

Building up the Body of Christ

**The Holy Spirit gives every baptized person (lay, religious and clerics)
unique gifts to meet the needs of the Body of Christ.**

**All of us have a carefully chosen role
as *living stones* being built into the *household of God*.** (See Eph 1, 18-22; 1Pet 2, 5)

Your Experience

**Name a small way in which your gifts and talents might help others live in the peace
or joy of Christ.**

**Name a gift that a friend or family member whose gifts bring you Christ's
encouragement or peace.**

What Vatican II Says

...all the faithful enjoy a true equality with regard to the dignity and the activity which they share in the building up of the body of Christ. ...And so, amid their variety all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the body of Christ: this very diversity of graces, of ministries and of works gathers the children of God into one, for "all these things are the work of the one and the same Spirit" (1Cor 12, 11).

Constitution on the Church, (Lumen Gentium), No. 32.

What the Catechism Says

"Thus, every person, through these gifts given ...is at once the witness and
The living instrument of the mission of the Church itself 'according to the measure of
Christ's bestowal.'" (CCC 913)

Your Experience

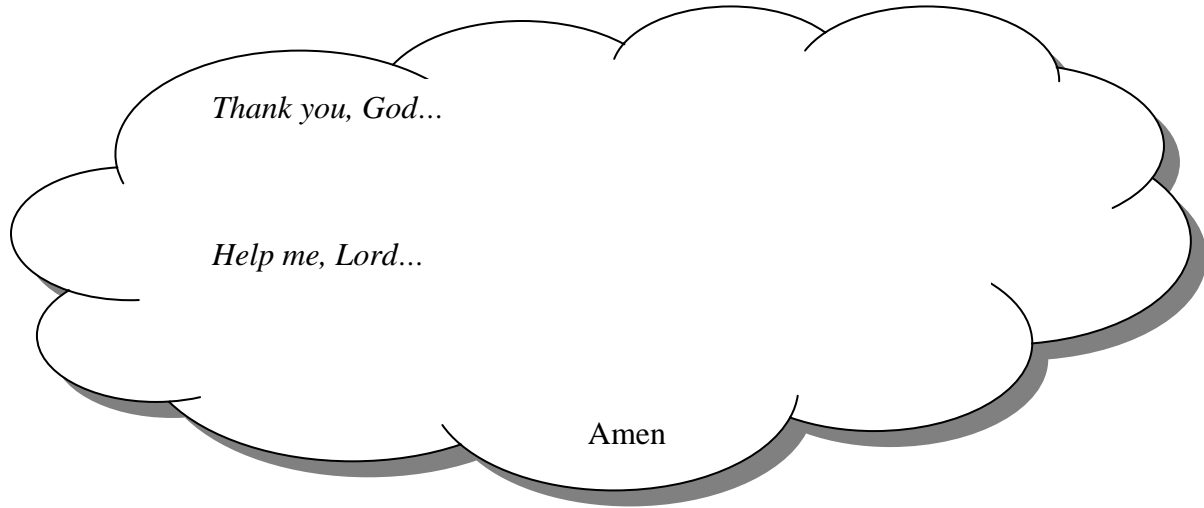
Name a phrase or word from the above section that stands out for you.

How does this help you understand your role in the body of Christ?

Praying Your Experience

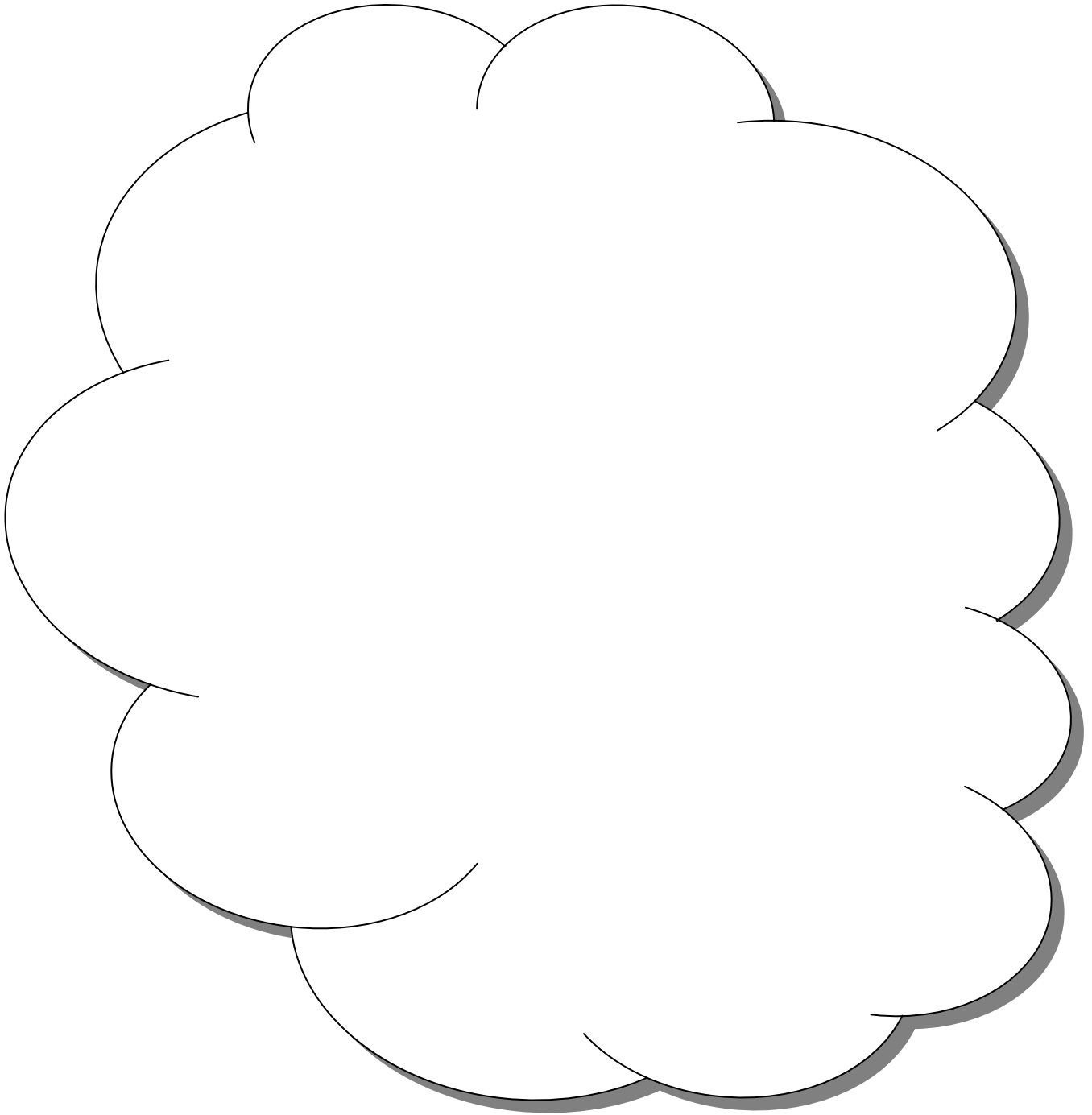
You have been reflecting on the gifts that you have been given
to build up the Body of Christ.

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



Integrating Activity

Draw an image or write a poem, word or phrase
that reflects what it means for you
to understand your life as a gift
for building up the Body of Christ.



Further Reading

Ecclesial communion is more precisely likened to an “organic” communion, analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms [gifts of the Spirit] and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity, every member of the lay faithful is seen *in relation to the whole body* and offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body. **Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *On the Mission and Vocation of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)*, No. 20.**

Through charity towards one’s neighbour, the lay faithful exercise and manifest their participation in the kingship of Christ, ...who “came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10, 45). ...charity is the highest gift offered by the spirit for building up the Church (cf. 1Cor 13,13) and for the good of humanity. In fact, *charity gives life and sustains the works of solidarity that look to the total needs of the human being.*

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *On the Mission and Vocation of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)*, No. 41.

The spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.

Such a vision of communion is closely linked to the Christian community’s ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit. The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf 1 Cor 12:12)

Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church’s life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognized, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs: from catechesis to liturgy, from the education of the young to the widest array of charitable works. **Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 45-46.**

Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as “collaborators” of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really “co-responsible” for the Church’s being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops.

Pope Benedict XVI Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action. Castelgandolfo, August 10, 2012.

By faith, across the centuries, men and women of all ages, whose names are written in the Book of Life (cf. Rev 7:9, 13:8), have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called.

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