

THE LAITY IN CHURCH LAW

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THIS IS the hour of the layman," said His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in one of the early addresses of his pontificate.¹ And clearly the contemporary interest in the layman's position and function in the Church stands, with the ecumenical and liturgical movements, among the foremost ecclesiological phenomena of the postwar period. Its predominance is evident in the volume of books and articles being written on the subject and the number and popularity of seminars, workshops, and conferences being conducted by clergy and laity, both separately and in collaboration.²

The present article will not add substantially to what has been said or written. On the contrary, we will borrow liberally from it. The purpose here is rather to look at the same ideas from a different point of view, to assemble them, as it were, in a different sort of synthesis. The subject of the layman's dignity and aspirations has been approached by liturgists, ecclesiologists, and Christian sociologists, both clerical and lay. This is an attempt to state briefly in canonical terms and in canonical perspective the position and function of the laity, in somewhat the same way as the Code of Canon Law and its commentators have defined and described the position and function of the clergy and religious in the Church.

¹ "E' l'ora, l'ora dei laici . . .": in the cathedral of Frascati, in the course of an exhortation to clergy and people during Mass, Sept. 1, 1963 (*Osservatore romano*, Sept. 2-3).

² Obviously, it would be impossible even to approach a thorough bibliography on the subject in the present essay. An extensive, systematic, and annotated bibliography is provided by A. Adversi, *Il laicato cattolico* (Rome: Editrice Studium, 1961) 103-10. Without disparagement of other works, the following are among the most representative: C. Papali, O.C.D., *De apostolatu laicorum* (Rome: Teresianum, 1962); Yves Congar, O.P., *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1953), also available in translation by D. Attwater, *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1957); J. Perrin, O.P., *L'Heure des laïcs* (Paris: Editions du Vieux Colombier, 1954), also available in translation by K. Gordon, *Forward the Layman* (London: Blackfriars, 1956); D. Thorman, *The Emerging Layman* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962); *The Layman in the Church*, ed. J. O'Gara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962); R. Graham, "The Laity and the Council," in *The 2nd Vatican Council* (New York: America Press, 1962) pp. 43-52.

CANONICAL STATUS

The second book of the Code begins with a series of introductory canons, 87–107, the last of which forecasts the division of the three classes of persons with whom that book is going to be concerned: "Though not all forms of the clergy are divinely instituted, it is of divine establishment that there be in the Church a *clergy* distinct from the *laity*; and it is possible for either of these to be *religious*."³ It is a first principle of the Church's social constitution, therefore, that it is composed of two classes, clergy and laity, and that this distinction is of divine law.⁴ The more detailed significance and motivation of this class distinction is expressed in the introductory canon to the title on orders: "It is the institution of orders which, by establishment of Christ, distinguishes the clergy from the laity with a view to the government of the faithful and the ministry of divine worship."⁵ This means that as our divine Lord elected to apply the fruits of redemption in a social manner, by establishing a visible, juridical Church in which and through which men are to be saved, so He determined also that the function of teaching, directing, and sanctifying in His name and person was not to be communicated transiently to various members of an undifferentiated, single-class community, in the manner of democratic organizations, but was to be vested in a distinct group, exclusively and stably dedicated to the service of God and the sanctification of men, in the manner of the priestly and Levitical orders of the Old Testament.

Because they have the Lord for their portion (*klēros*), or because their lot (*klēros*) is with the Lord's (as so often, the etymology is uncertain), this class has been designated "the clergy" from earliest times.

³ Can. 107: "Ex divina institutione sunt in Ecclesia *clerici* a *laicis* distincti, licet non omnes clerici sint divinae institutionis; utriusque autem possunt esse *religiosi*."

⁴ The new Code of the Eastern Churches, while omitting the reference to divine institution in the canon parallel to can. 107 of the Latin Code, asserts the same principle in another context. Cf. *De personis*, can. 26: "Personarum in Ecclesia aliae pertinent ad statum clericalem aliae ad laicalem. Tum clerici tum laici possunt esse religiosi." And *De clericis in genere*, can. 38, § 1, 2°: "Clerici ex divina institutione a laicis distinguuntur."

⁵ Can. 948: "Ordo ex Christi institutione clericos a laicis in Ecclesia distinguit ad fidelium regimen et cultus divini ministerium." Cf. can. 118: "Soli clerici possunt potestatem sive ordinis sive iurisdictionis ecclesiasticae et beneficia ac pensiones ecclesiasticas obtinere."

One is incorporated into this order by the rite of tonsure,⁶ and one advances in it by the successive reception of orders, minor and major, which are so many powers of participation, remote or proximate, partial or complete, in the total work of mediation, the office of the priesthood, the offering of sacrifice to God,⁷ and the administration of sacraments to men.⁸ The clergy exists, therefore, because it was in this way that our Lord elected to perpetuate His own priesthood and to continue His own work in the world.

But the constitution, within the Church, of one distinctive class, the clergy, induced the obvious consequence of another class, the non-clergy. In very early times, as early as Clement I (*ca.* 96), the word *laos*, originally employed in sacred sources sometimes indistinctly for the multitude and sometimes for the people of God as a whole, came to be used specifically to designate the nonclerical members of the Church.⁹ Our "laity," therefore, is a term honorable in its origins, having had from ancient times a positively religious connotation as well as a merely distinguishing function. And this same sense of religious significance appears still in the frequency with which legal texts refer to the laity as *fideles* or *Christifideles*.

By the third century, however, another distinctive type had arisen, the *monachi*, eventually to evolve into the various forms of the canonical state now entitled "religious." This was not, of course, a classification of the same nature as the division of clergy and laity, since both of these may be members of religious institutions; but it was sufficiently consequential canonically to justify the law's tripartite treatment of clergy, religious, and laity, and to bring it about that, unless the contrary is clear from a particular context, the term "laity," in common

⁶ Can. 108, § 1: "Qui divinis ministeriis per primam saltem tonsuram mancipati sunt, clerici dicuntur."

⁷ Can. 802: "Potestatem offerendi Missae sacrificium habent soli sacerdotes."

⁸ Can. 731, § 1: "Cum omnia Sacramenta Novae Legis, a Christo Domino Nostro instituta, sint praecipua sanctificationis et salutis media, summa in iis opportune riteque administrandis ac suscipiendis diligentia et reverentia adhibenda est."

⁹ Cf. Clement of Rome, *Ep. ad Cor.* 40, 5 (ed. Funk-Bihlmeyer, *Die apostolischen Väter* [2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1956] p. 57; tr. J. A. Kleist, in *ACW* 1 [Westminster, Md., 1946] 34): "Special functions are assigned to the high priest; a special office is imposed upon the priests; and special ministrations fall to the Levites. The layman (*laïkos*) is bound by the rules laid down for the laity (*laïkois*)." Cf. Acts 15:14; 1 Pt 2: 9-10.

usage and current discussion, designates those members of the Church who belong neither to the clergy nor to the religious.

Now it was not only in its name that the status of the laity was honorable from the beginning, but also in its active participation in the life and mission of the Church. It was, after all, as Pope Pius XII reminded us, through the apostolic activity of lay magistrates, soldiers, leading citizens, and common people, as well as of bishops and priests, that the Christian religion was propagated, within a hundred years, in all the principal cities of the Roman Empire.¹⁰ In time, however, for various reasons (not all, by the way, attributable to the clergy) this consciousness of an active responsibility in the Church was lost to such an extent that medieval paintings tend to depict the kingdom of Christ as consisting of two separate groups, the pope with bishops and other clerics on one side, the emperor with princes and laity on the other,¹¹ and St. Jerome is quoted in the Decree of Gratian as writing of the laity: "These are permitted to take wives, to till the soil, to judge between man and man, to plead causes, to place offerings upon the altar, to pay tithes; and in this way they can be saved, if indeed they avoid evil and do good."¹² Indeed, the Reformation is regarded as having been, in one respect, a protest of lay people against the exclusivity of the clergy in the Church.¹³ In its response to the Reformation's excessive reaction against the hierarchical constitution itself of the Church, the Council of Trent and subsequent legislation may have tended to canonize rather than to correct this attitude in theory,¹⁴ but in practice, as Pius XII observed, it is from that time, as a matter of fact, that the

¹⁰ In the Encyclical *Evangelii praecones*, "De sacris missionibus provehendis," June 11, 1951, *AAS* 43 (1951) 511-13.

¹¹ Cf. Papali, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

¹² "Duo sunt genera christianorum. Est autem genus unum, quod mancipatum divino officio, et deditum contemplationi et orationi, ab omni strepitu temporalium cessare convenit, ut sunt clerici, et Deo devoti. . . . Aliud vero est genus christianorum ut sunt laici. *Laos* enim est populus. His licet temporalia possidere, sed non nisi ad usum. . . . His concessum est uxorem ducere, terram colere, inter virum et virum iudicare, causas agere, oblationes super altaria ponere, decimas reddere, et ita salvari poterunt, si vitia tamen benefaciendo evitaverint" (C. 12, q. 1, c.7). It does not seem quite accurate, therefore, to assign the ecclesiastical depreciation of the laity to the Late Middle Ages.

¹³ Cf. E. Stanton, S.J., "The Layman's Part in the Social Mission of the Church," *America* 108 (Feb. 2, 1963) 164.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

laity have been progressively reassuming their active role in the Church through the sodalities, lay associations of charity, and various lay Catholic movements in defense of ecclesiastical rights and liberties.¹⁵ At any rate, the highly educated layman of today, with one hundred thousand Catholic graduates from American colleges and universities in 1961 alone,¹⁶ rightly feels that the time has come for a recognition in principle of his distinctive status and positive function in the Church.

In this connection the Roman Synod of 1960 offered a contribution which does not seem to have received the attention and appreciation it deserves. This was an attempt, in a series of thirteen articles or canons, professedly to deal with the question of the layman in the law: his status, his obligations, his functions. Introducing this section, the Synod proposed this definition: "In the articles of this Synod the laity are those who by the ritual waters of holy baptism are constituted members of the Mystical Body of Christ and endowed with the rights of personality in the Church, being distinguished from the clergy and religious, and subject to the duly constituted hierarchy."¹⁷ Classically, the definition contains a genus and specific difference. By baptism the layman, in common with clergy and religious, is made a member of the Mystical Body of Christ (theological viewpoint) and a person in the Church (juridical viewpoint). The specific note is somewhat less satisfactory, differentiating the layman by the accurate but not very inspiring notes of distinction from clergy and religious and subjection to the hierarchy. The specific difference should, it would seem, indicate the particular finality of the state in question within the total objective

¹⁵ Cf. Pius XII's allocution to the first world congress of the Catholic lay apostolate: "On se platt souvent à dire que, durant les quatre derniers siècles, l'Eglise a été exclusivement 'cléricale', par réaction contre la crise, qui au seizième siècle avait prétendu parvenir à l'abolition pure et simple de la hiérarchie et, là-dessus, on insinue qu'il est temps pour elle d'élargir ses cadres. Pareil jugement est tellement loin de la réalité que c'est précisément depuis le saint Concile de Trente que le laïcat a pris rang et a progressé dans l'activité apostolique" (Oct. 14, 1951, *AAS* 43 [1951] 784-85).

¹⁶ Cf. Stanton, *art. cit.*, p. 167.

¹⁷ "Laici ii habentur, in huiusce Synodi articulis, qui, Baptismate sancto rite abluti, membra mystici Christi Corporis sunt, et in Ecclesia personae iuribus gaudent (cfr. can. 87), a clericis religiosisque distinguuntur et legitimae Hierarchiae subiciuntur" (*Prima Romana Synodus* [Rome: Vatican, 1960] art. 208). In translating the articles of the Synod, the Latin text, which is the official one, has served as principal source, with attention, however, to the Italian, which may be closer to the original and is frequently far more clear.

of the society. A more positive attempt at specification has been suggested in this form: "The laity are those members of Christ's faithful whose part it is to win over to Christ the material universe and the temporal order by living the fulness of the Christian life in the midst of the world."¹⁸

Wherever one puts the emphasis, however, the status of the laity in the Church, if it is to be fully defined and evaluated, must be considered not only absolutely, in itself, but also in relation to the clerical and religious states. It has been noted above that the existence of the clergy as a distinct and stable class is due to the fact that the Church was constituted by Christ as a society in which certain persons are dedicated to the task of teaching, directing, and sanctifying the community in the name and with the authority of Christ. To this extent there is an inequality of classes in the Church, with the hierarchy superior, by reason of ministry and government, and the laity subject. But this superiority pertains to the hierarchy by reason of something not altogether their own; only because and to the extent that they take the place of Christ and act for Him. By themselves and in themselves, the members of the hierarchy are also of the faithful. They receive the same sacraments and other ministries in the same circumstances and for the same reasons as the laity. There is, in other words, an inequality of ministry and an equality of life.¹⁹ By way of humble comparison, the President of the United States at any time, precisely as president, i.e., as entrusted with the government of the country, is superior to the people whom he governs; but he is not, by reason of being president, any more or better an American than any other citizen. Similarly, in his status of Christian the layman is not inferior to any other member of the Church. It could be added that the clergy exists for the faithful, not the faithful for the clergy; and that in the life to come God will beatify immediately by Himself and not through the mediation of a clergy.

Now this comparison of laity and clergy is a relation of the external order, the relation of superior and subject, pastor and flock. It does not involve any comparison of the interior states, the relative degrees of

¹⁸ Papali, *op. cit.*, p. 20: "... laicus est ille christifidelis cujus est, vitam christianam plene in medio mundi ducendo, mundum materialem et ordinem temporalem Christo lucrificere."

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 28.

perfection, of the individual members of clergy or laity. The clerical state as such was not instituted for the sanctification of its members but for the sanctification of the faithful. The religious state, on the other hand, does exist for the perfection of its members.²⁰ And this suggests a comparison of the lay state and the religious state, from the point of view of the latter's being called the state of perfection.

Christian perfection consists, of course, in union with God in charity. Everyone must achieve and maintain this essentially; everyone is invited to strive for ever greater degrees of it in the living of the Christian life. But every act by which we live our lives and pursue perfection involves some usage of creatures; and these, howsoever good in themselves—indeed, because they are good—have a way of attracting one's affections to themselves and of distracting from intensive and exclusive dedication to God. Outstanding among creatures of this nature are temporal goods and property, the pleasures of family life, and the freedom to pursue one's own objectives according to one's own will and judgment. Hence, to those who wish to devote themselves to a more intensive quest of perfection, there is recommended, in the traditional interpretation of our Lord's example and of certain evangelical and Pauline texts, the renunciation of material possessions,²¹ the observance of continence,²² and the imitation of Christ in self-abnegation.²³ Hence, those who bind themselves by the stable bond of a vow to the practice of these evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, are said to put themselves in a state of perfection, which by reason of its recognition and regulation by the Church is called the public or canonical state of perfection. And this designation is applicable not only to religious in the strict canonical sense of the word, but also to the other juridically constituted states of perfection: the societies of common life, and secular institutes.

Now it is evident that they are called states of perfection not in the sense that the members have achieved it, but simply in the sense that they have adopted a way of life which is of its nature especially conducive to the pursuit of perfection. Consequently, this mode of speak-

²⁰ Cf. can. 488: "In canonibus qui sequuntur, veniunt nomine: 1° *Religionis*, societas, a legitima ecclesiastica auctoritate approbata, in qua sodales, secundum proprias ipsius societatis leges, vota publica, perpetua vel temporaria, elapso tamen tempore renovanda, nuncupant, atque ita ad evangelicam perfectionem tendunt. . . ."

²¹ Mt 19:21.

²² Mt 19:11-12; 1 Cor 7:6-9, 32-34, 38-40.

²³ Jn 6:38; Phil 2:8.

ing does not imply any comparison of the relative perfection of the individual members of the religious and lay states respectively. By way of another illustration, even more humble than the last, we might liken the situation to a race track. Given the fact that great races are often decided by a matter of seconds and of inches, it is incontestable that the inner track, which is mathematically shorter, is the preferable position, and of its nature more conducive to victory than the outer track. But in any given race the runner on the inside track may be out of training, or overweight, or just not making any personal effort, while the runner on the outside may be in excellent condition and exert himself to the utmost, with the result that the latter leaves the former far behind. Similarly, it is indisputable that the religious state enjoys a preferential position in comparison with the lay state in the matter of the pursuit of perfection;²⁴ but evidently the individual layman, receiving greater graces or co-operating more generously, may achieve a higher degree of union with God in charity, which is Christian perfection.

RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

The adequate exposition of any particular state in a society includes not only the definition of its constituent elements, which we have been attempting thus far, but also the enumeration of the rights and obligations which follow from it, in the mode of properties, with a view to the realization of its finality. The Code of Canon Law has done this, in

²⁴ Cf. Pius XII in the Encyclical *Sacra virginitas*, March 25, 1954: "Hac de causa imprimis asseverandum est—quod luculenter Ecclesia docet—sanctam virginitatem excellentia sua matrimonio praestare. Id iam Divinus Redemptor utpote perfectioris vitae consilium discipulis suaserat [Mt 19:10–11]. . . . Si igitur virginitas, ut scripsimus, matrimonio praestat, id potissimum procul dubio ex eo evenit, quod ad excellentiorem assequendum finem spectat; ac praeterea quod etiam efficacitate summa confert ad sese omnino divino servitio mancipandum; dum contra illius animus, qui coniugii vinculis negotisque implicatur, plus minusve 'divisus' est" (*AAS* 46 [1954] 170). "Haec doctrina, qua statuitur virginitatem et coelibatum omnino excellere ac matrimonio praestare, iam a Divino Redemptore et a gentium Apostolo, ut diximus, patefacta fuit; itemque in sacrosancta Tridentina synodo sollemniter fuit ut divinae fidei dogma definita, et a Sanctis Patribus Ecclesiaeque Doctoribus concorditer semper sententia declarata. Praeterea ut Decessores Nostri, ita Nosmet ipsi, quotiescumque occasio data est, eam etiam atque etiam explanavimus ac valde commendavimus" (*ibid.*, p. 174). Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. 24, can. 10: "Si quis dixerit, statum coniugalem anteponeendum esse statui virginitatis vel coelibatus, et non esse melius ac beatius, manere in virginitate aut coelibatu, quam iungi matrimonio: A.S." (*DB* 980).

specific sections, both for the clerical state and for the religious.²⁵ For the laity it has not provided a separate treatment, being content to state the general principle of canon 87 ("It is by baptism that one acquires personality in the Church, with all the rights and duties of the Christian . . .")²⁶ and to explicitate the various privileges and obligations of the laity, for the most part, in terms of Christian, rather than specifically lay, privileges and obligations. We might say that the Code considers the function of the laity rather in terms of private law (*ius privatum*) than of public (*ius publicum*).

In the light of this distinction the lacuna sometimes charged to the Code is not so serious as it seems. For there are very many canons expressing rights and obligations of the faithful, sometimes predicated directly of themselves, sometimes referred to the clergy as the subject of an obligation toward the people. Besides their right to the ministration of spiritual benefits generally,²⁷ there is the right to the reception of the Eucharist in fact²⁸ and in any Catholic rite,²⁹ to the sacrament of penance in any rite,³⁰ to marriage,³¹ to Christian burial,³² to act as plaintiff before the ecclesiastical tribunals,³³ to introduce one's case immediately before the Holy See,³⁴ to petition that a cause of beatification be instituted,³⁵ etc. There are also the obligations of the clergy and hierarchy toward the faithful: to celebrate Mass for the people,³⁶ to preserve the purity of faith,³⁷ to administer the sacraments, preach, instruct, and attend to other pastoral offices.³⁸ There is predicated or implied the admissibility of the laity to the office of ecclesiastical notary,³⁹ to the administration of pious causes,⁴⁰ of maintenance

²⁵ Cf. can. 118-44, 592-625.

²⁶ Can. 87: "Baptismate homo constituitur in Ecclesia Christi persona cum omnibus christianorum iuribus et officiis, nisi, ad iura quod attinet, obstet obex, ecclesiasticae communionis vinculum impediens, vel lata ab Ecclesia censura." Cf. Roman Synod, art. 209: "Laicus in perpetuum habet in Ecclesia personam; ex quo fit, ut ex sacris canonibus iura atque officia retineat, quae abalienare nequeat. Itaque si quis conatur Baptismum suum renuntiare, praeterquam quod gravissimum admisit peccatum, praeterea factum irritum edidit."

²⁷ Can. 682: "Laici ius habent recipiendi a clero, ad normam ecclesiasticae disciplinae, spiritualia bona et potissimum adiumenta ad salutem necessaria."

²⁸ Can. 853. ²⁹ Can. 866. ³⁰ Can. 905. ³¹ Can. 1035. ³² Can. 1239, § 3.

³³ Can. 1646. ³⁴ Can. 1569, § 1. ³⁵ Can. 2003, § 1. ³⁶ Can. 306, 466.

³⁷ Can. 336. ³⁸ Can. 467, 892, 939. ³⁹ Can. 373, § 3. ⁴⁰ Can. 841, § 1.

funds,⁴¹ and of ecclesiastical property in general,⁴² to the functions of marshal and courier of the tribunals,⁴³ and to various rights of patronage,⁴⁴ including the election, under certain conditions, of the clerical occupant of a benefice.⁴⁵

For the sake of completing this section of the laity's status at canon law, certain minor disabilities should also be mentioned and certain technical disadvantages, as it were, in comparison with clergy and religious. Thus, the laity are excluded from preaching in church,⁴⁶ cannot serve as arbiters in ecclesiastical procedure,⁴⁷ have no voice in the division of parishes,⁴⁸ may not receive the profession of faith required by law,⁴⁹ and are not permitted to attend to the washing of the more intimate altar linens (purificators, palls, corporals) till these have first been attended to by a cleric.⁵⁰ The laity owe special reverence to the clergy, and are guilty of sacrilege if they inflict personal injury upon them (a privilege which, curiously, is not reciprocal).⁵¹ The clergy, in turn, are expected to live a more holy life, both interior and exterior, than the laity, and to surpass them in virtuous conduct with a view to edification.⁵² The religious state also is to be held in honor by all (not excluding the clergy).⁵³ The laity are assigned third place, in order of precedence, after clergy and religious.⁵⁴ As a rule, they may confer private baptism only in the absence of a cleric.⁵⁵ The clergy are not permitted to serve as pallbearers for a lay person,⁵⁶ and the clergy are

⁴¹ Can. 1183, § 1. ⁴² Can. 1521, § 2. ⁴³ Can. 1592. ⁴⁴ Can. 1448 ff.

⁴⁵ Can. 1452: "Electiones ac praesentationes populares ad beneficia etiam parocchialia, sicubi vigent tolerari tantum possunt, si populus clericum seligat inter tres ab Ordinario loci designatos." Apart from such concessions, the prohibition against interference in ecclesiastical elections is very explicit; cf. can. 166: "Si laici contra canonicam libertatem electioni ecclesiasticae quoquo modo sese immiscuerint, electio est ipso facto nulla." Cf. also can. 2390 for the penal consequences of such interference.

⁴⁶ Can. 1342, § 2. ⁴⁷ Can. 1931. ⁴⁸ Can. 1427, § 1. ⁴⁹ Can. 1407.

⁵⁰ Can. 1306, § 2.

⁵¹ Can. 119: "Omnes fideles debent clericis, pro diversis eorum gradibus et muneribus, reverentiam, seque sacrilegii delicto commaculant, si quando clericis realem iniuriam intulerint." For the penal consequences, cf. can. 2343.

⁵² Can. 124: "Clerici debent sanctiorem prae laicis vitam interiorem et exteriorem ducere eiusque virtute et recte factis in exemplum excellere."

⁵³ Can. 487: "Status religiosus seu stabilis in communi vivendi modus, quo fideles, praeter communia praecepta, evangelica quoque consilia servanda per vota obedientiae, castitatis et paupertatis suscipiunt, ab omnibus in honore habendus est."

⁵⁴ Can. 491, §§ 1-2. ⁵⁵ Can. 742, § 2. ⁵⁶ Can. 1233, § 4.

to have places in the cemetery distinct from the laity and in a more honorable location (*decentiore loco*).⁶⁷ Finally, the principle is enunciated—though it is, of course, of divine rather than ecclesiastical law—that the hierarchy does not derive its vocation or authority from the consent of the people.⁶⁸

As with its rights and privileges, so the obligations of the lay state are scattered throughout the Code and included rather as obligations common to the faithful (usually including clerics and religious) than as duties specific to the laity: for example, the obligation to avoid various objectionable organizations,⁶⁹ of providing timely baptism,⁶⁰ of receiving confirmation,⁶¹ annual Communion⁶² and confession,⁶³ viaticum⁶⁴ and extreme unction,⁶⁵ of reporting matrimonial impediments,⁶⁶ and providing Christian burial rather than cremation;⁶⁷ the obligation of professing the faith in certain circumstances,⁶⁸ of co-operating in the building of Catholic schools,⁶⁹ of observing the laws of precensorship⁷⁰ and prohibition of books;⁷¹ and so on.

In view of the legitimate aspiration of the laity, however, for a more positive and specific presentation of their distinctive personal and social responsibility in the Church, the Roman Synod's section on the laity, mentioned above, is particularly interesting and instructive. It contains a series of articles which may be divided into a threefold statement: the vocation of the laity to supernatural perfection, the moral obligations of the laity in their private and social lives, and the duty of the laity positively to co-operate in the apostolic mission of the Church.

The vocation of the layman to supernatural perfection is presented in two parts. First, the vocation to supernatural living: "The laity, by reason of their dignity and the supernatural end to which they are called, cannot be satisfied to live a naturally moral life but must pursue a manner of living which is also supernaturally good, striving above all

⁶⁷ Can. 1209, § 2.

⁶⁸ Can. 109: "Qui in ecclesiasticam hierarchiam cooptantur, non ex populi vel potestatis saecularis consensu aut vocatione adleguntur; sed in gradibus potestatis ordinis constituuntur sacra ordinatione; in supremo pontificatu, ipsomet iure divino, adimpleta conditione legitimae electionis eiusdemque acceptationis; in reliquis gradibus iurisdictionis, canonica missione."

⁶⁹ Can. 684.

⁶⁰ Can. 770.

⁶¹ Can. 787.

⁶² Can. 859.

⁶³ Can. 906.

⁶⁴ Can. 864, § 1.

⁶⁵ Can. 944.

⁶⁶ Can. 1027.

⁶⁷ Can. 1203.

⁶⁸ Can. 1325.

⁶⁹ Can. 1379, § 3.

⁷⁰ Can. 1385.

⁷¹ Can. 1398.

things to this end, that they remain always in the grace of God.”⁷² Secondly, the vocation to perfection: “Since they, too, are called to holiness, the laity should have as their objective that each one achieve Christian perfection in his own state, by the use of the sacraments and other means conducive to perfection, and that each try to follow in the footsteps of Christ our Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.”⁷³ Thus, perhaps for the first time in the form of a canon, is confirmed the principle that although the clergy, as such, are supposed to live a more exemplary life than the laity (can. 124), and although the latter do not live in a canonical state of perfection through the profession of the evangelical counsels, yet they do have a true calling to the pursuit of Christian perfection, that is, to the quest of ever closer union with God in charity.

Having prefaced this general statement of the lay vocation, the Synod proceeds, in several articles, to inculcate certain moral obligations of particular applicability to the layman. He is reminded that the conscientious exercise of one’s profession requires a knowledge of the respective moral obligations,⁷⁴ that the economic order, in particular, cannot be divorced from morality,⁷⁵ and that as moral issues form a part of divine revelation, it is not possible, even in public life, to prescind from Catholic moral teaching.⁷⁶ Moreover, the Church has the

⁷² Art. 210, § 1: “Laici, propter dignitatem suam et finem supernaturalem ad quem sunt vocati, contenti vita naturaliter honesta esse non possunt, sed consuetudinem vitae persequi debent, quae sit etiam supernaturaliter bona, in eo maxime adlaborantes, ut apud Deum gratia semper vivant (preoccupandosi sopra ogni altra cosa di vivere sempre in grazia di Dio).”

⁷³ Art. 210, § 2: “Laici, cum et ipsi ad sanctimoniam vocati sint, in hoc spectent, ut christiane perfectum suum quisque statum assequatur, videlicet sacramentis aliisque modis ad sanctitatem persequendam adhibitis, et conetur Christi Domini Nostri, Mariae Virginis Sanctorumque vestigiis insistere (I laici, perchè chiamati anch’essi alla santità, si studino di raggiungere la perfezione del proprio stato . . .).”

⁷⁴ Art. 215: “Ut conscientia sua fretus suam quisque artem (professione) exercent, officia ab ea profecta ad mores pertinentia cognoscat ac teneatur oportet.”

⁷⁵ Art. 214: “Omnium rerum ordo, a Deo praestitutus, illud exigit, ne curae rerum administrandarum a praeceptis moralibus separentur; quam ob rem in memoria christifideles teneant, etiam in rebus administrandis esse sibi moralibus legibus parendum.”

⁷⁶ Art. 211: “Divinae Revelationis ea quoque est pars, quae officia ad mores pertinentia docet. Quam ob rem religio a praeceptis catholicis de moribus seiungi numquam potest, ne Rei publicae quidem si quis munera obeat (Anche gli obblighi morali fanno parte della divina Rivelazione. Perciò, non è mai lecito, neanche nella vita pubblica, separare la religione dalla morale cattolica).”

right and duty of explaining to the faithful their moral obligations at the polls.⁷⁷

In one's personal life, there is indeed the obligation to take due care of the body, as the instrument of the immortal soul, and temple of God destined to ultimate resurrection, but this is not to be perverted into a sort of idolatrous cult, nor should one forget how far superior are the values of the soul to those of the body.⁷⁸ Women are advised to shun unwholesome fads of "emancipation" and to have the greatest regard for their proper nature and particular mission.⁷⁹

In the matter of social theory, Catholics should be instructed in the following principles: that all are to contribute, according to their opportunity, to the solution of the social question, mindful that it cannot be solved without dependence on religion and Christian morality; that Catholics cannot accept or lend favor to social systems condemned by the Church; that the goods created by God for all men should be distributed equally, according to the laws of justice and charity; that there is an obligation to give of one's superfluities to the needy in acknowledgment of the notion that the rich are dispensers and administrators of the things of God; and that the best possible effort must be made to assure all, even of the most humble condition, the opportunity of work, with a view to procuring the necessities of life and providing, honestly and securely, for their own future and that of their loved ones.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Art. 218: "Ecclesiae ius et officium est christifideles docere, quibus officiis iidem obstringantur, qua cives, cum de suffragiorum certaminibus res est. . . ."

⁷⁸ Art. 213, § 1: "Obeundum est quidem officium curandi corpus, quod est, una cum animo immortalis, templum Dei ad resurrectionem praestitutum, sed vitandum est, ne corpus idem idololatrarum more colatur, neque obliviscendum mirum quantum animi vis corpori praestet (nè far dimenticare che i valori dello spirito hanno preminenza assoluta su quelli del corpo)."

⁷⁹ Art. 213, § 2: "Mulieres, malam quamvis 'emancipationem' respicientes, suae naturae munerumque observantissimae sint (La donna . . . abbia il massimo rispetto per la sua natura e per la sua particolare missione)."

⁸⁰ Art. 216: "Christifideles hisce quae sequuntur officiis erudiantur: 1° ab omnibus pro virili parte operam conferendam esse, ut quaestiones, quas dicunt sociales, recte explicentur; neque obliviscendum huiusmodi quaestiones numquam explicari posse, si auxilia, a christiana religione et a normis moralibus allata, temere refutentur; 2° catholici neque recipere possunt rationes de civium societate regenda, neve iis favere, quae ab Ecclesia sint damnatae etiam si diversae inter se ipsae sint natura et consecrariis; 3° bona a Deo omnibus hominibus creata, 'aequa ratione ad omnes effluere debere iustitia duce, caritate comite'; 4° 'ubi necessitati satis et decoro datum est, officium est de eo quod superest gratificari

In the sphere of social practice, the principle of private property is affirmed;⁸¹ but with regard to the production, possession, and distribution of worldly goods, Catholics are advised of their obligation to know and apply the tenets of Christian morality, especially in the matters of the just price, usurious interest, monopoly, illicit profits (including graft or bribery), and all methods of economic activity which are harmful to the common good.⁸² To the context of social obligations belongs also the inculcation of the Catholic's grave responsibility, in his use of motor vehicles, not to expose to danger his own life or the lives of others.⁸³ Here, too, occurs the exhortation not to be a mere passive subject of technical progress, but actively to direct it to the glory of the Creator, the development of the human personality, and the welfare and peace of the world.⁸⁴

APOSTOLIC VOCATION

The third category into which I have presumed to divide the Synod's list of obligations of the laity refers to the layman's apostolic office: "Let all Catholics, within the limits of their respective opportunities, undertake the promotion and defense of their religion, mindful that to be vacillating or neglectful is equivalent to offering comfort to the

indigentibus: neque eos praeterire debere divites esse 'terrestrium bonorum Dei dispensatores et procuratores'; 5° 'efficiendum pro viribus est, ut omnes infimae quoque plebis homines possint labore suo suaeque frontis sudore necessaria vitae sibi comparare, ac tuto honestoque modo in posterum quoque sibi suisque consulere.' The quotations are from various social documents of Pius XII, Leo XIII, and John XXIII.

⁸¹ Art. 217, § 1: "Contra veteres atque huius aetatis errores, privatum affirmetur possidendi ius, quod quidem cum iuribus et officiis sive singulorum sive totius hominum societatis, componatur."

⁸² Art. 217, § 2: "Quod si agitur de bonis vel comparandis vel procreandis vel dividendis, catholici, cum perspecta christiana praecepta habuerint, rationem agendi ex iisdem ducant, praesertim si de iis viis rationibusque sit statuendum, quae attineant ad aequum praetium faciendum, ad iniquum foenus, ad nimiam rerum praeoccupationem (accaparamenti), ad illicitos quaestus, quamvis specie donorum cuique tributos, denique ad omnia facta, quae communi utilitati noceant."

⁸³ Art. 219: "Grave catholicorum officium est, ne quis, vehiculis usus, in discrimen et suam et alterius vitam adducat."

⁸⁴ Art. 220: "Christifideles ne inertes progressui artium (progresso tecnico) subiciantur, at vero eundem progressum ad Creatoris gloriam, ad hominumque dignitatem augendam, ad bonum omnium pacemque dirigant."

enemies of the faith.”⁸⁵ In elaborating this point, however, the Synod becomes much too diffuse and detailed for the purposes of this synthesis, not indeed under the same title on the laity but in a separate section entitled “The Auxiliary Function of the Laity in Promoting the Apostolate, with Special Attention to Catholic Action.”⁸⁶ Various enumerations have been made, some in an organized and academic way, others in more cursory fashion, of the forms of lay participation in the Church’s mission on earth. For a simple, sufficiently complete, and systematic division, the following is suggested: (1) the action of the laity in matters properly clerical; (2) the action of the laity in matters properly laical, with a mandate and under the direction of the hierarchy, or Catholic Action in the technical sense of the word (*Actio Catholica*); and (3) the action of the laity in matters properly laical without any direct intervention of the hierarchy (*actio Catholicorum*).⁸⁷

The first manner in which the laity exercises the apostolate, or contributes to the work of the Church, is in a supplementary or subsidiary capacity, supplying, insofar as is possible without orders, for the insufficiency of clergy in performing functions of their nature clerical. It is to this form of action that the following words of Pope Paul VI are applicable: “Do you also, you faithful, you laymen, come and assist in the work of the Church. Come to the relief of the clergy, which has become depleted and inadequate to the volume of its ministry.”⁸⁸ Properly speaking, of course, this is not so much an apostolate of the laity as a participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.

More in detail, this form of action may be exercised in various ways. First, in the administration of the sacraments and the care of souls. This emergency function of the laity is particularly evident in the

⁸⁵ Art. 212, § 1: “Omnes catholici, et quidem pro viribus suis (nei limiti delle rispettive possibilità), propugnationem et defensionem suae religionis suscipiant; quod si iis hoc facere fuit incertum vel prorsus ipsi omiserunt, auxilia inimicis suae fidei certo attulerunt.”

⁸⁶ “De adiutrice laicorum opera in apostolatu promovendo et praecipue de Actione Catholica” (art. 628-709), comprising the following subdivisions: “De laicorum apostolatus officio” [in genere], “De religiosis consociationibus,” “De Actione Catholica ceterisque apostolatus operibus,” “De actione sociali,” “De caritatis operibus,” “De rebus ad animos relaxandos aptis.”

⁸⁷ Cf. Papali, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff.

⁸⁸ “Anche voi, fedeli, anche voi, laici, venite ad aiutare l’opera della Chiesa. Venite a confortare questo clero, divenuto scarso e insufficiente per il suo vasto ministero” (from the exhortation at Frascati, Sept. 1, 1963; *Osservatore romano*, Sept. 2-3, 1963).

specially trained catechist of the missions who, in the absence of the priest, may attend to the baptism of infants and converts, visit the sick, conduct funerals, arrange for weddings in the extraordinary conditions of can. 1098, and provide a Sunday service with reading of the Gospel, sermon, and prayers (attendance at which has even been made obligatory in certain missions). The same function has often been performed in circumstances of persecution, modern as well as ancient, by laymen conveying the Blessed Sacrament to prisons and camps and other places inaccessible to clergy. Indeed, in more prosaic fashion it is performed daily by doctors and nurses who baptize newborn babies in danger of death,⁸⁹ and might perhaps be more extensively exercised in the administration of viaticum by laymen in the absence or incapacitation of priests.⁹⁰

Another properly clerical function in which the laity are most commonly called to assist is the magisterial office, the teaching mission of the hierarchy. Although preaching in church is prohibited to the laity by the present law of the Code⁹¹ (as it was not in earlier times⁹²), there are very many laymen today, teachers of catechism and professors of theology, fulfilling a mandate divinely given to the hierarchy and communicated by them to other members of the clergy and to the laity.⁹³

The administration of ecclesiastical property and temporalities is a further area in which the laity assist in activities natively clerical. Indeed, it is somewhat paradoxical that while the administration of

⁸⁹ Cf. can. 743: "Curet parochus ut fideles, praesertim obstetrices, medici et chirurgi, rectum baptizandi modum pro casu necessitatis probe ediscant."

⁹⁰ Cf. Cappello, *De sacramentis* 1 (6th ed.; Rome, 1953) n. 305.

⁹¹ Can. 1342, § 1: "Concionandi facultas solis sacerdotibus vel diaconis fiat, non vero ceteris clericis, nisi rationabili de causa, iudicio Ordinarii et in casibus singularibus." § 2: "Concionari in ecclesia vetantur laici omnes, etsi religiosi."

⁹² Cf. Papali, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

⁹³ Cf. can. 1333, § 1: "Parochus in religiosa puerorum institutione potest, imo, si legitime sit impeditus, debet operam adhibere clericorum, in parocchia territorio degentium, aut etiam, si necesse sit, piorum laicorum, potissimum illorum qui in pium sodalium *doctrinae christianae* aliudve simile in parocchia erectum adscripti sint." And Pius XII's allocution to the second world congress of the apostolate of the laity, Oct. 5, 1957: "De celui-ci [pouvoir d'enseigner] seuls les détenteurs de l'autorité ecclésiastique sont dépositaires. Les autres, prêtres ou laïcs, collaborent avec eux dans la mesure où ils leur font confiance pour enseigner fidèlement et diriger les fidèles" (*AAS* 49 [1957] 924-25). And can. 1327, 1328, 1329.

material goods is really a hierarchical function (for the property belongs not to the people but to the ecclesiastical entity of parish, or diocese, or other juridical person, and is therefore the responsibility of the ecclesiastical authority),⁹⁴ yet in the economic complexities of today the actual management of affairs may be more congruously conducted by laymen, both by reason of greater competence and training and with a view to freeing the priest for more specifically sacerdotal action.

The second form of lay activity in the Church would include those organized activities which are of their nature laical but are actually commissioned and enfranchised, as it were, by the hierarchy and conducted under the direction of the hierarchy. The activity envisioned here is laical in character, i.e., such as the laity can, even ordinarily, perform by themselves, inasmuch as it does not involve in any way the ministry of orders, or of teaching, or of jurisdiction. It comes under the direction of the hierarchy legitimately but almost by accident: legitimately, because the hierarchy, in its mission of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling, has ultimate responsibility over every manner in which the Church pursues its end;⁹⁵ and yet that it intervene directly in works intrinsically laical could be called *per accidens*, in the sense that it occurs when special circumstances postulate organization with a view to effectiveness and hierarchical direction with a view to orthodoxy and co-ordination with the more strictly hierarchical apostolate. (Given such circumstances, of course, peculiarly involving the interests of the Church, it is not *per accidens* that the hierarchy be in direct control.)

This type of lay apostolate is verified not only in the organization called "Catholic Action," but in any instance in which the bishops or pastors organize groups of laymen, in official committees or councils, to work for certain important objectives of a moral or social nature: to

⁹⁴ Cf. Papali, *op. cit.*, p. 67. This is found among the earliest canonical records: e.g., Council of Antioch (341): "Episcopus ecclesiasticarum rerum habeat potestatem, ad dispensandum erga omnes qui indigent . . ." (Kirch, *Enchiridion fontium historiae ecclesiae antiquae*, n. 499). And *Canones apostolorum* (ca. 400): "Praecipimus ut episcopus potestatem habeat rerum ecclesiasticarum. Si enim animae hominum pretiosae ei credendae sunt, multo magis eum oportet de pecuniis mandare . . ." (*ibid.*, n. 699). For current legislation cf. can. 1519, § 1: "Loci Ordinarii est sedulo advigilare administrationi omnium bonorum ecclesiasticorum quae in suo territorio sint nec ex eius iurisdictione fuerint subducta. . . ."

⁹⁵ Cf. S. Tromp, S.J., "Actio Catholica et hierarchia," *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 25 (1936) 105*-118*.

forestall or abrogate immoral legislation, to promote racial justice, to combat social menaces like communism, to foster ecumenical relations with non-Catholics, to strive for sympathetic and fair consideration on the part of government toward Church activities and institutions, and countless other programs of the sort.

In the division given above, this form of lay apostolate was associated with the term "Catholic Action." But it is more important that it be recognized as a distinctive form of lay activity than that it be identified with any particular existing institution. Identification with "Catholic Action" is particularly hazardous, not only because this expression is used in broad and narrow senses (with subdivisions even of the latter),⁹⁶ but also because there is no unanimity as to whether Catholic Action should be called an apostolate of the laity or a participation or co-operation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy. The Roman Synod, following Pius XI, defines Catholic Action in terms of the hierarchical mission: "Catholic Action is an organization of lay people which, according to its peculiar statutes, with direct and special dependence upon the bishops, assists the hierarchy in the exercise of its mission with a view to the triumph of the kingdom of God in individuals, in the family, in society."⁹⁷ Others, not precisely in contradiction of this concept, but certainly with a different emphasis, refer this same Catholic Action primarily and more essentially to the laity. By a curious juxtaposition, the very next

⁹⁶ Cf. Pius XII, in allocution to second world congress of lay apostolate, *AAS* 49 (1957) 929-30.

⁹⁷ Art. 640, § 1: "Actio Catholica laicorum consociatio est, quae ad normam statutorum suorum adiutricem praestat operam Hierarchiae ecclesasticae, cuius moderamini directe ac speciali modo subicitur, in munere sustinendo, quod ad Dei regnum spectat in singulorum animis, in familiis atque in hominum societate constabiliendum." Cf. Pius XI, in letter to Cardinal Bertram, Nov. 13, 1928: "... apparet Actionem Catholicam alio non spectare, nisi ut laici apostolatam hierarchicum quodammodo participant" (*AAS* 20 [1928] 385). Similarly Fr. Tromp: "Dum enim missio Hierarchiae omne, quod iuridice est et habet, debet mandato ipsius Christi, quo misit divinitus Hierarchiam, eamque solam: Actio Catholica omne, quod iuridice est et habet, debet mandato ecclesiastico, quo ipsa mittitur ab Hierarchia fere in eum modum, quo Hierarchia missa est a Christo. Sicut igitur missio Hierarchiae est participatio immediata missionis Christi, sic missio Actionis Catholicae est participatio immediata missionis Ecclesiae. . . . Cum autem etiam in executione apostolatus principaliora dependeant a potestate ordinis et iurisdictionis, Actio Catholica natura sua debet esse apostolatus, quod quasi viam sternit ad actiones, quae propriae sunt Hierarchiae, et hoc sensu complet apostolatam sacerdotalem. Est igitur natura sua apostolatus auxiliaris" (*art. cit.*, pp. 109*-110*).

article in the text of the Synod seems to reflect this attitude, in a quotation from Pope John XXIII: "Catholic Action is an association of lay people, with their proper and responsible functions, in the execution of which they must be subject to the direction of the authorities, in such a way, however, that the laity compose the administrative staff of the organization."⁹⁸

This variability of concept is undoubtedly due to the fact that the whole movement of Catholic Action has been continuously evolving both in practice and in theory,⁹⁹ and that as the Church became more conscious, especially in the last decade or so, of the laity's having a properly ecclesiastical function which is natively its own and not merely derived from the clergy, it also became clearer that the sort of works just described and long exercised by Catholic Action groups are really of a character intrinsically laical, even when initiated, informed, and directed, for the reasons indicated, by the hierarchical authority. The meaning of the new formula, therefore, and its advantage is that now the activities of the laity so described appear as a contribution to the mission of the Church which always was, is, and will be expected of the laity from the nature of the activity itself, and not something which devolves upon them accidentally and transiently due to the numerical insufficiency of the clergy. This is, indeed, the reason why the laity are, in some times, places, and circumstances, called upon to do properly clerical work, as in our first division of the lay apostolate above. But the work in question here is lay work. It is, perhaps, significant that Pope Paul VI—who is evidently much concerned with Catholic Action and the lay apostolate in general—while retaining substantially the accepted definition of Catholic Action, does speak rather of the laity's participation in the hierarchical mission of

⁹⁸ Art. 641: "Est quidem Actio Catholica laicorum hominum sodalitas, cui propria sunt munera eaque cum officii onere coniuncta, in quibus obeundis moderationi auctoritatum obtemperetur oportet, ita tamen ut laici ipsi moderatorum gradus in ea obtineant" ("L'Azione Cattolica è una organizzazione di laici con proprie e responsabili funzioni esecutive; i laici, quindi, ne compongono i quadri direttivi"). The quotation is from the Encyclical *Princeps pastorum*, Nov. 28, 1959, AAS 51 (1959) 857. Obviously, the Italian version is a very free rendition. On the relation of Catholic Action to the total apostolate of the laity, cf. G. Jarlot, S.J., "Action catholique ou apostolat des laïcs?" *Nouvelle revue théologique* 84 (1962) 952-57.

⁹⁹ Cf. Papali, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 ff.; S. De Angelis, *De fidelium associationibus* 2 (Naples: D'Auria, 1959) 388 ff.

the Church than of participation in the mission of the hierarchy, and in his explanation places considerably greater emphasis upon the initiative of the laity and the properly laical nature of this form of apostolate.¹⁰⁰

The third form of lay activity, or apostolate, is that in which laymen, either singly or collectively, perform functions of a lay nature, without the direct intervention of the hierarchy. In "Catholic Action" the hierarchy's mandate and direction confers upon the apostolate an official and public character, so that the laity, in that case, act in the name of the Church. The distinctive note of the present category is that the layman here acts in his own name, in a private and unofficial capacity. For this reason it has been designated *actio Catholicorum*, in contrast to the more official-sounding *actio Catholica*.

This is the area of activity most specifically laical, both because it is the activity the layman exercises by himself and in his own name, and because it is to this sort that not only the specialist but every member of the laity is called, as Pius XII emphasized in the Encyclical *Mystici corporis*: "It is Our wish that everyone who calls the Church his mother seriously consider the fact that not only the sacred ministers dedicated to the work of religion in the service of God but every other member also of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, each in his own way, has a duty to labor zealously and assiduously for the improvement and growth of the same Body."¹⁰¹ Here the influence of the hierarchy is

¹⁰⁰ "Noi desideriamo che l'Azione Cattolica viva e rimanga sostanzialmente quale l'autorità e la saggezza dei Nostri venerati Predecessori, in questi ultimi decenni l'hanno delineata. Essa appartiene oramai al disegno costituzionale della Chiesa. Varie le forme secondo i vari Paesi, le varie tradizioni, le varie esigenze, i vari sviluppi. Ma la sua definizione di collaborazione dei Laici all'apostolato gerarchico della Chiesa rimane" (Address, July 25, 1963, to episcopal delegates of Italian Catholic Action: *Osservatore romano*, July 27, 1963). "... bisogna che i Laici possano considerare come opera propria l'Azione Cattolica; non solo a loro destinata, ma anche da loro formata e promossa, collegata indubbiamente alla Gerarchia ecclesiastica; diretta anzi a prestarle obbedienza ed aiuto; ma capace anche di proprie iniziative e di proprie responsabilità, come appunto si conviene ad un organismo, che tende a formare cristiani consapevoli e adulti, e a dare alla loro multiforme espressione di vita cattolica il carattere di maturità e di forza proprio del fedele militante e moderno" (*ibid.*).

¹⁰¹ "Cupimus igitur, ut omnes, quotquot Ecclesiam agnoscunt veluti matrem, sedulo perpendant, non modo sacrorum administris, iisque dumtaxat, qui Deo mancipati religiosae vitae se dederint, sed ceteris quoque mystici Iesu Christi Corporis membris, pro sua cuiusque parte, officium esse impense diligenterque adlaborandi ad aedificationem et incrementum eiusdem Corporis" (*AAS* 35 [1943] 241).

normally only indirect: it is their office to train the laity in the principles of Christian living and, as particular needs arise, to provide more detailed instructions and applications, but per se the layman acts on his own initiative and according to his own judgment.¹⁰²

This form of lay action includes a share in both parts of what has been referred to as the twofold aspect of redemption and of the Church's mission, the eschatological and the temporal, i.e., to save and perfect souls and to transform the material world.¹⁰³

Evidently the layman will exercise this form of apostolate in a vast number of ways. While they are frequently not spectacular, they constitute a true apostolic activity, which is really his mission and assignment in the Church and not just a metaphorical or analogous title to lend an extrinsic dignity to sporadic, disjointed works of piety or zeal. The layman's work in promoting liturgical participation, frequentation of sacraments, spiritual exercises (lay retreats, for instance) belongs to this category. So, very importantly, does the work of instructing in Christian doctrine and morality, not now officially and by hierarchic appointment, but privately, as the parent does with his children (a commission of divine rather than of clerical origin), or as any man may have occasion to do toward his neighbor. Here also belongs the more public, but still unofficial, function fulfilled by the Catholic lay writer, even on religious subjects (supposing, of course, that the condition of canonical approval be observed); the work of the doctor explaining, defending, and promoting, as well as practicing, principles of Christian morality in matters of marriage, care of the body, surgery, etc.; the work of the Catholic jurist or politician, striving for justice and equity in the law and policies of nations and communities. It might be observed, in this connection, that the actual regulation of such matters as steady dating or proper costuming on the

¹⁰² His Eminence Cardinal Ritter is quoted as follows on the subject of racial discrimination and such problems: "The Church is not and should not be a power bloc, capable of forcing compliance with directives of its leadership. Rather, it is for the Church to enunciate principles and their application to modern problems clearly and without equivocation, leaving it to men of the Church as free citizens to devise the most effective means of applying them to concrete situations" (Baltimore's *Catholic Review*, May 24, 1963).

¹⁰³ Cf. Papali: "Sub actione Catholicorum veniunt non solum activitates apostolicae in ordine spirituali, sed etiam activitas Christiana in ordine temporali ad objectum secundarium Incarnationis spectans [mundum materialem reconciliandi Deo]" (*op. cit.*, p. 107; cf. pp. 44-53).

part of teen-age youth should not devolve upon the clergy or religious but be determined, more usually through concerted action, by the laity—i.e., the parents—with the advice, insofar as moral issues may be involved and such advice required, of the priest and Catholic sociologist.

Somewhat more indirectly, the layman contributes to the spiritual mission of the Church in all those activities which help to dispose the neighbor toward the Church or the more perfect life: by exercising or promoting works of Christian charity, by participation in movements to better race and labor-management relations, by judicious selection of theme and method in the communication arts, by taking active part in the training and recreation programs of youth organizations, CYO, Boy Scouts, etc.

By way of illustrating the part of the layman in what is referred to as the temporal mission, i.e., of transforming the material world—insofar as this objective is inadequately distinguishable from the spiritual mission, directly or indirectly exercised—the following representative quotations may suffice. Fr. Stanton writes: “[The laity] are to create a healthy atmosphere in the world so that people may breathe easily as Christians. . . . Automation, urban renewal, slum clearance, public health, racial discrimination, the proper use of leisure, better government, the depersonalizing effects of modern living—all these, and more, can be listed as problems which Catholic laymen must do something about in order to make this world God’s world.”¹⁰⁴ And Mr. Donald J. Thorman: “The true role of the Catholic layman is to mediate between the Church and civil society, to reconcile the two societies, to be the link between them.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *Art. cit.*, pp. 165–66.

¹⁰⁵ As reported in Baltimore’s *Catholic Review*, Dec. 21, 1962. For others, the mission of transforming or redeeming the world is even less related to the spiritual mission, though still not wholly independent of it. Cf., e.g., Papali: “Aspectus ergo integralis christianus mundi hanc duplicem ejus destinationem comprehendit, id est, esse ad gloriam Dei et ad salutem animarum. . . . Si mundus esset unice propter utilitatem spiritualem hominis, certe nobis sufficeret minor scientia trigonometriae et astrophysicae; sed si mundus est principaliter propter gloriam Dei, homo debet illum perficere ut ipse solus potest facere. Et ideo, ‘tulit Dominus Deus hominem, et posuit eum in paradiso voluptatis, ut operaretur et custodiret illum’ [Gn 2:15]” (*op. cit.*, pp. 116–17). But it is not so clear that the consecration or redemption of the world, in this sense, belongs any more to the laity than to the clergy. Once outside the spiritual order altogether, does not the distinction of clergy and laity lose significance?

By way of concluding the present section of this article, and the article itself, it may help to submit a brief, illustrative list of some ways in which laymen are being active in apostolic operations of one or another type described, in accordance with the contemporary appreciation of their mission and abilities. To be sure, not all of the following facts belong strictly to the apostolic function of the layman as here outlined. Consultation of the layman, for example, in the conduct of diocesan affairs belongs more to the prudent and efficient exercise of the hierarchical office than to the mission of the laity.¹⁰⁶

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore two laymen, to be rotated periodically, are part of the civil corporation of each parish. This is not new, of course; the "parish corporation" system has long existed in some states; but it is proposed here to give laymen a more active role: they will review the actual financial situation of the parish with the pastor at the annual meeting and assist in the preparation of the parish report.¹⁰⁷ In Atlanta thirty-six laymen have been appointed to various standing diocesan committees.¹⁰⁸ In St. Louis the ten-member board of the college department of the seminary system includes three laymen, one of whom is chairman of the board.¹⁰⁹ In an unidentified diocese of Michigan the parish-school board includes a group of laymen together with pastor and teachers.¹¹⁰ The University of San Francisco's Institute of Lay Theology trains laymen to engage in convert work as parish inquiry-forum directors.¹¹¹ At Santa Clara and at Canisius College—and undoubtedly elsewhere with increasing frequency—laymen are now engaged as professors of theology. In Bridgeport a Catholic university has been opened with a teaching staff entirely

¹⁰⁶ In inviting the laity to contribute suggestions for the diocesan synod to be held after the Ecumenical Council, Archbishop Shehan of Baltimore said: "Our devoted lay people are often in a unique position to observe the disedifying aspects of certain local customs, and to sense the need for pastoral guidance on local moral issues. The fact that the bishop is the sole legislator of a synod [can. 362] does not mean that he is disinterested in the heartfelt, respectful observations of his flock" (*Catholic Review*, Apr. 13, 1962).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Apr. 12, 1963.

¹⁰⁸ *Catholic Union and Echo* (Diocese of Buffalo), Nov. 9, 1962.

¹⁰⁹ *Catholic Review*, Sept. 28, 1962.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Apr. 19, 1963. In another parish, in St. Paul, Minn., a board of seven laymen, of various professions, directs the school for the pastor (*ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1963).

¹¹¹ *Catholic Union and Echo*, Mar. 29, 1963.

lay.¹¹² In Buffalo specially-trained teachers drawn from various lay organizations of the diocese are meeting with groups of Catholic seniors attending public schools in a Christian-doctrine program.¹¹³ And to this merely representative list of actuations of lay potential in the Church may be added a few of the similar aspirations which have been voiced with a view to fuller utilization of lay expertise which might be initiated by the Ecumenical Council: advisory bodies of Catholic lay people at all levels of the Church (parish, diocese, and Holy See),¹¹⁴ members of the laity in diocesan marriage tribunals,¹¹⁵ and a distinct congregation at the Holy See, or at least a special commission, for the lay apostolate.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most significant and symbolic fact of all, in this connection, is the announcement of His Holiness Pope Paul VI that members of the laity will be invited to assist at Vatican II and to make their expert counsel available to the Fathers.¹¹⁷ Thus is filled, in accord with the evident attitude of the present Pontiff toward the laity, what many have regarded as a lacuna in the original constitution of the Council.

Borrowing, for a final word of summary and conclusion, another remark of the same Pontiff to a large audience predominantly lay: "We would wish that each and every one of you have an appreciation of the honorable position that is assigned to you, an appreciation of that personal vocation with which the Church loves each one and calls each one."¹¹⁸

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1963. Similarly, at the diocesan college of Hauterive, Quebec, the academic, administrative, and disciplinary functions have all been turned over to the laity (*Catholic Review*, June 21, 1963).

¹¹³ *Catholic Union and Echo*, Sept. 20, 1963.

¹¹⁴ *Catholic Review*, Oct. 19, 1962.

¹¹⁵ Suggested by L. Baas, national president of Catholic Action, Holland, as reported *ibid.*, Oct. 5, 1962.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 9, 1962.

¹¹⁷ *Osservatore romano*, Sept. 15, 1963.

¹¹⁸ "Ma desideriamo che ciascuno di voi abbia . . . il senso del posto privilegiato che a ciascuno è riservato, il senso della vocazione personale con cui la Chiesa lo ama e lo chiama . . ." (*Osservatore romano*, Aug. 29, 1963).



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