sections. This is the new concept of the Web, so connected with our latest times. This is a powerful concept which with differing topologies associates many people in liberty and with a pragmatic vision and does not set up cumbersome structures. People connect to this Web according to their needs and they switch off from it as they wish but the Web is powerful because it integrates efforts, it forces new identities to come to maturity and it encourages a new sense of belonging which probably has much to do with the future of the Church. The implications which this new model has for our spiritual, community and apostolic lives can be very wide ranging and we must bring matters for general reflection with openness and even give up old ways if we see the action of the Spirit in that which is new. A new way of being Church is coming into being but we have not yet formulated the theology which will sustain it, in particular the theology of the laity which lies at its very base.

José Reyes.

October 2004, revised in January 2005

Translated from Spanish by
Margaret Tejerizo

The Mission of CLC A Synthesis Starting with Itaicí 98
*(To inspire National and Regional Councils,
 local communities and individual members)*

Priorities	Options	Ideas for action	Place for Action
We want to bring to our social reality the liberating power of Jesus Christ.	➤ To participate in the prophetic posture of the Church, to be prophets of hope and justice, to go against the current. ➤ To make serious analyses, to adopt responsible and effective attitudes relating to poverty and its causes and to the structures of sin. ➤ Assuming the perspective of the poor, going to meet them and to participate in their struggles. ➤ Examining our own lives from these perspectives: a simple lifestyle, a spirit of solidarity, the refusal of consumerism, working against greed. ➤ Learning and contributing to discernment, dialogue and the capacity to listen ➤ Encouraging and supporting one another in these options. ➤ Bearing witness to our vocation as individuals and as a community.	➤ Initiating social action, being social entrepreneurs. ➤ Participating in national and international forums ➤ Participating actively in economic, social and political structures. ➤ Having a program of action and of training for action. ➤ Promoting experiences of integration ➤ Sharing the wealth of the Spiritual Exercises in all circumstances of life. ➤ Working in networks of collaboration. - Working in union with the Society of Jesus.	➤ Diverse political and economic structures ➤ International life ➤ The business world ➤ The international debt ➤ The integrity of creation ➤ The quality of family, work, ecclesial, social relationships, etc. ➤ Education ➤ Refugees ➤ NGOs

Priorities	Options	Ideas for action	Place for Action
We want to find Jesus Christ in all the various cultures allowing His grace to illuminate all that needs transformation.	➤ Hating the sin characteristic of each culture that breaks people and divides communities, developing critical capacities and the value of going against the current. ➤ Valuing the uniqueness of local cultures, enriching oneself with their unique contributions, with the local symbolism and creativity; seeking the positive integration of various cultures without seeking the uniformity that destroys the uniqueness and characteristics that each one can contribute. ➤ Allowing Christ to manifest Himself through respect, dialogue and the transformation of the negative, in the multiplication of good, and in concern for the human community which often asks us to go beyond our limited horizons.	➤ Using effectively the mass media, using them extensively in order to communicate our faith and the values that we defend. ➤ Sharing with those who are different in order to learn how to serve, give and receive. ➤ Seeking better forms of education in values. ➤ Accompanying the various stages of life and their cultural manifestations, especially among the youth. ➤ Furnishing abilities for dialogue, commitment and reconciliation. ➤ Being involved in the search for a new way of being a universal Church, one that welcomes cultural diversity.	➤ The Mass Media Instances of social dialogue ➤ Manifestations of local cultures ➤ Production of symbols, iconography, etc. ➤ Youth culture Interreligious or ecumenical dialogue ➤ Theological reflection Liturgy ➤ Pastoral and catechetical inculturation.

Priorities	Options	Ideas for action	Place for Action
	➤ Opposing tendencies such as individualism, marginalization, consumerism while on the other hand promoting tendencies like dialogue, concern for human rights, the affirmation of life, etc. ➤ Contributing to the search for meaning, in active hope, in dialogue, in reconciliation, in the integration of faith and life. ➤ Practising all the above-mentioned also in the Church: living internal and external dialogue, promoting the positive and challenging the negative in the local churches, healing the wounded, seeking authentic human relationships, transforming the structures of sin, etc.		
	➤ To seek and find to God in all the things, that our CLC vocation comes in contact with, all that we do in our daily life.	➤ Being a community of faith that is lay and Ignatian in mission Having special care for the poor and the excluded.	➤ Daily effort ➤ Work and the profession ➤ Human relationships

Priorities	Options	Ideas for action	Place for Action
We desire to live together with Jesus Christ so that He can enter into all the aspects of our ordinary life in the world.	➤ To give value to daily life as an opportunity to serve and to grow. ➤ Supporting the human person, creating authentic personal relationships, living a healthy affectivity, welcoming and valuing, including and not excluding. ➤ Promoting a family life in which authentic relationships mature in the couple, between parents and children, and between generations. ➤ Offering the wealth of our faith, striving to make the way of Jesus Christ attractive and challenging for youth. ➤ Valuing work and the dignity of the worker. ➤ Overcoming the frequent distance between our faith commitment and our professional activities and labors.	➤ Fomenting a Christian and critical understanding of contemporary problems such as globalization, the environment, militarization. ➤ Accompanying youth ➤ Accompanying couples ➤ Looking after the family in all its manifestations, especially looking after those who suffer division or brokenness. ➤ Bringing discernment into marriage and family life. ➤ Fighting against unemployment and low wage earning ➤ Fighting against consumerism, the obsession for gains, etc.	➤ Development and affective life ➤ A critical capacity in the face of facts ➤ The couple, the family and the youth ➤ Intergenerational dialogue ➤ A Style of life ➤ Christian initiation of youth.

Translated from Spanish by *Theresa Cademartori*

THE APOSTOLIC POLYNOMIAL OF CLC

Discern - Send - Support - Evaluate



This polynomial of four words has arisen in the recent history of CLC and has great apostolic force. It is not 4 successive steps that should occur in each community meeting. Neither is it a series of four words with a vague content that can stop our spontaneity. It implies four functions that fulfill the community on its different levels making it a true apostolic body.

I offer the following structure: it doesn't exhaust the topic but it has the merit of being synthetic. It will be completed and enriched by various contributions, and I believe that it is already necessary to add two more columns: one on means and another on the personal level.

Function	In the World Community - National - Regional Group	In the local community or group
Discern	• Study the reality • Bring together the experiences • Formulate orientations and apostolic priorities • Guide the processes • Communicate with the Church • Identify places, works, milieu, relationships.	• Welcome the orientations and apostolic priorities • Share individual experiences about them • Listen to the Word of God • 10. Contemplate Jesus in Action • Share the spiritual movements • Clarify what we have heard and experienced • Ask what we will do about it. • Take out personal or communities conclusions
Send	• Confirm (or not) initiatives and apostolic formal commitments. • Assure and organize a presence of CLC members in the different places or works identified • Cover the whole range of orientations and apostolic priorities	• Confirm (or question) personal options in the ordinary environment • Connect the experiences of the members with the apostolic priorities (publish and print the apostolic commitment of each member).

Function	In the World Community - National - Regional Group	In the local community or group
	• 4. Establish bonds with the hierarchical Church and with the Society of Jesus regarding missions entrusted to some members.	
Support	• Give spiritual, intellectual, apostolic and human formation • Connect efficiently to members apostolically authorized • Create structures of support • Contribute leadership, vision. • Disclose documents, possibilities for obtaining assistance, etc. • Go beyond CLC for apostolic collaboration with others	• Welcome and accompany concrete difficulties, personal necessities, depressions, questions. • Give members what they individually need: advice, encouragement, specific help, confirmation, etc. • Pray for each one and for their mission • Study and deepen some specific aspects according to the needs
Evaluate	• Promote and guide self-evaluation and self-criticism on apostolic efficacy within CLC • Gather and systematize successful or failed experiences • Study the criticisms coming from the Church, the Society of Jesus and other associations • Prepare and point out good examples of evaluation, discernment and projection • Set objective parameters for the apostolic commitment of CLC and its members.	• Practice giving advice and fraternal correction • Make known the background and give input to the leaders or commissions on the regional or national levels • Value the apostolic life of each member with a grateful attitude • Continuously refocus on our goals in function of the apostolic life of the members and of CLC

José Reyes
Vice-President World ExCo

Being Laity: Vocation and Mission²⁵

Intimacy and Extroversion

When referring to the laity we have been accustomed to talk about "vocation" and "mission" in an almost inseparable way. Similarly, we talk about the laity "in the Church" and "in the world," that is, of the "vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world." In doing so we must admit that intimacy and extroversion are not successive steps but circular, or rather go "in spirals." They are two lines of the Christian life that are inseparable and that feed each other mutually. Thus we could talk about "Apostolic Prayer," or the "Prayerful Apostolate." We could speak of "being with Jesus" or of being "sent by him,"²⁶ or of spirituality and ethics²⁷, of call and response. In short, being laity is a matter of developing a "style of life coherent and consistent with the received life of grace."²⁸

In the gospel there are many passages that help to understand the inseparability of these two



dimensions. I suggest taking John 15,1-17: the parable of the vine and the branches. The main verbs are "produce (fruits)" and "remain," or

²⁵ Taken from a conversation with the author to CLC Chile.

²⁶ Cf. Mk 3, 14: "He appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach".

²⁷ See Mifsud, Tony: "Ethical Focus of Ignatian Spirituality", in PROGRESSIO, Supplement N1 58, p 38 - 61.

²⁸ *ibid*, p 45

synonyms of these in different conjugations. "I am the vine and you the branches." The branches give fruit if they remain united to the vine. "Without me you can do nothing." We remain in Jesus, and Jesus remains among the people through us. Remain in me... bear fruit... the fruit remains (v16).

There is certainly a tension between prayer and apostolate, between remaining and bearing fruit, between calling and answering. But it is a constructive tension which sometime seems to be in opposition only because of our immaturity or historical errors. It has been said in the past and sometimes we ourselves say this: that either we chose the life of prayer - separated from the world [contemplative] - or we chose life in the world, apostolic, active. Jesus did not agree with that dichotomy. His mission flowed from his prayer, his prayer gave it dynamism and launched him into the world. The world caused feelings and movements that made him turn towards his Father in prayer.

When one contemplates the hidden life of Jesus, from the annunciation to the baptism in the Jordan²⁹, there

are many great graces which move us deeply. The Trinity is touched when looking at the divided world and from its infinite unity decides to tear itself apart, "separating" the second person. Jesus, the second person, whose mission is nothing less than the redemption of the world, is made small and vulnerable: He takes risks, receives threats and passes difficult tests. There is Herod and his sinister plans, the exile in Egypt, the austere intimate life of the family of Nazareth. What happened to Jesus during those years? The contemplation of the hidden life leads me to think that what happened is that Jesus, by means of prayer, is growing, becoming conscious of His mission, and restoring the Trinitarian unity that was willingly divided in the decision of the annunciation. The familiarity of Jesus with the psalms and the Scriptures cannot be explained otherwise. Surely little by little Mary told him of the annunciation of the Angel, the Virgin Conception, His birth in Bethlehem, the shepherds, the magi, Simeon, the visit to Elizabeth, etc., everything with simple words. Wisdom grew little by little in the

²⁹ Sp.Ex. 262 - 273

boy, according to His age. From these concrete stories He moved slowly to accept their meanings. These latter gather momentum in the episode of Jesus at twelve years of age: Jesus leaves childhood, searches for formation. He must have sustained long conversations with wise men as well as His parents. He must have done much reading. The stories that His mother related to Him, His reading of the psalms and Scriptures, the atmosphere of the Jewish town, everything was brought together for the grace of God. I believe that at some moment, or in various moments, He had "visions," insights we would say today, as Ignatius did in the Cardoner. Being God, He left God in order to be man... being man, He received the grace of God in order to return to Him bringing humanity with Him. In short, grace permitted Jesus to make connections, to be conscious of His mission, because of the intimate union He had with His Father. In His young mind and heart He was disturbed by many discoveries, and with emotion He recognized the Spirit which bound Him more and more to the Father. All Christian adolescents have had spiritual emotions, and "insights." Jesus certainly was no different. At this time deep in His heart, there was

stirring the truth He would later proclaim: "I and my Father are one." There are other sentences that indicate this growing consciousness of Jesus regarding His mission and his fundamental unity with the Father:

John 6, 57: "I have life because of the Father"

John 6, 27: "On whom God the Father has set his seal"

John 5, 19: "The Son cannot do anything by himself"

John 5, 20: "The Father loves the Son and everything the Father does He shows him."

John 4, 26: "I who speak to you am he [the messiah]"

John 4, 36: "The reaper and the sower"

John 8, 14: "I know where I came from and where I am going"

For Jesus, growing in grace is establishing intimate relationships with the Father, "reestablishing the Trinitarian unity," that for a time seemed broken in order to be given to mankind.

In spite of the fact that at twelve years old, an age in which religious obligations began, He declares that He must dedicate Himself to "the things of the Father," Jesus still waits for about

18 years more. He does not fall into the temptation of being a boy prodigy, in spite of impressing everyone. He knows that He has to grow in intimacy with the Father



and be formed humanly and socially. His options were maturing in prayer. Reading Ezekiel and Isaiah he opted for less rigorous or legalistic thoughts, more centered on the conversion of hearts, giving up the messianic current which was more political.³⁰

In prayer He discerned spirits: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, against the yeast of Herod" (Mk 8,15). Jesus must have read the messianic texts of Isaiah and Ezekiel (contemplate in prayer the Heart of Jesus reading Is 52ff, or Ez 36ff) given that He was moved by them in the beginning. He had to question whether they referred to Him and His mission. For example, these texts:

Is 42, 1: "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am well pleased upon whom I have put my Spirit..."

Is 42, 6: "I, Yahweh, have called you for the victory of justice; I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from

³⁰ Mk 3,5: "deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts", or Mk 7,6: "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites"

their confinement, and from the dungeon those who live in darkness."

After much reading and many hours of prayer, Jesus arrives at the conclusion that these prophecies refer to Him. Youthful Jesus, young adult, mature man, he decides that He is the Messiah. He proclaims it at the beginning of his preaching: "Today this prophecy has been completed." and He says to the woman at the well: "I am He." The baptism in the Jordan is the result of a discernment: Jesus is a humble Messiah who is inserted into history; he inaugurates a new stage, however he does not feel as if He is a founder. The explicit presence of the Father and of the Spirit is the confirmation of the discernment of Jesus, of what has been maturing in Him. The words of the Father present Jesus as the servant of Yahweh, the hoped for Messiah.

It is incomplete to contemplate Jesus in mission without considering the contemplation of Jesus in prayer, reading Scripture, singing the psalms, in discernment or of Jesus in formation, in waiting, in pilgrimage, in dialogue with teachers, listening to His parents.

The contemplation of the life of Christ are moments of intimacy and of launching out

In the same way, it is useless to imagine ourselves in mission, giving fruit that remains, without experiencing the manger, exile, silence, the desert, the Jordan... or without soaking ourselves in the current of salvation in which we are inserted, discerning who we are in all of this and what is the moment that we are now living. This is not a contiguity of doing, but a continuity of life, a dynamic of every day. This is what we call contemplation in action.

The same topic of the dynamic relationship between prayer and apostolate could be seen starting with the public life of Jesus, or from His passion and death. For us, the contemplation of the life of Christ are moments of intimacy and of launching out. Looking at

Jesus who passes, we comprehend, we are moved, we heal, we multiply human efforts, we go to the heart of the person, we expose the temptations

of the enemy, etc. It is both a motivation to move towards the apostolate and an invitation to intimacy. Sometimes it may move our wills more forcefully, sometimes our affections. At times it will have an impact more on the

fruits or on the experience of healing; at other times we will be moved more to contemplate the Heart of Christ, the healer.

Contemplative prayer develops the 5 spiritual senses in us. It gives us a particular sensitivity and a creative imagination.

Accompanying Jesus in his public life allows us to adapt little by little to the apostolic wisdom of Jesus. From the contemplation of the poor and humble Jesus the simple style of our life arises. From the contemplation of the group of the apostles with Jesus, our desire arises to be companions in mission. From the meditation of the parables there emanates a different wisdom and a less conceited attitude. From the contemplation of the fallen Samaritan woman a fruitful apostolic imagination arises. What is happening with us is that prayer and life are mutually generated: finding ourselves with a poor person crossing our path sends us to the Heart of Jesus, and meeting Jesus deep within us turns us to the poor on our path. One does not know if the tears flow from the pain and commotion at what we

see produces in us, or from the emotion of feeling, the beatings of the Heart of Jesus. With regard to action, when we surprise ourselves by undertaking generous services, prayer enables us to recognize that it is God who gives fertility to the sterile.

Finally, prayer is the source of apostolic inspiration. It is the wisdom that comes from above; it is the fertilizer of our life; it is a touching encounter. It is provocation, confirmation, a persevering force and transformation. For that reason, there is no apostolate without prayer, because prayer activates grace and keeps us united to the vine.

This dynamic that Jesus experienced of leaving God and returning to Him is the one that we want to deepen today as laity in connection with Jesus. Being with Him, being sent for Him and returning to Him. We cannot say like Jesus "my Father and I are one," but we will probably say with Saint Paul "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."³¹ In the contemplation of

³¹ Or other Pauline expressions as: "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Eph 3,17), "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2, 5).

the life of Christ from the baptism in the Jordan until Palm Sunday³² what happens in us regarding Jesus is what we have seen happening to Him regarding the Father and His mission: we become more conscious of our mission and available for action starting with a

growing intimacy, that is vocation or call.

This way of intimacy-extroversion marks our journey as lay adults in the Church and in the world, and our participation in the mission of Jesus.



Translated from Spanish by *Theresa Cademartori*

³² Sp. Ex. 273 - 288

Prophets of Hope and Justice

*A Vision of Lay Christians' Mission**

**Based on a presentation given to the Chilean National CLC Assembly, October 1999.*

How can I synthesise our way of being Christians in today's world? Throughout our Christian experience each one of us has developed his/her own personal relationship with Jesus Christ and his/her own special way of following Him. In this way a Christian 'style of life' comes into being, that is to say a way of living, of praying, of behaving, of choosing etc. On the other hand, all of us have an experience of 'Christian community', we feel that we are part of some 'cell' of the mystical body of Christ in which we experience the life of the Church in the liturgy, formation, charity, shared hopes and opportunities to discuss our faith. Finally, some Christians, we also belong to organizations or associations with all that this implies in terms of structures, planning, social and economic requirements. This can be described as the associative and apostolic dimension.

In this presentation I will lay most emphasis on the first aspect, that is to say on that which has to do with

our Christian 'style of life'. But my intention is in part to show how from this the other two, that is to say 'the experience of community' and 'the associative and apostolic dimension', rise up in a spontaneous way and how these three aspects both need each other and empower each other.

When we speak of christianity as a 'style of life' there at once rises up the classic tension of every vocation; the 'yes, but not just yet'

When we speak of Christianity as a 'style of life' there at once rises up the classic tension of every vocation; the 'yes, but not just yet'. From a very young age we make our Christian choices and in each of these choices we give our all. In that sense we are Christians. But at the same time we feel our personal limitations, our lack of formation, our lack of coherence. And in that way we are not yet what we would like to be. It may well be that when we say we are Christians we are placing more emphasis on the

community and associative dimensions: we are baptised, we are part of the Church, we belong to a community - maybe we even belong to some association, we are concerned about our formation, we take part in activities where we serve others etc. Perhaps when we say that we still 'are not', we are laying emphasis more on the style of life, being aware of our imperfections, of our feeling that we are carrying a treasure in vessels made of clay, of our feeling of distance with regard to a genuine Christian vocation, which we intuit but which we have not completely assimilated or made our own.

The fact is that any individual vocation in the Church has to be understood at one and the same time as a means of formation and as a style of life. A way of formation is marked out from beginning to end by the complete vocation which is being aspired to although there might not be a perfect model of this vocation set out which could be imitated. Nevertheless, even taking into account our imperfections and knowing that this way has no end,

there must be some people amongst us who live out their Christian vocation not only like part of the rules of some association or like a way which is being followed but as a complete orientation for their lives, a radical choice of life style, a personal response to a call, that is to say, like a stable vocation which is visible both within and outwith the community and which has the seal of a permanent commitment on it.³³ And there should be others also who feel that they are on the way, others who feel they are at the beginning of this way, others who have made some progress along it but all will have a certain fascination for this way they are following and they will be able to recognize stages of this way, turning points on it and they will be able to find adequate symbols to express these.

In order to clarify the way and to give the adequate means and signs, it is helpful to have brief and appropriate summaries which can in some form or other express well a genuine, mature and stable vocation - that to which people aspire and that which can give information about all

³³ This is the meaning of Permanent Commitment in CVX, for example.

the formative stages. In the Church and in its different associations we do have these basic texts and we are always trying to make up new syntheses and often this is done after discernment processes at a community level, at a local level, or at a national or a world level. At this point I will try to formulate some new summaries and I do this without attempting to replace much more authoritative texts.

Going for inspiration to a Workshop which I led at a CVX World Assembly and to a series of discussions which took place there I would like to offer a 'synthesis' of our Christian life today.³⁴ Although this comes from an experience of discernment at the heart of CVX I think that many Christians will be able to identify with it, whether they have Ignatian experience or not. Let us recall that in the Church any graces received are not private ones – they are for the entire Church. My synthesis of our vocation and our mission which I would like to move on to now is the following one: *we want to be prophets of hope and of justice, capable of acting in this world from the perspective of the poor.*

1. Prophets

I am not a teacher of 'Prophets' as was a Jesuit friend of mine in the Bible College in Rome. I use the word rather in an intuitive and an allegorical way, with freedom and a touch of fantasy, in order to bring together a series of experiences and contents which seem to me to be absolutely vital and at the very heart of our vocation.

In the first place a prophet is a person in conversation with God,



³⁴ Itaici, 1998. In general a World CVX Assembly brings together more or less 180

there is a communication which is familiar but not necessarily intense or impressive. God speaks to his/her heart, s/he is moved, stirred... the prophet listens and defends him/herself, asks and counterattacks, asks for more power or for more signs. God gives him/her only what is necessary, He asks him/her for actions, movements, journeys, to undertake various things. Their dialogue is about reality, about life and it consists of a coming close and a moving away again within the lines of our human history and the line of God's infinite love for us. It is a dialogue which is prayer but a prayer which is born of life and which returns you to life but with new drives, directions and meanings.

A prophet is also a lucid person although s/he may seem somewhat badly adapted or eccentric. Lucidity is a gift but it is also the result of observation, method, the capacity to listen, analyse and assimilate data which come from reality itself and from the dialogue with God, including those data which might

seem threatening or dangerous. Not being able to adapt is caused in his/her case by a refusal to adopt easy and obvious solutions, by a dissatisfaction with static and recalcitrant formulae which remain in place only because of the weight with which they oppress or by the habit and lethargy which exist around them. The prophet has an inner restlessness which will not be quietened – a kind of spiritual sense which tells him/her that something is amiss. The prophet knows all the gospel warnings about camels and is aware that there is so much hypocrisy, like that of the Pharisees, in both the organisation and behaviour of society, in speeches and official events, in the Church and even in the Communities to which s/he belongs.³⁵ Nevertheless, his/her place is right there, in the centre of reality but with a tendency towards

Moreover, the prophet knows well his/her own weakness and s/he grows starting from this point and passing through it

delegates from about 60 countries to pray and discern together from the Fundamental experience which they bring. It is a rich workshop of Christian life with the presence of laity and religious which offers great possibilities to share life and faith, dreams and mutual demands.

³⁵ See Matthew, 23 and 24.

the outer edges, and for this reason tending towards eccentricity also but without losing his/her union with God which will prevent any kind of lack of validity or self destruction. The prophet does not seek out any sort of lack of adaptation nor is s/he a misfit but s/he is able to live with the exact dose of these ingredients in a life which is not always easy to understand because it contains much that runs contrary to the prevailing culture.

Moreover, the prophet knows well his/her own weakness and s/he grows starting from this point and passing through it. His/her prophecy does not have as an aim to hold up its own conceited perfection against the generic and total imperfection of society. The prophet has his/her own experience of transformation, of empowerment which comes from his/her experience of God. S/he has made contact with her/his own weakness and that is what permits her/him set him/herself up as a prophet before others. It is not his/her perfection but his/her experience of transformation which sets him/her free and allows him/her to be detached from him/herself; this strengthens the prophet for mission and allows

him/her to live out his/her vocation without any false sense of shame.

One last feature which I would like to propose is that the prophet expresses him/herself in a convincing way. S/he does not denounce or destroy; rather, s/he is a creator of images, means and undertakings. S/he proposes alternatives and pulls out only to plant anew. S/he does not like abusing words and is shy of doing so. S/he has no liking for grandiloquent gestures but s/he knows that the Spirit is neither silent nor lifeless. S/he exults in images of deep wells, living waters, fires which will not be extinguished, swollen nets and vessels of clay. In this way s/he puts up no opposition to that which springs from within neither does s/he experience any problem in being able to express this in visible ways.

2. Of Hope

Prophets of hope, of direction. This means being able to show clearly, project and reflect a positive attitude to the world and to others and this should not be confused with a trivial sort of optimism. By hope we mean that which we have not been able to nor will we be able to achieve by ourselves but it is present and is understood in our

daily efforts to change the world and it is also something we know through revelation.

If we are firmly rooted in Christ we have no reason to lack hope.



We may be pessimistic with regard to the results which we will obtain through our own efforts or with regard to the quality of our ways of acting but we cannot doubt the action of God in the world through us.

This is a basic Christian attitude – that of believing in the multiplication of the loaves, in the miraculous fish and in the healing of the paralytic. In this way we can live our lives as fishermen, as children or as paralytics, without losing hope, but rather persevering, adding our own grain of sand with constancy and graciousness, offering it to be multiplied and spread.

It is hope which spurs us on to action. We do not love the action in itself but the action as transformed by God. Thus we are surprised by our catch and by what we are able to distribute and so we are encouraged to cast our nets each day.

Faced with the serious problems we have to witness or live through our response is one of active hope. We ask ourselves how we can help and even when we find ourselves face to face with extreme situations we have no doubt that there will be something we can do and that God wants us to do something so that He might show Himself.

In my opinion, this active hope is one of the most important sources of our apostolic energies. But, I repeat, hope springs from the contemplation of and the union with Christ. If our hope falters then so does our action and this generally happens because we have lost our sense of direction, because we have strayed from the Galilean ways, from the sands of Tabga, from the manger in Bethlehem, from the journeys to Jerusalem and from the synagogues, towns and villages which Our Lord frequented.

3. Of Justice

The World Assembly tells us that 'we must work against greed and the improper use of power in political and economic structures'.³⁶ There are those structures³⁷ which are sinful and they reinforce each other, they spread, they gain power and thus they engender even more sin, more injustice, they spread beyond national frontiers, dulling our consciences and making us used to the scandal of differences between and among our brothers and sisters, to the scandal of excessive earnings and of the thirst for power. Nevertheless on the way to a genuine conversion of heart there will be the consideration of these structures of sin in prayer and from this there will spring, like a grace which has been given, sorrow and tears.³⁸ During this contemplation of sins³⁹, both on a personal and a structural level, and the waving of The Two Flags⁴⁰ in the world and in our hearts, we will hear within ourselves The Call of the King⁴¹, the

Call to work with Him and the desire to accept this Call.

'We are called' – continues the World Assembly – 'to bear witness about a world community which gives to its members the power to be prophets of hope and justice, who are capable of taking up bold positions in order to bring more justice to this world'.⁴² And here again we will be going against the prevailing culture; we will have to struggle against and put up a strong resistance to consumerism and individualism, to unmask the spiritual and cultural erosion which they produce, to renounce unnecessary earnings, to maintain simplicity in our family life and in our relations with others. From a permanent conversion of our own lives we will prepare ourselves

As a community we will become not only a community of prophets but also a prophetic community

³⁶ World Assembly, ITAICI: CVX – Christ's Letter written by the Spirit and sent to today's world'. In 'Progressio', No 1-2-3-4, 1998, p.132.

³⁷ See 'Sollicitudo Rei Socialis', No.36-37

³⁸ Spiritual Exercises, No.55, 2 Preamble.

³⁹ Spiritual Exercises, No.55-72

⁴⁰ Spiritual Exercises, No. 136-148

⁴¹ Spiritual Exercises, No.91-100

⁴² World Assembly, ITAICI, *ibid*, p.132

also to 'establish new and virtuous collaboration networks' ⁴³ which will oppose the 'networks and chains' ⁴⁴ by which the enemy seeks to ensnare and trap. We will become social entrepreneurs and use the same astuteness, intelligence and decisiveness which managers use in the world of business. As a community we will become not only a community of prophets but also a prophetic community.

To be prophets of justice will signify also for us the fine tuning of discernment in order to understand and to identify the diverse forms, open and subtle, that sin has to infiltrate itself into our social relations, into our structures and into our societies, to weaken us and to confuse us in our struggles. It is a kind of fine sense that generates liberty, creativity, an ease of associations and undertaking, perseverance to go on and on and on.

The rebelliousness of prophet of justice is not bitterness, rancour or a sense of hopelessness – these

qualities normally spring from the bad spirit. But this is a pure and healthy rebelliousness which is the Paschal mystery in one's life, it is sorrow and pain which contain a glimmer of the resurrection, the seeds of future actions and of a greater intimacy with God.⁴⁵

4. Able to be Active in the World

Our contemplation and our formation have to lead us on to action. We have already spoken of this coming and going between action and contemplation, between the reality of the everyday and the life of the spirit. The World Assembly in Itaici also reminded us of the relationship between formation and mission, noting that 'practically all the social needs we wish to cope with require formation but action cannot wait until we have completed this formation... We need to learn right from the very beginning to be contemplatives in action, to promote opportunities of being right at the very deepest level of situations where there is

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Spiritual Exercises, No. 142.

⁴⁵ With regard to this one can pray with 2 Corinthians 1, 3-11; 2 Corinthians 4, 7-18 and other passages of this letter of St. Paul.

oppression and deprivation, and to promote the model of experience, reflection and action in our formation programmes'.⁴⁶

The tendency towards action is the factor which gives credibility to attitudes. We have to make ourselves able to be active in the middle of our reality and this means developing skills and forms of behaviour which make us men and women who are situated at the heart of our social, historical and cultural contexts.

In today's society it is not a matter of being lay Christians in spite of or behind the back of modern times but of being Christians fully within our modern times. This means that our ability to witness and to be active will be directly related to our ability to receive, to engage in dialogue, to listen to other different people and to learn from them. With this attitude 'we commit ourselves to promote the full presence of Christ in all cultures'⁴⁷ and we try to attract others towards Him rather than oppress with our convictions or try to impose our truths since we trust

that hearts are changed by God and not by us.

In order to work with Christ today in the midst of our reality and our times we need to equip ourselves to be able both to be innovators and promoters of new ways of doing things. We need to excel in the use of the means and very clear about the ends we are pursuing. We have to be judged worthy not so much by the posts we hold or by the activities we carry out but rather by our dedication and by the quality of our work. We must not succumb to offers of corruption or to the temptation of easy success. We will make every effort to reach a Christian and a critical understanding of phenomena such as globalisation, the environmental crisis or political problems and we will try to develop a special skill for social analysis.

And finally, I would like to suggest that from the point of view of our work to transform society, our family life is very relevant. The family is not only for us a source of energies which arises from love between and

⁴⁶ World Assembly, ITAICI, *ibid*, p.133, n.4

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.134: Christ and culture.

among persons or a place to relax after our daily struggle to extend God's Kingdom. I believe that it is above all the key place where



we learn and develop in a permanent way the models which we would like for society as a whole. It is the place where we learn to identify sin, personal grace and the grace to be found in structures. From a good family experience the following can be learned, come to fruition and be firmly rooted within us: an ability to express our affections in our lives, a proper harmony between male and female, a special sensitivity for and an inclination

towards those who suffer, a well-balanced ability to share our resources – our talents and our goods, a respect for people's intimacy and freedom, a sincere and transparent way of communicating, the ability to recognise and give little importance to that which is superfluous and the living out of our faith – including all its crises – as a daily adventure. However, we do appreciate that for many people their experience of family is something traumatic or destructive. We are not to judge or to compare and we should not oppress people with our own experience. We can but help, be there, love, accept, serve and search for that little thread of life which always allows growth to continue...

5. From the Perspective of the Poor

The teachings of Jesus, of the Church and of successive World Assemblies make it clear to us that this is not an extra option but that it is at the very heart of our experience. We need look no further than the World assembly of Itaici where we are told that 'we are called in our community life to encourage each other to look at the

world and to work in it from the perspective of the poor and to increase our ability to encounter them, to know where they are in our societies and to find out how we might take part in their struggles'.⁴⁸

We want to destroy poverty, leave behind marginalisation and in order to do this we must love the poor and those who are marginalized, encounter them and take their side. We have to become acquainted with their problems, to value all that is positive in their culture which might often seem to us to be coarse, basic and even threatening.

When we analyse the problems of health, education, accommodation, the family or leisure our perspective should be that of the poor not in order to perpetuate poverty nor to idealise its characteristics but simply because we will have more possibilities to build justice and we will come closer to the poor and humiliated Christ Whom we wish to follow on His Paschal Way and we will obtain greater spiritual benefit and have a greater desire to work.

6. Conclusion

The Christianity lived out in its lay variety is a style of life which expresses itself as a mature and stable vocation – which I have tried to outline above – and a formation process which reaches both personal and community level.

The relevance and the quality of a way of formation may be tested by what it produces in those who follow its paths. If it brings us close to the ideal we have dreamed of, if it permits us to live day by day in closer harmony with our vocation then we are on a true way of formation. On the other hand, if the way becomes exhausting and boring, if we often have the feeling that it does not present us with new stages or landmarks as we go along, it is probable that we are only repeating a model which originally might have been valid but one which today can no longer move our hearts. Or it may be that the way proposed is a good tried and tested one but that we are the ones at fault and if this is the case, then we must ask ourselves

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.132: Christ and social reality.

honestly the question of St. Ignatius as to whether we are carrying out well the Exercises which are being proposed to us.⁴⁹

And finally, I believe that our

desire to journey along a way of formation will stop us from being like the first type of man in the Exercises⁵⁰ – namely, the one who makes no efforts until at death's door.



Translated from Spanish by *Margaret Tejerizo*

⁴⁹ Spiritual Exercises, No. 6

⁵⁰ Spiritual Exercises, No.153.

Magis – a CLC experience?



Many times people ask me what CLC is? To give a general answer it is very easy. You can just quote the General Principles and the General Norms – and I already know them by heart – and there you are. Or, you can try to explain the meetings in small groups or how everything works. However, this does not tell anything about my personal experience and it does not reveal either what it is that distinguishes us from others. Ignatian spirituality? This is a quite general concept. The Spiritual Exercises? Many people who are not in the CLC do their annual retreat regularly. But what is Ignatian spirituality, what is at its core? My answer is *magis*.

It is obvious that one has to distinguish between CLC and the Jesuits though people are sometimes confused. There is often a tendency to describe CLC as “this Jesuits’ stuff”. Nevertheless, we also have to acknowledge that we share the same spirituality or to express it more vividly, “we swim in the common pool.” Now, Saint Ignatius chose as a motto for his Society the very famous “*ad maiorem Dei gloriam*” – all we do is for God’s greater glory. It is not by chance that it was chosen. And what does it tell us? It is an invitation that everything we do, we do for the greater glory of God.

Now, in the Bible, Jesus has another invitation for us. He invites us to be perfect (Mat 5:48) and in the Old Testament God even says to Moses that we are all saints (Lev 19:2). On the one hand, in every single one of us, in the depths of our souls, there is a desire to be perfect in one way or another. On the other hand, there is a question: “What does perfection consist of?” What are the virtues of a perfect person? So many religions tried to describe the person who was

one with the Absolute, a person who was well founded in the truth, integrity etc., and who showed the fullness of grace. Different religions called the person different things: saint, sage, arahant, siddha, Buddha, the perfect man etc. In every description, there is a great unanimity among the religions about what should be the characteristics of such a person.

For Christians - but not only for them - such a person bears a resemblance to God's image. We already quoted Leviticus where God said "You shall be/are holy, for I the LORD your God am holy," and we all know we are created in His own image (Genesis 1:27). So how do we become holy, how do we become similar to Him? The saints are people who do not have selfish desires, who do not cling to this world, but they are free, free for love. Saint Augustine writes in his *Confessions*: "ama et fac quod vis." It is a kind of holiness. Nevertheless, before being able to do this, there is a long path, a spiritual journey.

There are different ways of walking on this journey and therefore, today,

different spiritualities exist. Principally, spirituality is the way a person uses to come closer to God. Clearly, 'the way' has a special meaning for us Christians. Jesus understood Himself as 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6), the Acts of the Apostles describe the disciples as 'belonging to the Way' (της οδου οντας, Acts 9:2) and in Matthew it is written "... the way is hard that leads to life..." (7:14). Thus we can say Jesus is the only way to God, but every person has his special relation with Jesus, and therefore its own spiritual journey. Wisdom teaches us to "walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous" (Proverbs 2:20)⁵¹. It can also mean that we have to follow the example of those who already have come closer to the Way in order to help us encounter Him. In this way, we become pilgrims.

The saints are people who do not have selfish desires, who do not cling to this world, but they are free, free for love

And just as we are on our way, so too was Saint Ignatius. The notion

⁵¹ Also God is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints@ (Proverbs 2:7-8).

of his *magis* did not come all at once to him. It was a quite a long process and there are indications in his "Autobiography" of his progress. We are all well aware of his initial desire for heroic actions, touched by the great deeds of St. Francis and Dominic, but also wanting to surpass them in their virtues. However, the last stage of his life was carried out in the small study in Rome, where he was practising his *magis*, by ordering and instructing his companions from his desk. He wrote in his *Spiritual Exercises*: "Those who wish to give greater proof of their love, and to distinguish themselves in whatever concerns the service of the Eternal King and the Lord of all, will not only offer themselves entirely for the work... but make offerings of greater value and of more importance (SE, 97)." The greater proof of his love was in Rome and he was completely dedicated to it.

So this was *magis* for Ignatius, but, well, what is then *magis* for us? We can say, on the one hand, that the small word holds almost a magical meaning in Ignatian vocabulary and, in brief, it can be described as a principle that helps us to make our decisions - one decides on an action that results in a more generous answer to the call of God. On the

other hand, *magis* is also a term that is often misunderstood by people who use the word as a synonym for generosity, altruism, perfectionism etc. Accordingly, they often think that *Amore*" means more assignments one has to undertake in the service of God, or that it means that one is becoming more holy. In actual fact, this is not how I understand the term. It is not a question about quantity, but quality. Here, we can recall the *Annotation 20* and the famous "*non multa, sed multum*."

In addition, it is not only the question about "how", but also "what." It is a careful discernment of what is especially fitting in the service of God. And what is fitting is explained in the *Principle and Foundation*: "Man is created to praise, revere, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul" and he also adds that man is supposed to "desire and choose only that which is more conducive for us to this end for which we are created. And how do we choose? Again, the key term is *magis*. It is one of the most decisive factors for choice, for our discernment, and we can see it again and again in Ignatius' works: "for the greater glory of God", "the greater service of God", "the greater need", "the

greater fruit", "the more universal good." Our life should be a continuous evaluation of what is the most efficient way (the best choice at our disposal) of doing our service. We have to ask ourselves a question: "Given the situation, my responsibilities, my talents, my flaws how can I best grasp my desire to be a person for others?"

Thus, we have to consider all our limitations as challenges and opportunities; they cannot be regarded as unsurpassable barriers, as obstacles.⁵² I read somewhere that mediocrity has no place in Ignatius' vision and that we cannot accept the status quo.⁵³ That idea appeals to me a lot. Even though "to look for more" may seem to point out our dissatisfaction we know that the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is

to help us to put order in our lives and to establish our spiritual equilibrium which then makes us free to choose that which is more conducive for the service of God and for the service of our brothers and sisters. Therefore, we do not have to forget that this word in Ignatius' use is always a word that has meaning in terms of personal relationships, in terms of love, which does not have any limits (again Augustine's "ama et fac quod vis").

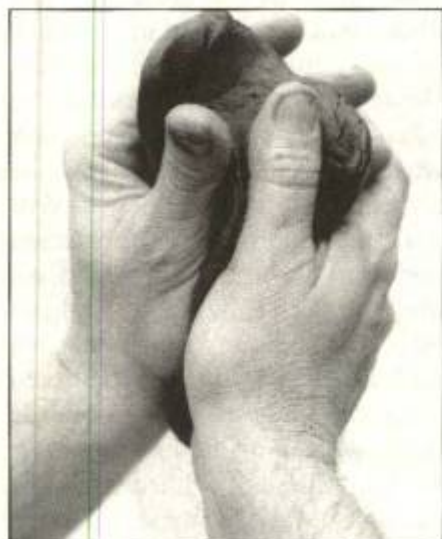
Returning back to our spiritual journey we can say it is a personal project, I would say a life project (coming from the Latin *pro-iectus*, "to be launched"). We are launched in this world to live our existence with a great freedom. After God has created us we have become our own authors (to some extent⁵⁴). Thus, I

⁵² Here, I can quote Gregory of Nyssa: "One should not be distressed when one considers this tendency in our nature; rather let us change in such way that we may constantly evolve toward what is better, being transformed from glory to glory, and thus always improving and ever becoming perfect by daily growth, and never arriving at any limit of perfection. For that perfection consists in our never stopping in our growth in good, never circumscribing our perfection by any limitation" (*De perfectione et qualem oporteat esse Christianum*, PG 46:285c-d).

⁵³ Actually it was in *Decrees of the 34th General Congregation (1995)*, numbers 559 and 561.

⁵⁴ i.e. parents, society, culture, religion. De Mello in his story *The Extra Mile* speaks about the liberation from our programming and about the computer that goes along with us in our life in order to act in complete freedom. He writes "Only then will you experience that inner freedom from which alone all social revolution must arise for the powerful emotion, the passion that arises in your heart at the sight of social

see *magis* in the reality that we are a continuous tendency of going beyond, beyond the point where we



are. In this way we can avoid the *status quo* and we can try to realize our deepest desire to be ourselves, at the same time being beyond ourselves, not as perfectionist voluntarism, but, on the contrary, as autonomous objectives awakened by the attracting strength of a certain value that we will choose.

Now, when I had in mind Jesus' call to us to be perfect I do not consider it to be perfectionism, but I see it as

Saint Paul teaches us in his epistle to the Philippians: ANot that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained" (3:12-16).

Another important thing is that *magis* "does not imply comparison with others or measurement of progress against an absolute standard; rather it is the fullest possible development of each person's individual capacities at each stage of life, joined to the willingness to continue this development throughout life and the motivation to use those developed gifts for others."⁵⁵ With regard to Saint Ignatius, we can say that his entire life was a search

evils and impels you to action, will have its origin in reality, not in your programming or your ego."

⁵⁵ "Excellence in Formation" (1986), number 109.

for this *magis*, the ever greater glory of God, the ever fuller service of his neighbour, the more universal good, the more effective apostolic means. And this was his pilgrimage and I am convinced it should be also ours. Therefore, I would wish that my life and of every CLC-er to be a constant pilgrimage

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus

(from Latin *per agrum* – “through fields”, because we do not always see the Way) on the way to the greater glory of God and the school of love in the greater service of my brothers and sisters.

Since scriptures permeates my life, I would finally compare *magis* with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the six antitheses. There is a huge debate among scholars what this text is all about. Many do not consider the antitheses to be legalistic, but look at them more as a type of character formation. This is a consequence of many Jesus’ demands that are almost

impossible to accomplish. Therefore, what is important is the attitude. I would say it should be understood as the unconditioned divine will proclaimed in the midst of our conditioned existence. However, as such it is not to be taken as a law that tells Christians what to do, but demands that we be something. It creates a new type of person. The character formation concerns the question “Who we are” and the decision-making concerns the question “What we do,” which is indirectly connected with who we are. On the same lines, we can also consider *magis* as a quality of character. For example, Matthew writes: “And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (5:41). People who are able to walk an additional mile”, not just because they were commanded (cowardly meekness), but because they wish to do the things for the greater glory of God, are deeply rooted in the spirituality of *magis*. This is only one small example.

Finally, as a last step, we can even consider *magis* as a ladder to be climbed,⁵⁶ rung by rung, or as a challenge which, its call being constant, can become ever more effective over the course of time. While one can do nothing at all

about one's height, one can do something about one's capacity to love. It can always be increased, deepened etc. This explains why John Climacus could speak of love as "the progress of eternity" (*Ladders of Divine Ascent*, 30). Love does not have any limit and there is always *magis*.

I will finish with the words of Richard of Chichester, a person apparently very dear to Saint Ignatius, who prays the Lord *to see Him more clearly, to follow Him more nearly, and to love Him more dearly, day by day*. In a few words, this is how I see *magis* and I think, I wish and I pray that this would also be my spirituality. This can be lived on all levels in our everyday life and also in individual or community manner. In my humble opinion, this is also a call for all CLCers.

This might seem quite a theoretic idea about what CLC is and what my experience and spirituality are, but if readers will meditate and Aread between the lines" I hope the idea will become clearer.

Goran Kühner



⁵⁶ And if we want to be more philosophical and to add a bit of mystical experience we can include alsoadd "and then abandoned" in the sense of Wittgensteins *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* which finishes with famous phrase: "Whereof one cannot speak thereof one has to be silent." For our final goal is beata visio which according to author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is reserved for those who "in true will" wants to be "a perfect follower of Christ, not only in active living, but in the sovereignest point of contemplative living, the which is possible by grace for to become to in this present life." He adds: "Of God Himself can no man think, and therefore I would leave all that thing that I can think, and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think." When I speak about mystical life I see it as final stage of our growth towards God, a right employment of our will. For sure I do not consider it as a short cut to hidden knowledge or supersensual experience.

XXI Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity



With great happiness and hope, I attended the XXI Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity to which our Holy Father appointed me and in which I participated as an experienced representative of CLC. Many presidents and founders of a great variety of lay movements as well as lay persons who have or had responsibilities in Church associations and movements were present at this meeting. There was also a representation of Bishops and Cardinals who act as consultants of the Dicastery: in all there were about sixty people.

The Assembly was above all a joyful experience of Church based on deep and simple sharing illuminated by theological reflection

on a basic topic the theme of which structured all the sessions. In the rich and intense debates that took place, this sharing at great length was for all a sign that not only is it possible to gain enlightenment from the magisterium of the Church and the experience of all the movements and lay associations, but also that today it is more necessary than ever to relaunch the hope that Jesus' message brings to the world in which we live.

Besides this, I was participating with so many wise men, laity, bishops and cardinals in charge of dioceses as complicated as Bombay or that of San Paulo with twenty million faithful, or those in countries of an Islamic majority, like Lebanon. This was for me — a humble technician involved in building designs — a joyful experience of learning and an intense experience of the Church in progress manifested in an expanded and hopeful horizon.

The topic of this Assembly was "Rediscovering the True Face of the Parish." Through the present

reality of the parish and its problems in an ever more secularized and at the same time more globalized world, there are emerging what we might call new directions for the parishes to face in this new socio-cultural context. We will continue this topic in the next Assembly in order to go more deeply into concrete situations and contributions.

We were fortunate to begin the Assembly with an audience with our Holy Father who encouraged us to work to rediscover the authentic face of the parish as a more immediate and visible expression of the Church that lives in the midst of the "suburbs" and housing projects of her children. This is a basic cell where the laity can find a natural place to participate in the construction and mission of the Church in the world.

Thus the parish, as the place par excellence for announcing Christ and for educating in the faith must be renewed constantly in order to become an authentic community among communities, able to bring about a profound and incisive missionary action. In this year of the Eucharist, we were reminded that the Eucharist is the heart that

beats in the parish, the source of its mission and a presence that continually renews it.

With these purposeful words we began our Assembly. The introductory talks given by various theologians and Churchmen were very interesting and these plus the later debates enabled us to draw forth various reflections and challenges:

The parish is a microcosm where we live the problems of the Church and society that affect the larger socio-cultural and religious challenges. For example, the fierce individualism of Western society, relativity and the loss of values, the disintegration of the family, the growing decline of Christians in the world but at the same time their greater presence in the social structures faced with the silent Church of the past. There is a wealth of ecclesial movements with their charisms that under the inspiration of the Spirit are renewing the face of the Church, and the assumption by the laity of their evangelizing and missionary role bearing witness to their vocation in their own basic environment, overcoming the dichotomy between faith and life.

Many contributions from various parts of the world gave us an image of the great diversity of situations in which these challenges are lived and the strength given by the Spirit enabled us to discover creative answers to each situation.

Special mention should be made of the "Parroquia -Movimientos" (Parish Movements) report. We are aware of the difficulties that could exist between the richness and the charisms of the movements and their integration into the reality of the local Church. We also are aware that the movements are an expression of the richness of charisms in the Church, therefore, of the need to overcome daily problems while respecting these charisms to achieve full integration for the benefit of the evangelizing mission of the whole Church and of all Christians.

Finally Professor Carraquiry proposed 10 challenges for the laity in the Church of today:

1. Ninety-eight percent of Church members are lay persons of which only between 5-10% participate in the life of the Church through their local parishes. Therefore, the most

urgent need is the proclamation of the Faith and its value for the Christian today.

2. Formation is even more necessary to give answers from our faith to proposed challenges. This includes the concept of permanent formation so important in the world of business and labor which still has not taken hold in the ecclesial world.
3. A revision and updating of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Not enough of the laity have accepted their role in the evangelization of this world and their active participation in the coming — here and now— of the Kingdom of love, peace and justice that Christ brought about with his death and resurrection. There are various reasons for this. Most of the time they remain simple recipients of the pastors' services thus perpetuating a clericalization lived by these same pastors and by the laity who attend the parish as a "Service Station" (that is, the place where they impart religious services: liturgy, baptisms, weddings etc.)
4. Recovering the laity's vocation to sanctity in accordance with the previous point is to speak of the full assumption of the

- Lord's call (vocation) to be his participators in this world, to give sense to life in this society that needs to hear: "It is not I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."
5. Recuperating the sense of grace as a gratuitous gift. Christianity is neither a feeling, nor a utopia but rather a Gift, which in salvation launches us out to assume the fullness to which we are called already here in this life.
 6. Renewing the laity's sense of belonging in the Church as a mystery: the Church is not an NGO nor is it a political institution. It is the body of the Lord in time to which we were united by Jesus Christ and in which we are participators according to our talents and charisms.
 7. Always living life as a vocation, as a call from the Lord, to be his hands in the world, called through our reality and illuminated by the Spirit to take the message of justice, peace and love to a world absolutely needful of this. The laity in their secular life are absolutely indispensable and unique for taking this message to the basic milieu in which they move: family, work, service, leisure etc.
 8. Consequently, the laity are a key factor of the new evangelization with a renewed, competent and coherent way of "looking after" the areas where the integral growth of the person is played out: family, work, education, politics etc.
 9. Overcoming the "diaspora" of the laity in society, the anonymity in the masses. Working on the principles of dignity, subsidiarity and solidarity and therefore being active in the fields of the defense of life, the safeguarding of marriage and family, the natural rights of people, freedom, peace:
 10. Knowing how to build authentic Christian communities: periodic attendance in churches is not enough. It is necessary to attract lay persons who are integrated, fed and sustained by the local resident communities.
- As you can see the Assembly was profoundly rich and it realistically considered current problems. However, in experiencing the catholicity and diversity that we live, we found that source of hope in which we share the same faith in the risen Christ. His call to reestablish the Kingdom of God

resonates day by day. He send us his Grace through the Spirit so that we can carry out it.

As laity of the CLC, I believe that our spirituality gives us the necessary tools to discern daily what our answer to the Lord should be. Through prayer in its various forms, through the intense moments of encounter with the Lord in the Spiritual Exercises and through the practice of the daily examen and of discernment or deliberation in communion with the apostolic body to which we

belong, we are available to be sent there where the Lord and the Church call us. We are able and should contribute the whole richness of our charism to the Church and to the world in which we move. We are part of this rich expression of ecclesial life and catholicity and should also be present and active members in the Church where we live: the parishes.

José Maria Riera

Translated from Spanish by
Theresa Cademartori



