

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- The lay faithful are essential in the life of the Church.
- The laity serve the kingdom of God together with the ordained priesthood and consecrated religious.
- Laypeople live out their call to holiness in the world of family, work, and community.

Each of us is tremendously important to God's plan for the world. Drawing on the graces received at baptism, members of the **common priesthood of the faithful** serve God's kingdom. God marks all Christians as his children, empowering us to act in Christ's name as priests, prophets, and kings.

"But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

1 Peter 2:9

As *priests*, laypeople offer worship to God, especially by participating in the eucharistic liturgy. As *prophets*, we speak the word of God and witness to the life, teachings, and saving actions of Christ. As *kings*, we profit from the authority and power of God to continue Christ's ministry of service and love to all people.

While never the true definition of the laity, the term layperson once had the connotation of being the passive recipient of the faith. While the ordained priesthood and those in consecrated life were viewed as having the active role of dispensing and passing on the faith. In today's Church, the laity is expected to be anything but passive in their faith.

As a layperson, you're an adopted child of God, a brother or sister of Jesus, and an heir to God's wealth of grace and life eternal, called to serve God's kingdom here on earth.

The Role of the Laity

The members of a parish liturgy planning committee were choosing songs for upcoming Sunday Masses. After deciding on mostly traditional hymns, one liturgist suggested dedicating one Mass time specifically for young adults. "After all," she said, "they're the future of the Church. It's important we have a Mass where they feel welcomed."

That's when a young priest at the table spoke up, "It's important for everyone to feel welcomed at all our Mass times. We're all part of the same Church, no matter what stage or state of life we're in."

- What do you think the priest meant by his comment?
- How can you help others feel welcomed in your parish church?



"No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church."

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity
(*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), 2

- How do you feel called to be active in your faith life? The faith life of your parish? The Church?



A Shared Work

Though the ordained priesthood is unique, bishops, priests, and deacons work in collaboration with the laity. Christ sends the laity into the world to transform the values of society and individuals into those of the kingdom of God, to minister as he would minister. This means we are sometimes called to act counterculturally, to go against what may be expected in secular culture and act as Jesus would.

Before his passion and death, Christ prayed for all his disciples, present and future:

"They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world."

John 17:16–18

As laypeople, we go into the world "bearing consistent witness in [our] personal, family, and social lives by proclaiming and sharing the gospel of Christ in every situation in which [we] find [our]selves" (*On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest*).

- What do you think it means to live counterculturally, like Jesus?
- How do you already minister as Jesus would in your life?



Doing God's Work in the World

That call to holiness and living a life like Jesus is our **universal vocation**, the vocation we are all called to live. Each of us also has a **particular vocation**, that is, we are called to a vocation that is specific to each of us. The priesthood of the faithful includes celibate religious, married, and single persons. All of these vocations comes with special gifts and opportunities to serve.

"Love is...the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being... Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being 'created in the image of God.'"

Pope St. John Paul II, *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*, 11

- How are you currently living out your universal vocation?
- Have you felt God calling you to a particular vocation?



As Married Couples and Parents

Husbands and wives are called to help their spouse and children along the path to sainthood. Their primary responsibilities revolve around their family, their domestic church. Other kinds of service in the Church follow after these primary responsibilities.

"Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and 'a school for human enrichment.' Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous—even repeated—forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life."

CCC 1657

As Single Adults

While being single is considered a state of life, not a primary vocation like marriage, priesthood, and consecrated life, we all share in the fundamental call of Christians to love. Belonging to God and our call to holiness extends to all states of life. Those living in the single state of life may or may not be called to a lifetime of being single, but can use their single state to devote more time to serving others and being engaged in the community.

Scripture gives us many models for how to live our universal vocation in the single state of life. Jesus was single, as were Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and others. Saint Paul saw much value in the single state and encouraged others to use their gifts within the single life:

"Each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Now to the unmarried and to widows I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do."

1 Corinthians 7:7-8

As Workers

Whether you have a part-time job or are a full-time student, the work you do every day is an opportunity to glorify God. The way we do our chores, the effort we put into our schoolwork, how we treat those we meet during the day can all be powerful ways to witness to the grace of God.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Colossians 3:16-17

- How might someone see the Catholic Church after meeting you?
- How can you strengthen the connection between your faith and your life?



As Church Members

Some laypeople are called to perform tasks that assist priests in serving the needs of the community by ministries such as service to shut-ins. Some use their gifts in parish or diocesan administration, pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, bereavement ministry, or faith formation. Others participate in liturgical ministries such as lector, cantor, or extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

"There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification."

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity
(*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), 6

As Community Members and Citizens

Finally, the laity touches the lives of friends, extended family, and community in unique and deeply personal ways.

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

James 1:27

Getting Ready, Getting Involved

As you become more mature in your faith you may have questions or be asked questions about your faith that you don't know the answers to right now. That's why it's important that your faith formation never ends. Stay involved in your local parish or Catholic campus ministry and look for opportunities to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation often, as well as opportunities for ongoing faith formation, social outreach, and community involvement.

You can also continue to grow your faith on your own through regular prayer, studying Scripture, and reading good books about faith topics of interest or the spiritual lives of holy people you admire.

On your own or with a partner, write a prayer asking God to help young Christians live out their universal vocation. Share this prayer with the rest of the group at the end of the session.

What parish or community ministries do you feel called to participate in? How can you get started?



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