
Introduction

“Among the most enduring contributions of the Second Vatican Council is its description of the Church as the People of God . . . This image, drawing on a rich biblical and historical tradition, gives marvelous expression to the role of the Church as the sign of the Kingdom of God.”

The Call to Adulthood

“Thanks to the impetus of the Second Vatican Council, lay women and men feel themselves called to exercise the same mature interdependence and practical self-direction which characterize them in other areas of life . . . the adult character of the People of God flows from baptism and confirmation which are the foundation of the Christian life and ministry.”

The Call to Holiness

“It is characteristic that lay men and women hear the call to holiness in the very web of their existence (LG #31), in and through the events of the world, the pluralism of modern living, the complex decisions and conflicting values they must struggle with, the richness and fragility of sexual relationships, the delicate balance between activity and stillness, presence and privacy, love and loss.”

The Call to Ministry

“Baptism and confirmation empower all believers to share in some form of ministry . . . This unity in the ministry should be especially evident in the relationships between laity and clergy as lay men and women respond to the call of the Spirit in their lives. The clergy help to call forth, identify, coordinate, and affirm the diverse gifts bestowed by the Spirit. We applaud this solidarity between laity and clergy as their most effective ministry and witness to the world.”

“The whole Church faces unprecedented situations in the contemporary world, and lay people are at the cutting edge of these new challenges. It is they who engage directly in the task of relating Christian values and practices to complex questions such as those of business ethics, political choice, economic security, quality of life, cultural development, and family planning.”

“Lay persons who have prepared for professional ministry in the Church, represent a new development. We welcome this as a gift to the Church . . . We recognize and accept the responsibility of working out practical difficulties such as the availability of positions, the number of qualified applicants, procedures for hiring, just wages and benefits.”

The Call to Community

“Because lay women and men do experience intimacy, support, acceptance and availability in family life, they seek the same in Christian communities.”
Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium. USCCB 1995.

The Call to Holiness

“During the last fifteen years the Christian lay faithful have contributed greatly to the spiritual heritage of the Church, enlarging our understanding of what it means to be called to holiness . . . The laity’s call to holiness is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Their response is a gift to the Church and to the world.”

The Call to Community

“The parish is for most Catholics their foremost experience of Christian community, enabling them to express their faith, grow in unity with God and others, and continue the saving mission of Christ. We have seen a welcome renewal in all aspects of parish life and ministry, due in large measure to an informed and committed laity often encouraged by their pastors and priests imbued with the spirit of Vatican II.

The Call to Mission and Ministry

“Lay ministers speak of their work, their service as a calling not merely a job. They believe God has called them to their ministry, and often the parish priest is the means of discerning the call.

“We, and all pastoral leaders, feel challenged:
To develop and commit the resources necessary to help laity, both paid staff and volunteers, prepare for church ministry.
To practice justice in the workplace and to provide a living wage.
To incorporate minority lay ministers into ecclesial leadership.
To ensure that the Church becomes an exemplary steward of all it human resources.”

The Call to Christian Maturity

“In the last fifteen years many of the lay faithful have moved beyond the learning laboratories of ordinary life to more systematic education in theology, Scripture, spiritual life, religious studies and spiritual direction. This development has been beneficial to growing numbers of lay women and men who, in turn, have helped the whole Church understand and communicate the truths of our faith in new ways.

We urge that theological education and formation be extended to more lay persons . . . Innovative ways must be found to bring the best of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition to more laity . . . The Church needs a well educated, inquiring, and vocal laity if the new evangelization is to achieve its full potential.”