

A Secular Calling

**The laity's role in the Church's mission to spread the Gospel
(the laity's *apostolate*)**

has a secular character.

**Their faithful witness in the world
gives meaning and direction
to society.**

Your Experience

Describe a way you bring the Gospel's values to your daily life and work.

Name a challenge you face while striving to live your faith in today's secular society.

What Vatican II Says

Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to lay[persons].

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), No. 43

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. ...

But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), No. 31

Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Lumen Gentium), No. 33.

What the Catechism Says

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world."

This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers . . . or to the faithful. (CCC 905)

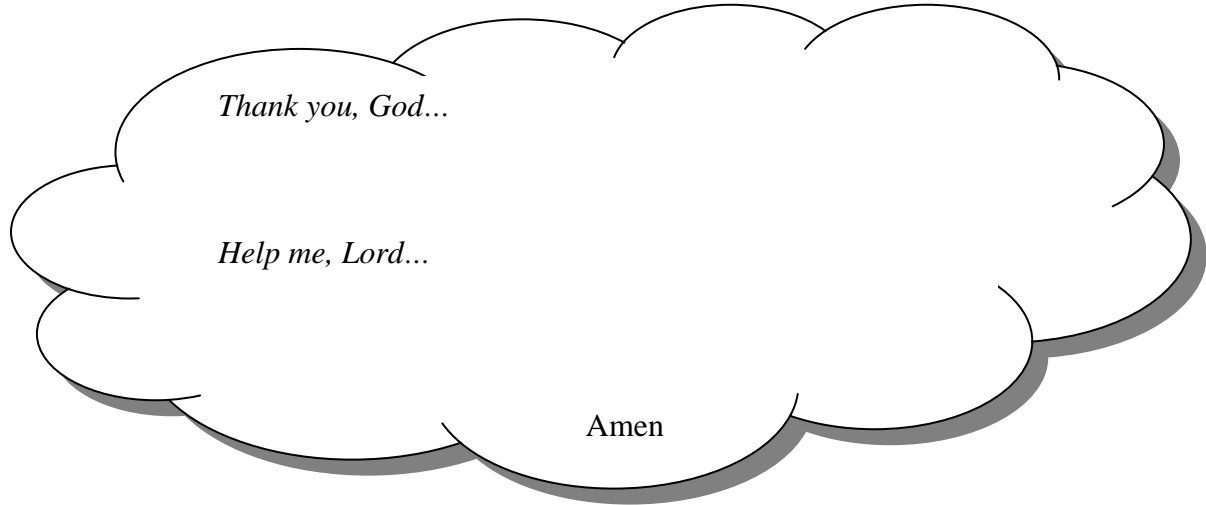
Your Experience

Name a time when you made a difference (however small or large) by saying or doing something in keeping with the Gospel.

Praying Your Experience

You have been reflecting your call
to bring the Gospel to the world.

Please use the space below to bring to God what is in your heart.



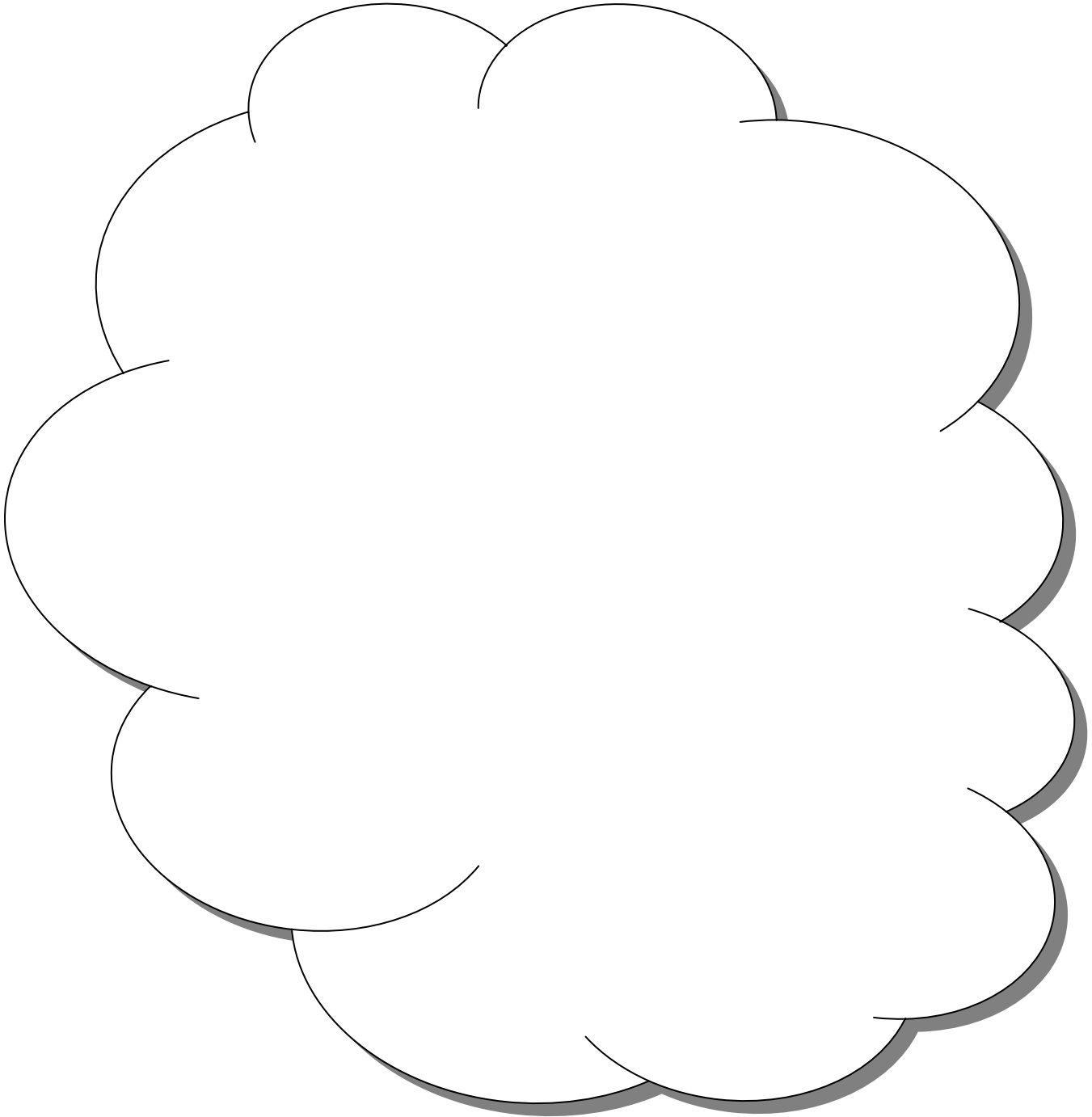
Thank you, God...

Help me, Lord...

Amen

Integrating Activity

Draw an image or write a poem, word or phrase
that reflects what it means for you
to bring the message of Christ and his Church to the world.



Further Reading:

...the [1987] Synod Fathers said: "The secular character of the lay faithful is not therefore to be defined only in a sociological sense, but most especially in a theological sense. The term *secular* must be understood in light of the act of God the creator and redeemer, who has handed over the world to women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves in marriage or in the celibate life, in a family, in a profession and in the various activities of society."

The lay faithful's *position in the Church*, then, comes to be fundamentally defined by their *newness in Christian life* and distinguished by their *secular character*.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *On the Vocation and the mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifidelis Laici)*, 1988. No. 15.

... In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully *the specific vocation of the laity*, called "to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God";³² they "have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world ... by their work for the evangelization and the sanctification of people".³³

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001. No. 46.

Of great importance for the laity, moreover, are professional competence, a sense of family, a civic sense and social values. Although they are called individually to offer their personal testimony, ... the [Second Vatican] Council stressed the importance of the organized apostolate, necessary to influence the general mentality, social conditions and institutions (cf. [Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity] No. 18).

Pope Benedict XVI Angelus on the Vocation of the Laity: "Apostolate Depends Upon the Laity's Living Union With Christ" Vatican City, November 14, 2005.

Every milieu, circumstance and activity in which we engage that can become resplendent with the unity of faith and life is entrusted to the responsibility of lay faithful, moved by the desire to communicate the gift of encounter with Christ and the certainty of the human person's dignity. It is their duty to take up the witness of charity especially with the most poor, suffering and needy just as it is to assume every Christian task aimed to construct conditions of ever greater justice and peace within human coexistence, thus opening new horizons to the Gospel!

Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Participants in the 23rd Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Rome, November 15, 2008.

The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.

Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei*, 2001. No. 6.