



# Newsletter – November 2020

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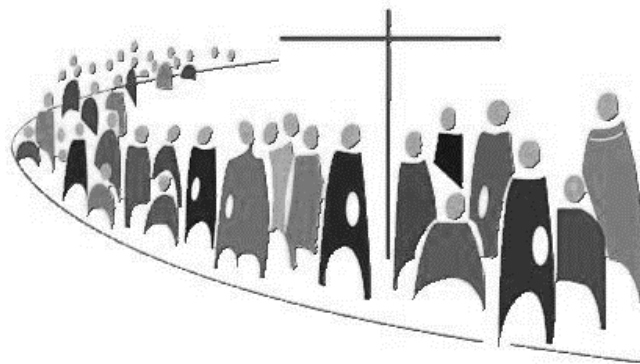
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## The laity and the mystery the Church

At the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis gave some catechesis on the mystery of the Church. He emphasized on the fact that the Church has its source in God himself who wants “to make of us all a single family of his children, in which each person feels that God is close and feels loved by Him, ... feels the warmth of being God’s family.”<sup>1</sup> Our original relationship with God has always been filial from the very beginning of humanity. As human being, we are sons and daughters of God. We can claim this because we believe that God created all of us, as He created Adam and Eve<sup>2</sup>, so that we become literally his children. But our relationship with God the Father was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and hid themselves from Him.<sup>3</sup> So, just like the Parable of the Prodigal Son, our first parents separated themselves from the Father.

Thankfully, through His obedience to the Father and the gift of Himself to us, Jesus redeemed us. He brings us back to God and restores our relationship with our Heavenly Father through Baptism. “Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: ‘Therefore ... we are members one of another’ (Eph 4:25). Baptism incorporates us into the Church.”<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Pope FRANCIS, *General Audience*, Rome, Wednesday, 29 May 2013.

<sup>2</sup>Genesis 2:7.19

<sup>3</sup>Genesis3:8.

<sup>4</sup>CCC 1263.

In baptism, we received the divine adoption from Christ. United to Christ, we are inserted into Him like branches into the vine. The life of grace flows through Him to us all. Christ is the Head and we are the members of the one Body, living in communion with God the Father and with one another. In this way, the Church is “the mystical body of Christ”, prolonging his presence in the world.

The Church is like a true family in which we are all children of God and all brothers and sisters. As children, our mission is to bear witness of the love of God to the world and attract all to him. We will be faithful to our mission if we stay in communion with God and with one another, so that the Church will be the “sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”<sup>5</sup>, a mystery in which “communion and mission are profoundly interconnected”<sup>6</sup>. Our communion with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ is the gift that we have received by grace in Baptism and that we are called to protect, grow and make visible through our cooperation with Christ.

As baptized, we are called to grow and strengthen our communion with God and with one another through our Christian way of life. Then, this communion will be an invitation to all peoples to join in this same divine filiation.

All the different states of life within the Church, the various ministries, the variety of charisms and talents which the members have received, in short, the various vocations within the Church, contribute to strengthening the communion and



the mission of the Church as a whole. Christ gives each vocation for the good of the Church and its mission. “The various vocations are like so many rays of the one light of Christ,”<sup>7</sup> and are “at the service of one another, for the growth of the Body of Christ in history and for its mission in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

All the baptized are “living stones”<sup>9</sup> of the house of God, the spiritual building through which God is made visible on earth. Whoever we are, we are called to be Church, to build it up with the holiness of our lives and to contribute to the fulfillment of its mission. We are all called to holiness and it is through the holiness of our lives that God will continue to reveal Himself to the world.

To grow in holiness, we have to stay in communion with God and with one another, in a spirit of faith, hope and charity. “All the faithful of Christ are invited to

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<sup>5</sup>VATICAN II, Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Pope FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 23.

<sup>7</sup>Idem, 16.

<sup>8</sup>Idem, 31.

<sup>9</sup>1 Peter 2, 5.

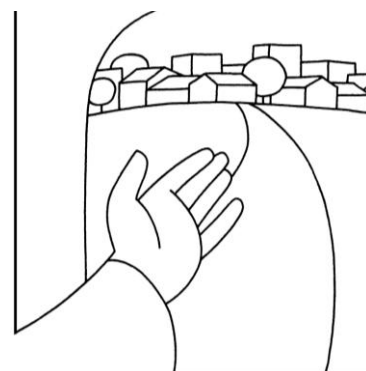
strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state.”<sup>10</sup> “Every person must walk unhesitatingly, according to his own personal gifts and duties, in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.”<sup>11</sup>

We are all called to holiness, but we are not all called to fulfill this responsibility in the same way. Each person has to listen to the voice of God to discover what his vocation is, what gifts he has received, what God expects of him and what the best way is for him to contribute to the communion and mission of the Church.

In the body of the church, God calls the vast majority of its members to the lay state. Within the common vocation which all laity share, each person is called to contribute to the communion and mission of the Church in a specific way.

The word laity derives from the Middle English *laite*, which comes from the Greek *laikós*, meaning *common* or *one of the people*. The related word lay comes from the Greek *laós* which means *people*. In the Church, according to the Canon Law, the word laity designates all the faithful, excepted is those who have received the sacrament of holy orders (as deacon, priest or bishop). But in ordinary usage, the laity or lay faithful refer to the baptized who are neither cleric nor religious.

Through baptism, the lay faithful are incorporated into the People of God. Their specific vocation and their specific way to holiness are to contribute to the building up of the Church by “living in the midst of the world and its concerns” in a Christian manner.<sup>12</sup>



When the fathers of the Council speak of the world here, they are not referring to the negative concept frequently found in the Gospel of Saint John where the world is seen as a place of temptation and perversion subject to evil. Rather, the concept of world is understood here as the cosmos, the created universe that reveals the goodness and beauty of God and men are given the wonderful task of giving glory to God by taking care of it and making it bear fruits.<sup>13</sup> In that sense, we could say the world “awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God.”<sup>14</sup> And the lay faithful are those who are expected to bring the Christian way of life to all region and situations of our world. “They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world.”<sup>15</sup> We will see in the months to come what this office of priest, prophet and king consists of for the laity.

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<sup>10</sup>VATICAN II, Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, 41.

<sup>12</sup>VATICAN II, Decree on the apostolate of the laity. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2.

<sup>13</sup>cf. *Genesis* 1:28-31.

<sup>14</sup> *Romans* 8:19

<sup>15</sup> VATICAN II, Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 31.

## **Sharing**

### **See**

- ✓ What the Church does to make “each person feel that God is close and feels loved by him”?
- ✓ What are my colleagues and friends' expectations or criticisms of the Church?
- ✓ How do I bear witness to my faith, hope and love of God and of the Church?

### **Judge**

- ✓ Is the Church doing enough to be welcoming and attractive to people?
- ✓ Are my colleagues and friends' expectations satisfied?
- ✓ Are my colleagues and friends' criticisms justified?
- ✓ Did my Christian way of life ever attract some people to God, to the Church or to the movement?

### **Act**

- ✓ What can I do in my parish, at work or at home to make “each person feels that God is close and feels loved by Him”?
- ✓ What should I change in my way of life to bear witness to God's love for the world?

### **Announcement:**

*CFSM Faith Formation Session: 7 November, 3-5pm, Saturday via Zoom*

*Theme: Role of the Laity in the Church*

*Please keep a lookout for further details.*