

Who are the Laity?

**The laity make up the majority of the baptized.
The laity comprise all who...
...are not ordained or
...do not live a vowed religious life.
They are Catholic faith's front line of witnesses
before the world.
In their unique and important way,
their lives help make the face of Christ
and the Church's mission to announce the Gospel
present in the world.**

Your Experience

Name an experience where you felt you were the *face of Christ* or the voice of *the Church* for another person.

Describe an experience of how you were able to make a difference in someone's life as a layperson and follower of Jesus.

What Vatican II Says

The term *laity* is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church.

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

The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific [saving] mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself.

...Thus every [layperson], in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him (sic.), is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself ...

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

What the Catechism Says

Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the common Head, and of the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church.

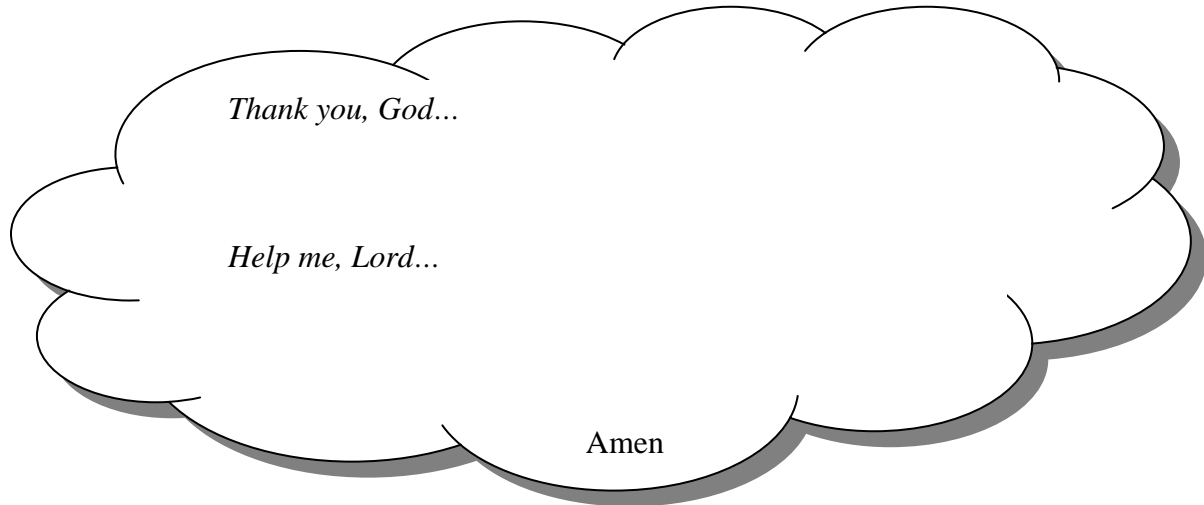
Pope Pius XII, Quoted in CCC 899

Your Experience

Name a gift or talent that enables you to live as Christ's witness in your home, work or social life...

Praying Your Experience

You have been reflecting on your unique role in the Church's mission as a member of the Laity.
Please use the space below to bring to God what is in your heart.



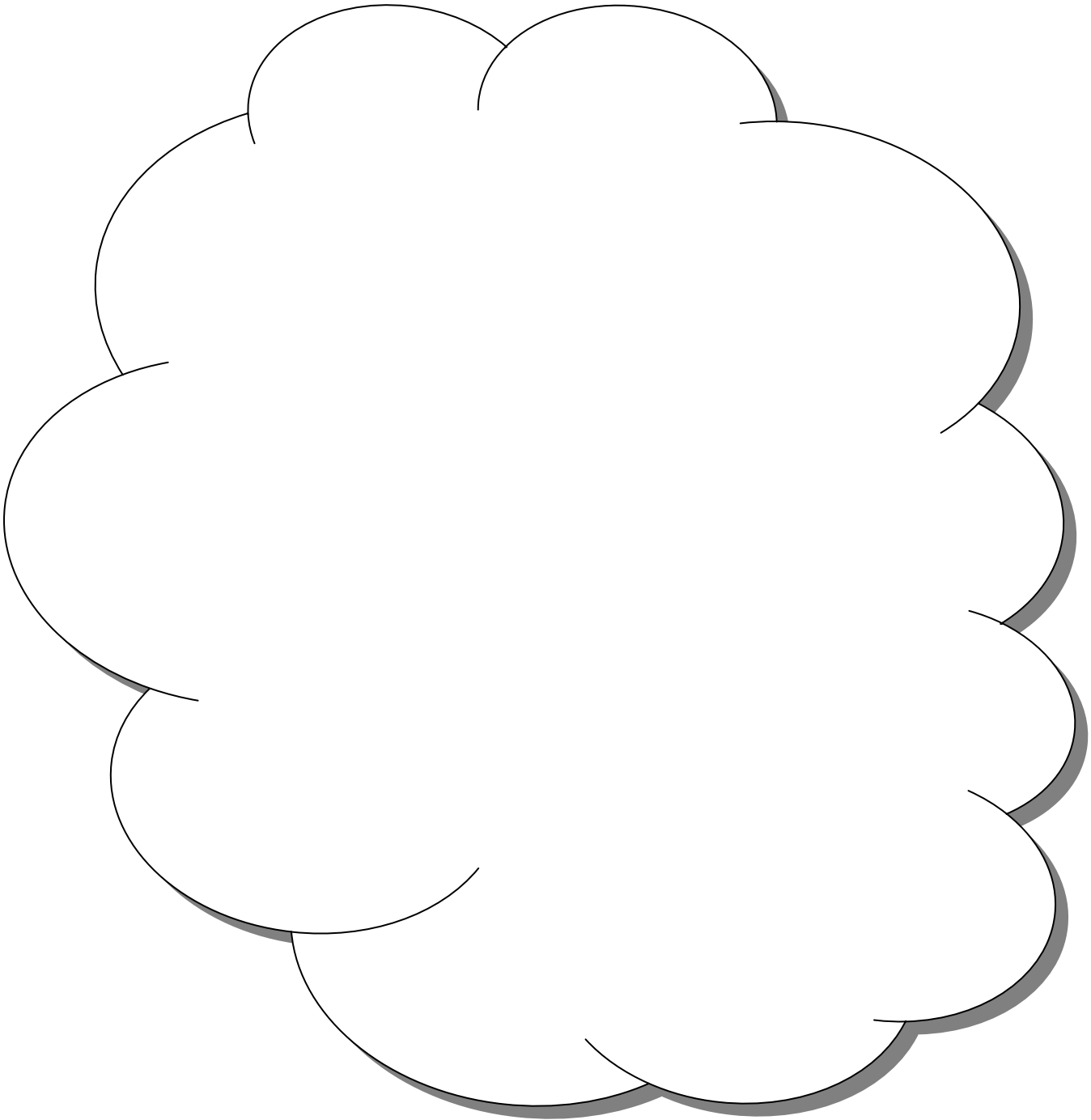
Thank you, God...

Help me, Lord...

Amen

Integrating Activity

Draw an image or write a poem, word or phrase
that reflects what it means for you
to be Christ's witness
as a member of the Laity.



Further Reading

Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.

Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, No. 35.

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.

Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam Actuositatem)*, No. 2.

In giving a response to the question “Who are the lay faithful”, the [Second Vatican] Council went beyond previous interpretations which were predominantly negative. Instead it opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting *the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery*.

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)*, No. 9.

Through her lay members, the Church is present and active in the world. Lay people have an important role to play in the Church and in society.... Lay men and women, in fact, are “ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor 5:20) in the public sphere, in the heart of the world!

Pope Benedict XVI Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, n. 128.