

MYSTAGOGY

The Laity Called to Build God's Kingdom



Did you know that you are tremendously important to God's plan for the world? Did you know that you are a member of the priesthood of the faithful? Did you know that you are called to build God's kingdom?

These responsibilities come with the graces received at baptism. God marks all Christians as children of God empowered to act in Christ's name as priests, prophets, and kings.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

As priests, the laity offers worship to God, especially by participating in the eucharistic liturgy.

As prophets, they speak the word of God and witness to the life, teachings, and saving actions of Christ.

As kings, they profit from the authority and power of God to continue Christ's ministry of service and love to all people.

What does being a layperson mean?

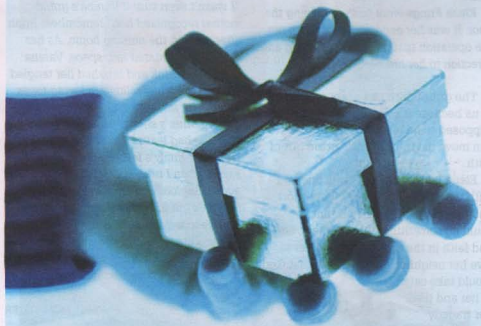
Unfortunately, the term *layperson* has often had a negative connotation of an "amateur." But the word actually describes God's high calling to faith

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Your Special Gifts

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11



You can't picture yourself as a prophet or performing mighty deeds? You don't think you have any special gifts? You think the Holy Spirit forgot about you?

This handout will help you recognize the special gifts the Holy Spirit has given you.

THE EXPRESSION OF WISDOM

Mother tells of an afternoon when she was bustling around the church getting ready for a banquet. Strands of hair clung to her forehead as she put flowers into vases and carried trays of plates.

An ancient Chinese grandmother sat serenely on the sideline observing the bustle. Seeing her, Mother stopped and greeted the old woman. "Oh, my, what a busy day this is, Mrs. Lew. There's so much to do."

Mrs. Lew nodded and agreed. With an encouraging little smile she patted Mother's hand. "Don't worry," she said "someday you'll be old too."

PAT KING

It is said that "wisdom" comes with age, as it often does. But this is by no means automatic. Wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is attained through having an open mind, learning from experience, knowing human nature, knowing that God is alive and active at the heart of our world. Knowing there is a meaning to life is part of the wisdom we receive from God. And it changes the way we live.

In what ways do you have the gift of expression of wisdom?

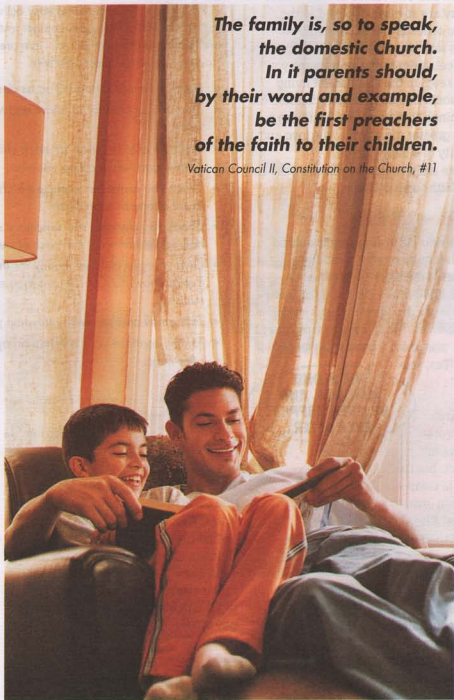
Saint Paul tells us that gifts are not given to us for our enjoyment and pleasure, but for the benefit of others. So, the question is not just what gifts you have but how you use them to minister to others.

MYSTAGOGY

Family Life

**The family is, so to speak,
the domestic Church.
In it parents should,
by their word and example,
be the first preachers
of the faith to their children.**

Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Church, #11



What do you want most for your family?

Let's imagine a fairy godmother showed you two jars filled with gifts. She tells you that you can choose three gifts from the jars to give your child. The only catch is that all three have to be from the same jar.

Jar One: Fame, Power, Physical Beauty,
Financial Security,
Perfect Health,
Success, Wealth,
Influence

Jar Two: Patience, Kindness,
Generosity, Self-
Respect, Compassion,
Tolerance, Integrity, Honesty

Which three gifts would you choose for your child? Why? Remember, all three must be from the same jar.

There are many considerations parents might keep in mind in choosing their gifts.

Mr. and Mrs. A might say, "We've chosen from the first jar: perfect health, wealth, and influence. We want our daughter to be successful, and those are the things we think she'll need most."



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Your Prayer Life



How do you feel about your prayer life?

My friend's eyes opened wide with shock. I had just said to her that I didn't like to pray.

Did that mean I did not love God? No, but it did mean that my love was immature. I did not know how to pray so as to allow God to nourish my spirit directly.

Let's be honest. Sometimes we don't like to pray. Sometimes we are less interested in prayer than in everything else we do. There may be times in our lives when we love to pray, but just as often, we may avoid it or minimize the time we spend.

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

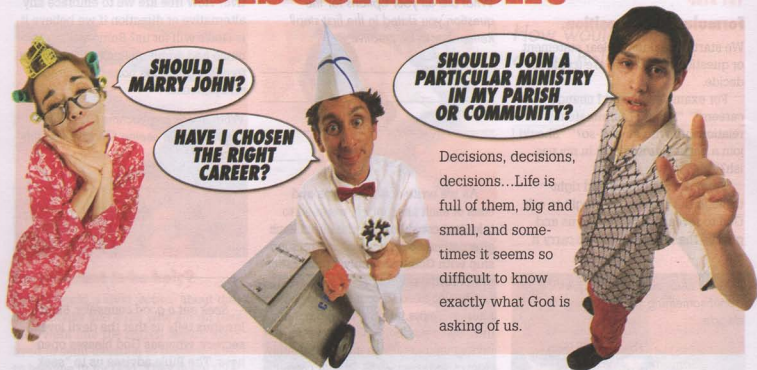
Lesson 69: Be content to be human.



Today, prayer has a completely different quality for me. I go to it with love and wonder, and I'm interested in whatever may occur during prayer and afterward as its results appear in my life. I don't feel thrilled every day, because feelings are as changeable as the weather, but prayer is precious because God touches my heart when I pray.

MYSTAGOGY

Discernment



Decisions, decisions, decisions... Life is full of them, big and small, and sometimes it seems so difficult to know exactly what God is asking of us.

When it comes to decision making, many of us would like very much to dial heaven and say:

"HI, LORD, THIS IS YOUR FRIEND MARY. I AM FACED WITH THIS PARTICULAR DECISION AND I WAS WONDERING WHICH WAY TO GO. COULD YOU PLEASE LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE? THANKS."

How do you usually make decisions?
Do you follow your head or your heart?
Do you write down options or ask the advice of others?

Even though no such direct line to God exists, that is not to say that no divine guidance is available to us. As Christians, we believe that because the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts (see 1 Corinthians 6:19) we can indeed come to a good sense of God's truth for our lives. Before he left this world to return to his Father, Jesus promised us the gift of his Spirit. He told his disciples, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate, to be with you forever. This is the spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).

A central activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to lead us into the truth by helping us to discover and walk God's path for our lives. Because the Holy Spirit is not the only voice that seeks to guide us in life, we Christians

need help when it comes to decision-making. Besides the voice of God, there are many other voices that call out to us, seeking to attract us and influence us to walk in a particular direction.

What other "voices" besides God's influence your decisions?

The decision-making process (often called discernment) can be a rather complex process, basically due to our lack of self-knowledge, our lack of inner freedom, and our great ability

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Holiness



Do you want to be holy?

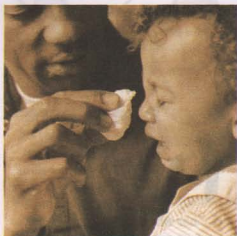
Once I heard a vivid lecture about the early monks and nuns who left all they had, went into the barren desert, and lived in semi-isolation to become holy, to become fit for God. They made their living by braiding baskets from palm leaves; they spoke to one another rarely; they were alone for weeks at a time; they carried all their water, sometimes as far as ten miles; they imposed difficult disciplines on their bodies. As I listened, a realization suddenly struck me, and I turned to the priest sitting next to me to whisper, "I have never wanted *anything* that much!" He shook his head, "Me neither."

We live in a world that has somehow narrowed our desires, made them powerless. Our capacity to desire deeply has been stunted. The grand goals, the great aims often elude us. Yet, all of us who are attracted to Jesus Christ have before us the grandest challenge and opportunity possible: to live in his reign, to become like him.



Jesus has told us that those who hunger and thirst for holiness will be filled. He offers no instant course in holiness. He offers no snap response to our meager wishing in that general direction. Above all, he does not make us holy when all we feel is a vague guilt that we are not already holy—which is perhaps how most of us feel. Jesus assures us that holiness can be ours, that blessedness is promised. We have only to desire it. But we must

How would you define holiness?



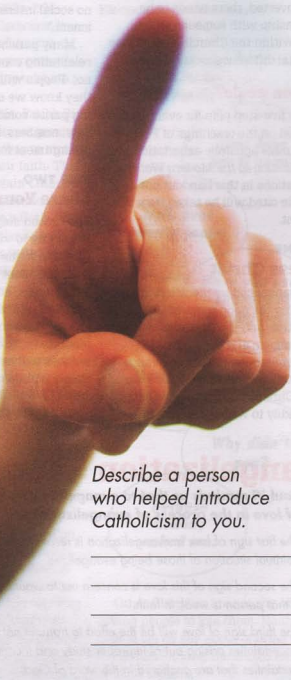
desire it as a starving person desires food.

What do you want most in all your experience and dreams? Think about that for a few minutes. It's the old question: If you had one wish.... Is it something material? Is it related to other people? Is it intangible, hard to express? Is it holiness? Is it God?

And this one wish—how *much* energy, thought, caring, practice goes

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Evangelization



Describe a person
who helped introduce
Catholicism to you.



"One day at lunch a group of us started talking about religion.

I started challenging Margaret, who was Catholic. I thought I knew what Catholics believed. Margaret very patiently explained what Catholic beliefs really were. I didn't convert then but years later I remembered what she said."



"I'd been going to a Catholic church for a couple of weeks but I felt out of place so I just

sat by myself. One day a woman came up to me and introduced herself. She helped make me feel like I belonged."



"After my brother became Catholic, he sent me a lot of books by

Merton, Chesterton, and others. I just put them on a shelf. But one day, years later, I started to read those books and they made sense."

The Catholics you and these other converts encountered were evangelizing, whether they or you recognized it at the time.

Too often when we hear the word evangelization we visualize TV preachers, fundamentalists making door-to-door visits, or hard-sell convert-making. Seldom do we associate the word evangelization with us and our Church.