

**The Church 40 years  
on  
No. 4**

*Published by the Singapore Pastoral  
Institute for internal circulation only*

A Witness of Christ  
to the World

**The Laity**

Chapter four  
The Dogmatic Constitution on the  
Church  
Second Vatican Council, 1965

A Small Group Reflection

Inside:

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2. Part One: Our life story
3. Part Two: What scripture teaches,  
What the church teaches.

## How to use these reflections

**Contents:** The guide provides texts for reflection and brief supplements on the texts. At the end, there are questions suggested for reflection and sharing.

**Method:** There is no fixed method. Groups that meet regularly may use their established ways of presenting the materials, reflection and sharing. For others, it is suggested that a facilitator leads the reflection and sharing.

One suggestion takes the following format: opening prayer (*optional hymn*); facilitator introduces the theme, all share experiences and understanding, summary of the sharing and closing prayer.

[**Note:** The texts are not easy to read. Have the reader(s) prepare. After each text, pause, and give time for the others to read the texts quietly on their own. The reflection questions provided are only suggestions – do not be limited by them.]

**Comment:** It is good to have available the document itself (*Lumen Gentium*), and a Bible.

**Caution:** This is the fourth of a series of eight reflections on the Church. Try to stay focused on the aspects of Church discussed in each chapter. Used in conjunction with the flyer will help.

## A Witness of Christ

### The Laity Lumen Gentium Chapter IV

#### Part One

#### A. Our Life Story

As is usual, in their monthly meeting, the group discussion turns to the question of recruiting people to their ministry:

*"It is so hard to get people interested in serving God these days."*

*"Yes, people are so engrossed in their own lives, they have no time to spare for church. They don't seem to care."*

*"The same people come forward every time. How can we get the others to be interested?"*

*"I wonder what kind of formation the people have. Don't they realize that as baptized Catholics, they have the responsibility to participate in the mission of the church?"*

This and similar conversations are common occurrences. We lament over the apparent disinterest in the people to take up and fulfill their responsibility in proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

#### *Questions for reflection*

1. What did the people lament over? What was their view of the role and responsibility of a baptized Catholic?
2. Outside of church ministries, what are the ways we can witness to Christ?
3. In the routine of our lives, in what ways are we open to the promptings of the Spirit?

### ***Supplement***

- The people of God - clergy, religious and lay people - are all called to share in the mission of Jesus.
- The lay people, i.e. those who are not ordained or committed to live in a religious community, are called to live out their secular vocation.
- As a mother, father, brother, sister, boss, employer, employee, colleague, friend, adviser, teacher, student, and a political leader, we are to make real the love of God in our lives; in the daily situations of our lives.
- We are to express the values of the kingdom in the decisions we make daily, and the actions we take. These are not limited to the church environment and ministries, but to the world we live in.

## **Part Two**

### **B. What Scripture teaches**

*Work in pairs. Read the three texts and reflect on the question:*

***What were the characteristics of the people sent out by Jesus and the owner of the vineyard?***

*Share your reflections with the whole group.*

1. Luke 10:1
2. Matt 20:3-7
3. Acts 6:1-6

### ***Supplement***

- Not only did Jesus send the twelve, but he also sent seventy disciples in pairs with identical instructions and he empowered both groups.

- God is constantly looking for people to work with him in the world. He gives everyone a chance to serve.
- The roles of the apostles and the seven chosen are complementary. We are called to collaborate too.

### **C. What the church teaches.**

*Work in pairs: Read the following text from Vatican II "Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (LG)" and reflect on the following question:*

#### ***Question for reflection***

***How can I best witness to God in my daily life, especially in making the world a better place? Sanctifying the world in other words.***

*Share with the big group.*

*...It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world's occupations and callings and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, form the context of their existence. There they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven, in the spirit to the Gospel, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially, by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they manifest Christ to others. It is their special task to illuminate and order all temporal matters in which they are closely involved in such a way that these are always carried out*

*and develop in Christ's way and to the praise of the Creator and Redeemer. (LG 31).*

## Conclusion

### *Question for reflection*

*What can I contribute to sanctify the world I live in?* Focus on the world / environment you spend most time in: home, family, office, social circles and church circles.

## HOME WORK

*For you to read at home – these texts will be useful for your further reflections.*

- The Lord from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the church and the world as well personally calls lay people. (John Paul II, CL 2)

- Lay people are called by God to make their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world (AA 2)

- Lay people have countless opportunities for exercising the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification (AA 6)

- The Asian bishops recognized and affirmed this in Bandung in 1990. They clearly affirm that the formation of the lay faithful must be placed among the priorities of a diocese. "It ought to be so placed within the plan of pastoral action that the efforts of the whole community (clergy, lay faithful, and religious) converge on this goal" (CL 57)

## Abbreviations

CL – *Christifidelis Laici* (Apostolic exhortation on the mission of the Lay faithful in the church and in the world, 1987).

AA – *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity 1965).

LG – *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council, 1964)

**The documents of the Second Vatican Council** come in three categories:

- Constitutions,
- Declarations and
- Decrees.

**Constitutions** are of two types – Dogmatic and Pastoral. Dogmatic has more to do with doctrine and Pastoral more with the church's mission. Both have the authoritative of the teaching church behind them.

**Declarations and Decrees** are more the elaboration, implementing and 'unpacking' of the constitutions.