

Called, Formed, & Sent

May 2020

From the
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LAITY'S CALL TO HOLINESS

by Bryan Reising

Vatican II Decree on the Laity

In the Vatican II Decree on the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Council Fathers wrote affirming things regarding the laity and their involvement in the Church and world:

"In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world."
(AA, 2)

So, by our own Baptism, we share in Christ's roles of priest, prophet, and king. We are involved with the Church's mission both within the Church, with some of us as lay professionals or lay ecclesial ministers, and of course, in the various structures of society and the world.

Saint John XIII



St. John XXIII, before the Second Vatican Council, affirmed the words of his predecessor, Pope Pius XII, while adding his own affirming words about the laity:

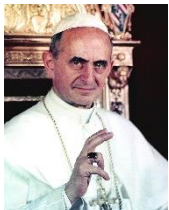
"Our predecessor Pius XII—and this redounds to his special credit and praise—exhorted the laity, with eloquent and abundant doctrine and repeated admonitions, willingly and zealously to enter the apostolic field and give their active cooperation to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in the same way in which, since the times of the early Church and throughout the centuries, the faithful have cooperated with their bishops and their clergy, to enable them to carry out their tasks more easily and with greater efficacy, in religious and social fields. Our times require this effort, not less, nay, even more, since requirements of this kind have grown, and the greatly increased multitudes who are hungry for the spiritual food of true doctrine. Indeed, their circumstances have become more difficult and complex. And, wherever the Church fights her peaceful battles, she must be able to count on a complete organization, including not only the different

grades of the hierarchy, but also the ranks of the laity proper. It is also necessary that her work of salvation be carried out equally by all." (*Princeps Pastorum*, 28)

We need the laity involved with their pastors in the work of catechetical ministry as well as other ministries so that pastors can be more effective.

Saint Paul VI

St. Paul VI shared these words regarding evangelization and the laity:



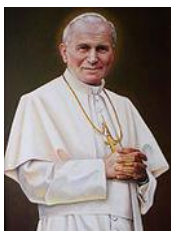
"We exhort the laity: Christian families, youth, adults, all those who exercise a trade or profession, leaders, without forgetting the poor who are often rich in faith and hope--all lay

people who are conscious of their evangelizing role in the service of their Church or in the midst of society and the world. We say to all of them: our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and, as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in its turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 76)

Evangelization is not just the work of the clergy or religious, but it is also the work of the laity so that we can go and proclaim the news to all throughout the world.

Saint John Paul II

St. John Paul II has much to say about the laity, about laity who work in the Church and the great effect of laity who shine the light of the Gospel to the world. Here is what he says about laity who offer their expertise to the Church:



"The various ministries, offices, and roles that the lay faithful can legitimately fulfill in the liturgy, in the transmission of the faith, and in the pastoral structure of the

Church, ought to be exercised *in conformity to their specific lay vocation*." (*Christifidelis Laici*, 23)

In this document, *Christifidelis Laici* by St. John Paul II, he specifically teaches about the lay faithful. This is a document that should be read by lay catechetical leaders and youth ministers, among others.

Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI also added some valuable insights regarding the laity as well:



"Laypeople are not merely the clergy's collaborators, but rather share in the responsibility of the Church's ministry... [there needs to be a] change of mentality," [especially regarding laypeople, shifting from] "considering

themselves collaborators of the clergy to recognizing themselves truly as 'co-responsible' for the being and action of the Church, favoring the consolidation of a mature and committed laity." (Church Membership and Pastoral Co-responsibility, a conference for the Diocese of Rome, May 2009)

Pope Benedict XVI goes beyond the notion that we are collaborators with clergy, which we are, but we are also co-responsible for the Church's ministry. We have a stake; we are called by God to participate in the Church's mission.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis challenges the Church to offer more formation for the laity so that they can be more equipped to participate in the life, ministries, and mission of the Church:



"Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply rooted sense of

community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis, and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches, room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political, and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 102)

Pope Francis has much to say in *Rejoice and Be Glad* regarding holiness and the laity:
http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/post_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

Because of its importance, we must provide formation for our catechetical leaders, for our youth ministers, for our adult faith formation directors, for our RCIA directors, and so on. And there are many opportunities through Catholic colleges and universities, through online opportunities, through formation opportunities sponsored by the diocese, and so on.

Lay Saints

Yes, most of our canonized saints are either religious or clergy, but there are several saints who were lay, some married and some single, some were tertiary or third order or secular order associated with some religious order, some were not. But these people inspire us because they show us various paths of holiness while remaining lay.

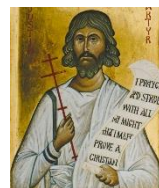
Take for example, **Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida**, affectionately known



as Conchita. From Mexico and living in the late 1800s and early 1900s, she was a wife and a mother of nine children. She became a widow at the age of 39 with her youngest child who was two years old at the time. She

raised her children with struggles, yet with love. She founded a lay apostolate, a religious order for women, an association for priests, and a religious order for men. Her writings, which have been approved by the Bishops of Mexico and the Vatican, number almost 60,000 handwritten pages. She is now in the process of beatification.

St. Justin Martyr



St. Justin Martyr was a lay theologian and Christian apologist in the early Church who was instrumental developing the catechumenate process and teaching Christianity within the realm of Scriptures and philosophy. He died because he proclaimed and taught the faith.

St. Catherine of Siena



St. Catherine (1347-1380) neither married nor became a woman religious. She was influenced by the spirituality of St. Dominic and so became a third order (secular or tertiary) Dominican. She did wear the habit of the Dominicans yet was called by God to serve as a lay woman outside the convent walls. She advised priests, bishops, and even popes.

St. Juan Diego



St. Juan Diego (1474-1548) was a lay indigenous faithful Catholic who lived in Mexico (just north of Mexico City). He is said by sources to have been married and widowed. There is another source that claims he had a son, perhaps by another wife later in life.

Juan had several visions of the Blessed Virgin Mother which eventually produced an image of Mary on his time, his outer garment. This image has many symbols including a symbol for a deity, a four pedaled flower. This symbol is placed over the womb of Mary indicating that she is pregnant with this deity, namely Jesus. It was through her messages and the image of Our Lady that millions of indigenous people in Central America came to believe and were baptized. Juan promoted this image and made sure a chapel was built in her honor. Today, the image is within the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, north of Mexico City.

St. Gianna Beretta Molla



St. Gianna (1922-1962) was a wife, a mother, and a pediatrician caring for children and their health. When she was pregnant with her fourth child, she was asked to have an abortion and hysterectomy because her life depended upon it. She refused and died while the child survived.

She was active with Catholic Action in Italy, a Catholic lay movement under the shepherding of bishops and the Church. She was dedicated to God, her Catholic faith, her husband, and her children.

So the Church needs us, the laity, to participate in the life of the Church, to serve the Church with gladness, to lead, to live holy lives, to be active witnesses of the Risen Lord in the world, in our everyday lives. Let us be inspired, let us be faithful disciples, and live out the faith as the lay faithful.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

PCL Gathering

Thursday, May 14, 2020

Zoom Retreat sponsored by Sadlier

10:00 am to 11:00 am

Next year's PCL Gatherings are 8-27-20, 10-22-20, 2-18-21, and 4-22-21.

EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

Parish Visits

These visits will resume after the coronavirus pandemic. Bryan can do visits with pastors, catechetical leaders, and during your parish catechetical formation. Please arrange a time that you can invite him to your parish by contacting him via email:

breising@dioceseofbmt.org or calling his office at 409-924-4323. He will not get to all places during the catechetical year, but he would like to get to all regions of the diocese. In addition, Twyla (North, West Vicariates), Sr. Misty (East, South, and Central Vicariates), and Paul are available for parish visits as well. What will happen with these visits? The following are some possibilities: an evaluation of your evangelization efforts and adult catechetical formation, an observation of your faith formation during the time of instruction, perhaps an in-service with your catechists, a presentation to parents, or even a catechetical presentation – guest catechist for adults, youth, or children.

Vicariate Meetings

These will be on hold until next catechetical year.



Heart of Faith

These will be on hold until next catechetical year (unless a parish would like to have a session electronically via Zoom Meeting). Topics include Evangelization, Home Visitation Training, Christian Morality, the Sacraments, Catholic Social Teaching, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and Sacred Scripture.

Volunteer Opportunities

Southeast Texas Food Bank The website to help volunteer: <https://setxfoodbank.org/get-involved/>

Market to Hope (Catholic Charities) They are also looking for volunteers. Contact Chris Robertson: (409) 924-4419

Some Other Place – They need food preparation in the mornings (Monday through Saturday). Contact them: 409-832-7976.

University of Dayton (VLCFF)

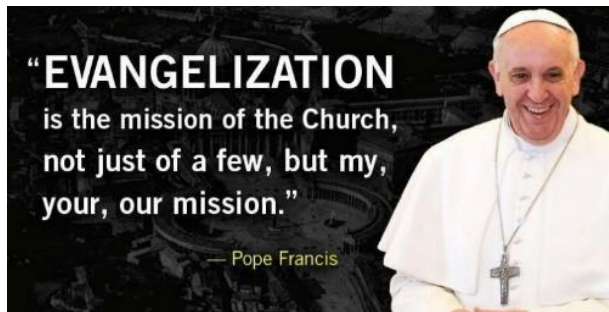


Cycle 4: May 24 - June 27, 2020(Registration: Opens April 22; Closes May 20)

- [Autism in Faith Formation \(SN 4\)](#)
- [Bible Basics](#)
- [Catechetical Methodology: Archdiocese for the Military Services Only](#)
- [Catholic Beliefs](#)
- [Church History 1](#)
- [Disability across the Life Span: Prenatal Diagnosis - End of Life Care](#)
- [Ecclesiology: Beginnings of the Church](#)
- [Echoes of Racism: Whispers of Healing](#)
- [Faith and Human Development](#)
- [Foundations for Liturgy](#)

- [Hope in Times of Crisis: A Free e-Seminar](#)
- [Images of Jesus](#)
- [Introduction to Catechesis](#)
- [Introduction to Christian Morality](#)
- [Introduction to Paul's Life and Letters](#)
- [Introduction to Practical Morality](#)
- [Introduction to Prayer](#)
- [Introduction to Scripture](#)
- [Marianist Studies: Community](#)
- [Ministering in Times of Scandals and Divisions](#)
- [Music in Liturgy](#)
- [New Testament](#)
- [Old Testament](#)
- [On the Call to Holiness \(Gaudete Et Exsultate\)](#)
- [Parish as a Learning Community \(AFL 2\)](#)
- [Pastoral Approach to Culture \(FLM\)](#)
- [Poverty in the U.S. and Around the World \(SJ\)](#)
- [Principles for Addressing Diversity Issues in Youth Ministry \(YM\)](#)
- [Reflections on Faith and Finance](#)
- [Sacraments](#)
- [Survey of Catholic Doctrine](#) **Bryan will be facilitating this course**
- [Survey of Catholic Social Teaching](#)
- [The Mass](#)
- [Vocation to Ministry](#)

Evangelization and Adult Faith Formation



Word on Fire: Bishop Robert Barron adult faith formation series - <https://www.wordonfire.org/>

Check out this resource from Word on Fire Engage: <https://engage.wordonfire.org/about>

Formed.org is a subscription service by parish that includes adult faith formation offerings, movies, and podcasts, and eBooks: <https://formed.org/>

JustFaith is a small group process to learn about Catholic Social Teaching: <https://justfaith.org/>

RENEW International has a host of resources for renewal and adult catechetical formation: <http://www.renewintl.org/>

SINE (Systematic Integral New Evangelization) is a plan for the new evangelization for parishes that offer renewal experiences, small Christian communities, neighborhood based ministries, and home visitation: <https://sinecentral.org/>

Paulist Evangelization Ministries offers many resources for small groups, parish renewal, a process for returning Catholics (**Awakening Faith**), and outreach: <https://www.pemdc.org/>

Catholic Returning Home is a process for returning Catholics: <http://www.catholicsreturninghome.org/>



Adoration • Community • Theology • Service

To find out about upcoming ACTS Retreat and Activities: <https://beaumontacts.org/>

Interested in a bachelor's or master's in theology



St. Thomas University in Houston: <https://www.stthom.edu/Academics/School-of-Arts-and-Sciences/Undergraduate/Theology/Index.aspx>

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Membership



The next NCCL Convocation in Dubuque, Iowa has been canceled. They will have some further online opportunities to have a virtual conference called Witness. To register: <https://nccl.org/product/witness/>. S And all PCLs are now members of NCCL! Check out the Web site: www.nccl.org. Contact our office to learn how you can be a member of NCCL compliments of the Diocese of Beaumont if you are not a member yet! And this year, there is no additional \$24 fee! For information, go to www.nccl.org

Safe Environment Compliance Reminders



Any PCL, youth minister, catechist, adults helping with youth ministry, or anyone who may be in a ministry with minors is required to be in total compliance with safe environment requirements.

To be in compliance, one must attend an in-person a Protecting God's Children (PGC)

session. After 5 years from the initial training participation, a recertification is required. This can be done either through the diocesan website online module, or by attending another in person PGC session.

If you have any questions regarding Safe Environment Training, you may contact the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator through the following information: Paul J Thomas pjthomas@dioceseofbmt.org 409-924-4315

Protecting God's Children **Information**

Protecting God's Children: **2019- 2020 Schedule of Sessions**

No sessions scheduled until the pandemic is under control.

The Great Easter Fast by Sr. Misty Garriga, CDP

I recently finished reading a book called *The Wisdom Jesus* by Cynthia Bourgeault. It was during the time of Easter when I came upon this chapter entitled "The Great Easter Fast." Yes, you read it right, a fast! Most of the time we think of fasting during Lent, but this author shared the following:

"A fast is not about penitence and beating up on yourself. That's a very medieval attitude that totally distorts the meaning of fasting. A fast is really training...so that our whole embodied being can be tuned up to support a spiritual aim we wish to achieve. In the case of Eastertide, what's at stake—the aim we are striving for—is our physical capacity to be available to truth at a subtle and much more intense level....During these great fifty days of Easter, that same invitation is extended to each one of us: to catch the drift of what Jesus is really inviting us to and to deepen our capacity to receive the intense spiritual energy available to us during this sacred season as a catapult to our own transformations."

This specific chapter struck me the hardest amid all that we're experiencing right now. In this time of great pause, vulnerability, and even mourning, we are called into a period of transformation, so that when we do move beyond this crisis, we may be stronger in our relationship with a God who never leaves us.

So, I leave you with a few questions to ponder and take to prayer:

1. What has this health crisis invited you to pay more attention to?
2. What have you discovered about yourself?
3. What grace do you still need in your own personal transformation?

Awake O Sleeper by Twyla Satterthwaite

This time spent away from one another is difficult. We don't get the affirmation and energy that comes when we relate to others in person. We miss the hugs from our younger students. We miss the joy that comes with in person interactions. Talking to one another on the phone or online lacks that interpersonal energy. It is hard to stay enthused. We want to isolate ourselves even more. We ask ourselves things like, "What's the use?" and "Why am I doing this?" or "What good am I actually doing?" These lines run through our heads, over and over.

This is a good time to reflect on what it is that we actually do. Are our efforts worth the struggle?

Jesus says of us in Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

We are witness to the Good News of Jesus. We are proclaiming a way of living that Jesus shared with us thousands of years ago. A way of living in service to others. A way of living in community and support of others. We are sharing the Good News of a loving and personal God. It is hard to do this enthusiastically online. Jesus did not promise that this would be easy. In fact, he said it would be a cross to carry!

The apostles were imprisoned, tortured, and eventually executed for preaching the Gospel. We are just quarantined! St. Paul ran the church from prison, with NO INTERNET! We can still share the Good News. We are not powerless. Some people in countries today risk their lives by being a Christian and telling others about Jesus. We have been sidetracked because we can't gather in large groups!

It is tempting to just shut down and wait for all this mess to go away. That is not reality. This virus will be with us for a while. There will be flare ups and shutdowns. Things are going to be uncertain. There is no going back to our pre-virus innocence. We must continue the good fight. Keep on racing toward the finish line as St. Paul told us. This is just one obstacle in the way. Call on the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given to us at our Confirmation: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and awe of the Lord. Be creative, create a new way to share the Good News.

How do we go on? How do we continue to share the message? First, realize what you do **NOW** is important. It is not a time to pull back, it is a time to push forward and into a new reality. This is a great time to train. Educate yourself, your catechists, your RCIA teams, and youth ministers. This is a perfect opportunity to get training done. Many of the publishers are offering online training and webinars. The

Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) through the University of Dayton is an online certificate and course program that partners with our diocese. TeamRCIA is doing online training for RCIA teams. Our diocesan department has many online training opportunities. The Lay Missionary Disciples courses are online. We are offering zoom sessions for PCLs using the Effective Catechetical Leader series. Our staff is willing to work with you to provide any training that you request. If you are unfamiliar on how to access any of the online formats, we will be willing to train you on that!

Second, **NOW** is the time to reach out to others. A card, a call, or an email. Everyone is at home and coping with all kinds of stress. Just checking with others to see how they are doing makes all the difference. You, as a parish leader, could be organizing groups of people to check on one another. You could have kids and teens sending cards to parishioners. With a little effort and creative planning, we could minister to others from our homes. Be creative, reach out.

Third, realize that the planning we do **NOW** is important. When we start our programs again, what will they look like? We will have to be more flexible and adaptive because this is not going to be business as usual. Until we have a vaccine, we cannot expect that all people will be comfortable gathering in large groups. How will we do faith formation? How can we educate, inspire, evangelize, and do the works of mercy? **NOW** is the time to think about these things. What does your pastor think? What about your parents? Check online with the publishers. What are they offering? This is a great opportunity to re-image your programs. One thing you can count on is that things will not return to business as usual. We will either be stronger or weaker when this is over. It is our choice.

We cannot afford to sleep through this challenge. We cannot wait until it goes away. **NOW** is the time to act. St. Paul calls to us in Ephesian 5: 14:

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you”

Secret Place by Paul Thomas

Dear “newsletter family,” as we continue to use this time as a pause in our daily routines, may this song help you reflect while you seek your own Secret Place within. God bless, peace, and good health. Please click (or ctrl+click depending on your browser) the image below to watch the video on YouTube.

