

LAYPERSON IN THE CHURCH

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – June 2005

This is the third part of the proclamation of the message in the Cursillo: the life of grace is not lived in isolation, but in community. Laity in the Church is a call to be living and working members of the Church community into which we have been incorporated by grace in Baptism. In Scripture, the Church is described in images rather than in rational terms only – more as living than as rational. The Church as “Mystical Body” (1 Cor. 12:27) and as “People of God” (1 Pt. 2:9-10) are key ideas of the whole Cursillo. All the baptized – priests, vowed religious and laity are the Church; there is unity of mission though there is a diversity of functions. All have responsibilities springing from their Baptism.

This Rollo presents to the participants their apostolic ideal. It presents to them the mission of the Church in the world and their part in that mission. It should awaken in them an enthusiasm for Christian action. The “Laity in the Church” is the third Rollo of the Cursillo. The first talk, Ideal, explains the need to have an ideal, something to live for that is adequate for their life. The second Rollo, Grace, presents the only truly human ideal, the life of grace, a life of union with God. The Laity in the Church grows out of these first two Rollos, because it considers how this ideal, which has been presented, can be made effective in the world. The Christian ideal makes the person aware of the concerns of the world and its problems. It stimulates in the person a desire to share with all people the life of grace. The Rollo presents the vision of God’s plan for the world, and the necessary role of the person in that plan. It presents God’s call to the participants, explaining how the living out of the Christian ideal is meant to be part of the everyday experience of life. God has a place for each person in His plan of building His Kingdom, and expects all Christians to participate and do their own tasks He gives them.

The Laity in the Church is a Rollo on the lay apostolate. It is not primarily a Rollo on the Church or a Rollo on the Lay Person. It is easy to get the Rollo off-focus by giving too full a treatment of the Church or by giving too full a treatment of the layperson’s role. The Church should be mainly presented in its apostolic or missionary dimension so that the participant can see that being an apostle is part of living in the Church as a full member. The layperson’s role also should be presented mainly in its apostolic dimension. The point that needs to be made about the layperson’s role is that they must have an active part in the mission of the Church

because they are members of the Church and, therefore, have an apostolic responsibility. Another key point that is presented in this Rollo is the wide scope of the lay apostolate. Most participants will mentally tend to restrict the apostolate to doing “Church” things, to the point of not even hearing the term “world” in its broad meaning. Lay Person, in other words, has a very particular function.

While at a meeting in Rome, Pope Paul VI addressed Cursillistas and sketched a four-part program that is valid for all of the laity: First, the permanent task of the layperson will ever be the insertion of the Gospel in life, by means of a personal encounter and friendship with God, and in communion with his/her brothers and sisters; Second, the layperson, in making himself/herself over into a Christian, reforms his/her attitudes. Being converted, he/she believes the Good News and makes it come alive; Third, the layperson transforms the temporal order in which he/she is immersed by taking his/her own responsibility seriously; Fourth, the layperson realizes his/her human and Christian ideal in the world and in the Church by conforming his/her life to the image of Christ and by bringing this life to his/her temporal commitments at all levels: personal, family, professional, civic, socio-economic, political, and so on.

Each person has the capacity to discover and accomplish the Truth and Goodness in the world. If a person does not discover it, he/she does not accomplish anything. Each person through our daily living, depending on our personality and our circumstances, must share the Truth and Goodness with others in our respective environments.

It gives us an opportunity to make our life a living reflection of the Gospel in anything we say and do. To serve the Church in this way is transforming the world, living in Grace and being authentic Christians, as described by John XXIII: “The Christian is a joy, a joy to him/herself, to God and to his fellow men and women”.