

Christifideles Laici

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Lord, as ordinary men and women, we are decisive agents in bringing the message of church to the world. At Pentecost, your church received the gifts of the Holy Spirit for its work on earth. Fortify those gifts in us today so that we may remain faithful to our calling to serve you and to invite others into Christian service. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

‘He summoned the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick--no food, no sack, and no money in their belts.

They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance." (*Mark 6:7-13*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

When Jesus sent out the twelve He also gave them a new commandment. In that they love one another so the world will know that they are his disciples. This love is the challenge that is given to anyone who chooses to follow Jesus. It is with these words that this program provides a glimpse of the heart of the Christian vocation - to make a difference in the world, by the way we accept one another.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

“Each individual lay person must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a sign that God lives ... In a word, ‘what the soul is to the body, let Christians be to the world.’” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), Vatican Council II, Nov. 21, 1964, No. 38*)

In his later Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (Christ’s Faithful People), Pope John Paul II picks up the theme as first outlined in *Lumen Gentium* and addresses the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the world.

It is as an impressive and affirming document. It emphasizes that there are a multitude of people who are called and sent forth by God to labor in the world. His holiness draws on the image of the vineyard found in John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches.” He further describes a ”communion” of relationships between lay people and the church, the world, and the ordained ministry.

The call to holiness goes out to everyone and is expressed through many ways of working and many special gifts given to all by the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of the Church’s ministry and mission. In this writing we hear the message that all people in the Church are called to constant conversion. All are

invited to bring the promise of the Gospel message that values and dignifies human life, to a broken world.

In conclusion, we see a shift that has occurred in the Church since the second Vatican Council. Basically, we are not to be suspicious or withdrawn from the world. Rather we are to be fully engaged in it, transforming it through our own relationships, deeply rooted in Christ, the church, family and community. This visionary statement gives direction and hope to all the baptized who experience God working in their unique lives. It invites them to search for a way to express a personal call to service.

Lastly, the Pope identifies marriage and family as an environment in which people experience their call to service by stating that... “The lay person’s faithful duty to society primarily begins in marriage and in the family. This duty can only be fulfilled adequately with the conviction of the unique and irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the church itself.”
“*Christifideles Laici*,” *Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity*, Jan. 30, 1989. No. 40.

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. Today lack of commitment, dedication, and discipline, are the sources of many troubles. How can we help our families instill these values?
2. As laity, we seem to be called often to “preach” the Gospel in subtle, almost unseen ways, at home and at work. Relate some instances.
3. Serra is an organization of men and women who are called to grow in holiness and participate in the Church’s apostolic goals. How does your Serra club foster growth in holiness and participation in the church’s apostolic goals?

Closing Reflection

“Lay Christians live their lives and do their work at all the crucial points where they can discover the God who renews the face of the earth. God’s Spirit helps them discern the seeds of life and the seeds of death in the modern world. Social processes are ambiguous and complex, and they often wear masks. Sometimes it is only the suffering of the poor and powerless that can unmask for us the evil inherent in a particular use of human power. Their voice carries to our ears the cry of Jesus pleading with the church not to abandon the world, but to meet him in it.” *Bishop John M. Sherlock (b.1926) of London, Ontario, speaking to the World Synod of Bishops (on the laity), Oct. 10, 1987*

Bibliography

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