

Working for the Justice of Christ's Kingdom

**The laity's baptismal call to evangelization
is a call to preach the Gospel's justice with their lives.**

Your Experience

Name a time when you had to stand up for someone being treated unjustly.

Name someone you feel is standing up for justice on behalf of others in the world today.

What Vatican II Says

But the Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. In this kingdom creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. ... The faithful, therefore, must ... assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Lumen Gentium), No. 36.*

It is imperative also that the freedom and dignity of the person being helped be respected with the utmost consideration, that the purity of one's charitable intentions be not stained by seeking one's own advantage or by striving for domination, and especially that the demands of justice be satisfied lest the giving of what is due in justice be represented as the offering of a charitable gift. Not only the effects but also the causes of these ills must be removed and the help be given in such a way that the recipients may gradually be freed from dependence on outsiders and become self-sufficient. *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem), No 8.*

Some Additional Questions

1. Name a relationship where you have been called to help someone else live justly.

2. What are some of the activities by which we help one another bring greater justice to our communities, and to our poorer brothers and sisters throughout the world?

Further Reading:

The laity should therefore highly esteem, and support as far as they can, private or public works of charity and social assistance movements, including international schemes. By these channels effective help is brought to individuals and nations in need. They should collaborate in this with all men and women of good will.

Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem), No 8.*

Wherever there are people in need of food and drink, clothing, housing, medicine, employment, education; wherever men [sic.] lack the facilities necessary for living a truly human life or are afflicted with serious distress or illness or suffer exile or imprisonment, there Christian charity should seek them out and find them, console them with great solicitude, and help them with appropriate relief. This obligation is imposed above all upon every prosperous nation and person.(4)

In order that the exercise of charity on this scale may be unexceptionable in appearance as well as in fact, it is altogether necessary that one should consider in one's neighbor the image of God in which he has been created, and also Christ the Lord to Whom is really offered whatever is given to a needy person.

Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem), No 8.*

This constant dedication to the poor and disadvantaged emerges in the Church's social teaching, which ceaselessly invites the Christian community to a commitment to overcome every form of exploitation and oppression. It is a question not only of alleviating the most serious and urgent needs through individual actions here and there, but of uncovering the roots of evil and proposing initiatives to make social, political and economic structures more just and fraternal.

Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, No 18.*

The Synod Fathers rightly stressed that "the fundamental rights of the human person are inscribed in human nature itself, they are willed by God and therefore call for universal observance and acceptance. No human authority can infringe on them by appealing to majority opinion or political consensus, on the pretext of respect for pluralism and democracy. Therefore, the Church must be committed to the task of educating and supporting lay people involved in law-making, government and the administration of justice, so that legislation will always reflect those principles and moral values which are in conformity with a sound anthropology and advance the common good."

Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, No 19.*

The Church concentrates particularly on the formation of the disciples of Christ, in order that they may ever increasingly become witnesses of his Presence, any and everywhere. It is up to the

lay faithful to demonstrate concretely in their personal and family life, in social, cultural and political life that the faith enables them to see reality in a new and profound way, and to transform it; that Christian hope broadens the limited horizon of mankind, expanding it towards the true loftiness of his being, towards God; that charity in truth is the most effective force that is capable of changing the world; that the Gospel gives a guarantee of freedom and a message of liberation; that the fundamental principles of the social doctrine of the Church such as the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity and solidarity are extremely relevant and valuable in order to support new paths of development in service to the whole person and to all humanity. It is also the duty of the laity to participate actively in political life, in a manner consistently in accordance with the Church's teaching, bringing their well-founded reasons and high ideals into the democratic debate, and into the search for a broad consensus among all those who care about the defense of life and freedom, the safeguarding of truth and the good of the family, solidarity with the needy and the crucial search for the common good. Christians do not seek political or cultural hegemony but, whatever their work, they are animated by the certainty that Christ is the cornerstone of every human structure.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the 24th Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Rome, May 24, 2010.*

The Christifideles laity [Christ's lay faithful], in particular, cannot be solely passive beneficiaries but are the protagonists of the Church's social doctrine at the vital moment of its implementation. **Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Meeting Participants at Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Encyclical, Mater et Magistra. May 16, 2011.***

[J]ustice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it, an integral part of the love "in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us. On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the earthly city according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. The earthly city is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. Charity always manifests God's love in human relationships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world. **Pope Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Caritas in Veritate, No. 6, 2009.***

Praying Your Experience

You have been reflecting on your baptismal call to practice justice.

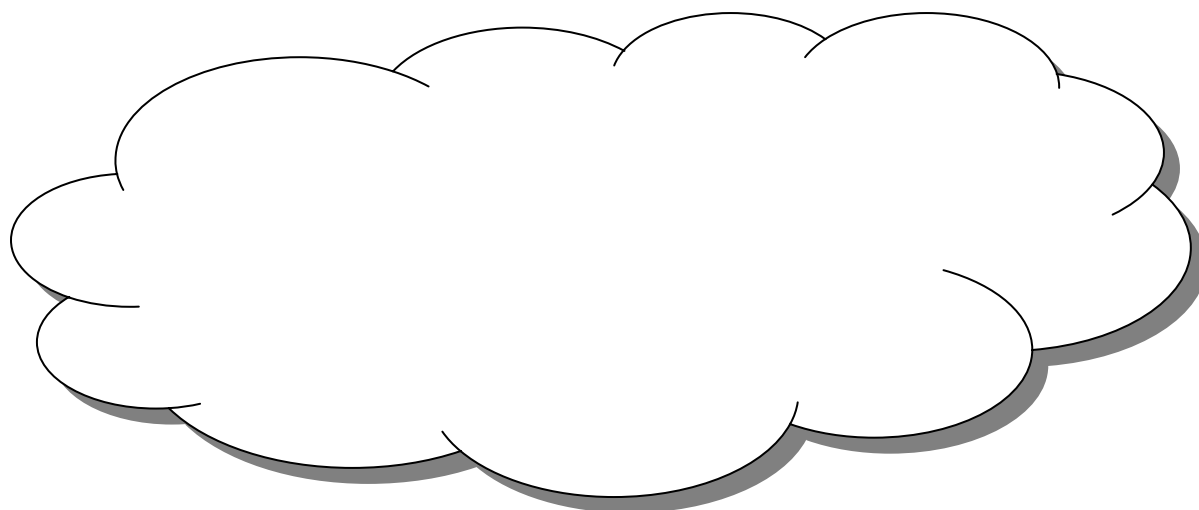
Please use the space below to bring to God what is on your heart.

your hopes...

your needs...

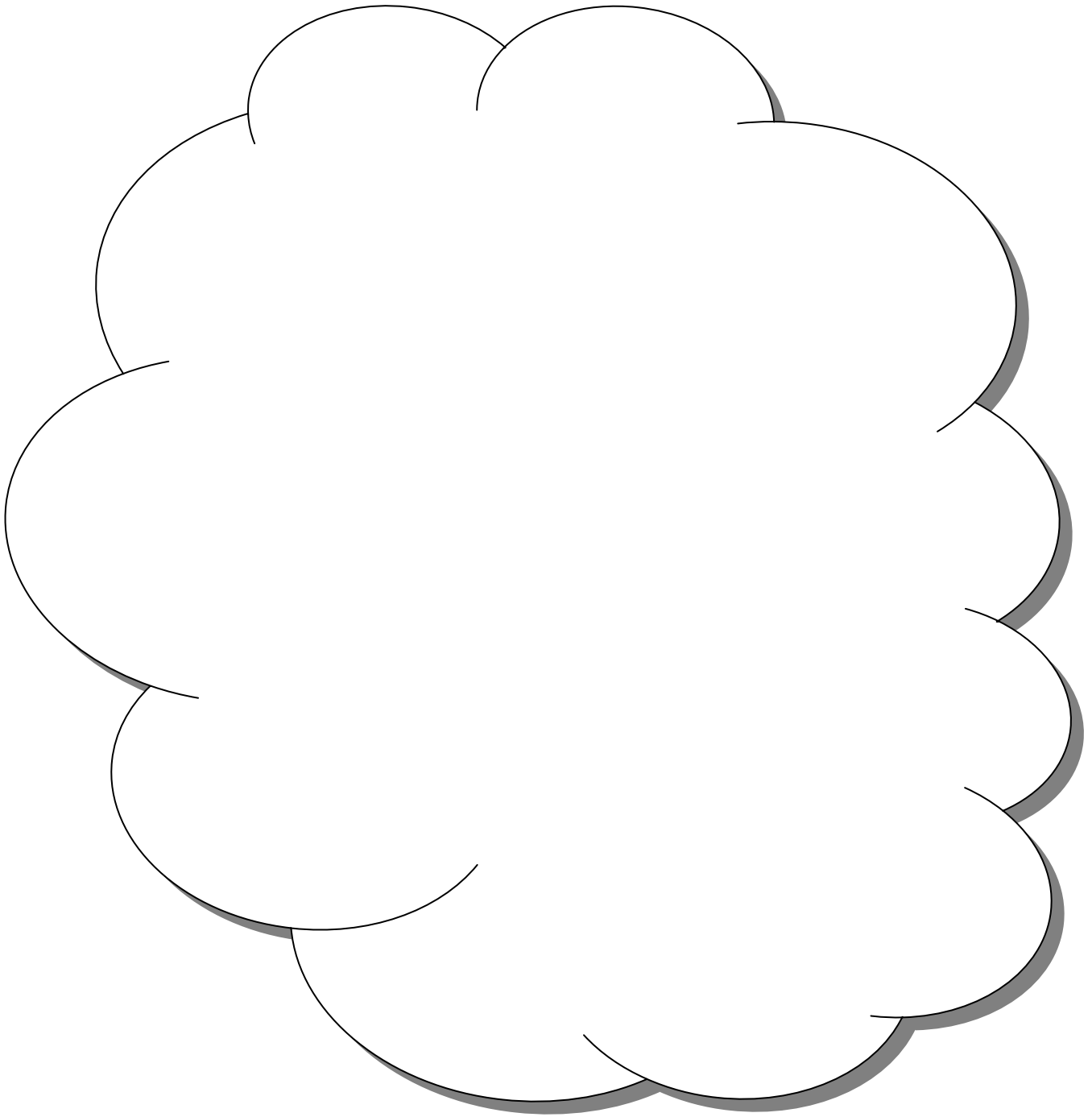
Some areas to consider:

dreams, fears, pain, thanksgiving...



Integrating Activity

Design an image or poem/write down a word or phrase
that reflects your feelings and aspirations
as you ponder your life in Christ as a call to live justly.



Called to Live as Soul of the World

The baptized, into whose hearts the Holy Spirit has been poured (Rom 5,5)
are called to be for the world what the soul is to the body.

Animated by the Spirit,
our decisions and actions help direct the world and its cultures
according to God's plan,
to the glory of God
and joy of humankind, made in God's image.

Your Experience

1. Name someone whom you consider to be the *soul* of an organization or community, and why you see them this way.
2. Name an experience in which your faith's values improved a relationship or activity in which you were involved.

What Vatican II Says

Each individual layperson must be a witness before the world to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God. All together, and each one to the best of [their] ability, must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (cf. Gal. 5:22). They must diffuse in the world the spirit which animates those poor, meek and peace-makers whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed blessed (Cf. Mt 5, 3-9). In a word, 'what the soul is to the body, let Christians be to the world.'" Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, No. 38

The laity are called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church; not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of [humankind]. Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, No. 43.

Some Additional Questions

1. In your own relationships, how are you called to be the *soul* of the world?
2. What must we do to support one another to be *soul* for the world in our workplaces and parishes?

Further Reading:

Respect for the human person goes beyond the demands of individual morality. Instead, it is a basic criterion, an essential element, in the very structure of society, since the purpose of the whole of society itself is geared to the human person.

Thus, intimately connected with the responsibility of *service to the person*, is the responsibility to *serve society*, as the general task of that Christian animation of the temporal order to which the lay faithful are called as their proper and specific role.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *On the Mission and Vocation of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)*, No. 39.

The greatest gift which America has received from the Lord is the faith which has forged its Christian identity. For more than five hundred years the name of Christ has been proclaimed on the continent. The evangelization which accompanied the European migrations has shaped America's religious profile, marked by moral values which, though they are not always consistently practiced and at times are cast into doubt, are in a sense the heritage of all Americans, even of those who do not explicitly recognize this fact.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, No. 14.

The Saints are the true expression and the finest fruits of America's Christian identity. In them, the encounter with the living Christ "is so deep and demanding...that it becomes a fire which consumes them completely and impels them to build his Kingdom, to the point that Christ and the new Covenant are the meaning and the soul...of personal and communal life.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, No. 15.

There is a need for authentically Christian politicians but, even more so, for lay faithful who witness to Christ and the Gospel in the civil and political community. This demand must be reflected in the educational programmes of ecclesial communities and requires new forms of presence and support from Pastors.

Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the 24th Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Rome, May 24, 2010.

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.

Praying Your Experience

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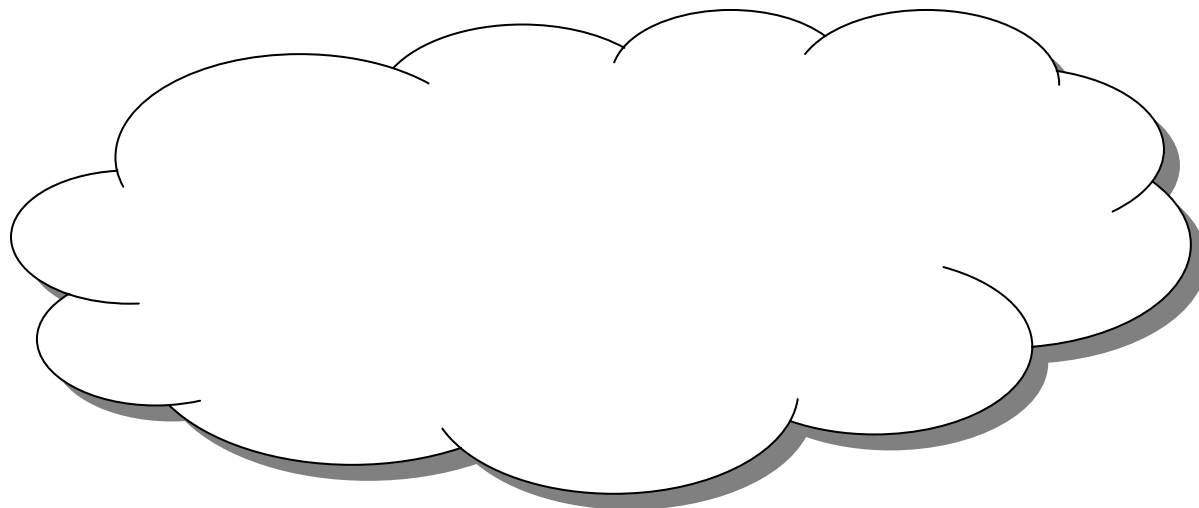
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