The Participation of Lay Catholics in Nigerian Politics in the Light of the Teaching of Articles 7 and 14 of Vatican II’s, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

by

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Theology and mission of the laity in both the Church and society have been approached in different ways. One of the important developments in ecclesiology since the Second Vatican Council has been the emphasis on the dignity and the role of the laity in the Church and society. This consistent call of the Second Vatican Council for the laity to take up their rightful place in the Church and in its mission in the world represents a renewal in Church’s teaching concerning the laity.

Since it is proper to the laity’s state to live both in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, the typical mark or special characteristic of the laity’s participation in the mission of the Church is an apostolate exercised in and through direct concern with secular affairs. In line with this secular mission of the laity, the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* has inspired the laity by breaching the age long dichotomy between faith and concrete witnessing when it states that Catholics versed in politics, firm in the faith and Christian teaching, should not decline to enter public life (*AA, 14*). In the light of the teaching of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* in articles 7 and 14 and building on further development on the theology and mission of the laity, this thesis will examine how Nigerian Catholic lay members of Christ’s Faithful can contribute to promoting the common good in Nigeria through their participation.
in politics. This thesis will show that in order to fully realize the mission of the laity in
Nigeria’s politics, there is need for authentic collaboration between the Nigerian clergy and
the laity. It will also demonstrate how an effective transformation of the laity can be achieved
through their socialization in the social teaching of the Church with regard to how they can
contribute to the promotion, protection, and preservation of the common good
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA  *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: Vatican II’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.
AFER  *African Ecclesiastical Review*
CGR  *Colonial Government Report*
CPI  Corruption Perception Index
EIA  *Ecclesia in Africa* (1994 Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on the Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission towards the Year 2000).
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GNP  Gross National Product
GNI  Gross National Income
GS  *Gaudium et Spes*: Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
HDI  Human Development Index
LG  *Lumen Gentium*: Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
MDGS  Millennium Development Goals
NLCN  National Laity Council of Nigeria
PDP  People’s Democratic Party
PO  *Presbyterum Ordinis*: Vatican II’s Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
PPP  Purchasing Power Parity
USCCB  United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
VP  Vice President
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>VIP</td>
<td>Very Important People</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPP</td>
<td>Very Poor Personalities.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In the past, many theologians usually spoke about the laity’s role as secondary to that of the clergy and institutional Church. Whereas the laity was understood in the past as neither members of the clergy nor religious, there was no clarity about their role, hence the pejorative notion that the role of the laity was; only to pay, pray, obey and listen to the Church hierarchy.¹ They consisted of two classes, those baptised and the catechumens, who were in preparation for baptism.² Some other theologians in a scarcely less pejorative way, described the laity as those who fed and sustained the ministers of the altar, symbolised by the Levitical hierarchy.³ In both cases, the laity was presented as spectators and inferior to the ordained members of Christ’s faithful.

In the ecclesiologies of Yves Congar, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac, the laity is presented in a different way. They present the laity as those who by their incorporation into Christ through baptism become constitutive members of the Church. Being part of the Church, they engage in the apostolate and therefore share in the mission of the Church. The difference among these theologians lies in how they conceive the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. Congar and Philips share some common perspectives in their theology of the laity. They recognise that the laity participates in the three fold offices of Christ, namely: his priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices. This


triadic function of the laity is not distinguished by Rahner, though he recognises that the laity through their baptism are united with the priest in the sacrifice of the Mass. Henri de Lubac, on the other hand, emphasises the communion that should exist in the Church. These theologians commonly share the notion that the laity receives charisms, which dispose them for the apostolate. They also locate the laity’s primary mission in the Church in the temporal sphere and stress that through baptism the laity have the right to participate in the inner ecclesial functions. These pioneering theological articulations of the role of the laity in the mission of the Church by these theologians were significant in reshaping the Church’s teaching regarding the laity at the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II was the first Council to address specifically the question of the place of the laity in the Church. Vatican II documents are remarkable; they gave new impetus to dynamic changes that emphasize the indispensability of the laity as full members of the Church. There are three particular documents of Vatican II that contributed to a renewed understanding of the vocation of the laity in the Church: the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Lumen Gentium), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, (Gaudium et Spes) and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, (Apostolicam Actuositatem). In those documents, the Council Fathers, drawing from theological discussion from some pre-Vatican II theologians, discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit, and reflecting on both the biblical tradition of the Church and the Tradition of the Church came up with a far reaching and profound understanding of the place and mission of the lay person in the Church.

The significant contribution of Vatican II is the development of a new understanding of the role of the laity in the mission of the Church in and to the world. This new
development which specifies the unique and essential mission of the laity in the evangelising
and sanctifying role of the Church (AA, 5) is in contrast to the pre-conciliar understanding of
the mission of the laity in the Church.⁴ For in the pre-conciliar era, the clergy acted and the
laity received, the clergy sanctified and the laity were sanctified.⁵ But this manner of
distinction has changed. A new movement in the Church’s thinking as a result of Second
Vatican Council’s teaching on the mission of the laity in secular society demands a sincere
appreciation of the role of the laity as it concerns their various apostolates.

Many reasons have been advanced for this change in mentality. They include the
following: a more comprehensive understanding of the mystery of the Church; a more
positive sense of the secular world and mission of the Church within it; and new cultural and
social conditions which significantly raised the educational levels of lay Christians.⁶

Apostolicam Actuositatem, therefore, calls on the laity according to their natural endowments
and intellectual acquisition to play their role in fidelity to the mind of the Church, in
explaining and defending Christian principles and applying them to modern problems (AA,
6). The Council further stresses the renewal of the temporal order as an ecclesial task, which
belongs specially to the laity (AA, 7). The laity are thus called not only to various missions
in the Church, but also to active participation in the secular apostolate of the Church in the
world, particularly in the concrete political situations of their communities. This participation
of the laity is to enable them to put into practice the principles and values proper to life in
society. In line with this, Apostolicam Actuositatem emphasises that Catholics versed in

(1987)86.

⁵ Paul Lakeland, “Laity” in From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations, ed.

⁶ Ibid.
politics and firm in the faith and Christian teaching should not decline to enter public life \((AA, 14)\). In other words, Christians are called to fulfil their civic responsibility by active involvement in politics in order to penetrate the temporal order with the gospel spirit and to exercise their apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven. The rights of the laity to the apostolate come from their union with Christ in baptism and strengthened by the power of the Spirit in confirmation \((AA, 3)\).\(^7\)

This thesis studies the need for the active involvement and participation of the Nigerian Catholic laity in the political life of Nigeria, guided by the teaching of articles 7 and 14 of Second Vatican Council’s *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, in the light of Vatican II’s emphasis on the importance of the mission of the laity in the temporal sphere. The thought is formed, based on the political leadership crisis and corruption that has been the bane of Nigeria since her independence on 1\(^{st}\) October 1960. Without doubt, the unpardonable failure of the political leadership class managing the affairs and wealth of the country had inevitably brought severe misery to many voiceless and helpless Nigerians. More still, Nigeria’s post-independence political bureaucratic and military elites had terribly pillaged the nation’s common wealth and national patrimony with impunity, thereby denying Nigerians access to economic prosperity and quality living condition. Indeed, it is a paradox that Nigeria, the world’s eighth largest oil producing nation, is yet the thirteenth poorest

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\(^7\) Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, translated by Donald Attwater, (London: Bloomsbury Publisher and Co., 1957) 390, the foundation is always baptism, charity, confirmation; spiritual gifts received…. Cf Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*, translated by John Pairman and Susan Perry (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988) 57. All lay people, through the gifts given them, are at once the witnesses and the living instruments of the mission of the Church itself. Specifically, Christ fulfils this prophetic office not only by the hierarchy…but also by the laity. And finally the Apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through baptism and confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.
country in the world. The country continues to languish in the bottom quartile of the Human Development Index, with over 90 percent of its population surviving on less than $2 (US) a day. At the same time, a decimal of its population swims in affluence and scandalous ostentation. More so, Nigeria’s economy is the second largest in the Sub-Saharan Africa and one of the world’s fastest growing sources of high quality crude oil and natural gas. Despite her numerous natural resources, Nigeria remains highly underdeveloped. Corruption, lack of vision, and poor leadership have greatly limited the provision of basic infrastructural amenities and social services, all of which are hindering economic development and leaving her citizens in abject poverty. Amidst these great economic depressions, political turmoil, widespread corruption and abuse of human rights, in present day Nigeria, the question that comes to mind for this research is whether the good people of Nigeria should sit back and watch this display of fraudulent leadership by the politicians? How can the lay members of Christ’s faithful become the salt of the earth and the light of the world in Nigeria through active involvement and participation in the political mission of Nigeria? What must the Church do to arrest this oppressive system of political leadership and fulfil its mission of humanising the society and promoting the values of the kingdom of God in Nigeria? It is obvious that any form of mass action that is peaceful and capable of bringing pressure to bear on the unjust leaders is desirable since power belongs to the people. However, for this to happen, the Nigerian Church must engage in a programme of civic education and training in Catholic social ethics through which the people will get to know their fundamental human

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rights and responsibilities under the nation’s constitution, and be empowered to defend these
rights against the forces of oppression and manipulation. This awareness on the part of the
people will empower them not only to know their rights but equally to be able to hold the
leadership responsible for the appalling corruption and other anomalies in their political
situation. This would help to checkmate the abuses of political leadership and power.

This thesis undertakes an analytical, historical and expository approach in its
interpretative methodology. It articulates the theological contribution of the pre-Vatican II
theologians who pioneered the theology of the laity and formed the basis for the building of
Vatican II’s theology of the place and mission of the laity in the Church and society. This
research is not unaware of the numerous theological works pertaining to the laity, but
because of the nature and limitations of this work, it will concern itself only with the works
of Yves Congar, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac with reference to the role
and mission of the laity in the secular life. Then our studies of the teaching of *Apostolicam
Actuositatem* will help us to see to what extent the laity have been recognized and given their
proper place in the life of the Church. The thesis will explore the different stages and
theological arguments that went into the formulation of the teaching on the mission of the
laity in the document, with other conciliar documents like *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic
Constitution on the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in
Modern World). These documents will be crucial for a better understanding of the main
theological basis of the apostolate of the laity in the Church and its mission in the world.

Situating this study within the Nigerian context gives it the privilege of practical and
first-hand experience. In this regard I will review the complex Nigeria political landscape,
which will help us grasp the need for the involvement of the Catholic laity in the country’s
political situation in the light of the message expressed in articles 7 and 14 of the text of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. This thesis will argue that it is the duty of enlightened Catholic laity to lead the way in creating relevant structures, practices, democratic principles, and a civic culture which promote the common good of Nigeria. However, education remains a very key factor for empowering the people. In this regard, this thesis will show that the laity should be adequately trained and allowed to take up their responsibility in the transformation of the Nigerian society.

This work is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will concentrate on the discussion of the theologies of four major pre-conciliar theologians, namely, Yves Congar, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac, whose works had a great impact in the shaping of the pre-conciliar theology of the laity. Chapter two will concentrate on the teaching of the Church on the laity as expressed in the decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. Here I will do a historical overview of the evolution of this document and its teaching on the place and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world. In this chapter also, through a deep analysis of the laity’s mission in politics in the light of Vatican II, I will lay the outline of the theology of lay participation in politics, with the help of many ecclesiastical documents. Chapter three will situate this study within the Nigerian context by reviewing the complex Nigeria political landscape which has contributed to a major setback to stability and progress, which has accounted and continues to account for the suffering of the people. I will also consider the problem of leadership as one of the key setbacks in the Nigerian political situation that calls for the awakening of the Catholic laity toward their mission in Nigerian politics. Chapter four will examine the need for the empowerment of the laity through formation, which stems naturally from their being primarily constitutive members of the
mystical body of Christ, sharers in the three-fold mission of teaching, governing and sanctifying (AA, 2) of the temporal order through their witnessing to the world. The formation of the lay faithful on the Church’s social doctrine must be the basis of an intense and constant work of training the Nigerian Catholic laity in their obligations in civic society. I will also examine the need for collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the Nigerian Church which is built on the basis of the principle of interdependence, especially in the political scene.

This thesis will conclude with a reflection, where I will restate my position by affirming the theology of inclusivity of the pre-conciliar theologians, as well as the teaching of Vatican II, that the laity are those who by their baptism and other sacraments of Christian initiation are constitutive members of the Church.
CHAPTER ONE
THE THEOLOGY AND MISSION OF THE LAITY, BEFORE VATICAN II

1.1 Introduction

Even before the Second Vatican Council, some theologians engaged in a deep theological reflection on the laity which eventually proved to be pivotal to the revitalization of the theology of the laity in the succeeding decades. In this chapter, I intend to discuss the theological contribution of some theologians that helped in reshaping the thought pattern of the Church, which culminated in the Conciliar teaching regarding the laity.

1.2 Yves Congar

Yves Congar was one of the first theologians to make a serious articulation of the theology of the laity in the early 1950s. He worked out his theology in his book *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (1953),\(^{11}\) which remains a masterpiece. Later in 1967, he also published *Le sacerdoce chrétien des laïcs et du prêtre*. Congar was moved by the firm conviction that the Church should adapt to the circumstances of its age in order to make itself relevant. Based on the experience of past centuries, he believed that when Christians are relegated to the background, they become indifferent to the Church’s teachings. He calls the passive condition of the laity in the Catholic Church “religion by proxy,”\(^{12}\) and that does not contribute to the growth of the Church. He, therefore, advocates for conscious and active Christians who participate in the day-to-day life of the Church. For him, Christian life is

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something to be lived and assimilated into one’s own life. Congar further observes that the common usage of the word ‘Church,’ to a great extent, signified the “hierarchy of bishops, the governing body, sometimes even simply the pope, with or without the Roman congregations.”\textsuperscript{13} He blames the Church for not responding to the feelings of the laity.

Congar was influenced by the theology of John Henry Newman (1801-1891) with particular reference to his thoughts on the laity. In his sermon preached in the Church of St Mary at Oxford, Newman reflects on the mystical reality implicit in qualifying the Church as a holy priesthood as stated in the first Epistle of Peter (1Pet. 2: 9-10). He applied this mystical ideal to the classic distinction of the three offices of Christ. For him, the faithful reproduce Christ and in this sense are also kings, priests and prophets. Lay persons according to Newman are kings when they work and endure since work is the Christian form of genuine royalty of real possession and domination. They are priests in so far as they are called to practice prayer and endurance and also prophets through witnessing to Christian faith.\textsuperscript{14} Newman’s intuition about the laity is concentrated in his Rambler article \textit{On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid


\textsuperscript{15} See John Henry Newman, \textit{On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, edited by John Coulson (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961). The situation in England at the time precipitated this article. In it he blamed the English Catholic bishops for failing to access the opinion of the laity in matters related to education. He argues that their Lordships really desire to know the opinion of the laity on subjects in which the laity are especially concerned. If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception, it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical questions, [...]. It is our fervent prayer that their Lordship may live in the heart of their people....” Samuel D.Femiano, \textit{Infallibility of the Laity: The Legacy of Newman} (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 87-88.Cited from \textit{Judgement of the English Bishops in the Rambler}, May 1859, pp.122-123.
Yves Congar in formulating his theology had recourse to the theology of the mystical body of Christ and the vision of the common priesthood of the faithful.\textsuperscript{16} His theology of the laity is rooted on two points: the Church in itself and the Church in relationship with the world.\textsuperscript{17} He believes that the laity through baptism are part of the Church, not the structure of the Church, but rather of its communion of life. They are members of the People of God. They partake in the office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king in a way different from that of the clergy.\textsuperscript{18} This forms his background for situating the laity in the life of the Church and his insistence that the issue of apostleship pertains not only to the bishops and priests, but also to the laity. He makes a distinction between the sacramental priesthood, the spiritual priesthood, and the baptismal priesthood of the faithful. Although only the ordained priest participates in the sacramental priesthood, all the baptized participate in the spiritual and baptismal priesthood and can exercise this double priesthood even in the official mission of the Church.\textsuperscript{19} In his definition of the role of the laity in the Church, he considers it side by side with the respective function of the clergy, indicating that the Church has to fulfil a mission in the world. Congar assigns this function to the laity.

Congar maintains that the essence of the Church is evangelization of the people and sanctification of the world since the Church does not exist for itself. He stresses that faith and charity necessitate the Church’s attention to secular things. In this way, the Church has a dual sphere of activity: the spiritual sphere and the temporal or secular sphere. Stressing the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ramiro Pellitero, “Congar’s Developing Understanding of the Laity and their Mission,” The Thomist 65 (2000) 329
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 333.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid. This has influenced chapter four of Lumen Gentium where it is also stated that the laity share in their own way in the three offices of Christ as priest, prophet and king.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid.108-118
\end{itemize}
expediency of the active participation of the laity in the Church, he holds that though the priest’s work should be all encompassing, they cannot properly do justice to the temporal sphere. This is because priests are “directly and exclusively committed to the service of God’s kingdom.”

Hence, the laity who are deeply involved in the two major temporal commitments - family and work - are more suited for it. He further argues that their commitment to their state of life is a service to God. By exercising the Church’s mission to the world, Congar argues, the laity are not only “belonging to the Church, but of being the Church”

Besides, Congar’s theology seems to favour an exclusive preoccupation of the clergy with the affairs of the Church, and this excludes the clergy from using their Christian virtues to impact positively on the world, a responsibility which they also possess as citizens of the world.

In his book *Lay People in the Church*, Congar tends to understand the laity in relation to the clergy and the monks, and more generally in relation to the hierarchy of the Church in a way that is more juridical than theological. However, in his later works, he tries to overcome two powerful dichotomies of priest and layperson, the Church and world. Accordingly, he modifies his position to show that the clergy and the laity are now understood as both standing before God with the duty to offer gifts and to pray; he shows that those whose apostolate it is to be active in the world are now seen as equally having a

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20 Ibid, 48
21 Ibid.
role in the Church’s life of prayer, their work comprising both the exterior activities of secular profession and mission and the interior acts of worship and prayer.23

More still, Congar’s theological contribution can also be seen in the ecclesiological idea of collaboration between the clergy and the laity, as expressed in the future council. It is the view of Congar that mutuality of faith through witness and Christian life involved in prayer, penitence and charity should characterise the relationship between the clergy and the laity. He clarifies this with the instance of Augustine who exemplifies mutuality in his word: “For you I am a bishop, but with you I am a Christian.”24 He advises that clerics formulating a conception of being at the service of the people are the panacea for the bad relationship, for Congar, the clergy - laity relationship should be that of “collaborating of apostolic and missionary action in common.”25 The priest’s worldview should spring from his reflections on the Bible about God. He describes the nature of the collaboration as “team or priesthood-lay couple.”26 The role of the clergy and that of the laity complement each other. This flows from the fact that Christ entrusted to the Church, the clergy and the laity, each according to their ability and situation in life, one single mission, namely, “making disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18-20), and living the life of love personally and among the community of people.

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
1.3 Gérard Philips

Philips was moved by the increased awareness and interest of the laity during the 20th century in participating in the ecclesial life. So, in his book, *Le rôle du laïcat dans l’Église* (1954), he sets out to formulate an ecclesiology that offers the laity their proper role in the Church. In his theology, he maintains that the laity constitutes an integral part of the Church. And any association of religion and Church as the domain of the clergy amounts to the exclusion of the laity from the Church. For Philips, the laity have the right to express their opinion prudently in the Church and make necessary demands for the success of their mission. They may also, according to their capacities, be officially commissioned to teach or engage in the instruction of catechism.

The basis of the laity’s religious activity is their consecration through baptism; this automatically inclines them towards their religious obligation. Philips considers every member of the Church as a light bearer, for, according to him, the spirit begins by giving faith to the Church, and, through the Church, the spirit also addresses himself to each man [and woman]. Philips also understands the laity from the point of view of the nature of human being. As a social being, man and woman are always moved towards communion with God and other creatures. He therefore says that temporal values exist and should be integrated into the Christian’s total concept of life. Following the idea in the epistle of St. James, he argues that every true faith must show itself in works. The laity’s witness of faith

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28 Ibid. 80-81. Philips in expressing this view relies on the canon law. Those Philips refers to with regard to teaching, and instructions of catechism are professors of religion and catechists. But they should not preach, *Cf. Codex Juris Canonici*, 1917, no. 1333.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
is most often in the area of social justice and charity inspired by faith. The responsibility of
the Church in the temporal sphere is typically the laity’s field of action. In view of this,
Philips says that the lay Catholic is the one to assume the task of constructing the temporal
city attached in its way to the city of God. He further emphasizes that the temporal sphere is
specifically lay territory; it is theirs to be engaged here wholeheartedly and to make the
gospel spirit felt.\textsuperscript{31} Philips is also of the view that the specific task of the laity in the world
will not make them forget their task in the Church. He, however, warns the laity against any
religious excesses and confusion between the “profane and the sacred.”\textsuperscript{32}

Philips warning implies that the laity should be involved in professional and political life
in a way that the gospel spirit will be felt. They should also follow the general moral
principle mapped out by the Church regarding the economic and social order. This is in line
with the views of John XXIII in “Pacem in Terris.” He wrote: “in obedience to the
providential designs and commands of God, men and women must conduct themselves in
their temporal activity in such a way as to effect a thorough integration of the principal
spiritual values with those of science, technology and the professions.”\textsuperscript{33} In order that the
laity would be able to carry out their mission creditably, Philips proposes for the laity an
adequate religious and moral formation.\textsuperscript{34}

In relation to the clergy, he argues that the laity should have freedom to exercise their
duty. He distinguished between the universal priesthood of the faithful and functional

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.51 \\
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.52 \\
\textsuperscript{33} John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, Acta Apostolicae Sedis 55 (1963) 257-304. English translation is that
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.52-53
\end{flushright}
priesthood. Making reference to the Old Testament\textsuperscript{35} and the New Testament\textsuperscript{36} he writes of the priesthood of the faithful as pertaining to all the baptized and at the same time he recognises the special position of the ordained priesthood. According to Philips, the liturgy is presided over by the ordained priest, while the rest of the baptized spiritually share in it and, so, benefit from its fruits. He explains that the laity are also called to partake of the royal and priestly privilege, but this should not denigrate the hierarchical priesthood.\textsuperscript{37} At liturgy, the priest is one with the laity. In their active participation in the sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of the sacrament, the laity exercises their priestly function. This requires that the laity meditate on the mystery already celebrated by Christ, but now being re-enacted at the Eucharistic worship. The clergy and the laity share in the same priesthood of Christ, but their duty and function differ.\textsuperscript{38}

Philips in his discussion on the doctrinal mission of the laity says that the laity have the duty of carrying out their mission in their private milieu like the family or social environment. They should not preach but transmit the truth of the gospel with the example of their own life. This for Philips constitutes the prophetic role of the laity, which is realized in the “concrete circumstances of daily life.”\textsuperscript{39} Further, he reiterates that carrying the mission

\textsuperscript{35} From the Old Testament Philips recalls that kings and priests were consecrated and dedicated to God through anointing. The whole chosen race of Israel shared in that dignity. “So now, if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of the peoples shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine. For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” \textit{Exodus 19, 5-6}.

\textsuperscript{36} In the New Testament the Chosen Israel becomes the new Israel in a universal sense “…so that you, too, may be living stones making a spiritual house as a holy priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” \textit{1 Peter 2, 5}.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.58
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.59-60
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.78-79
of the Church to the world is the prerogative of the laity. They also have to use their intellectual acquisition at the service of the Church.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Philips’s theology of the laity is very concrete, at least, in giving specific functions to the laity and offering them a voice in the life of the Church. In his theology, one finds out that though the Church and the world have their distinct autonomy, they are strongly related. Whereas the Church through its actions sanctifies the world, the world in turn provides the locus for the operations of the Church. Philips, however, advocates for the laity’s participation in the internal mission of the Church due to their baptism, but believes that their responsibility is more in the temporal order.

1.4 Karl Rahner

In his 1955 article Notes on the Lay Apostolate Karl Rahner argues that any qualification of the laity as “profane” or “ignorant” is theologically improper. The only way to rectify the status of the laity is by the development of a new theology of the laity. For him, the laity are also consecrated members of the people of God called into the Church through baptism.

Rahner describes the laity negatively, in contrast to the clergy, and then positively, when describing their inner characteristics. He believes that the laity must be distinguished from the clergy with regard to the potestas ordinis and the potestas iurisdictionis. The potestas ordinis consists of those ministries, which in their very nature are conferred only by sacramental ordination. The potestas iurisdictionis includes those ministerial offices by

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42 Ibid. 319.
means of which the clergy govern and direct the people of God. According to Rahner, a layperson strictly speaking means one who does not have these powers. But he further posited that any member of the people of God, “who in any way, rightfully in habitual possession of any part of liturgical or legal powers over and above the basic right of every baptised member of the Church, is no longer a layperson in the proper sense.”\(^{43}\) He maintains that any member of the laity who is officially commissioned in the Church’s principal function ceases to belong to the laity.\(^{44}\) This view met with strong oppositions from theologians. According to Rahner’s view, even Catholic Actions, as defined by Pope Pius XI, would not fit into the category of the lay apostolate. Rahner’s argument goes so far to say that lay catechists, sacristans and even house keepers in rectories are no longer members of the laity. This is because, “anyone who is, in any way, rightfully in habitual possession of any part of liturgical or legal power over and above the basic rights of every baptized member of the Church is no longer a layperson in the proper sense that is, no longer belongs to the simple people of God. Both Congar and Schillebeeckx explicitly rejected Rahner’s view.\(^{45}\) Also in 1959 article, Gérard Philips criticized Rahner’s limitations on the laity that left them little to no role in intra-ecclesial activities, because once they engage in these affairs, they lose their lay identity. Philips, however, insisted on the lay status of members of Catholic Action, Christian social work, and religious education. He admitted a line of demarcation between the hierarchical function and the religious apostolate of the laity, but denied that there were two kinds of apostolate - one rooted in the institution by Christ and the

\(^{43}\) Ibid.320

\(^{44}\) Ibid. Rahner explains that, “an officially commissioned lay catechist, a woman officially employed as parochial helper, an officially sacristan etc. are not indeed ordained; yet if these are their principal functions, they are no longer, properly speaking, lay persons.”

other rooted in the human needs of the community, he holds, rather, that everything comes from Christ.⁴⁶

Rahner, further, distinguishes the laity from the ‘religious’ for the fact that the religious also profess the vows of the evangelical counsels, though they do not possess any hierarchical power.⁴⁷ In the positive description, Rahner understands the laity as Christians, “who remain in the world, not in the sense of the profane…, but in the sense that the layman and woman must have a specific task towards the world and in the world which determines his or her status in the Church.”⁴⁸ In describing the vocation and mission of the laity, Rahner says being a layman and woman in the Church and also having the qualification of a Church member in this sense means having one’s place in the Church as her member and exercising her functions wherever in the world.⁴⁹ The laity though in the Church carries out their mission in the temporal order, since the world should not be regarded as profane but seen as God’s creation which can also be redeemed and sanctified. He views the world as the proper place of the laity due to their determined position in family, social engagement and life career.

According to Karl Rahner, the positive function of the laity in the Church comprises the following aspects:

i. They are called by God and destined for eternal life in Jesus Christ

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⁴⁶ See Gerard Philips, The role of the Laity in the Church, 86
⁴⁷ Ibid. 321-322.
⁴⁸ Ibid. 322
ii. The laity by virtue of their baptism offer the sacrifice of Mass together with the priest, and are strengthened for their mission in the world through confirmation.

iii. The life of the Church is expansive and not limited to the ecclesiastical functions of the clergy. They can equally exercise their own charisms.

iv. The laity by virtue of being proper members of the Church “necessarily” take part in the Church’s mission and responsibility in their own way without participating in the mission of the clergy.

v. The laity have other functions proper to them, “de iure humano.” These include being a godparent, taking up functions in ecclesiastical associations, right of patronage, assisting in the administration of Church property. 50

Rahner in his consideration of the Church’s apostolate says that in the Church, according to divine right and institution by Christ, there are both clerical and non-clerical functions. The clerical ministry derives from Christ and is rendered in the Church and for the Church as a function of service. There are some powers attached to it, which the laity does not have. The lay apostolate, differing from the clerical apostolate, serves the same purpose, but has a different starting point. It is constituted by baptism and confirmation, by membership in the Church and by the motive force communicated to the members by the infused habit of supernatural love. 51 As has already been mentioned, Rahner clarifies that the official apostolic mission belongs only to the clergy, but any layperson who shares in it a permanent way, even without ordination, would cease to be a layperson. The official apostolic mission consists of sacramental absolution, transubstantiation, power to confirm, to anoint the sick

50 Ibid. 324-327.
51 Ibid. 332
and to ordain, the power to teach independently and authoritatively as invested in bishops and the pope, the right to make Church laws in the real sense, etc. The bearer of the clerical apostolate requires an official apostolic mandate, whereas this is not necessary for the apostolate of the laity.

From the above distinctions, lay apostolate, for Rahner, is understood as:

The kind of concern for the salvation of others incumbent on every baptized Christian by the duty of love of neighbour and through the force of this love in the world which belongs to him, without participating in the hierarchical ministry and its apostolate. It is not the apostolate constituted by the official and vocational sending out, but the apostolate of love in the situation in-the-world in which the lay person finds himself/herself and which belongs to the nature of a layperson.

By the virtue of their apostolate, the lay missionaries have the responsibility of making their Christian virtues bear on the world. For Rahner, the apostolate is mandatory, and the compulsion arises from the obligation of every Christian to assist in the salvation of his or her neighbour. It is the apostolate aimed at redeeming and sanctifying the world through the layperson’s exercise of his or her Christian role. For this reason, he maintains that the apostolate must be integral, that is, carried out in all places and situations, “which constitute the laity’s place in the world.” He, therefore, recommends the formation of the laity for an effective apostolate. Rahner believes that the laity’s apostolate also includes “all those factors which result from their relation towards the Church and within the Church.” These factors involve paying their Church dues, taking part in the divine service, being a godparent

52 Ibid.333
53 Ibid.339. Karl Rahner understanding of the laity in this way confines them to the world beyond which they have no apostolic duty.
54 Ibid.340-341
55 Ibid.343
and belonging to Church committees. The laity, for him, can belong to Church organisation formed by the clergy in order to assist them to carry out their own clerical task. But this cooperation is only on a voluntary basis and should not constitute their principal function; otherwise, they cease to be laypersons. Also, there can be some other organisations of the laity formed by themselves and aimed at helping themselves to improve their Christian life as laypersons. Such organisations may include “student associations, federations of youth groups and unions of university men and women.”

Karl Rahner further sees the importance of the apostolate of the laity as helping to transform the non-religious sphere of human being’s existence by effecting Christian virtues in all areas of human existence, such as profane sciences, art, technology, politics, a highly complicated economy etc.; those are special areas of the laity and not of priests. In his reference to Pius XII address of February 1950 in which the pope stated that the clergy and the laity are allowed to express their judicious opinion in the Church, Rahner maintains that the pope advocating the freedom of the laity to contribute positively in the life of the Church.

In the later part of his life, Karl Rahner makes a shift in his pastoral theology. He considers parish pastoral work as pertaining to “all those who are engaged together officially and as full-time workers in pastoral activity.” One can observe here that he allows laypersons to retain their status as members of the laity even though they are officially and permanently

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.349
involved in the Church’s inner ecclesial function. Moreover, he noted that the introduction of
the office of pastoral assistance in some part of Europe was the result of a pastoral exigency
without any prior thorough theological reflection. Then, in accepting this pastoral solution of
lay involvement in an official pastoral duty, Rahner asserts that pastoral assistance is an
office in the Church. He explains that the Church has one office, but its extension and
gradation can be understood in different ways and may equally vary according to times and
pastoral requirements.\(^{60}\) So for him the different extensions and gradations of the one office
of the Church, like the office of priesthood, the office of deacon, and that of pastoral
assistant, can be understood in their own distinctive way, though, practically, it may pose
some theological questions.

In his later pastoral theology, Rahner articulates further that free charisms are gained
through baptism, and they are given for the service of the Church. Baptism incorporates a
person into the Church and into her mission. Every baptised believer has a share in the
function of the Church. This task or function is to make the grace of God in Christ
historically and tangibly present to the world.\(^{61}\) Against this background, Rahner purports
that a layperson can officially be sent on mission. As a missionary, he or she takes care of the
maintenance and strengthening of the choice of the faith and also sees to the conversion of
non-believers into Christianity amidst other duties.

1.5 Henri De Lubac

Henri de Lubac in his theological thoughts was of the opinion that what makes a Christian
Christ-like is the anointing with the oil of the Holy Spirit and the anointing of Christ. In the


\(^{61}\) See K. Rahner, The Sacramental Basis for the Role of the Layman in the Church, 54-55.
light of this, all the baptized are priests after the priesthood of Christ. He therefore calls it a
“mystical reality.” He holds that it is not simply a priesthood of the faithful, but “the
priesthood of the whole Church,” which he qualifies as being entirely spiritual. He uses this
to explain the nature of the New Covenant worship as against the corporeal worship of the
Old Testament. Then using a quotation from the work of J.M D’Ambrieres, de Lubac tries to
bring to view the whole implication of the priesthood of the whole Church: “do you not
know that priesthood was given to you too, that is, to the whole Church of God, the whole
nation of believers? It binds you to offer God a sacrifice of praise, a sacrifice of prayer,
compassion, modest chastity, justice and sanctity….Each one of you should deck his [her]
head with the priestly insignia, that is to say, deck his [her] spirit with the discipline of
wisdom….” This implies that the life of every Christian should be Christ-like, which means
a life lived in communion with others. Some other theologians like Yves Congar also share
this view with Henri de Lubac, even though the idea is not a fundamental tenet of the
Christian faith from earliest times. 

De Lubac further differentiates the priesthood, which is common to all, from the
priesthood of the ordained on the ground of the liturgical life of the Church, which he counts
as the domain of the ordained. He argues that the priesthood of the ordained is not to be seen
as a higher dignity in the realm of the Christian participation in the grace of Christ. He is of
the view that all the baptized have different responsibilities and duties, according to each
state of life. They “participate in the same life; rejoice in the same grace and the same

62 Henri de Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, translated by Michael Mason (London: Sheed and
Ward,1956) 93
63 Ibid.95
64 Humphrey, Anameje, “Contemporary Theological Reflection on the Laity: Towards a more Active
Participation in the Mission of the Church,” Ephemerides Theologicae: Leuven Journal of Theology and Canon
sacraments, and all these with a view to the same end.\textsuperscript{65} De Lubac points-out a fundamental truth of faith about the equality of all Christians with regard to the priesthood common to all the baptized in the Church. In his theological reflections, de Lubac holds that the institution of the priesthood and the sacrament of Order do not create, within the Church, two degrees of membership of Christ and two different species of Christians, as it were….The priest (ordained) is not, in virtue of his priestly ordination, more of a Christian than the ordinary believer, the order he has received is for the sake of the Eucharist, but the Eucharist is for the sake of everyone. All are called, as from this present world, to the same divine life, and that is what makes all one in the same essential dignity, the Christian dignity, which is the wonderful renewal of the dignity of man….\textsuperscript{66} Here, de Lubac underscores the fundamental equality of all Christians, which marked the apostolic Church and formed the propelling force of the sixteenth century reformation. According to de Lubac, there is one faith, and the Church is a mystery of unity, this unity is achieved in the participatory role of each baptized person in the work of the Church.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.97

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid,100.This idea was  what was reflected, by the Vatican II, fathers in Lumen Gentium, article 10

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.167.Henri de Lubac explains this unity in the following way: “Each one of us is a member of the unique body and each one of us, in his own way is the Church. The Church is meant to proclaim the Gospel through each one of us, and to announce it to every creature. She is meant to make its light enlighten the eyes of everybody who comes into this world like the candlestick, which is simply a flame bearer.”
1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate for us, from the ecclesiologies of Yves Congar, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner, and Henri de Lubac, that the clergy and the laity constitute the Church and both are incorporated into Christ through baptism. Therefore, the Church, in order to realize its aim, should involve all its members without any dichotomy, in its mission, both in the Church and in the world. Although their missions differ in their specificity, both clergy and the laity are called to serve in continuing the mission of Christ on earth. The next chapter will deal with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially the document on the apostolate of the laity.
CHAPTER TWO

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY IN *APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM*

2.1 Introduction

*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, in its focus, implements the recommendations of *Lumen Gentium*. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* addresses the laity who constitutes a greater percentage of the people of God. The Church’s presence in the world is due to the laity. In the light of this, the document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, finds its primary source in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, as well as it is related to other documents of Vatican II as they speak on different dimensions of the laity’s role in the various areas of the Church’s mission. The document stresses in a special way the indispensable role of the laity. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* considers the nature, character, variety, and basic principle of lay apostolate and at the same time gives some pastoral directives though it excludes the laity in certain matters in favour of the clergy. For the proper understanding of the importance of this document, the knowledge of the history and development of this document is very necessary. I will also examine the theological teaching of the document on the apostolate of the laity. Then, I will look at Vatican II and the theology of lay participation in politics.
2.2 Brief History Of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*

2.2.1. The Preparatory Draft

The decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, is the product of more than five years of intensive work on the part of the preparatory commission and the conciliar commission itself. The preparatory commission met for their first plenary session on 15th November 1960.68 Prior to this first session, the preparatory commission had done important preliminary work. Their area of concentration according to the official *Questioners* was as follows: (a) The apostolate of the laity: its scope and purposes, its relation to the hierarchy, and how it may be adapted to meet contemporary needs, (b) Catholic Action: the notion, scope and its relation to the hierarchy, its organisation, adapting its constitution to present needs, the relation between it and other associations, (c) Associations: how they can better accomplish their charitable and social activity. The theological foundation of the apostolate of the laity was not mentioned, may-be, because the work of the theological commission charged with the study on the Church would take care of it.69

The commission was divided into three-sub commissions according to different themes: the general notion and Catholic Action, social action, and charitable activity. The whole commission had seven plenary sessions which were held between November 1960 and April 1962.70 In the course of their work, they discussed some of these notions among others: the


duty of the apostolate, the notion of the laity, the character of baptism and confirmation, the foundation of the apostolate, and the love of God as the motivation for the apostolate. The commission was poised to go beyond the negative definition of the laity such as “neither clerics nor religious.” The positive notions incorporated into the description of the laity include: the dignity of the baptized and membership in the people of God, the right and duties of all the members of the Church, and the laity’s work in the edification of the Mystical Body of Christ within the ordinary condition of family and social life. The commission tried also to identify the tasks that are specific to the laity within the one apostolic mission of the Church. The product of the sub-commissions’ work was a single text with 172 pages, titled the *Schema Constitutionis de apostolatu Laicorum*. This was approved at the commission’s plenary session in April 1962 and submitted to the central preparatory commission.

The introductory part of the draft explained the two dimensions of the mission of the Church: the salvation of the world and the renewal of the temporal order. The entire

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71 Achille Glorieux, “Historie du Decret ‘Apostolicam Actuositatem’ sur l’Apostolat des Laics” *L’Apostolat des Laics: Decret Apostolicam Actuositatem*, edited by Jean Streiff; Achille Glorieux; Rosemary Goldie; Yves Congar, (Paris: Les Editions, 1970) 103. This discussion was later be taken up by the Council Fathers in the discussions concerning the secular condition of the laity.

72 This preparatory Schema had four parts. But this was contrary to the instruction given by the general secretary. But the commission had considered it appropriate to divide the work into four parts. The first part treated the general notion of the apostolate of the laity and Catholic Action. The second part dealt with *De apostolatu laicorum in actione ad regnum Christi directe provehendum*. Discussing the various types of direct apostolate, Catholic Action was given priority and was understood in a narrow sense as those forms of lay activity put under the supervision of the hierarchy. Other forms of lay activity were referred to as “other forms” of the direct apostolate. The third part centred on the laity’s charitable activities. The sub-commission that deliberated on this had the difficulty in fashioning the relation between the Church’s charitable work and the state-sponsored programs of social welfare. While one group of members preferred approaching the issue from the perspective of an abstract insistence on the superiority of the supernatural virtue of charity, others regarded the approach as “unrealistic and paternalistic.” The last part of the Schema, *De apostolatu laicorum in actione sociali*, defended the right and duty of the Church to participate in what it called the “Christian restoration of the mutual order.” It saw this as the significance of Christ’s redemption of the world. See Komonchak, “The Structure for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962)” 198-199.
Christian faithful share in the mission of the salvation of the world, whereas the laity have a special part in the renewal of the temporal order.\textsuperscript{73} In the first part of the Schema, the ecclesial character of the laity was well highlighted, arising from the conviction that all the members of the Church, through baptism and confirmation, have rights and duty to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. Therefore, it offered a juridical definition of the laity, as Christians who belong neither to the clerical state nor to the religious state, and who are called to their Christian perfection in the midst of the affairs of the world.\textsuperscript{74}

The central commission had two major complaints concerning the preparatory draft. First, they criticized the excessive breadth of the document. Secondly, they criticized the chapter on Catholic Action. Questions were also raised as to the use of the concept of priesthood and other common expressions for clergy and laity. Also, some of the commission members complained that the draft had unclear and faulty principles, and an exceedingly negative conception of the laity, and the unsuitability of speaking of charisms of the laity.\textsuperscript{75} All of these observations, critiques and remarks of the central commission, were sent to the preparatory commission for the apostolate of the laity which was already at work in July of 1962. The major revisions done at this time were concerned with reducing the excessive


\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. Before this definition was reached, there was serious disagreement among the members of the sub-commission that worked on this section of the Schema. This disagreement precipitated out of the question of the basis and the status of lay activity in the world and “the significance to be assigned to a public ‘mandate’ officially accrediting certain forms of the lay apostolate.” There was also a divergent opinion regarding the issue of Catholic Action concerning whether it should be understood to refer to many different types of lay activity or a particular type. See Joseph A. Komonchak, The Structure for the Council during the preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962) 197-198.

\textsuperscript{75} See Ferdinand Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity- History of the Text,” 274
length of the draft. It was trimmed down by removing chapters or sections that could be taken care of by other commissions.76

2.2.2 The First Draft (1962)

A revised draft of the text constituted the basis for discussion by the conciliar commission on the apostolate of the laity for the period of the first session of the Council. Most of the members of the preparatory commission for the apostolate of the laity became members of the conciliar commission for the apostolate of the laity, also known as Tenth Council commission.77 This commission encountered some major problems even before the beginning of the Council because of a lack of agreement on its name78 and also the title of the decree itself.79 Certain members of the commission wanted a change in the title of the decree. While some preferred the decree to be named *De Participatione Laicorum in Ecclesiae Apostolatu*, others preferred it to be named *De Laicorum Munere in Apostolatu Ecclesiae*. But all these suggested change of title was not approved by the whole

76 Examples of those sections that were removed include the sections on the media, Christian unity, and the apostolate in the mission fields of the Church. This was because they were to be treated by other commissions like the commission on the Missionary Activity of the Church and the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

77 The Conciliar Commission for the Apostolate of the laity also known as Tenth Conciliar Commission had Cardinal Cento as its president. Other members include Bishop Castellano, Hengsbach, and Guano etc.

78 In order to distinguish the Conciliar Commission from the Preparatory Commission for the Apostolate of the laity, the Tenth Council Commission was give the title “Commission for the Apostolate of the Faithful.” This was hoped to be also advantageous for the editing of Printed Material and the Mass Media. But in September 1962 the secretary of the Tenth Council Commission requested the General Secretary of the Council to change the word “fidelium” in the name of the commission to “laicorum.” The reply he received was that the word laity had an anti-clerical ring to it; and also it was to be made clear that the schema was to be addressed to the faithful in the Church and not the Christians of other confessions. The schema itself retained the name Apostolate of the laity as was expressly noted in the third session of the commission on December 5th, 1962, although the name of the commission was not to be changed again. In fact, it was referred to from that time on as the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity.” See Klostermann, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity- History of the Text*, 277-278.

commission. The issue of the title of the decree was an important one because a change to any of the suggested title apart from indicating a negative theological perception about the laity would plunge the commission into adopting the pre-conciliar understanding of the lay apostolate as “sharing in the apostolate of the hierarchy.” The readiness of the majority of the members of the commission to stress the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church itself and not in the apostolate of the hierarchy led to the double rejection of the suggested titles.80

During the first meeting of the conciliar commission for the apostolate of the laity in November 1962, a guideline was received from the central commission, which said that the draft should be considerably shortened and reorganized before it would be presented to the Council Fathers.81 However, because of the need of editing and re-structuring the draft, the work could not be finished; therefore, the draft was not presented to the Council Fathers throughout the first session of the Council in 1962. The period between the first and second sessions of the Council was very useful in advancing the work on the draft; during this time, an important decision was reached to arrange for a consultation with reputed lay persons as experts on the schema. The lay persons present at the consultation that took place at the end of February 1962 cut across various countries, they include, J.P Dubois-Dumée from France, Marguerite Fiévez from Belgium, P. Keegan from Great Britain, Prince Karl zu Löwenstein from Germany, Claude Ryan from Canada, Ramón Sugranyes de Franch from Catalonia,

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Juan Vásquez from Argentina and Martin Work from America. Also invited was Silvio Golzio who chaired the COPECIAL committee with Rosemary Goldie as secretary.  

2.2.3 The Second Draft (1963)

After an extensive re-working of the draft had been done, the commission submitted the new draft to the co-ordinating commission of the Council in March 1963, under the title “Draft of a Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.” The co-ordinating commission responded positively to the new text in the early days of April 1963, with suggestions for only minor amendments. On 22nd April 1963, this “Draft of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity” was published with the permission of Pope John XXIII and then sent to the Council Fathers for their response. 

By the beginning of the second session of the Council in September 1963, the commission for the apostolate of the laity had already received a number of critical remarks and suggestions from the Council Fathers. The commission met on 3rd October 1963, the members were given the thirty-seven pages of recommendations which had been received up to that time. This time six more lay auditors were added and they include De Habicht, Inglessis, Norris, Sugranyes de Franch, Vazquez and Veronese. Then Bishop Franz Hengsbach was made the sole reporter to the ‘aula.’ The lay auditors who had joined the

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83 The new draft consisted of 29 mimeographed pages of text in 92 articles and a concluding section with almost 10 pages of notes. The decree contained a general introduction and two parts: the apostolate of the laity in general consisting of 43 articles, with four sections and the apostolate of the laity in particular with 44 articles, with three sections. See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,” 284.

meetings of the commission were of great advantage. Also the contributions of the International Lay Organisations, particularly COPECIAL, were quite informative. The proposal was soon reached that the apostolate of the laity is the whole apostolate of the Church. Therefore, the major facets of the lay apostolate include: (a) The direct promotion of the kingdom of Christ, (b) The perfecting of the temporal order in Christ, (c) The motive force of the apostolate is charity.\footnote{Claude Leetham, “Report on Vatican II: The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” \textit{The Homiletic and Pastoral Review} 66 (1966) 388.} On 26th November 1963, the commission became aware that the schema for the apostolate of the laity should no longer be discussed in the second session, since the discussion on the schema on the Church required more time than expected, and since the Decree on Ecumenism was yet to be brought forward. On 1\textsuperscript{st} December 1963, the co-ordinating commission sent a statement from Cardinal Cicognani to Cardinal Cento suggesting a postponement of the schema until the third session of the Council. The statement also suggested that a new and shorter draft was to be prepared in line with the desires of the Council Fathers. Then on 13\textsuperscript{th} December 1963 Bishop Franz Hengsbach sent a recommendation to the members of the commission concerning a further shortening of the draft, on the basis of the recommendations, criticisms and suggestions of the Council Fathers, the commission tasked themselves with the work of producing a new draft before the plenary session that was scheduled for February 1964.\footnote{See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity- History of the Text,” 286.}

\subsection*{2.2.4 The Third Draft (1964)}

The commission produced a new draft of a Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity on 25\textsuperscript{th} January 1964. It consisted of seventeen pages and contained forty-seven articles. Before this draft could be forwarded to the conciliar co-ordinating commission, Cardinal Cento received
a letter on 23rd January 1964 from Cardinal Cigognani, the secretary of States, directing
everyone to reduce the draft on the apostolate of the laity to its essential points and to present
it in the form of propositions upon which the Council Fathers would be able to vote after a
short debate.87 The members of the commission effected the required reduction, while the
overall schema was kept intact; its content was reduced from seventeen pages and forty-nine
paragraphs, to ten pages and twenty-four articles, the only significant change being a new
separation between the treatment of charitable action and the treatment of social action.88 In
March 1964, the commission was ready with a new draft, and it was finally approved by the
co-ordinating commission. It had five chapters in all with a prologue and concluding
exhortation.89 It was sent for printing with Papal approval on 11th May 1964, and then mailed
to the Council Fathers.

On 7th October 1964 the draft was presented to the Council Fathers for debate. The relatio
Bishop Franz Hengsbach made some introductory remark on the work to the Fathers,
explaining the extent of the work done so far on the draft.90 During the general debate on the
draft, many Fathers appreciated the draft, at least, as greatly improved. Whereas, some
remarked that “the draft was still too clerical in tone, too juridical in concept, too diffuse and

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87 Ibid
A.Komonchak (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 386. “The shortening of the schema, while fostering a selection of
crucial themes, also brought out the limitations, already found in the preparatory text, of considering the subject
apart from reflection on the Church.” The implication of this is that an exclusive concentration on this limited
area meant remaining within the limits of a pastoral effort understood as a clarification and organisation of what
already existed.”
90 The original draft was trimmed to a quarter of its original size with the removal of materials dealt
with in the chapter on the laity in Lumen Gentium, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” and Gaudium et
Spes, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”
general, too abstract and that it did not correspond to modern needs.”\textsuperscript{91} Some of the Council Fathers further pointed out that “the layperson’s Christian state was not fully recognised and that their specific spirituality, vocation, and apostolate were not understood. The apostolate of the laity was still interpreted in such a way that it was based upon participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy and under its direction.”\textsuperscript{92} Several of the Fathers considered it to be of special importance to explain clearly the dogmatic basis of the apostolate of the laity. In view of this, Bishop Leven pointed out that the apostolate of the laity was not accidental, but rather essential in the life of the Church. The lay apostolate is also not a mere concession on the part of the Bishops, but it is a realization of the charisms of the people of God.\textsuperscript{93} On the other hand, Bishop Rastouil highlighted the sacramental foundation of the lay apostolate; basing on the laity’s sharing in the priesthood of Christ, he contended that the character of baptism and confirmation are the foundation of the lay apostolate.\textsuperscript{94} On 12\textsuperscript{th} October 1964, at the end of the 99\textsuperscript{th} general congregation, the debate on the draft of the apostolate of the laity was suspended. In the next meeting of the general congregation on 13\textsuperscript{th} October 1964, a layman, Patrick Keegan, the president of the International Catholic Workers Movement, spoke on behalf of the lay auditors about the importance of the document. In his speech, he advocated for a closer relationship between the clergy and the laity. It was the first time in the history of the Church that a member of the laity addressed a Council.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91} See Klostermann, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity- History of the Text 290-291

\textsuperscript{92} This thorough criticism and consequent refusal of the text of the draft on the Apostolate of the Laity is very significant in showing the resolve of the Council to accord the laity their proper status among the people of God.


\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, 141-143.

2.2.5. The Fourth Draft (1965)

After the debate and remarks of the Council Fathers on the draft of the decree on the apostolate of the laity, the commission began a fresh work of modifying the draft in line with the suggestions of the Fathers. Then on 5th November 1964, a new arrangement of the draft was proposed. In it, “there were 26 articles divided into 6 chapters, besides an amended introduction and concluding admonition.” After the end of the third session of the Council, the commission revised the draft in January 1965 and again in March. Then on the 20th March 1965, the revised draft of the decree was distributed to the members and assistants of the commission. This time the draft was comprised 39 articles, including an introduction and concluding admonition. The division of the draft into 6 chapters was retained. The coordinating commission in their plenary session in April 3rd to 6th 1965 further re-examined the text and with a very few additional changes the draft was finally approved by Pope Paul VI. It was printed and distributed to the Council Fathers on 28th May 1965. The draft now consisted of an introduction, 33 articles in 6 chapters and a concluding admonition. The draft was printed in two columns: the draft from April 27, 1964 was on the left (textus prior), and the new draft was on the right (textus emendatus). The introduction was followed by a

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96 See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,” 293
97 See Claude Leetham, “Report on Vatican II,” 290. Working with the criticisms of the Council Fathers, two new articles were added to chapter one: the fundamental theology of the apostolate (art.3), and the specific spirituality of the laity (art.4). Chapter two was to a large extent rewritten. Chapter three was rephrased all over and a number added on youth (art.12). A deeper treatment was given to the apostolate of the laity in parish and diocese; the apostolate of the family was elaborated further, and the role of the laity in the apostolate of city and nation was stated with more confidence and trust. A new article (17) was added to chapter four on the private apostolate to be exercised in places where the Church was persecuted or not yet developed. Chapter five on the relations of the hierarchy and the apostolate of the laity was slightly amended. The final chapter dealing on the formation of the laity for the apostolate was greatly enlarged.
98 Ibid, 295.
The titles of the chapters of the draft are as follows:

Chapter 1: On the call of the Laity to the Apostolate
Chapter 2: On the Goals to be Achieved
Chapter 3: On the Various Fields of Apostolate
Chapter 4: On the Various Kinds of Apostolate
Chapter 5: On the Order to be Observed
Chapter 6: On the Formation for the Apostolate

2.2.6. The Final Draft (1965)

On 23rd September 1965, during the fourth session of the Council, the final draft was presented to the Council Fathers for voting. At the beginning of the session, the general secretary of the Council, Bishop Franz Hengsbach, indicated that there would not be much debate, since the Fathers had enough time to study the revised draft and submit their comments. After the voting, the reservations of the Fathers were collected and the commission for the apostolate of the laity made their revisions of the draft during the first two weeks of October 1965. The final touches to the draft were made during the conciliar interval between 17th and 23rd October 1965.

On 18th November 1965 the final ‘solemn vote’ was taken, presided over by Pope Paul VI in the 8th public session of Vatican II. The text was overwhelmingly approved by the Fathers.

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100 See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,”299
with 2,340 votes in affirmative and only 2 votes in negative.\textsuperscript{101} It was solemnly promulgated on the same day. The thoroughness and the perseverance of the members of the commission, bishops and laypersons, and the Council Fathers that went into the making of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, go a long way to testifying to the sincerity and resolve of the Church to proclaim and recognize the laity as participants in the mission of the Church. The promulgated decree exhibits a magnificent teaching on the laity to which we turn our attention.

\textbf{2.3 Apostolate of the Laity in \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem}}

The apostolate of the laity is the participation of the laity in the salvific mission of the Church, to which all are called by the Lord himself through baptism and confirmation (\textit{LG}, 33). It is “that which is exercised freely in accordance with its particular responsibilities” and does not have to be constituted by a mission or a new mandate.\textsuperscript{102} In this regard, \textit{AA}, 2 stressed that with the priestly, prophetic and kingly entitlement of the laity derived from Christ, they exercise their mission both in the Church and in the world. This is done through evangelization or spreading of the good news and the Christianization of the temporal order by their Christian way of life, ordering all things to God. More still, \textit{AA}, 2 also made an important clarification that, there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. This recognition of the diversity of ministry is in contrast to the usage which for so long before Vatican II has applied this term only to the work of the clergy. It also reflects the teaching of article 32 of \textit{Lumen Gentium} that stresses the unity of all Christians, clergy and laity in the

\textsuperscript{101} See Worlock, “Toil in the Lord” 241. Worlock reports that the affirmative votes were 2, 340, while the negative votes were six. The difference does not make much meaning because the fact remains that very few were on the negative when compared with the huge number that voted on the affirmative.

\textsuperscript{102} Yves, Congar, \textit{Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity}, translated by Donald Attwatter (London: Bloomsbury Publisher and Co., 1957) 397.
one body of Christ, though such unity is not uniformity. Among the People of God, where
the entire Christians have the same ultimate vocation and the same baptismal dignity,
charisms, roles, and functions differ. This means that in the midst of the Church members,
where there is a basic equality, a functional diversity still exists. In fact, the diversity of
ministries within the Church is itself a unifying force, since the diversity of functions aims at
building up the Church as a whole. The richness of the Church lies not only in the difference
between the roles, but also in the convergence of these roles at the service of one and the
same mission. If the diversity of roles was to be suppressed, it would lead to a uniformity,
which impoverishes rather than edifies the Church.103

_Apostolicam Actuositatem_ further affirms that the lay apostolate is characterized by its
secular character, that is, the fact that the laity accomplishes the mission of the Church by
engaging in temporal activity (AA, 2). This view also reflects the message of _Lumen Gentium_
31, which outlined the concept of the secular character of the laity. Since it is proper to the
laity’s state to live in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, they are called by
God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise their apostolate in the world as a kind of
leaven (AA, 2). The typical mark of the laity’s participation in the mission of the Church is an
apostolate exercised in and through direct concern with secular affairs. The secular character
of the laity is not merely concerned with physical presence in the world, since every member
of the Church is in the world in this sense. But with a living presence which involves

103 See Aurelie Hagstrom, _The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity_ (San Francisco:
Catholic Scholars Press, 1994) 47.
commitment and immersion in the temporal order.\textsuperscript{104} The secular character is not only a sociological fact about the laity, but also a theological \textit{datum} concerning their role in the saving mission of the Church. The life of the laity in the world is in itself an instrument of the Church’s mission. This means that everyday activities of the laity can take on a redemptive value. These temporal activities are not simply a means, but an end in themselves to exercising their apostolate.\textsuperscript{105}

The right and duty of the laity to the apostolate is derived in their union with Christ through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation (\textit{AA}, 3). The sacrament of the Eucharist, which engenders love, is the soul of the whole apostolate, since the apostolate is sustained through love.\textsuperscript{106} Therefore the laity requires no special deputation from the clergy in order to labour for the sanctification and growth of the Church and the renewal of the temporal order since they are deputed by the Lord Himself. All Christians have a right and an obligation to this apostolate, which originate from the Father and reaches all Christians through Jesus Christ. The question of right and obligation of the laity to the mission of the Church as reflected in \textit{AA}, 3 is directly linked to article 11 and 33 of \textit{Lumen Gentium}. In these articles the mandate for the mission is rooted in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

\textsuperscript{104} Aurelie A. Hagstrom, \textit{The Emerging Laity, Vocation, Mission and Spirituality} (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2010) 81

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Yves Congar, “The Laity” \textit{Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal}, edited by John H.Miller (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966) 241-242. Congar in making a link between consecration and mission maintains that the clerics who are consecrated and set apart for a specific mission so also the whole of the people of God are chosen and consecrated to announce the wonders of God. This is achieved through the sacraments of initiation. He further clarifies that the apostolate of the laity is not based on the reality of juridical order, but on the supernatural ontology, which makes a person a Christian. Congar makes a positive use of ontology, not to make any distinction between the clergy and the laity but to indicate that the apostolate of the laity is in God’s eternal plan.
The Council Fathers got their concept of the sacramental character from the theology of Thomas Aquinas. According to Aquinas, through the sacramental character of baptism and confirmation all members of the Church are configured to the priesthood of Christ.\(^{107}\) While baptism gives one the passive capacity to receive sacramental grace, confirmation confers an active capacity to confess the faith and engage in spiritual combat. In baptism the laity discovers the true source of their co-responsibility and the dignity for their active participation in the mission of evangelisation and sanctification of the world. In the light of this Vatican II, states that the laity have been given an exalted responsibility to spread the gospel in the world and particular responsibility to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances in which only they can (\textit{LG}, 33). This sacramental character marks a great shift in the teaching of the Church, from seeing the Church as based on a juridical order to perceiving the Church as based on the order of sacramental grace. This shift does not presuppose an abandonment of the juridical structure of the Church, since the order of grace and the juridical structure of the Church are two sides of the same coin. The Council Fathers expressed the organic link between the order of grace and the juridical structure of the Church. They achieve this by looking at the juridical relations in the Church in the light of the ontology of grace and of the sacramental foundation of the Church.\(^{108}\) For every apostolate to be sustained, it requires a realistic and sound spiritual basis as \textit{AA}, 4 emphasizes. This spirituality needed is realized by the laity’s intimacy with Christ.\(^{109}\) The Council insisted that the same spirituality is required from the whole people of God whether

\(^{107}\) Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologie}, III, Q. 63, art.2 and 3.


\(^{109}\) This call to holiness of life makes reference to Lumen Gentium, which talks about the call of all Christians to holiness and to perfection:… all the Faithfull, whatever their condition or state are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect (\textit{LG}).
clergy or laity, but the spirituality of the laity needs to be expressed in a way that conforms to the responsibility of the laity in the secular domain.110

2.3.1. The Purpose of the Apostolate of the Laity.

The main mission of the Church is the salvation of all humankind as is evident in the missionary mandate given to the disciples (Matt. 28: 18). This apostolate of the Church and thus of all Christians primarily moves towards spreading the message of Christ by words and by deeds. The laity have a special role to play in this apostolate through their involvement in the renewal of the whole temporal order (AA, 5). So the mission of the Church is not only to bring to the world the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the gospel (AA, 5). It is in carrying out this apostolate as co-workers in the Lord’s vineyard that the pastoral ministry and the apostolate of the laity, according to the Council, mutually complement each other (AA, 5).111 What the Council Fathers want to stress here is that the contribution of the laity in spreading the Gospel is not provisional but proper to them. Also the intention of the Fathers is to destroy the wrong opinion which sees in the catechetical contribution of the laity an extension for the clergy when the later cannot do the work. So the Council Fathers hold the opinion that even where

110 See Worlock, “Toil in the Lord” 242.

111 See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,” 326. It is to achieve this common participation in the apostolate of the Church that the “relatio” of 1965 categorically rejects the idea which understands lay apostolate as nothing other than co-operation or continuation of the specifically hierarchical apostolate in things religious. For even in the realization of these goals of evangelization and sanctification “there can be an apostolate proper to the laity.”
there is sufficient well trained clergy, the apostolic contribution of the laity is not only desirable, but necessary.\textsuperscript{112}

The decree in its article six calls on the laity according to their natural endowment and intellectual acquisition to play their role in fidelity to the mind of the Church in explaining and defending Christian principles and applying them to modern problems (\textit{AA}, 6). This reflects the ecclesiology of Gérard Philips before the Council in which he holds that the laity should use their intellectual acquisition at the service of the Church.\textsuperscript{113} In order to enhance a good knowledge of Christian principles and a correct application of them, the laity are to engage in the study of theology. It is in this regard that \textit{Gaudium et Spes} states that “it is to be hoped that many laypersons will receive an appropriate formation in the sacred sciences, and that some will develop and deepen these studies by their own labours.” It further maintains that “all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence.”(\textit{GS}, 62).

\textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem} stresses the restoration of the temporal order as an ecclesial task, which belongs specially to the laity (\textit{AA}, 7). This is due to the laity’s specific responsibilities in the world about which the Church has no direct control. The laity carries out the task of the renewal of the temporal order as the area of the apostolate peculiar to lay apostolate, that is, of bringing the spirit of Christ and the Gospel values into the various areas of secular life, such as marriage and family, trade and commerce, the arts and professions, political


\textsuperscript{113} See Gerard Philips, \textit{The role of the Laity in the Church}, 78-80.
institutions, government, culture and international relations etc.\textsuperscript{114} The turning point brought by this article 7 of \textit{AA} revolves around the idea that the Christian must be interested in the temporal order because the temporal sphere has value in itself.\textsuperscript{115} This is contrary to the idea before the Council that seemed to regard the secular world as a profane world. No doubt, the clear affirmation of the secular character of the lay vocation was intended by the Council Fathers to convey an appreciation for the laity’s privileged place in the mission of the Church. While the Church’s mission in the world is the responsibility of all of its members, the clergy and laity alike, yet it is the place where the laity discovers their particular place and competency.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{2.3.2 The Fields of the Apostolate}

The fields of the apostolate include communities in the Church, the family, youth, the social environment, national and international affairs (\textit{AA}, 9). The Church communities are ascribed in \textit{AA} 10 as the first field for apostolic activity of the laity. They include the parish, the diocese, and the entire Church. This is the domain where the laity exercises their priestly, prophetic, and kingly participation in the Church’s mission of evangelisation and sanctification. The apostolic activity of the laity in this field, which is seen as necessary,


\textsuperscript{115} All that make up the temporal order—the means of livelihood and family life, culture, economy, the arts and professions, the institutions of the political community, internation relations and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress—are not only helps to the final end of human beings, but have their own values given by God, both in themselves and taken as parts of the integral order: God saw all that he had made and it was very good, (Gen.1, 31), See AA, 7.

complements that of the clergy. They are to bring back to faith those who have lost their faith, proclaim the good news especially by catechetical instruction, and enhance the progress of pastoral skills. They are also to help the parish to make its apostolate relevant to contemporary conditions and needs. This calls for a close cooperation between the clergy and the laity.\footnote{See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,” 335-336.}

The Council Fathers in a special way emphasised the apostolate of the married people and of family. Reflecting on the importance of the family, Basil M. Pennington says that the apostolate of the laity should begin at home and extend to other areas of the spiritual, social, and political domain. But active apostolate also has positive implications for the family life.\footnote{Basil M. Pennington, Vatican II: We Have Only Just Begun (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 80.} Family is the basic cell of the society, and according to \textit{Lumen Gentium} 11, a domestic sanctuary, and it is in the family that a child’s moral and spiritual development begins. So, the parents are the first preachers of the gospel to their children by word and example. They should equally inculcate sound Christian virtues to them by the example of their life. In this way, the apostolate of married people and of families is of utmost importance both for the Church and for the civil society.\footnote{Ibid, 341.}

Of special emphasis is the national and international apostolate, where all the laity are called to be stewards of Christian wisdom, in loyalty to their country and in faithful fulfillment of their civic obligations, \textit{(AA, 14)}. The responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the state, since the common good is the reason for the political authority exists. It is, therefore, necessary, for a peaceful and
progressive development of the society, that all must contribute to the common good.\textsuperscript{120} In the light of this, the Council Fathers called on all Catholics to feel themselves obliged to the promotion of a true common good (\textit{AA, 14}). The laity’s field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics…\textsuperscript{121} In line with this, \textit{AA} stressed that Catholics versed in politics and firm in the faith and Christian teaching should not decline to enter public life (\textit{AA, 14}). So, the laity are called not only to various missions in the Church, but also to active participation in the secular apostolate of the Church in the world, particularly in concrete political situations of their communities in order to put into practice the principles and values proper to life in the society. Hans Urs Von Balthazar in confirming the message of \textit{AA}, 14 affirms “that every level of the society and all the professions must be permeated by the yeast of courageous Christians who are sure of their faith.”\textsuperscript{122} The laity must be on the front lines of the Church’s evangelization to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can the Church become the salt of the earth, for instance, the political field.\textsuperscript{123} All Christians have a role to play in the evangelisation of our culture and the transformation of our communities. The Church therefore exhorts all Christians of the need to fulfil their civic responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{123} Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Quadragesimo Anno, AAS 23 May 15 (1931) 221. See also Pius XII, Allocution: “De Quelle Consolation,” AAS 43 Oct.14 (1951) 790.
responsibility by active involvement in politics in order to penetrate the temporal order with the gospel spirit and to exercise their apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven.\textsuperscript{124}

2.3.3 Various Forms of the Apostolate

There are two forms of apostolate, namely, individual apostolate and group or association apostolate (\textit{AA, 15}). The source of the individual apostolate is an authentic Christian life sustained by the wellspring of a truly Christian life (Jn. 4:14). The individual apostolate serves as the springboard for the whole of the apostolate of the laity. It is most preferred and embraces every kind of apostolic goal and task. This takes the form of witness of lay-life in the world, consolidated on faith, hope and charity together with the apostolate of the world, which is very essential. In this regard, Pope Paul VI wrote: people today listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.\textsuperscript{125} The individual apostolate is the only adequate form suitable, where the freedom of the Church is impaired and where the situation calls for the laity to assume the place of priests (\textit{AA, 17}).\textsuperscript{126}

However, the Council Fathers also emphasised the social and community apostolate because they considered it more efficient and more \textit{ad rem} with the nature of the Church as communion.\textsuperscript{127} Social apostolate can be carried out in places like the family, the parish, the diocese and also within communities (\textit{AA, 18}). Nevertheless, Vatican II and its development


\textsuperscript{126} Situations meant here may include places where Catholics are living as a minority or in diaspora condition. It also includes situations where the Church is under persecution. What the laity’s apostolate consists of “in this regard include, risking their freedom and sometimes their life, teaching Christian doctrine to those around them, educating them in a religious way of life and a Catholic mentality, and bringing them to the frequent reception of the sacraments and particularly to Eucharistic piety.”

\textsuperscript{127} See Klostermann, “\textit{Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text},” 347.
in the post-conciliar era have variously empowered the laity to actively participate in the secular affairs, especially in the political life of the society, which is an important arena where decisions for mankind’s survival and the future well-being of their children are to be made. In view of this, our next topic will focus on the laity and their political involvement.

2.4 Vatican II and the Theology of Lay Participation in Politics

In the past, before the Second Vatican Council, Christian’s participation in politics was not very much encouraged. This is because of the so called age-long monolithic fallacy that saw the Church as opposed to anything earthly, and the world was seen as an obstacle to the eschatological pilgrimage of God’s people. But after the Second Vatican Council, the Church realized that the Church’s prophetic role of denouncing evil is also needed in the political arena, and it is better done from within. Therefore, the Council Fathers call on all Christians to participate actively in politics, because through participation in politics and secular affairs, they will promote the renewal of the temporal order in the light of the gospel and in accordance with the mind of the Church. This does not exclude them from the Church’s mission ad intra, for the Council explicitly says that it is a right proper to them through baptism (AA, 3). For more than 2000 years, Christians have actively engaged themselves in the life of the world, submitting themselves to duly constituted authority, willingly cooperating with it, in accordance to the dictates of their conscience and the light of the Gospel and for the pursuit of the common good. For these people, “humanity cannot be

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separated from God, nor politics from morality.”129 The Christian’s political rights are meant to be exercised for the common good of the nation and the human community, and their contribution to the common good requires Christians to fulfil their roles in the life of the political community. Hence the Council Fathers stated that:

> in their patriotism and in their fidelity to their civic duties, Catholics will feel themselves bound to promote the true common good; they will make the weight of their convictions so influential that as a result civil authority will be justly exercised and laws will accord with the moral precepts and the common good. Catholics versed in politics and firm in the faith and Christian teaching should not decline to enter public life, for, by a worthy discharge of their function, they can work for the common good and at the same time prepare the way for the gospel (AA, 14).130

In patriotism and love for their fatherland, Christians have a moral responsibility in taking part in shaping the moral vision and the ideals of every democratic state. As citizens of the state, they are called to actively participate in the affairs of the State, a call that is more urgent today. After all, the life of a democratic state cannot be productive and fruitful without the active and responsible involvement of everyone.131 Therefore, Christians are expected to contribute their share to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which could benefit the common good.

In *Gaudium et Spes* the Council Fathers stress that a good Christian should concretize his/her religion in acts of good citizenship. And there should be no divorce or false dichotomy between religion and daily life activities as a citizen. It is impossible to separate

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131 See Pontifical Council for the Laity: *Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 3-4.
the work for the welfare of humanity from the preaching of the gospel.\textsuperscript{132} The Council Fathers exhort Christians as citizens of two cities to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the gospel spirit (\textit{GS, 43}). To accomplish the Church’s task of Christianizing the world, the Council considers the laity better placed than the clergy and so locate the primary role of the laity to the temporal sphere. Thus, it states:

\begin{quote}
It is to the laity that secular duties and activities belong, although not exclusively in their awareness of what faith demands, and in the strength of that faith, they should immediately introduce whatever initiatives are required and bring them to fruition. It is a matter for their properly formed conscience that God’s law be impressed on the life of the earthly city… The laity have an active part to play in the entire life of the Church, and are not just obliged to give the world a Christian spirit, but are also called to be witnesses to Christ in all they do within human society (\textit{GS, 43}).
\end{quote}

The laity, because of their state of life, are afforded the chance and the freedom as citizens to participate freely and actively in establishing the constitutional bases of a political community, governing the state, determining the scope and purpose of various institutions, and choosing leaders.\textsuperscript{133} In order to fulfil this mission, the Council called on all citizens to be mindful of their right and duty to vote freely in the interest of promoting the common good (\textit{GS, 75}). It also emphasised that it is commendable that in today’s democratic society that the Church regards as worthy of praise and consideration the work of those who, as a service to others, dedicate themselves to the welfare of the state and undertake the burdens of this task (\textit{GS, 75}).

In the light of the teaching of \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem} articles 7 and 14, many Canons of the New Code of 1983 emphasise the rights and obligations of Christ’s faithful, and in

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\end{flushright}
particular the laity’s involvement, in the apostolate in political and social spheres. This duty is all the more urgent today especially in those circumstances in which people can hear the message of the gospel and know Christ only through the lay faithful. ¹³⁴ The New Code stresses that, at all times, it is through the laity that the secular activities which are typical of lay persons can be transformed. It further states that each lay person in accord with his /her condition is bound by a special duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel; they must give witness to Christ in a special way in carrying out their public affairs and exercising their secular duties and civic responsibilities.¹³⁵

Twenty years after the Council, the 1987 Synod Fathers in their message to the people indicated that they, too, wished to place high priority on the entry of the laity into public and political spheres. They emphasized that the laity give witness to the new world in Christ Jesus, through their participation in social, economic, and political activities.¹³⁶ It is precisely through their involvement in the public sector that the laity are capable of influencing the promotion of social justice, the rights of the human person, and the defense and recovery of various freedoms.¹³⁷ A large number of interventions encouraged the laity to be more involved in public affairs. In his own contribution, Bishop Cahal Daly of Down and Connor, Northern Ireland challenges the laity to more active participation in the mission of the Church in the world. Daly pointed out the need for active participation of the laity in the world of politics and social issues. He argues that “it is highly important that men and


¹³⁵ Cf.Canon 225#2


¹³⁷ Ibid.
women inspired by their Christian faith and urged on by the love of Christ should engage themselves in politics and should find here their own Christian vocation and indeed their own call to holiness. They must, of course, be careful not to identify the faith of the Church with any political option, but, rather, they should evaluate all political programs by the light of the gospel and strive to permeate them with Gospel values.” In his own intervention, Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, England, observed the necessity of the witness of the Church within a secular society; he, therefore, cautioned that, the Gospel-inspired laity must be close enough to the secular challenges of this age and that their witness must be visible and audible in political activities.

In the working instrument (Instrumentum Laboris), 1987 Synod Bishops consider the participation of the laity in political life as a binding obligation in charity, whose aim should be the service of others in the light of common good. The laity have to react against every manifestation of idolatry and cynicism towards ‘power.’ And their involvement in politics should be characterised by placing Christian values at the service of human person and the progress of justice in the life among nations. Politics, according to the 1987 Synod Fathers, was said to be an area of great importance for witnessing in the midst of the world because it is there that decisions are made that will influence the present and future. The Synod Fathers further stressed that the laity need to bring gospel value to the political world of their countries to combat ignorance, corruption, and arbitrariness in decision making.

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140 See Instrumentum Laboris 69
Pope John Paul II, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, warmly countered some reasons that have been advanced for the non-participation of the Faithful in the social, economic and political arenas. He cautioned that the common opinion that participating in politics is an absolute moral danger does not in the least justify either skepticism or an absence on the part of Christians in public life.\(^{141}\) The lay faithful should never relinquish their participation in the public life because it is necessary in order to achieve their task of Christ animation of the temporal order. Their participation in the Church’s work in the many diverse areas of society should be motivated by the knowledge that evangelization is intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good.\(^{142}\)

Similarly, Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* wrote that lay people whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks must for this reason exercise a very special form of evangelization.\(^{143}\) Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community - this is the specific role of the pastors - but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world.\(^{144}\) Stressing further on the mission of the laity, Paul VI wrote that their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love,

\(^{141}\) See Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, no.42 92-93, 94.

\(^{142}\) Ibid.

\(^{143}\) Pope Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.70: AAS LXVIII (1976).

\(^{144}\) Ibid.
the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. He further argued that the presence of the Christian laity in the world must be courageous and prophetic, capable of taking on various forms of witness accompanied by a discernment that is always evangelical and at times critical. And by reason of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will.

More still Paul VI in his Octogesima Adveniens further came out strongly to urge the Catholic lay faithful to claim an active and independently chosen role in transforming the world in the direction of justice through collaborative action in the political affairs. Paul VI insisted on the universal participation in decision making for all Catholics and for everybody to be able to accept the responsibility of their decisions and actions. Pope Paul VI further shifted the treatment of participation in decision making from the economic realm in which John XXIII treated it to the political realm. Here Paul VI built on John XXIII’s earlier call for workers participation in decision making in economic enterprises to demanding not only the citizen’s participation in democratic political decision making, but also universal participation in decision making in the social sphere, because he believed that participation in decision making is a path to human development.

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145 The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded.

146 Ibid.


148 Ibid.
Furthermore, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith in its clarification on the participation of Catholics in the political life reminded Catholics that the commitment of Christians in the world have found a variety of expressions for over the course of 2000 years. One such expression has been the Christian involvement in the political life in the world. This document also stresses that the early Christians played their full role as citizens, therefore, it is commendable that in today’s democratic societies, that every Catholic should be a participant in directing the body politics. The document further argues that today’s democracy calls for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christians and non-Christians alike. The document therefore admonished that all Catholics should contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices, which will benefit the common good. It also emphasises that life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks and responsibilities. The document also stressed that when Catholics fulfill this civic duty, guided by a Christian conscience (GS, 76), in conformity with its values, then the lay faithful exercises their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values. The document finally exhorts all Christians that living and acting in conformity with one’s conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics, but rather the way in which Christians offer their

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151 Ibid.
concrete contribution, so that through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.\textsuperscript{152}

The presence of the Church in the political arena has also been a frequent concern of the American bishops. So in 1995 the USCC Administrative Board issued a statement on political responsibility that called for a re-orientation of the political life of the country based on the common good and the dignity of every human being.\textsuperscript{153} The bishops stated that Catholics should actively involve themselves in the public debate about what the American society should be, contributing their deepest convictions to the formation of public policy.\textsuperscript{154} The bishops also stated that they wished to involve every Catholic, on different levels, in areas of public policy, making use of parish education programs, instructions on political choices, voters registration drives, support groups for professional Catholics and other Christians in politics, and encouragement to lay people to run for and hold public office.\textsuperscript{155} More so in their recent publication entitled \textit{Faithful Citizenship}; the bishops wrote that, believers are called to become informed, active and responsible participants in the political process. They further emphasised that Catholics who seek political offices have a particular responsibility to bring together their faith, moral convictions, and public responsibilities, which, they said, require on-going participation in the political process.\textsuperscript{156}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{152} Ibid, 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Ibid
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Ibid
  \item \textsuperscript{156} United State Catholic Conference, \textit{A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility: Statements by the Administrative Board of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops}, (Washington D.C: A Publication of Catholic Bishops of America, 2004) 1-2.
\end{itemize}
In each of these areas, the popes and bishops were careful to state that the Church does not intend to offer any concrete or technical solution, since the Church has no partisan political-economic platform (GS, 76). Rather, it offers to all peoples the truth about Christ and about humanity, the truth which can then be applied to concrete situations, especially political field. It is not part of the ecclesial mission to work directly on the economic, technical, or political levels, nor does it contribute materially to development. The Church’s aim is to awaken consciences through the gospel, so that Christians and all good citizens may be awakened to their moral responsibility to be in the forefront of the Church’s evangelization, to engage in the political development of the world and to read the signs of the times, so as to offer the leaven the world so urgently needs today in the political sphere.157

2.5 Conclusion

In the document Apostolicam Actuositatem we have discussed in this chapter, we can see that the role and the status of the laity are fully discernible. The laity together with the clergy are People of God, all gearing towards the building up of the Church and the sanctification of the world. This is based on the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of Christ in which all participate through baptism. But the laity, by reason of their special vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs, animating them with the gospel values, and, to the best of their ability, carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world, especially in concrete political situations of the their communities. This call for activism in the human society by Apostolicam Actuositatem is an illustrative

stance of empowering the laity in their civic responsibility. In the light of this, the laity are called to a prophetic mission within the human concrete situation. And a look at Nigeria’s political situation will help us to grasp the need for this empowerment of the Catholic laity in the country’s political situation, especially in the light of the message in articles 7 and 14 of our text, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. 
CHAPTER THREE

THE CHALLENGES OF NIGERIA’S COMPLEX SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITION AND THE ROLE OF CATHOLIC LAITY IN NIGERIA.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the research within the Nigerian context and analyses the political realities within the Nigeria democratic system. This chapter does not intend to retrace the entire political history of Nigeria since it is not a research on the political history of Nigeria per se. This chapter will show how the Nigeria political landscape laid the Nigerian developmental and political challenges and, thereby, necessitated the need for empowering the Catholic laity to engage actively in the country’s political system. This call to participate in politics is to enable the lay faithful to extend and infuse the Gospel values into the political arena, and champion the actual course of bringing the influence of the Church’s moral teaching and social ethics into the Nigerian political system. In the light of this, I will review the complex political landscape of Nigeria and then examine the problem of political leadership and explore how the problem of leadership has contributed to the need for the Nigerian Church and the laity to rise up to their mission in the political situation in Nigeria in the light of the teaching of Apostolicam Actuositatem articles 7 and 14.

3.2 Understanding Nigeria’s Complex Political Landscape Today

The political entity called Nigeria occupies some 925,000 hectares of land. The country is divided into three regions that include: the forest lands in the south, the Sudan savannah in
the north, and the middle belt, in between. Nigeria has an extensive geography, with a large degree of ecological, economic and cultural variations. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has a diverse ethnic population of over 160 million people. It is one of the most populous countries in Africa. Nigeria contains over 250 ethnic groups, and many of them are divided into further subgroup. The official language of Nigeria is English, but there are ethno-linguistic categories that can be differentiated by sub-regions of Nigeria; these languages are Hausa and Fulani in the north, Yoruba in southwest, Igbo in southeast and also Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Ijaw. These ethnic groups play an important role in the social and political framework of the country as traditional customs and ethnic loyalties have divided the country since its inception.

On 1st October 1960, Nigeria gained independence from the British, and on 1st October 1963 it became a Republic. The British at the time of the amalgamation of Nigeria did not care about the complexity of the ethnic, cultural and tribal differences, but rather they advanced a political system that best served their interest to the detriment of Nigerians. They introduced an indirect rule system which left the British in charge of the national government that controlled the whole economy, whereas local governance was left in the hands of the local leaders. The British consolidated much power in these individuals, who

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became lords and tyrants.\textsuperscript{162} To make sure that their place was protected without challenge from the indigenes, the British employed the “divide and rule system” - a political technique, which set each ethnic group against the other.

The nationalists who took over from the British at independence in 1960 continued in the footstep of their past colonial masters. That resulted in renewed rancor between the different tribes and the institutionalisation of tribalism in Nigerian politics. From the day of independence, each national leader saw himself as victor and proceeded to consolidate his achieved victory; that sparked the creation of various political groups and political alliances that, in turn, caused internal turmoil as various factions grappled for recognition and power within the newly established government.\textsuperscript{163} The result was that politics in Nigeria from the cradle of independence moved along ethnic lines, thereby allowing tribalism a great influence. Tribalism and ethnicity, which could have been an instrument for fashioning national cohesion, became an agent of disunity because Nigeria as it exists has never really

\textsuperscript{162} Emeka C.Obiezu, \textit{Towards a Politics of Compassion: Socio-Political Dimensions of Christian Responses to Suffering}, 60. See also M.A, Adebisi, \textit{Ethnic Relations and Politics in Nigeria}, (Nigeria: Vantage Publishers, 1999), 121-122. The seeds of ethnic violence in Nigeria were sown by the British with the adoption of a divide and rule tactics, which later robbed Nigerians of common front, for nation building. This tactic paved the way for the emergence of regional parties, interests and leaders whose manifestoes were designed along ethnically motivated interests.

\textsuperscript{163} Charles, G. Edwin, “English Colonial Policy and Economy in Nigeria,” \textit{American Journal of Economics and Sociology} 26 (1967), 79-92. See also S.G, Egwu, “Ethnic and Religious violence in Nigeria,” in \textit{African Centre for Democratic Governance}, edited by R.T Adegbuyye, (Jos: Spectrum, 2001), 20-35. Egwu (2001) posited that the constant political, ethnic and religious violence that characterized the Nigerian state is attributable to the history and processes inherent in the state formation during the colonial and postcolonial era. According to him, the colonial state was the foundation upon which the post-colonial state was built therefore the process of ethnic identity formation and the political use to which such identity is put were determined by this process. Presently, the Nigerian state, he argues, is a violent institution and to a large extent a crisis generating mechanism because the development of a bourgeois nation-state based on respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the institutionalization of democratic order and governance was not the priority of the colonialists in building the Nigerian state.
been one homogeneous country: its widely differing peoples and tribes are yet to find any basis for true unity.\(^{164}\)

The first Republic, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and the President Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, laid the foundation of Nigeria’s ill political landscape. Their government was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity, federal representatives and ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon.\(^{165}\) In fact, there seemed to be no men and women of good character in the political leadership of the first Republic. It is a general belief in Nigeria that the thinking of the first Republic Nigerian leadership class was based on politics for material gain, making money and living well. This situation provided the pretext for a group of young middle-rank army officers to sack the Nigeria first Republic politicians from power through a coup on 15\(^{\text{th}}\) January 1966 on the ground of corruption. General Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi then became the first military head of state.\(^{166}\) Ironsi’s regime instituted military rule by subverting the constitutional succession and alleging that the democratic institutions had failed and that, while he was defending them, they clearly needed revision and clean-up before reversion back to democratic rule. On the night of 29 July 1966, northern soldiers at Abeokuta barracks mutinied, thus precipitating a counter-coup. The counter-coup led to the installation of


\(^{166}\) A.A, Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafra War*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 3. General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi led a group of army officers and assassinated the prime minister taking control of the regional government. General Aguiyi-Ironsi eliminated the federal system of government and replaced it with a more centralized form of government. General Aguiyi-Ironsi was of Igbo ethnicity and thus appointed many Igbo’s in positions of prominence within the cabinet. This caused unrest and precipitated into civil unrest resulting in the killing of many of the Igbo people in the northern regions. That the same year some Northern army officers revolted against General Aguiyi-Ironsi’s government and killed him and then General Yakubu Gowon was appointed the leader of the military led government.
Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon as Supreme Commander of the Nigerian Armed Forces. He was a Northerner, a Christian, from a minority tribe, and had a good reputation within the army. Ethnic tension due to the coup and counter-coup increased and more mass pogroms against the Igbo’s in North in July and September 1966 took place.\textsuperscript{167} The then military governor of the Igbo-dominated southeast, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, citing the northern massacre of the Igbo’s living in the north and electoral fraud, proclaimed with the southern parliament the secession of the south-eastern region from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra, an independent nation on 30 May 1967, which sparked off Nigeria’s civil war that claimed over three million lives.\textsuperscript{168} Since then, Nigeria has been left with a porous political system that breeds injustice, exploitation, and marginalization. The post-colonial Nigeria politics has been dominated by 38 years of brutal military dictatorship. Since the economy is so tied to the national government, their rule was sustained by corruption, sometimes resulting in incessant coup d’états, bloodshed, lawlessness and the violation of human rights and untold hardship that made Nigeria become synonymous with bad governance. Corruption conspired with political instability and the nation became the playground for all kinds of visionless actors within government and the business elite.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{167} General Yakubu Gowon ruled the country at a time Nigeria experienced an unprecedented wealth from the oil boom of the 1970s. Apart from the mismanagement of the economy, the Gowon regime was enmeshed in deep-seated corruption. By 1974, reports of unaccountable wealth of Gowon’s military governors and other public office holders had become the crux of discussion in the various Nigerian dailies. Thus, in July 1975, the Gowon administration was toppled by General Murtala Mohammed through a coup d’état. The coup of 1975, among other things, was an attempt to end corruption in the public service. General Murtala Mohammed began by declaring his assets and asking all government officials to follow suit. He instituted a series of probes of past leaders.

\textsuperscript{168} Raph Uwechue, \textit{Reflection on the Nigerian Civil War: Facing the Future}, (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1971), xiv. According to Uwechue, the memories of the civil war still haunt Nigeria. It has left the nation with much bitterness, anger and hatred towards one another, as can be seen in the number of renewed fights, revivals and hatred and formations of new militant groups calling for peaceful separation.

The story did not change even with the coming of the Second Republic. Nigeria had her first executive president under a new executive presidential constitution on 1st October 1979 in the person of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The Shagari administration was marked by spectacular government corruption, as the President did nothing to stop the looting of public funds by elected officials. Corruption among the political leaders was amplified due to greater availability of funds. It was claimed that over $16 billion in oil revenues were lost between 1979 and 1983 during the reign of President Shehu Shagari. It became quite common for federal buildings to mysteriously go up in flames, mostly before the onset of ordered audits of government accounts, making it impossible to discover written evidence of embezzlement and fraud. More still, fiscal irresponsibility was rampant as the government took to deficit financing, ignoring accountability, making corrupt and fraudulent loans, and embezzlement; accordingly, internal and external debts soared. Shagari’s administration was unable to manage the growing economic crisis, and its external debts alienated the masses.


Many of the political problems came into sharper focus with the abolition of the transition to the Third Republic. The process began with much enthusiasm, but doubts sets in as General Babangida changed the rules of the game more and more often. The usual self-serving attitude of the Nigerian politicians took over and votes were bought and identities exploited. As poor as the preparation for the Third Republic was, Nigeria managed to hold a

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171 Ibid
172 Ibid
presidential election on June 12th 1993.\textsuperscript{173} When it was apparent that Chief Moshood Abiola, a southern Yoruba business tycoon, was about to emerge victorious because Nigerians voted for him, not based on the ethnic considerations, but because they saw him as best suited for the highest office in the land, General Babaginda annulled the historic verdict - an event that has haunted the nation like a ghost till this day.\textsuperscript{174} It was in the midst of the heat generated by the June 12 saga, during which the Nigerian state was dwindling towards anarchy that the divine intervention saw the demise of the two principal \textit{dramatis personae} in the crisis from the scene, General Sani Abacha who took power in 1994 from the interim government of Ernest Shonekan and Chief Moshood Abiola. Their death gave peace another chance to reign in the country. The major and immediate challenge before General Abdusalam Abubakar who filled the leadership vacuum created by Abacha’s death was to unite the various ethno-regional conflicting groups. The first step he took was to release the political prisoners, including Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, and to put in place a credible and realistic transition program to hand over power to civilian administration in 1999.\textsuperscript{175}

The emergence of a democratic Nigeria in May 1999 ended 26 years of consecutive military rule. The new president Olusegun Obasanjo took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, economic stagnation and a nation with a deteriorating democratic institution. Even though Obasanjo’s


\textsuperscript{174} BenEzenwa, O. Hillary, \textit{The Clay-Footed Giant: Crisis of Life and Challenges for Change in Nigeria}. (Nigeria: Rex Charles & Patrick Limited, 2008), 27. The last time Nigerians had the privilege of witnessing a unified Nigeria working to elect a man, regardless of tribe or creed was on June 12, 1993. Chief MKO Abiola brought Nigerians together in a way never before seen and perhaps that; never will be seen again. A politician who surrounds himself with supporters who are judged based on their competence and effectiveness will do better than an insecure, tribalistic oaf.

administration was credited for implementing a range of important reforms in his eight years of administration, his regime, yet, represents an era in the history of Nigeria when corruption was practically institutionalized as the foundation and essence of governance. In April 2007 Umaru Yar’adua was elected president of Nigeria, after an election widely decried as fraudulent. Yar’adua began his term facing a number of severe problems, including rampant corruption, chronic mismanagement of oil revenues, deep ethnic and religious tensions, and rising violence in the depressed but oil-rich regions around the mouth of the Niger River. Although his administration appeared to be marked by a greater respect for the rule of law than his predecessor’s, his early years in office were marked largely by unfulfilled promises to curb corruption and modernize the oil industry. In 2009 he had some success in bringing peace to the strife-torn but oil-rich Niger Delta region, but by early 2010 his continued absence abroad (from Nov., 2009) for medical treatment threatened Nigeria with a political crisis over his failure to transfer executive powers to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. In February 2010, however, the National Assembly voted to name

176 Ibid.

177 The 2007 election which was described by Nigerians and international observers and admitted by President Yar’adua himself as the most fraudulent was the direct product of Obasanjo’s “do or die” electoral packages for Nigeria electorates. Yar’adua was still serving his second four-year term as governor when outgoing President Obasanjo, leader of the PDP, shocked observers by selecting him as his chosen successor at the party’s convention in December of 2006. There is little doubt that Obasanjo, then at the end of his second term as a duly elected, civilian president, would have liked to stand for a third term himself, but a constitutionally mandated limit of two terms prevented him. There were probably three major factors behind Yar’adua’s selection: his reputation for integrity, his family’s close ties to Obasanjo, and his relative obscurity. Analysts considered the last of these of particular importance.


179 Ibid.
Jonathan acting president. Jonathan continued as acting president after Yar’Adua returned late that month and succeeded him after he died in May, 2010.

Barely 12 hours after Yar’Adua’s death, Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as the new president and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. And in 2011, he won his first election, despite opposition claims of fraud.\(^\text{180}\) With the election of Goodluck Jonathan and his promise of transformation, many Nigerians had believed that the culture of waste would become a thing of the past. But events in the past three years seem to confirm that the President’s promise of transformation may not be in the area of cutting wasteful spending. In fact, the administration, in the past three years, has been especially visible in its large travelling contingents, indiscriminate setting up of committees, huge budgetary allocations to Aso Rock Presidential Villa, stealthily conducted media campaigns and depletion of funds in various specialized accounts of the federal government.\(^\text{181}\) The President had also come under fierce criticism late last year after he submitted the 2013 Appropriation bill to the National Assembly following what many saw as huge, unnecessary and frivolous allocations for the National Assembly. Jonathan had in the bill proposed to spend N477 million for “foodstuffs and catering materials supplies” for the President’s office, and another N293 million for refreshment and meals for his office and home. Also in the same budget, N45.4 million was set aside to be used for purchasing kitchen equipment for the President’s house. Vice-President Namadi Sambo’s refreshment and meals, as contained in the proposal, were to cost N20.8 million, N104 million was allocated for the VP’s foodstuffs, catering and material supplies, while he will spend another N6.2 million on cooking fuel. On vehicles, the

\(^\text{180}\) Ibid.

Presidency, also in the budget proposal, allocated N280 million for two Mercedes Benz armored S-guard vehicles, N144 million for assorted utility vehicles, N18 million on Toyota Hiace bus, and N77 million on other cars to be added to the presidential flee. The present administration has shown great insensitivity in the management of the national resources, which is part of the reason why the Nigerian economy has remained in the state of crisis. Yinka Odumakin describing the appalling situation stresses “that the country is broke because the PDP regime has emptied all the treasuries. The country is broke, that is why we are being forced to pay N145 for a litre of petrol.” Government debts have also witnessed a massive rise, to over N11.2 trillion total domestic debts, while external debt now stands at US$4 billion. And Alhaji Lai Mohammed reacting on the present national situation stated that President Jonathan frittered away the goodwill of the nation quickly after his inauguration with a gross mismanagement and a waffling leadership that shocked the citizenry. He further emphasized that a president who asked Nigerians to dream again succeeded in turning their dreams into nightmares, and Nigerians are worse off today than they were before President Jonathan assumed office on May 29th 2011. The country under his watch has become more divided today than at any other time since the civil war of 1967 to 1970. This has been the situation in Nigeria since her independence in 1960 till now. But there is more than meets the eye in the Nigeria socio-political and economic situation. What could be considered as part of the key issues, the leadership problem, has contributed to Nigeria’s under-development.

182 Ibid
184 Ibid, 5.
3.3 The Problem of Leadership in Nigeria

History has shown that no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady development in virtually all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. ¹⁸⁵ This is largely because qualitative growth and development has always been an outcome of good governance. Commenting on the experience of the Nigerian nation, the renowned novelist Chinua Achebe insisted that the root cause of the Nigerian predicament should be laid squarely at the foot of bad leadership. “The trouble with Nigeria,” Achebe argued,

is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership. ¹⁸⁶

A good political leadership plays a crucial role in establishing a potentially creative socio-political and economic environment in which a people can pursue development through genuine and sustained collective sacrifice. But in the case of Nigeria political development since her independence, the reins of government have always fallen into the hands of a political leadership class that showed more interest in private, group, or ethnic gains than in the general wellbeing of the Nigerian state.¹⁸⁷ And power has alternated between the civilian


¹⁸⁷ Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Sub-Sahara Africa, in Findings: Best Practice Infobrief, no 38 (March 1999) 2-7. Historically, the origin of corruption in Nigeria predates the colonial era. According to a colonial Government Report (CGR) of 1947, “The African’s background and outlook on public morality is very different from that of the present day Briton. The African in the public service seeks to further his own financial interest.” Before independence, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment. Over the years, Nigeria has seen its wealth withered with little to show in living conditions of the citizens.
and the military since independence, and neither of the two categories that ruled the country has done better in terms of good leadership ratings. Nigeria political leadership class has succeeded in entrenching corruption by providing a fertile ground and an environment conducive for the phenomenon to thrive incurably at the expense of national socio-economic, cultural and political development.188

Since the emergence of democracy in Nigeria, the political climate is distinguishingly marked by uncontrolled passion for power and authority. Nigerian politicians can engage in unimaginable actions in order to gain and retain power, since leadership is the fastest means for self-enrichment because it guarantees access to public funds. According to Claude Ake:

> Political power was everything; it was not only the access to wealth, but also the means to security and the only guarantor of general well-being. For anyone outside the hegemonic faction of the political elite, it was generally futile to harbour any illusions of becoming wealthy by entrepreneurial activity or to even take personal safety for granted. For anyone who was part of the ruling faction, entrepreneurial activity was unnecessary, for one could appropriate surplus with less risk and less trouble by means of state power.189

From the survey of the political leadership problem in Nigeria, it is evident that the generality of Nigerians still measure success in terms of economic growth and security. And majority, on the other hand, are inclined to respecting and adoring the wealthy, thereby promoting excessive greed among our leaders; our own values are now centred on power, profit and property.190 Based on this, leadership in Nigeria has become a huge investment and a life insurance scheme where one has to engage in many abnormal things to be secure in

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perpetuity. This ugly trend has continued because the leadership selection process in Nigeria is characterized by fraud. Democracy, a principle of governance with its inherent qualities of freedom, and power of the people to elect candidates of their choice in terms of leadership, has been redefined within the Nigerian context as the power of the incumbent. Therefore, having disciplined, visionary, progressive, intelligent and qualitative leadership has become a mirage to the Nigerian people. And the transformation to meet the challenges of the modern globalized world of competitiveness has become impossible.

Nigeria’s rate of economic decline compared to the advancement of some countries that were at about the same level of development in the early 1960s is a pointer to failed political leadership which mismanaged the country’s abundant resources. In spite of the acknowledged vast human and material resources as I showed earlier, Nigeria, at fifty-three years after attaining political independence, is ranked among the poorest countries in the world. This has left many Nigerians to ask whether democracy is necessarily the most efficient form of government, since in Nigeria it harbours and allows an organized manipulation by a few who perpetuate exploitation and increase the suffering of the masses under the cover of the law. The Nigerian situation has shown that abundance of natural resources would not solve the nation’s economic problems if the political leadership is inept and corrupt. This appalling situation prompted George Ayittey to state that a leader is supposed to pursue the common interest of the people, but in Nigeria, we have those who pursue only their selfish interest and do not give a damn about us, they oppress us, brutalise

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us, and steal our money to accumulate a huge fortune in Swiss banks.\(^{193}\) Today, the average Nigerian sees himself or herself as divorced from his or her leaders due to staggering unemployment level, lack of basic infrastructure, blind looting of the treasury, police brutality, insecurity and poor quality of life. The lack of these basic amenities has led Nigerians to believe that the government has no place for them.\(^{194}\)

It is suggested by some scholars, like Ray Ekpu, that part of the reason for this failure of leadership in Nigeria is the lack of adequate preparation or good formation for the high office. In this regard, Ray Ekpu thus argues:

> This is true as we all know that, for example, to be a good electrician, a mechanic, a tailor, a hairdresser, a barber or a plumber you must enrol in a school, formal or informal, and go through a period of apprenticeship. At the end of your training, you would, under the keen supervision of an expert, have acquired enough skill in your trade to be able to set up shop or take up paid employment. To be a good doctor, a lawyer, an engineer or a pharmacist, you must undergo a course of training. This rigorous process of knowledge acquisition is even more necessary for the highest office as is case with leadership of a country.\(^{195}\)

From the foregoing, one can argue that the type of leadership that can impact positively in Nigeria political situation is a transforming leadership, which has the characteristics of innovativeness, with high moral character and deep societal understanding, trained on a solid political formation proportionate to the level of present and future civic responsibilities in Nigeria.

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\(^{194}\) Francis Kizito Obeya, “Transforming the Political Landscape of Nigeria,” *in Nigeria World*, (January 27, 2009), 1

No one needs a preponderance of evidence to say that corruption is the bane of Nigeria’s socio-political and economic development. Today, in Nigeria, there is a consensus among well-meaning individuals and foreign nations that corruption has inevitably become a major clog in the quest for sustainable growth and development. It is the single most critical impediment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and like a deadly virus, it attacks the vital structures and systems that engender progressive functioning of the society.\(^{196}\) Like most developing countries, Nigeria is still grappling with the dilemma of corruption that has largely retarded social development, undermined economic growth, discouraged foreign investments, and reduced the resources available for infrastructural development, public service, and poverty reduction programmes.\(^{197}\) Much more disturbing, the scourge of corruption leaves the poor perpetually disproportionately under-privileged, even as it renders the development of democracy and the opportunity of building the society more problematic.\(^{198}\) Thus, by diverting assets away from their intended use, corruption can be said to be the single most important factor responsible for the failure of governance and lack of sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Perhaps, the most tragic effect of corruption on Nigeria has been the failure of the country to attain its economic potentials. Despite its substantial natural and human resources,


\(^{197}\) See Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Sub-Sahara Africa, *in Findings: Best Practice Infobrief*, no 38 (March 1999), 1

\(^{198}\) Nuhu Ribadu, “Corruption and Survival of Nigeria,” *A Paper Presented in Annual Gani Fawehinmi Lectures/Symposium*, (Lagos: January 2007), 2-10. It is disheartening, that the volume of development assistance totalling about $400 billion that flowed into the country for socio-economic development between independence and the collapse of military dictatorship in 1999 was atrociously squandered by the political leaders of the period. The mismanagement of resources of such quantum which was worth six times the resources committed to the rebuilding of Western Europe after a devastating Second World War simply defines the callousness of the political leadership class towards the socio-economic wellbeing of the country.
Nigeria remains desperately poor due to bad management of its wealth by successive corrupt governments.\textsuperscript{199} Today, Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its unadjusted GNP per capita of $300 leaves it in 164th position among other countries in 1999. The per capita GNP PPP (purchasing power parity) figure of $820 looks better at first glance, but it ranks 199th out of the 209 countries covered in the World Bank’s 2000 World Development Report.\textsuperscript{200} In 2010, Nigeria’s GDP per capita (PPP) of $2,365 ranked as 138th in the world out of the 180 countries, while the GNI per capita (PPP) of $2,160 left the country in the 172nd position out of the 215 countries listed in the World Development Indicators Database.\textsuperscript{201} These are not just abstract statistics. An average Nigerian leads an appallingly difficult life that is worse in most ways than the situations in other Third World countries.\textsuperscript{202} Unfortunately, the country has not been able to break through with any significant step that would dramatically improve the living conditions of its mostly impoverished population due to the high level of corruption in the system.

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) released annually by Transparency International has consistently listed Nigeria among the most corrupt nations of the world. The 1996 study of corruption by Transparency International and Goettingen University ranked Nigeria as the


\textsuperscript{201} Ibid

most corrupt nation, among 54 nations listed in the study. The 1998 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranked Nigeria as the fifth most corrupt nation out of 85 countries listed in the rating. The 2001 Corruption Perception Index rated Nigeria second most corrupt nation among 91 countries listed. The 2002 Corruption Perception Index ranked Nigeria third most corrupt nation out of the 102 countries listed. Similarly, the 2003 Corruption Perception Index also rated the country as the second most corrupt nation out of 133 countries listed. Although the trend improved a little in the 2005 Corruption Perception Index ratings, Nigeria still languishes within the first ten most corrupt nations of the world.

Amidst these great economic depressions, political turmoil, widespread corruption and bad political leadership in present day Nigeria, the question that comes to mind for this research is this: what must the Church do to arrest this oppressive system of political leadership and fulfil its mission of humanising the society and promoting the values of the kingdom of God in Nigeria? It is obvious that the Nigerian laity has a decisive role to play in the temporal order in Nigeria. For Christ’s redemptive work, while of its nature directed to the salvation of men and women, involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order (AA, 5). The Church, therefore, does not only have the mission of bringing to men and women the message of Christ and his grace, but also to permeate and perfect the temporal sphere with

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205 Ibid,

the Spirit of the Gospel (*AA, 7*). It is the Church that most Nigerians are looking up to for true leadership in the struggle for social transformation and national regeneration in the socio-political and economic situation of the present day Nigeria.207 Today, the Nigerian people, oppressed, impoverished, and humiliated by the callous civilian elites and politicians, are looking up to the Church for liberation. What must the Church do under the prevailing circumstances beyond the pious exhortations and passionate appeals to which the leaders have often paid deaf ears? The time has come for some form of action. In this regard, the Bishops’ Synod of 1971 in their message to the people stated that action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.208 This implies that the mission to transform the world is part and parcel of the Church’s mission.

The liberation announced by Jesus cannot fail to take account of the deepest dimensions of what it means to be human. In this regard, therefore, social and political concerns are not secondary importance for the Church; they are to be taken more seriously by the Church than by any other social institution. In the light of this, Paul VI in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi* emphasises that evangelisation is not limited to preaching or to ministries of the literal words,209 but it is also inclusive of the transformation of the human realm. He stressed that, it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater number of people, but also of affecting and, as it were upsetting, through the power

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of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria for judgment and determining values… and models of life, which are in contrast with the word of God and the plan of salvation.\textsuperscript{210} Based on this, for the Nigerian Church to achieve any meaningful transformation in the political situation of the country, the Church should engage in some programme of action. In the first place, the Church should engage in civic education and training in Catholic social ethics through which the people will get to know their fundamental human rights and responsibilities under the nation’s constitution and be empowered to defend these rights against the forces of oppression and manipulation.\textsuperscript{211} Nigerian Catholic laity should be made to know that the political community exists for the common good, and that that is its full justification and meaning and the source of its specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces all those conditions of social life that enable individuals, families, and organisations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfilment.\textsuperscript{212} This awareness on the part of the people will empower them not only to know their rights but, equally, to be able to hold the leadership responsible for the appalling corruption, bad leadership, and other anomalies in their political situation. This would help to checkmate the abuses of political leadership, corruption, and abuse of electoral power by Nigerian politicians.\textsuperscript{213}

Nigerian situation today, with the general perception that politics has become an obstacle to integral development of the country, calls for an urgent necessity for the lay faithful to be encouraged by the Church to participate more actively, with singular

\textsuperscript{210} Paul VI, \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi}, Apostolic Exhortation 45: AAS 68 (December 8, 1976)16.

\textsuperscript{211} Peter C. Okuma, \textit{The Vatican II: The Laity and Today Challenges}, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishers, 2011), 236.


\textsuperscript{213} Ibid, 237.
competence and integrity, in political affairs. It is through this concrete involvement and active participation that the Catholic laity may be able to bring moral civility in the Nigerian politics and contribute in shaping the moral vision of Nigerian society and the ideals that they are leaving behind for their children.\textsuperscript{214} There is no doubt that the absence of morality in governmental power in Nigeria has been responsible for the uncontrollable amassing of wealth by most of her leadership at the detriment of the common good of the people. It is, therefore, the task before the Nigerian Catholic laity to make sure that positive values are realised in the Nigeria’s political situation. It is a compelling task to the Catholic laity that morality and religion, conscience and responsibility, will have to come back into politics in Nigeria. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) advocates, Catholics who seek political office have a particular responsibility to bring together their faith, moral convictions, and public responsibilities.\textsuperscript{215} This means a challenging prophetic call to the Nigerian Catholic laity to rise up to their prophetic mission in the Nigeria political situation and transform the moral understanding of Nigerian politicians and the renewal of the temporal political system of Nigeria as is urgently needed today.

Mass rallies and public demonstrations were among the most power instruments that brought down Apartheid South Africa, as is the case today in the Mid-East regions of the world, where mass rallies are bringing down political dictators and oppressors. Besides, when the government became very repressive and all public demonstrations were banned, the South Africans started to use religious ceremonies as occasions for mass protest. Funeral


services for black people in the Churches for example became an occasion for raising consciousness and for the empowering the people.216 Like in South Africa, can we not explore the possibility of organising Church- based nation-wide rallies and demonstrations to put pressure on government over issues of bad leadership and corruption that have left the country underdeveloped? Msgr John Aniagwu thinks that it has become necessary for the Nigerian Church to organise this type of mass action. Thus he says:

The time may well have come for the Nigerian Church to borrow a leaf from the examples of the Philippines and Poland, and take to the street to drive home all her sermon about the problem of bad leadership and corruption that have so far gone unheeded by the government officials. It is to be understood, that bishops, priests seminarians and nuns will be at the head of the proposed mass action. There should be no dearth of laymen and women to march behind their spiritual leaders.217

This appalling political situation in the country has indeed called on all Nigerian Catholic laity to co-ordinate themselves and organise peaceful demonstrations and protest in this face of lack of competent and responsible leadership, which has attained an unimaginable height, since the emergence of democracy in the country. This will make the Nigerian Catholic laity to rise up to the challenges of their prophetic mission and stop paying lip service to the search for a more true, just, and democratic Nigeria.218 The laity must acknowledge that the cost of freedom, justice, democracy and peace is a lifestyle of struggle and sacrifice.

The Nigerian Catholic laity should also be ready to commit their resources into programmes and projects aimed at educating and empowering the poor masses for the election of good Christian leaders and pulling down of those evil structures of bad leadership

216 See George Omaku Ehusani, A Prophetic Church, 107.


218 Ibid,
and corruption in our society that have made the majority of Nigerians so poor, so ignorant, vulnerable, dependent and distressed. It is only by this kind of true commitment to their apostolate and mission and also as empowered true followers of Christ who are called to be prophetic through baptism can the Nigeria Catholic laity may be able to achieve and bring about positive change to the political situation in Nigeria.

3.4 Catholic Laity’s Participation in Nigeria’s politics

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, in his first Encyclical, “Deus Caritas Est” says: the direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the state, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good. Such involvement is not optional; it flows from the very core of Christian faith.219 The implication of this for the Nigeria Catholic lay faithful is to participate actively in politics, because through participation in politics and other secular spheres, they will promote justice, unity, honesty and public spiritedness.220 Also John Paul II, in his address to young people of Nigeria at Onitsha on 13th February, 1982, said, a good Christian is a good citizen. You must love your country, obey its laws and respect your leaders. You are called to take your due part in political, social, economic and cultural affairs. When you are eligible, you should vote and be voted for in political elections.221


221 Ibid,
follows that every Nigerian Catholic Youth should take voting as a serious matter and to be more active and responsible participant in the Nigeria political process and as good citizens of the state and the Church to fulfill their civic responsibility to their country. In this regard, Vatican II exhorts Christians, as citizens of two cities, to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to Gospel spirit (GS, 43).

Party politics is one of those areas in social life, where the laity must take on the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. It is the specific apostolate of the laity to bring the spirit of Christ into the science of politics in Nigeria. Emphasising the importance of this role of the laity in the Nigerian politics, the Catholic Archbishop of Ibadan, Felix Alaba Job, stressed that party politics is the proper area of apostolate the Catholic laity can and should engage in; otherwise, he/she could become irrelevant in the society or an apostolic straggler. This implies that Catholic lay faithful can, and should freely, like any other citizen, engage in party politics. This is necessary if he/she is to discharge all his/her duties as a good citizen, and as a witness of Christ in the world of politics.

The concrete cases where the apostolate of the Nigerian Catholic laity in the political and social spheres are challenged and called for today in Nigeria include the issue of the government take-over of Catholic schools, religious liberty and freedom of worship - which should not be used for or against a citizen in politics or any other sector of the public life - attempts by the former governments in Nigeria to establish a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal for Moslems and Islamic bank also for Moslems, the issue of Boko Haram terrorist group

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and the ethno-religious conflicts, etc. In this regard, Nigerian Catholic laity are called upon to be politically responsible and to strive within the limit of their talent and competence to effectively represent the Church in political matters. In this way, Nigerian laity may be able to elect wise and mature politicians who will have respect for different religions in the country and bring to bear religious tolerance, religious equality, cultural integration and, above all, moral regeneration in Nigerian politics. In view of this, therefore, Catholics with political abilities should not normally avoid political offices. Like Christ who was actively involved in the political and religious life of his time, Christians of today have no choice but to be actively engage in the religious and political life of Nigeria.\textsuperscript{223}

It is undoubtedly clear that the Nigerian Catholic hierarchy have always played a significant role in the process of nation building since the beginning of Nigerian political independence on October 1, 1960. They have observed that our nation is sick and “profoundly distressed, even traumatized.”\textsuperscript{224} From the early 1960 to this day, the Nigerian Catholic Bishops, in response to their social responsibility and duty towards the impoverished and the marginalized Nigerians, produced several social documents dealing with the issues of social justice as they affect the lives of so many Nigerians. These documents represent their steady and unflinching commitments towards the support and enthronement of justice in the political system of Nigeria.\textsuperscript{225} However, in their effort for the transformation and enthronement of justice in Nigerian political system, the Catholic Bishops

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.55-74.
have given the Catholic laity and all Christians in Nigeria the salutary advice of not to neglect their political responsibility. According to the Bishops:

In pursuance of her mission of social justice, the Church exhorts all lay Catholic and all Christians of age to fully and actively participate in the life and government of their state, whether as individual or as group. The time has come when all of us as individuals citizens must justify our likeness to God by accepting responsibility for political formation of our society. Every Christian men and women should actively and responsibly exercise their civic duties. For this reason, individuals of their own respective volition freely enter into a political community in order to shape public opinion and influence the common good. Only in this way will the glorification of God take place in public affairs.\(^{226}\)

When His Holiness Pope John Paul II visited Nigeria in February, 1982, he made it clear that lay people should participate in politics. Addressing the representatives of the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria in Kaduna on 14\(^{th}\) February 1982, he said, among other things, that as lay people know their special apostolate is to bring Christian principles to bear upon the temporal order, that is, to bring the spirit of Christ into such spheres of life as marriage and the family, trade and commerce, the arts and professions, politics and government, culture and national and international relations (\textit{AA, 7}). The Pope further called on the Nigerian Catholic laity to be aware that it is their duty to be a leaven for Christ in the society and to be witnesses to Christ in the government offices and in politics, as a sign of the Church on a journey with different people in their own nation.\(^{227}\) So, it is the duty of every Nigerian lay person, firm in the faith and versed in the Catholic teaching, to inspire and lead the society to achieve God’s plan for all peoples at all times. The Nigerian Catholic Bishops in the \textit{Lineamenta} for the first National Pastoral Congress on the Church in Nigeria,


a Family of God, came out stronger about the lay participation in the Nigerian politics when they stated that the political sphere is an area that calls for stronger lay involvement and sharper discernment by the Nigerian Catholic laity; that despite the intrinsic value of politics, Nigeria politics need to be healed of the ‘cash and carry’ connotation. They, therefore, called upon the Nigerian Catholic laity to make concerted efforts to ensure that only God-fearing persons of sound morals and proven integrity are elected into political positions in the country.228

Although the Catholic Church as an institution would not take part in partisan politics, the Catholic Church has called all her lay members as individuals and groups to be very active in partisan politics. So the Church encourages all the laity to participate in politics and indeed in all the secular affairs to permeate and perfect the temporal spheres with the spirit of the gospel. In the light of this, Chief David D.Dodo reminded the Nigerian laity that if the laity is not interested in politics, politics is interested in the laity. On this ground, therefore, the laity have no choice but to be also interested in politics. Aware of the cardinal importance of political power in Nigeria in fashioning national development for the future generation and for the good of the Church, Dodo further stressed that no lay person should say that politics is a dirty game and then avoid it. He argued that politics is not a dirty game; and even if it were, he argued it is the more reason why Christ’s lay faithful should go in and make it a clean game. He charged the Nigerian Catholic laity of the responsibility of making a concerted effort to ensure that politics in Nigeria is played as a clean game.229 Nigeria

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Catholic laity should at all times and in all places, in the exercise of their civic and political rights, choose able persons from all the political candidates with moral integrity, candidates with trustworthy character and place them in the political offices. In this way, Nigerian politics will definitely become a clean game when persons of proven integrity are elected in political offices in Nigeria. Consequently, the laity in Nigeria under the umbrella movement for all the laity in Nigeria called the National Laity Council of Nigeria, (NLCN), in their recent seminar in Ibadan, revisited Vatican II call of the laity to be actively involved in politics. The National laity Council of Nigeria reminded the laity that as long as human beings live as a social being, political consideration will be part of the factors that will govern the human life. Human beings cannot just run away from politics for their own well-being and for the common good of all human being, they must be involved in politics.230

The current efforts to find solutions to the appalling political situation in the country have led the Nigerian hierarchy to call on all Catholics to allow themselves to be moved by the spirit of Christ to participate actively in politics in order to work for the common good of our nation and the improvement and purification of the nation’s political life. In this regard, in the preparation for 2011 election, the Nigerian Catholic Bishops’ Conference exhorted the Catholic Christian communities of the need for their active involvement in electoral process as well as the need of fulfilling their civic responsibility of electing credible persons to public offices in order to guide or influence government policies, and for an effective transformation of the Nigeria socio-political and economic system that is enmeshed in corruption and bad leadership. The Bishops further made a passionate demand to the

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Catholic laity thus: we encourage Catholic lay Christians men and women with a talent for the difficult, yet noble art of politics to prepare themselves for it; we urge capable men and women to consider carefully whether they can indeed render glory to God and virtuous service to the nation in standing for electoral public office.\textsuperscript{231} The sole objective is that Nigerian Bishops wants honest, competent, well-motivated and Gospel-Spirited and upright laity to be encouraged to see involvement in politics as participation in the mission of Christ. In this way, the Nigerian Church, through its lay faithful can contribute meaningfully and sufficiently to the socio-political and economic emancipation of Nigeria society when credible lay faithful occupy the centre stages of politics and constitute the key figures in decision-making in Nigeria political system.

\textbf{3.5 Conclusion}

It is simply disheartening that Nigeria, a country blessed with natural resources and manpower, is now doomed with uncertainty where abject poverty, high unemployment rate, unresolved assassinations, looting and squandering of public funds, all as a consequence of bad leadership and corruption, have become the order of the day. And to address this social evil in Nigeria political system, Nigerian Catholic laity are called upon to help clean Nigerian politics by regarding political involvement as a major Christian apostolate. But in order to fully realize this mission of the laity in the Nigerian politics, there is need for collaboration between the Nigerian clergy and the laity. For an effective transformation to be achieved, the laity must be formed and acquainted in the social teaching of the Church with regard to how they can contribute to the promotion of the common good.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORMATION OF NIGERIAN LAY CATHOLICS ON THEIR MISSION IN THE SECULAR ORDER

4.1 Introduction

The formation of the laity for mission is the practical means for advancing lay participation in the Church’s evangelization. The Second Vatican Council has always emphasised that: in order to mature in awareness of the challenges of the lay identity and responsibly assume the lay mission, a progressive formation is indispensable (AA, 28). In this chapter, I will examine the empowerment of the laity through formation and the training of the Nigerian laity in Catholic social doctrine and, then, examine also the need for authentic collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the mission of the Nigerian Church.

4.2 Empowerment of the Laity through Formation

The apostolate of the laity, whether individual or communal, is very important in the life of the Church; for this apostolate to be effective and efficient, an adequate formation is very necessary. In the light of this formation, the Second Vatican Council stated that:

the apostolate can only attain its full effectiveness through an integrated and many-sided formation. This is required not only for the continued progress of laypeople in spirituality and doctrine, but also by the variety of circumstances, persons and duties to which the work must be adapted (AA, 28).

This apostolic formation is an integrating and indistinguishable part of Christian formation as such because the Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well. Reflecting on LG, 31 that describes the laity and speaks of the secularity as the special
character of the laity, the decree stresses that the formation of the lay faithful should have a lay character.\textsuperscript{232}

One of the contributions made by the 1987 Synod of Bishops was to place the entire issue of formation more clearly in the context of evangelization.\textsuperscript{233} The methodology and goals of every aspect of formation must take account of the vocation of each of the baptized to participate in the mission of the Church. In this regard, Egidio Vigano argued that this linking of formation with mission signifies that the methodology adopted should not be that of indoctrination, but rather a dynamic process that stimulates the self-formation of the persons, so that they become able to make the connection between theory and praxis in contact with the surrounding reality.\textsuperscript{234} So we can argue that the goal of formation should not be the mastery of individual points of doctrine, but the growth of one’s ability to be open to the whole of the Church’s faith and to apply oneself to translating that faith into the lived reality of one’s daily life. The Synod Fathers further pointed out that lay formation programs should focus on the practical competence the laity need in order to take responsible action in the Church’s mission. Lay formation should address the environment, mentality, and concrete problems faced by the laity in their mission of evangelization in the world.\textsuperscript{235} So lay formation should be incarnated in their concrete historical situation, and specifically related to the exigencies of their secular vocation, especially the demands of family, work and society. Its style and content cannot be automatically transposed from the formation

\textsuperscript{232} See Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity-History of the Text,” 396.


\textsuperscript{235} Ibid, 378.
programs used in the seminaries and religious houses; instead, it needs to be oriented to the personal deepening of vocation of lay persons, teaching them the authenticity and value of the vocation to follow Christ in the secular life.\(^{236}\) As the Council stated in AA, lay formation must take its special flavour from the secular quality of the lay vocation and adapted to the natural abilities and circumstances of each lay person (\textit{AA, 29}).

Pope John XXIII in \textit{Mater et Magistra} also stressed the importance of training and formation of the laity when he wrote that, since the education of Christians is concerned with duties in every department of life, the teaching they receive must inspire the faithful to make their conduct conform to the Church’s teaching in economic, politics, and social matters. Therefore, it is not enough to tell them in what manner the Church teaches how Christian ought to act in social, economic and political affairs. They should be taught how they may effectively carry out their duties.\(^{237}\) In fact, the practical dimensions of the formation of the laity should be shaped by the demands of life of the laity in the world. It should address their specific concerns and contribute to their growth in a deeper sense of responsibility for the mission of the Church in the world. In this regard, Cardinal Cardijn in his book, \textit{Laymen into Action}, wrote:

\begin{quote}
the laity are not formed or empowered for the apostolate through books, purely theoretic teaching, or spoken lectures, however magnificent. The laity are formed first of all by the discovery of facts, followed by Christian judgement; resulting in the action plan they carry into effect, the responsibilities they shoulder. This method involves the exercise of all the human faculties and at the same time the use of all the
\end{quote}


supernatural and apostolic resources, as well as an extraordinary powerful impetus to progress and personal sanctification.\textsuperscript{238}

So, the formation should be such that it will lead lay persons to act on their own initiative; in that way, they will develop concrete responsibilities to be truly leavens in their communities. This is one of the primary goals for the lay formation to help develop the kind of skills needed for evangelization today, such as the ability to identify the sectors most in need of the Church’s efforts and the personal strength to channel one’s effort towards meeting specific needs of such sectors.

In Nigeria, the formation to be given to the laity should be such as to enable them to bring the gospel values to bear on the political fabric of the society. In this way, Nigerian laity will be able to influence not only the thinking of the masses, but also the structures of the Nigeria society to reflect the plan of God for the Nigeria society. John Paul II, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, \textit{Ecclesia in Africa}, stresses the need for the formation of African lay faithful, especially those who are engaged in the public affairs, when he said that:

\begin{quote}
the laity are to be helped to become increasingly aware of their role in the church, thereby fulfilling their particular mission as baptized and confirmed persons…Lay people are to be trained for their mission through suitable centres and schools of biblical and pastoral formation. Similarly, Christians who occupy positions of responsibility are to be carefully prepared for political, economic and social tasks by means of a solid formation in the Church’s social doctrine so that in their places of work they will be faithful witnesses to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{239}
\end{quote}

The Nigerian Church cannot solely and effectively exercise her evangelizing mission in Nigeria today without the active involvement of the lay members of Christ’s faithful who make up over 99\% majority of the Christian population with countless charisms to lend to

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\textsuperscript{238} J Cardijn, \textit{Laymen into Action}, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), 7.  \\
\textsuperscript{239} John Paul II, \textit{Ecclesia in Africa}, no.90,261; Cf. no.53-54,248; no. 76-77, 256-257; no. 91.261.
\end{flushright}
the mission of the Church. Therefore, there is great and urgent need in Nigeria today for the training and adequate formation of the Nigerian Catholic laity in both human and spiritual, doctrinal and theological formation adapted to the different types of apostolate in order to carry out their apostolate effectively in the Church and in the Nigerian society. In this regard, Cardinal John Onaiyekan affirmed that it is not only necessary to have a well-grounded doctrinal, theological and philosophical formation, but also a serious professional training with basic knowledge of human history. This formation which must be provided on an ongoing and systematic basis, demands continuous attention to the ‘signs of the times,’ and to the real nature of the world that has to be evangelized.240 The need for this formation of the laity stems naturally from their being primarily constitutive members of the mystical body of Christ, which makes them sharers in the three-fold mission of Christ: of teaching, sanctifying and governing (AA, 2).

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria stresses that solid doctrinal formation should be given in form of catechesis, bible study, retreat, seminar and fundamentals of Catholic belief, morals, liturgy, Church history and ecumenism, as well as basic knowledge of African traditional Religion, and Islam. This is the guarantee for mature and committed laity.241 Based on this foundation, the well-formed Nigerian Catholic laity are called not only to be actively committed in the mission of the Church in Nigeria, but to champion the actual course of bringing the influence of the Church into the ordinary events of communities such as in the political and economic life of Nigeria. Hence Gaudium et Spes clearly stated that it

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is the lay faithful’s task to cultivate a properly informed conscience and to impress the divine law on the affairs of the earthly city (GS, 43).

Indeed, the Nigerian Catholic laity needs adequate formation and active involvement presently in the mission of the Church in the Nigerian society, because they have been left passive receptors of the priests’ instructions since the missionary era and as a result of the over-clericalisation of the Nigerian Church. Under the prevailing circumstances in Nigeria, for the Church to achieve any meaningful change and authentic transformation in the socio-political and economic situation in Nigeria, there must be active involvement and commitment of enlightened laity in the Nigerian political system. Based on this, Matthew Hassan Kukah stated, “for the talk about option for the poor, liberation of Nigerians from bad leadership, structures of sin, etc., not much will happen unless the lay people fully assume their role in the Church and society. Whether in politics, economy or social life, there is very little that the clerical class can do in terms of bringing about direct political change unless the laity are fully educated and equipped to take the ball and run as the saying goes.”

Hence, John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa, called on the African Bishops for thorough formation of the lay people to help them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and consider socio-political problems in the light of the Gospel and faith in God. Therefore the Nigerian Church has a responsibility in this matter which it cannot abdicate without failing in her mission. The basic concern here for the

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244 See John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa, no.90, 261; Cf. no.53-54,248.
Nigerian hierarchy is to bring the people’s faith back into our surroundings of real life and the problems they raise, through education and formation, so that Nigerian Catholic laity can become the first and immediate apostles of Christ in denouncing violations of human dignity and fundamental human rights, the evil of bribery and corruption, the abuse of power by the political class, degradation of the family, the environment, culture and other social evils. Therefore, the empowerment of the Catholic laity in Nigeria is a must for progress and stability, through enlightenment and education in Catholic social thoughts and theology.\textsuperscript{245}

\textbf{4.3 Training in Catholic Social Doctrine or Ethics}

The Church’s social doctrine should be the basis of an intense and constant work of formation, especially for Nigerian lay faithful. Such a formation should take into account their obligations in civil society. As Paul VI, in \textit{Populorum progressio} emphasises, it belongs to the laymen and women, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live.\textsuperscript{246} The first level of the formation of lay Christians should be to help them to become capable of meeting their daily activities effectively in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres and to develop in them a sense of duty that is at the service of the common good (\textit{GS}, 75). Whereas the second level concerns the formation of a political conscience in order to prepare lay Christians to exercise political power. Today more than ever, the Church’s social doctrine provides the fundamental criteria for pastoral action in the area of social activity, proclaiming the Gospel and placing the Gospel message in the context of social realities, and planning actions aimed


at the renewal of these realities and conforming them to the demands of Christian morality. In
the light of this, John Paul II stated that the situation today points to an ever increasing
urgency for a doctrinal formation of the lay faithful. This urgency arises from the fact that
lay persons are increasingly being required to make response to the problems of their own
time and place. The Pope further said that the element of formation is especially significant
for those responsible in society and public life.  

The prominence of the element of formation in the Church’s social doctrine appeared in a
striking section of the proposition of 1987 Synod of Bishops which stated that, for the
Church to help the laity to take up actively this noble purpose in political matters, it is not
enough to exhort them in the society and culture of the late twentieth century; the laity must
be offered a proper formation of a social conscience, especially in the Church’s social
teaching, which contains principles of reflection, criteria for judging and practical
directives. The Church should form special skilled people who can influence social life,
especially intellectuals in the philosophical, economic, political and scientific fields.
Therefore the Church’s social doctrine is a necessary means for an efficacious Christian
education towards justice and peace, as well as for a conscious maturation of moral and
social duties in the various cultural and professional fields. Accordingly, AA stresses that
the laity should above all learn the principles and conclusions of the social doctrine so as to
become capable of working for the development of this doctrine to the best of their ability

247 Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles Laici, no.60 148,149-150.


249 Ibid.
and of rightly applying these same principles and conclusions to individual cases and in their political communities (AA, 31).

In Nigeria, the Church’s social doctrine should be the basis of an intense and constant work of training for the Nigerian Catholic laity. In line with this view, the Nigerian Bishops have instructed the Catholic dioceses and parishes to teach the Church’s social teaching sufficiently to equip the laity for their participation in public life and to enable them to actively take up their Christian responsibility of imbuing the earthly order in Nigeria with the spirit of the Gospel. Such training will aim to empower the Nigerian Catholic laity for encountering the society in all its facets.  

Also, such training and education on the social doctrine of the Church should be spearheaded by the laity in the spirit of the apostolate of ‘likes towards likes’ in cooperation with the clergy and should aim at the grassroots level and equally at the urban centres, where majority of the Nigerian populace are politically unwary. Such efforts would help to conscientize, ennoble and empower action in concrete form from the grassroots where Nigerian leadership seek and get their political mandate to lead the people through the ballot boxes. The Church’s social doctrine is a necessary means for an efficacious Christian education towards love, justice and peace, as well as for a conscious maturation of moral and social duties in the various cultural and professional fields.  

This awareness on the part of the people would empower them not only to know their rights, but equally to be able to hold the leadership responsible for the appalling corruption and other

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anomalies in their political situation. Thus, this would help to check the abuses of political leadership and power.

The Nigerian Church should adopt a more practical approach of the social teaching of the Church, since the laity in Nigeria will not change the political situation of Nigeria by just sitting down and bemoaning the ugly situation and sufferings in the country in their kitchens or by engaging in self-pity. The Nigeria situation can only change for better and suffering persons will have justice done to them only when the education of the laity in the social doctrine of the Church is aimed at enabling them to overcome the fear arising from the intimidation of the political class who covet political power and use it to their advantage.\textsuperscript{252} Such education should be aimed at conscientizing the laity on the possibility of constructing a new society, founded on justice and morality, better than the present structures of the Nigerian society. This is important because what has happened over the years is that Nigerians have been manipulated into accepting the present stratification of the society into ‘the haves’ and ‘the have not,’ the VIPs (Very Important Personalities) and VPPs (Very Poor Personalities).\textsuperscript{253}

The Nigeria Church should also adopt a process of social education similar to that proposed by the Latin American Church in Medellin, Colombia, 1969. The Medellin Documents favour a process of enlightening the masses of ordinary people in their struggle for social justice, a call that demands a dynamic action of awakening and conscientizing the social conscience of the people to enable them take actions for social justice by pressing

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\footnote{253} Joseph Ogbonnaya, \textit{Moral Integrity and Igbo Cultural Values}, (U.S.A: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 120.
\end{footnotes}
government officials for reform. In Nigeria, such dynamic action of awakening could be done by restoring in Nigerians their human worth as persons through social education in the dignity of human life and in their rights and responsibilities. This would enable them to appreciate themselves and one another and help them resist all forms of economic and political abuse by the Nigerian politicians. Such education in the social teachings of the Church should begin at the grassroots, in the parishes, small Christian communities, the schools and colleges, and in institutions of higher learning the Church own in various parts of the country. In Nigeria today, the highest places of theological formation are in the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) and in the Major Seminaries. At the moment, Seminarians and priests dominate these institutions, since theological studies in Nigeria are still predominantly for the clergy. But the present political situation in Nigeria has called for the need to have side-by- side theologically qualified and competent laity alongside with the clergy. The essence of this theological formation of the laity is geared towards the growth and emergence of a mature, critical and responsible laity. Such formation equally will go a long way in preparing the laity for the active participation and involvement in the political process in Nigeria.

The empowerment of the lay faithful through theological formation in Nigeria will enable the lay professionals to embark on the training programme of the generality of Nigerian Catholic laity. In view of this, I advocate for what the Magisterium calls the “Social

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255 Ibid, 121.
Weeks\textsuperscript{257} as an important forum of formation opportunity for the Nigerian laity. It has to do with setting out some weeks during the year when the Catholic laity are tutored on the socio-political issues, in the light of the social doctrine of the Church; this is in agreement with the message of \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem} on the formation of the laity (\textit{AA}, 28-31). Apart from ‘Social Weeks’ there is equally need for occasional awareness programmes like workshops, seminars, programmes on specific fields of theological and social ethics, exposing the Catholic laity in Nigeria to trainings on their civic rights, duties and privileges to ennoble their active participation in the life of the Nigerian political system.

\textbf{4.4 Building a Strong Bond of Relationship and Co-operation between Clergy and the Laity.}

Prior to Vatican II, the lay apostolate was limited to forms of lay collaboration in the mission of the clergy. The Council, however, presented a much wider understanding of the ways in which the laity and the hierarchy relate in the work of evangelisation. The Council teaches that both the clergy and the laity should see themselves as brothers and sisters, since all the faithful have an equal right to the apostolate in the Church. This is very explicit in the following statement:

Bishops, parish priests and other priests, both secular and religious, should keep before their eyes the fact that the right and duty of exercising the apostolate is common to all the faithful, clerical and lay, and that in the building up of the Church the laity have their part to play. Consequently they should work as brothers with lay people in the Church and for the Church (\textit{AA}, 25).

This explains that the clergy and the laity are linked together in the Church by their common mission in building up the Church. It springs from their common identity as people of God.

through baptism. And so membership to the people of God accords one both charism and vocation in the Church. The root for the cordial relationship expressed in AA 25 is found in *Lumen Gentium* 32 and 37. While *LG* 32 gives the theological basis of their relationship,258 *LG* 37 specifically discusses the relationship of the laity to the clergy both from the perspective of the clergy and also from that of the laity. This shows that the relationship between the clergy and the laity should be that of mutual need. The clergy have to work among the laity and the laity are strengthened by the work of the clergy.

In line with this, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests), though it deals mainly with the ecclesial responsibilities of priests, recognizes the common dignity of all the people of God and the unique role each member has to play in building up the Church.259 For this reason, the clergy and the laity should relate among themselves and support one another for they all are Christ’s disciples. PO 9, therefore, states:

> Although the priests of the new covenant exercise in and for God’s people the exalted and necessary role of father and teacher in virtue of the sacrament of order yet together with all Christ’s faithful they are the disciples of the Lord, given a share in his kingdom by the grace of God who called them. Reborn like everyone else in the baptismal font, they are brothers among brothers and sisters, members of one and the same body which all are bidden to foster. Priests should…work together with the faithful and deal with them after the example of their master…Priests should sincerely acknowledge and promote the standing of the laity and their proper role in the Church’s mission… (*PO, 9*).

It should be noted that the relationship between the clergy and the laity, which was a difficult one in pre - Vatican II history of the Church, acquired a new and positive dimension

258 *The Constitution on the Church, in its article 32, says, “…the chosen people of God is one: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (Eph4, 5). There is the common dignity of the members from their regeneration in Christ; they share in common the grace of being heirs…There is, therefore, no inequality in Christ and in the Church….”

259 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, “the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests” art.2. Here referred to as PO.
with the teaching of Vatican II. The Council now teaches that, the laity by virtue of their baptism and confirmation are divinely called to an apostolate (AA, 2; LG, 33). This baptismal dignity is the basis of their participation in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ and of their vocation to holiness in love, and for the lay faithful, it is fulfilled through their presence in the world.\textsuperscript{260} As members of the Church and sharers in the triple office of Christ, the lay faithful participate in the mission of the Church, which is concentrated and manifested in evangelization. The shortage of priests and the needs of the Church are not the basic reason why the laity are to undertake an apostolate. The main reason is that they hold a distinct place in the People of God through their baptism.\textsuperscript{261} The laity, indeed, are the Church, co-responsible with bishops, priests and religious for Christ’s mission on earth. Moreover, ‘the signs of the times’ in the 1960s till now and the widening gap between the modern world and message of the Gospel, demanded that the laity be empowered to bring the Gospel to the market place.\textsuperscript{262} In this regard, John Paul II said:

that in order to meet the contemporary demands of evangelization, the collaboration of the laity is becoming more and more indispensable. This is not only a practical need occasioned by a reduction in religious personnel, but is a new, unprecedented opportunity that God is offering us. Our era could in some ways be called the era of the laity. Therefore be open to lay people’s contribution. Help them to understand the spiritual motives for the service they render with you, so that they will be the “salt” that gives life its Christian flavour and the “light” that shines in the darkness of indifference and selfishness. As lay people faithful to their own identity, they are called to give a Christian inspiration to the temporal order by actively and effectively transforming society according to the spirit of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{263}

\begin{flushright}
260 See Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles Laici, no.64, 149-157.
261 Ibid
\end{flushright}
So, the lay apostolate consists in effecting the incarnation of the Church in the structures of the world. The salvation of the world cannot be brought about without the participation of the laity.

Benedict XVI in his address at the 6th Assembly of the International Catholic Action Forum, 24th August 2012, said that the laity should be seen as truly ‘co-responsible’ for the Church and not just collaborators with the clergy. The Pope further said that co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church; the Holy Father affirmed that, the laity should be considered “persons truly ‘co-responsible’ for the being and activity of the Church, in the world.”

So the mission of the laity should be understood within the theology of the mission of the whole people of God. And this mission of the laity is never derived from the mission of the ordained, which was a popular pre-conciliar notion, but the lay apostolate is the participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. In the light of this, Pope Benedict XVI exhorted the laity to feel the commitment to work for the Church’s mission to be their own, through the laity’s renewal of the temporal order, through their daily experience in work, politics and family and through active participation in ecclesial life.

Vatican II is explicitly clear that all who are united in Christ through baptism have a common responsibility for mission; this implies that both the clergy and the laity are partners in the mission of the Church. In view of this, the American Bishops’ Conference wrote that evangelisation is a collaborative effort that springs from the partnership between the clergy

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265 Ibid.
and the laity. In their pastoral letter to the laity in 1995, they also stated that the Church’s ministry can be more effective if it becomes truly collaboratorative, mindful of its weaknesses, but grateful for its gifts. Therefore shared responsibility, then, is neither a luxury nor concession brought about by some American desire to democratize the Church. Rather, it is the inevitable result of the Second Vatican Council’s renewed appreciation of the laity not as mere instruments of the hierarchy, but as the People of God who possess personal gifts and charisms that empower them to contribute their part to the mission of the Church and the transfiguration of society. All the members of the Church share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ (LG, 32).

During the 1994 African Synod of Bishops, the Synod Fathers adopted the model of the Church-as -Family as the most appropriate image of the Church for the Church in Africa. They were convinced that the image of family could appeal to the lived experience of many people in Africa in order to convey the reality of the Church. In this way, the African people could enter into the mystery of the Church more fully than if they were faced with less familiar image, like the body of Christ, the sacrament of salvation, or the mystery of Trinitarian communion. Their conviction was predicated on the fact that the family is “a place where deep African values of life are protected and nourished. A place of belonging

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where deep sharing and solidarity characterize daily life and each one feels truly at home.\textsuperscript{270}

Within the family context, values like love, concern for others, warm relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust are seriously stressed. Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, exploring the appropriateness of the model, insist that “the vision of the Church as God’s family has a natural appeal to African people.” For them, this ecclesiology of the Church –as Family emphasises the warmth of love among widely extended relationships and an authority that finds its proper context in service.\textsuperscript{271} The suitability of the image is not only due to the strong and positive elements of the African family, but also due to the fact that the concept of the family radiates a sense of belonging and identity. The core values the image represent portrays the Church as inclusive of all, with the laity recognized and given responsibility and clerical dominance eliminated.

Adopting this model in the Nigerian Church will imply imbibing such values of respect, concern, solidarity, co-responsibility and appreciating the dignity of all believers. This image has provided a medium to comprehend in the Nigerian Church that the clergy and the laity are brothers and sisters, equal in dignity, but exercising different functions in service of one another, since they have been bestowed with different gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{272} In the light of this, ministry in the Christian community has become the responsibility of all members. Therefore, it is not surprising that quite a great number of lay people are committed to the mission of the Church in Nigeria; despite the political and economic hardship in the country, Nigerians still have great faith in the Church because the model of the Church – as – family


encourages communitarian way of life, which emphasises mutual interpersonal relationships, interdependence, and co-responsibility.\(^{273}\) As this model highlights the complementarity of the role of the members of a family, it has encouraged good number of lay men and women to function as lectors and acolytes during liturgical celebrations and, in most of the parishes, there are well formed choirs constituted entirely by the laity. Some of the laypeople are Church wardens who see that order is maintained throughout the period of the liturgical celebration. They also act as ushers. Francis Anekwe Oborji was right when he affirmed that the strength of Christianity in Africa is a result of the active participation of the laity and their generous contribution to the growth of the Church both locally and internationally.\(^{274}\) With this model of the Church – as – Family, instead of understanding the laity from the perspective of the clergy or in opposition to the clergy, the laity are now seen as co-responsible members of the people of God, called to the mission of the Church by God through baptism and confirmation. This appreciation of all the baptized in the Nigerian Church has been followed by the different roles and status of the members in the Nigerian Church. And emphasis has been that these different roles are complementary gearing towards the richness of the body – the Church, since all in different ways contribute to its growth and wellbeing.\(^{275}\)

However, in the political situation in Nigeria, the clergy and the laity have also built a strong bond of collaboration, and have worked out some strategies, such as political sponsorship programs, making use of parish education programs, instructions on political

\(^{273}\) Ibid. 105.


choices, voters registration drives, support groups for professional Catholics and other Christians in politics.\textsuperscript{276} These strategies are aimed at the empowerment of lay Catholics who are competent and enlightened in the noble art of politics to devote themselves to the service of the state and courageously take on the burden of political office. The people cannot be made Christians unless they have first been ‘made really humans and live like human persons’ in a human political situation.\textsuperscript{277} The Nigerian lay faithful are today motivated to contribute meaningfully and positively to the socio-political and economic emancipation of Nigeria by their willingness to participate actively in the political system of Nigeria and to elect credible lay faithful to occupy the centre stage of politics and constitute the key figures in decision-making stage in Nigerian political system.\textsuperscript{278} However, even though tremendous progress has been made in the direction of priests and laity collaboration in the Nigerian Church, since Vatican II, yet there is still a long way to go to ensure full and effective collaboration among all the People of God in the mission of Christ in Nigeria. Gabriel Afolabi Ojo, therefore, suggested that “the resilient traditional cultures of African communality and fellowship should continue to be cultivated in forming a firm basis for the inclusion of everyone in the mission of the Church in Nigeria.”\textsuperscript{279}


\textsuperscript{277} See Yves Congar, \textit{Laity, Church, and World: Three Addresses}, translated by Donald Attwater, 48-49.

\textsuperscript{278} See Afolabi Gabriel Ojo and David, D. Dodo. Eds. \textit{The Role of the Layperson in the Church in Nigeria}, 85.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have identified that in order to enhance an active lay participation in the general mission of the Church in Nigeria, a provision of regular formation will be of great help. If the lay Christians are well formed, they will be better equipped to face the challenges in society today as well as responsibly carry out their roles within the Church community. It is obvious from the research that there is a need for formation of the Nigerian Catholic laity in the social teaching of the Church. This will enable them to respond to their social, economic and political responsibilities in a Christian spirit and inculcate the Gospel into the various situations of their daily lives. All in all, the question of the active participation of the laity in the mission of the Church is a very serious issue which the Church, both universal and local, cannot risk to neglect. The Nigerian Church needs to be ever conscious of this fact and thus invest sufficient resources, material, intellectual and spiritual, for the realisation of this all important project.
GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Our research topic is “The participation of lay Catholics in Nigerian politics in the light of articles 7 and 14 of Vatican II’s Apostolicam Actuositatem.” I have adopted in this research an analytic, historical, expository, and interpretative methodology. The aim of these approaches is to be able to look at our text Apostolicam Actuositatem critically in the light of some development and focus on the theology of the laity, but, more so, they are relevant to the political mission of empowering the Catholic laity in Nigeria for active participation in the concrete political system of Nigeria.

Shortly before Vatican II, a number of theologians sought to develop a renewed theology of the laity. For instance, while Yves Congar delineated the triadic functions of the laity which they perform by virtue of their baptism, Gérard Philips concentrated on the right of the laity to express their opinion prudently in the Church, as well as to engage in the instruction of catechism. Karl Rahner’s view differed from those of Congar and Philips in some aspects. He denied the laity any permanent or official participation in the mission of the Church ad intra; otherwise they ceased to be laypersons, but, he later modified this view. Henri de Lubac, recognising the priesthood of the laity, emphasised the communion that should exist in the Church. This rapid survey of the theological views and positions regarding the laity was useful in giving a basic understanding of what was happening in the theological arena on the eve of Vatican II. Without a doubt, the thought and writings of these theologians had a decisive influence on the development of the documents, especially Lumen Gentium and Apostolicam Actuositatem.
The Second Vatican Council marked a turning point in the life of the Church and most especially on repositioning the mission of the laity in the Church. Some even call it Council of the laity.\textsuperscript{280} It is most remarkable that Vatican II was the first Council ever in the history of the Church to make a serious articulation on the role, responsibility and status of the laity. It recovered the biblical image of the Church as “People of God,” which stresses the consecration of everyone, clergy and laity alike, for communion and mission.\textsuperscript{281} This recovery of the biblical concept of the Church as People of God makes Vatican II somewhat revolutionary. However, \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem}, in its focus, implements the recommendations of \textit{Lumen Gentium}, including the vocation, mission and ecclesial identity based on the configuration to Christ through sacramental character, and the secular nature of the laity, and this secular nature of the laity give their mission a unique character. By reason of their special vocation the laity seeks the kingdom of God by engaging in the temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will (\textit{AA}, 7). In fact, the decree \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem} in its teaching stresses that the clergy, the religious, and the laity are co-equal members of the Church, through baptism all share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ.\textsuperscript{282} This innovation of Vatican II helps to alter in a way the seemingly historical tension and pejorative understanding of the laity as those whose mission is reduced and negligible in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Thus, this theological innovation of Vatican II logically confronts the laity particularly in their mission \textit{ad extra} in the world. This is the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See Yves Congar, \textit{Laity, Church and World}, 239. It is described so, because from the second session on, not only were there lay auditors of both sexes, who were heard, and who collaborated effectively on several commissions, but the council gave the laity an important place in its teaching.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
reason why *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, explicitly urges the laity to be up and doing in public affairs, specifically in the field of politics. It exhorts them thus: Catholics versed in politics and firm in the faith and Christian teaching should not decline to enter public life (*AA, 14*). This follows from the fact that in the light of the ‘signs of the modern time’ with democracy knocking at the door of nations, most of the Third world countries getting independent, it was obvious to the Council that the greatest challenge the Church will be facing in the twenty-first century is to recall the Catholic faithful to their Christian identity in their day-to-day existential engagement. This existential engagement is most challenging today especially in a complex society where politics has become very outstanding. In the light of this, we can safely conclude that active participation in the political life of every nation is all the more imperative to all Christian citizens.

From the study of the political leadership in Nigeria, it is evident that the problem with Nigeria is not just corruption, but leadership failure. The fact is obvious that there really was never a golden age of great leadership in the history of Nigeria. Nigerians have been subjected to protracted and failed political and economic programmes. The various leaders in different epochs, both military and civilian, have failed to put the common good of human persons in Nigeria first, instead they have taken to self-aggrandisement; bribery and corruption became the order of the day. As Chinua Achebe articulated: the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of Leadership.

But Nigeria can change for good today if she discovers leaders who have the will and vision. Therefore, the enlightened and the empowered Catholic laity who have the ability and

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the vision should lead the way and create an atmosphere conducive for the discovery of such leaders. This is a challenging mission for the Catholic laity in Nigeria, and it is only through this way can we overcome debility towards the common good in the Nigerian political situation.

The implication of this research is the re-awakening of the Catholic laity into active involvement in the political activities, especially in Nigeria, in order to steer the actual course of bringing the influence of the Church’s teaching and social ethics into the Nigerian political system. In this regard, the contribution of this research to the contemporary theological studies on the mission of the Catholic laity is that the mission and the spirituality of the Catholic laity that worth the name today must be combined with concrete action, since, in the face of unjust systems and corrupt governments, Christians cannot get away with simply practicing private virtue.\(^{285}\) Therefore, the laity must be empowered through formation and training in the social doctrine of the Church. In the Nigerian situation where majority of the populace is marginalised by bad political leadership, the Church’s social doctrine must be the basis of an intense and constant work of formation and training especially for the lay faithful. Such a formation should take into account their obligations in civic society.\(^{286}\) Such awareness will make the people to appreciate their rights, then, they can sufficiently organise themselves against bad political leaders.

Besides, the contribution of this research to the wealth of studies on the laity with particular reference to political situation and empowerment as in the case of Nigeria is a


dismissal of the age-long belief that is still acceptable in some quarters fifty years after Vatican II, that the laity are in the Church simply to pray, pay and to obey the hierarchy. This is not the case anymore. The laity today are the Church, and, by baptism, they are incorporated into Christ and placed among the People of God. And in their own way, they share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ and carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.

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