

You Are On a Mission From God

Every baptized person is an apostle

- An apostle is “one who is sent”
- At baptism, each of us was anointed by Christ himself for a specific mission or vocation.

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” - John 20:21

- Debated at the Second Vatican Council - Decree on Apostolate of the Laity: 2,3

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles . . . - Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 4

She was the strong woman, the strong apostle.” - St. Vincent Pallotti

Lay Christians are Apostles with a Difference!

- **Secular:** holiness and fulfillment of mission through:
 - ◇ Other People
 - ◇ Human Society and Culture
 - ◇ The Physical Creation
 - ◇ This Life

Healing this world and bringing it to the fulfillment that God intends is part of the redeeming work of Jesus. - Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 5

- There is a path to holiness that is truly secular - *the path of spiritual transformation through loving, prayerful work in the midst of and for the sake of the world.*
- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 41
- Lay Christians witness to: the value and significance of this life in God’s plan.
- Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, 55

The First Mission of Lay Apostles

- Communicating the faith to the world:
 - ◇ Enabling every man and every woman on earth to meet the risen Christ;
 - ◇ Especially those farthest from the Church.
- The Great Commission of Matthew 28: 18-20

How Can We Help Others Meet Jesus?

- Approach others with reverence.

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest thing you will ever encounter with your senses. . . if he is your Christian neighbor, he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also, Christ . . . Glory himself, is truly hidden.”

- C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

- Share your personal experience of Christ in your own words.
“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope . . .” - I Peter 3:15

"To be a witness . . . means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." - Cardinal Suhard

- Exercise your charisms
But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
- 1 Corinthians 12:7

So Mary . . . was obedient and became to herself and to the whole human race a cause of salvation. - St. Irenaeus

- Help others to encounter the Church.

The Second Mission of Lay Apostles

- Applying the faith in the world as secular apostles:
- Healing and transforming its cultures and structures;
 - ◊ So that they foster all that is truly human;
 - ◊ Help to fulfill God's plan.

"The glory of God is man (and woman) fully alive." - Irenaeus

Frederick Ozanam, founder at age 20
St. Vincent de Paul Society

In 2003

- ◊ In the US: 70,000 members
- ◊ Helped: 13.7 million people
- ◊ Aid: \$ 254 million

In the world: 900,000 members

Secular Apostles Bring Christ as "competent insiders" to

- War and Peace, International Relations
- Politics, Government
- Justice/Human Rights
- Education
- The Arts, Communication
- Science, Technology, Medicine
- Family life
- Agriculture . . .

Secular Apostles brought Christ to Jyoti, forced into prostitution at age 14

- Rescued at 17 by the International Justice Mission.
- IMJ are professional Christian human rights investigators
- Jyoti is now married and works with IMJ to rescue other girls.

You Have Been Gifted to Answer the Call

The Apostolic Skill of Discernment*Discernment of:*

- •personal gifts and charisms
- •personal call/vocation
- •the leading of the Holy Spirit
- •the meaning and value of temporal things
- •how to creatively apply the truths of Christianity

Giving The Holy SpiritGifts or charisms for the sake of others

- St. Thomas Aquinas: *gratuitous graces*
- Empowered by God
 - Instruments of his providence*
 - For the sake of others* in real-life situations

Characteristics of a CharismLong-term; therefore, may be further developed.

- Bears results above and beyond our natural abilities.
- Focused outward
- Received from God, not chosen.

Charisms are not Natural TalentsCannot be inherited from our parents

- Given by the Holy Spirit (Baptism/Confirmation)
- Enable us to be an agent of God's purposes for others
- Cannot be turned to evil

How many kinds of charisms are there?

We don't know.

Common Charisms:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Administration | Knowledge |
| Celibacy | Leadership |
| Craftsmanship | Mercy |
| Discernment of Spirits | Missionary |
| Encouragement | Music |
| Evangelism | Pastoring |
| Faith | Prophecy |
| Giving | Service |
| Healing | Teaching |
| Helps | Voluntary Poverty |
| Hospitality | Wisdom |
| Intercessory Prayer | Writing |

Why Discern Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Charisms)?

With a charism comes a call from God.

Our charisms are:

- Clues to our personal call/vocation
- Supernatural tools with which to carry out our mission

The Five Steps of Discernment

1) Explore the possibilities

- What a charism is
- What it looks like
- How it functions
- How it feels to exercise a charism

2) Experiment—Charisms are real and objective

- Cannot discern in the abstract
- Discernment through action
- DO it and see what happens

3) Examine your experience

- Energizing
- Satisfying
- Joyful
- Feels like you “fit”
- Expression of relationship with God
- Prayerful or contemplative

4) Evaluate your effectiveness

- Does what it is supposed to do
- Mediocre or poor results
- Success:
 - »Recognizing where you are gifted
 - AND
 - where you are Not!

5) Expect confirmation from others

- Direct
- Indirect