



THREE

Corresponds to Page 23 in Participant's Book

The Everyday Vocation of the Lay Disciple

*Becoming missionaries and catechists
by and in our laboring life*

Definition of Vocation: A call from God to a distinctive state of life, in which the person can reach holiness. The Second Vatican Council made it plain that there is a “Universal call [*vocatio*] to holiness in the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, 39).

Definition of Missionary: A person who is sent by Church authority to preach the Gospel, or help strengthen the faith already professed, among people in a given place or region. Essential to being a missionary, whether at home or abroad, is the desire to extend the Kingdom of Christ by preaching, teaching, or other means of evangelization and catechesis.

This chapter discusses how the everyday world of work provides opportunities for lay persons to share their faith through living as Jesus taught us and speaking of the joy of the Gospel.

GATHER

Share with each other what a typical work day, whether at home or out of the home, looks like for you.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are always with us:
in our work and in our leisure.
You listen to our hearts,

and bless even the most ordinary tasks by your grace.

We pray that, by the power of your Holy Spirit,
we may be inspired and strengthened in our vocations
as lay members of your body,
and that we may live in the joy of Christian hope.
Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

Encourage members to look back into the last chapter and re-read the actions together. Ask who has anything to report. Ask how they see family life relating to their work life.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke (3:10-14).

“And the crowds asked [John the Baptist], ‘What then shall we do?’ And he answered them, ‘Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.’ Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than you are authorized to do.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages.’”

John the Baptist appeared as one epoch ended and the next began. He was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, his preaching turned the hearts of the fathers to the children, and he prepared the way for the Messiah. The Bible positions John's ministry as the starting point of Christ's gospel, not because John literally preached the gospel, but apparently because of his preparatory work to Jesus preaching it. Mark 1:5 records, "And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem went out to him and

were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

A reading from the first letter of Peter (2:9).

"But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

These passages reveal how Jesus calls the whole people of God to abide by his teaching in all facets of their lives. Whatever our workplace vocation – government administrator, teacher, soldier, homemaker – as believers, we are "already" in the kingdom, even though we do "not yet" see it in its glory.

Similar concepts can be found in Hebrews 2:8-9, and John 18:36.

1. Reflect upon each designation in this passage: chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation people of his own. What does each mean to you?

Chosen race – In this passage in Peter, the apostle transfers a term, which in the Old Testament, referred only to the people of Israel, to mean members of Christ's Church, here on earth and in heaven. Another word used for the same term is "elect," and the elect of the Church Militant (the here and now Church) has a double meaning: 1) They are freely chosen by God's goodness, and 2) the way they conduct themselves ought to demonstrate this election.

Royal priesthood -- A priest is a mediator. He [or she] acts as an ambassador, a chosen vehicle through whom God has chosen to serve the people and represent Him, on His behalf.

Peter makes it clear we are all priests in this sense of the word.

Holy nation – Refers to the sense in which Christendom stands for a polity as well as a religion, for a nation as well as for a people. It was an ideal inspired by the Jewish theocracy in the completeness with which the Christian principles were applied to all of life, [and] in the aloofness of the Christian communities from the world around them. "...in this sense [it] was an ideal, which inspired and dignified many centuries of

history and which has not yet altogether lost its power over the minds of men.”

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03699b.htm>.)

2. From what darkness into what light have we been called? We are called into the light that is Jesus himself. Israel followed the presence of God in the pillar of fire as they escaped Egypt. Jesus says that those who follow him will never walk in darkness, but will have the ‘light of life.’ He promises salvation much greater than the salvation Israel experienced. It is not simply deliverance from a national enemy, but from the forces of rebellion against God that lie behind every form of evil in the world. The world lies in darkness and death because it has rebelled against God, and thus broken contact with the one source of light and life. Jesus is the light that brings light and life back to the world and sets it free from its bondage to sin.
(<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/John/Jesus-Reveals-Himself-Light>)

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, whose work with the Young Christian Workers in Europe inspired the founding of the Christian Family Movement, insisted that lay people, both women and men, have a vital part to play in the mission of the Church. He said of the layman, “His workbench is his altar.”

Cardijn told workers, “It is according to the plan of Providence that the working classes—the labourer and his family—are necessary collaborators with God, with Christ, and with the Church, in the work of Creation and Redemption. In this sense work and the worker have an apostolic significance. “Without labour there is no wine, no host, no altar, no Mass.” In this sense the worker’s life is a prayer and a sacrifice; daily Mass extended throughout his working day, so that his life is a real vocation and apostolate. He becomes a missionary and catechist by and in his labouring life.”

- "*The Life and Work of Cardijn: The Spirit of the Layman*"

“The lay apostolate is an indispensable complement to the priestly apostolate, which can only achieve its end fully and completely if laymen are faithful to their own apostolate. When this happens, the Mass offered by the priest at the altar will become a Mass prolonged on all those altars of the secular life: the worktable, the loom, the lathe, the joiner’s bench, the typist’s desk. ...The Gloria and Sanctus will rise in praise not only from the Church but from Christian lives which have become a prayer, an atonement, an act of grace. And all the environments of secular life will be transformed into temples where laymen truly render glory to God.”

- Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, *Laymen into Action*, p. 40

“There can be no lay apostolate...without the apostolate of the priest. There can be no other apostolic channel, because he alone can give Christ to the people. It must be added at once, however, that without the lay apostolate, the priestly apostolate is powerless to carry out the human Christian transformation of the world. The union and the reciprocal collaboration between priests and laymen are therefore essential to the unity of the Church and her mission, and to the fulfillment of every apostolate.”

- Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, *Laymen into Action*, p.122

Cardinal Cardijn’s statements can be further understood within the context of his whole vision for the Church as expressed in the following excerpt: “That is why the poorest of workers can be called by God to become a pope, a bishop, a priest, a monk, a missionary, a saviour of humanity, because each has, without exception, a divine vocation. . . .

(a) . . . It is work that must continue God's act of creation, make use of the creation, discover all the riches within creation, and place them at the disposal of humanity, in order that it may attain its destiny. Without work there is nothing, moral, intellectual, or religious. Without work there is no Host, a single drop of wine to consecrate, no altar stone, no vestments, No Church. Without work

there is no religion. There is no Kingdom of God without work, and therefore work must be respected and treated with dignity, honour and justice. By its labour, the international working class must build the Cathedral of the New World, in which the working class is no longer regarded as a slave, but in which he offers up his work as an act of praise in the Mass with Christ.

(b) Like every other family, each working-class family has a divine mission on earth, which no other can fulfil. The parents are deputies of the Creator, procreators. There would be no children without them, no life. God has given them the divine mission of begetting life, of bringing up their children, sanctifying them, and preparing them for life. Courtship, engagement, and preparation for marriage: all this is a divine mission. Why should they respect each other? Why should they honour each other while they are courting? Just as in a seminary or a novitiate, priests prepare for the priesthood or novices prepare for the apostolate as monks, so must future husbands and wives prepare together for an indispensable lay priesthood. It is they who will give to the Church the future priests, monks and missionaries. Without them there will be none.) <https://sites.google.com/a/cardijn.info/cardijn-project/lecture-2---the-churvy>

“Before God, no occupation is in itself great or small. Everything gains the value of the Love with which it is done.”

- St. Josemaria Escriva

From our own experience, **OBSERVE:**

Suggested practice: At the end of each meeting, have each person or couple choose an Observe for which they will do the research before this meeting.

1. What examples of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, etc., have you observed in the workplace or society?

To answer this question, it is best that members first report current statistics on harassment and discrimination in the workplace they found through research and then augment this with eye-witness

observations from their own experience.

2. Based on your experiences in the workplace, volunteer settings, and other situations, what sort of expressions of faith and Christian service come most naturally to you?

This question can be answered from personal experience, but members could be encouraged to ask family members and friends about their experiences. It could also be enlightening if members looked up on the internet any news stories about those who have taken their expression of religions into the workplace, for example: places of work that offer contemplation rooms. Other examples would be places of work that respect the faith of its employees or encourage volunteerism or community service.

3. In what ways do you bring your personal style to your workplace/community (e.g. fashion, mannerisms, favorite sports, social media presence)?

Encourage members to keep a diary over the next month, jotting down times when they believe they impacted their workplace in a way that was uniquely their own

4. How easy is it for those who interact with you to discern your identity as a follower of Jesus?

Members will need to be careful to not turn this question into a “Judge.” To keep it at the level of an “Observe,” i.e. get the facts, a workplace diary of moments and actions that seemed to them to express their discipleship could be kept. Keep in mind, being “identified” as a follower of Jesus need not mean that others discern your faith community affiliation. Rather that they see you making “hard choices” to do the right thing.

5. Who have you seen bring their faith into the workplace? How did they transform a situation?

The answers to this question will depend not just on observation over the next month, but will demand that members search their memories as well. Remembering a time from childhood when an adult brought Christ’s presence into one’s life could be a rewarding

way to research this question. Searching the media for example would also make for a broader understanding of what is meant by “bringing faith into the workplace.”

In the light of Christ’s teachings, **JUDGE**:

1. Review your personal “environments”: e.g., workplace, parents’ organizations, professional associations, leisure (sports leagues, community and neighborhood circles), and family (his and her sides of the family, old friends). In which environments do you find it easiest/most difficult to share your faith by actions or by words? What characteristics of those environments make sharing easy or difficult?

The answer to this question calls for serious reflection between meetings. It is also an exercise that could benefit each family in the group. Perhaps, the leader could prepare a graph for the members to take home, the month before. Families could share their observations from a given day over several different evening meals during the month, filling the graph out as they go. Trying to do it all at once could be overwhelming. Perhaps families could reflect on in which environments it is difficult to share their faith and why it is difficult to share their faith in these environments.

2. In what ways can your CFM group work with the clergy in your parish and diocese to help one another become better disciples and build a stronger church community?

The individual or couple who agree to take this question might arrange a meeting with one of the clergy members in their parish, or if possible with a priest who works for the diocese. They can ask the priest what his hopes for the parish or the diocese are for the next year. They could then suggest ways CFM can work with the clergy to make these things happen. They can report on his responses. The “Judge” part comes as the group discusses whether they can follow through on these expectations.

3. Sexual harassment, racial slurs, and unjust practices rooted in prejudice are common in many settings. How can Christians

stand up for Christian values in such situations? How can Christians support one another to promote justice and mutual respect?

Suggest that members read this excellent article on witnesses the faith in the workplace: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/workplace-witnesses>. Ask them to name ways they can apply its principles to their own workplace.

4. Profanity and using God's name in vain are common occurrences in the secular realm. How can Christians work as leaven for change?

Have members consider the following, “The *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines 'cursing' as “call[ing] down evil upon God or creatures, rational or irrational, living or dead.” A curse, the encyclopedia provides, can be a general curse for ill-fate or could involve the weather, earth, and disasters. We also distinguish taking the Lord's name in vain from the way we use it to curse others: one is a violation of the second commandment; the other is a combination of breaking the commandment and profanity. Profanity has the same meaning as cussing, and we all know what profanities are, so there is no need to provide examples. . . . There's a number of good reasons, but the primary reason Christians shouldn't use profanity is because the Bible tells us without doubt that profanity is comparable to malice and slander, should *never* be repeated, and contradicts blessing—a principal act of Christ's followers. God created the entire universe by speaking, and as creatures made in the image of God and having the Holy Spirit in us, it is our charge to be co-creators of goodwill and blessings, not defamations.”

- Shaun McAfee, Catholic Answers, March 17, 2017.

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/am-i-really-not-allowed-to-cuss-or-swear>.

What does it suggest about how we can counter-act the cultural trend toward profanity and blasphemy?

Based on our discussion, **ACT**:

1. Identify an area in one of your environments which needs change. Then, envision what would be a better situation, and steps toward improvement you could take. If possible, begin implementing the first step.

“In union with all people of good will, Christians, especially the laity, are called to this task of imbuing human realities with the Gospel.” [56] (Centesimus Annus. Encyclical Letter, His Holiness Pope John Paul II)

Urge members to realize that change happens one step at a time. This question calls upon CFMers to engage in a full “Observe, Judge, Act” sequence regarding one small difference they might be able to make.

2. Meet with your parish priests. Share with them your experience of CFM and CFM’s mission. Invite them to a meeting.

This could be a good follow-through Act for the members of the group who participated in Judge #2.

3. The next time you find yourself in one of your “environments,” (e.g., a family party, a work meeting, among the playground moms), take a moment to pray, asking God to point out someone who needs encouragement. Take action and reach out to that “someone” with a simple kind word. Report back on whether it helped the person and/or environment.

One or more members should be aware of this question ahead of time – each could agree to be open to such awareness in a different type of environment so that more than one report could be made. This connects well to Act #1.

4. Discuss and plan a time to hold the Family and Community Meeting, “Working Together.” See Page 30 for directions.

Let members know that the “Family and Community Meetings” are intended both to strengthen group solidarity and to attract new

members to CFM.

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Share your own lists of personal environments from question 1 of the JUDGE section, and help your children develop their own lists. Using some of the insights from the meeting, encourage your children to think of ways to serve God in their “workplaces.”
2. When you discuss potential summer jobs and careers with your children, encourage them to think of ways that they might add a faith dimension to their work.
3. Discuss how you can show your priest that you appreciate them. Ask them to dinner or another family activity.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation

Date _____ **Time** _____ **Place** _____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend.
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the disciples you chose were quite ordinary, and none of them had achieved prominence in the eyes of the world.

We come to you tonight as ordinary people.

And we know that, by your grace, your Holy Spirit can use us

to accomplish extraordinary results.

Thank you for counting us among your friends and collaborators.

Please make your instructions clear to us.

Use us to build your kingdom here in our little corners of the earth.

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement
(found on Page 80 or inside back cover of the Participants' Book).

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