A Critique of Lay Ministry as Expressed in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*.

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College and the Pastoral Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology awarded by Regis College and the University of Toronto.

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Master of Theology

Regis College and the University of Toronto

2015

Abstract

This thesis critiques John Paul II’s theology of the laity in the mission and ministry of the Church as expressed in his most extensive and systematic reflection on the subject in the 1988 post-synodal apostolic exhortation Christifideles Laici. John Paul II’s theology of the laity represents a particular interpretation of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. His interpretation not only preserves the pre-conciliar two-states ecclesiology but expands it given his interpretation of secularity as an ontological characteristic of the laity. In this thesis I examine the foundations of this theological interpretation in John Paul II’s pre-papal text Sources of Renewal and how Christifideles Laici, while not dependent upon it remains in continuity with it. Three tropes: fidelity to the future, discipleship, and evangelisation are a backdrop against which this critique of John Paul II’s theology of the laity is examined and an alternative set of presuppositions to underpin ministry in the future is developed.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Michael Attridge, Faculty of Theology, University of Saint Michael’s College, University of Toronto for all his support and guidance.
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Chapter One: Introduction.

1.1. Introduction.

We are still a long way from seeing the Church as the People of God, composed of those who have been converted to the Gospel; she still appears to far too great an extent as consisting of hierarchy, sacraments, and institutions, despite the fact that these are merely means to the conversion to the Gospel of living, active men and women. That is why the faithful, or the laity as they are called, are still far too often regarded as recipients of the action of the Church and not sufficiently as forming this Church, considered as the People of God.¹

What would Yves Congar say today, fifty years after those words were written? Could these words have been written today, fifty years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council?

The tenor of what follows will suggest that I believe Congar’s comment could have been written today and that much of the Second Vatican Council’s vision for the laity remains unfulfilled. The post-conciliar period bears witness to conflicting visions of the mission and ministry proper to a layperson. The post-conciliar development of lay ministry through the 1970s and 1980s was followed by a reversion to pre-conciliar forms under the papacy of John Paul II that emphasised the laity’s mission in the secular sphere.

At issue is not whether the laity’s vocation has a secular character. It does. But so does every Christian vocation including that of the ordained. The issue is whether the secular character represents the totality of the lay vocation. The majority of laypersons will discover God’s call for them within the concrete circumstances of the world and of temporal affairs and so become holy by doing what God calls them to do in and through the “world.” There are, however, laypeople who feel called to minister more directly and more specifically to the People

of God within the Church. Given the official situation regarding laity and ministry these
individuals are presently in a theological and pastoral limbo, doing ministry yet not fully
accepted or appreciated by the Church’s highest teaching and pastoral authority.

This conflict between addressing ministerial need and Church law is not simply a conflict
between differing interpretations of the Council’s teaching and spirit that is only of interest to
theologians. This conflict of interpretation is of immense importance to the spiritual wellbeing of
the People of God. If “sacred” ministry is identified with the clergy, arises solely from
ordination, and is reserved to them alone then the worldwide decline in candidates for the
priesthood means the faithful are in danger of being denied spiritual ministration. Between 1969
and 1999 there was a worldwide reduction of 63% in the number of diocesan and religious
priests to the number of the faithful. On a regional basis the situation varies in severity. Europe
experienced a 22% drop in the ratio of clergy to people, Central and South America a massive
80%, meaning vast swathes of the continent are without priests. While the number of priests in
Africa rose 57% over this time the number of Catholics rose 206% so in reality there has been a
decrease of 147% in the ratio of priests to people.\textsuperscript{2} The last 15 years has not seen these trends
reversed and given the number of retirements and deaths among the clergy during this time the
situation must surely be graver than in 1999 when these statistics were compiled. These statistics
reveal a number of distinct issues among which is the necessity of creating and sanctioning new
forms of ministry, whereby laypeople becoming increasingly active in pastoral ministry: leading
the community in worship, proclaiming the Word, preaching the Word, consoling the faithful,
ministering as spiritual directors, and taking leadership roles in the Church. Despite the practical
challenge facing the spiritual mission of the Church the pontificate of John Paul II witnessed a

\textsuperscript{2} See Michael Himes, “Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers,” in \textit{Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning
reversion to pre-conciliar forms of ministry: that of the clergy in the Church and of the laity in the world.

The recent revelations around clerical child abuse and the unethical response of the ecclesiastical authorities have increased the faithful’s questioning of ecclesiastical structures and the way authority is exercised by the hierarchy and reserved to them. How different would the Church’s response have been if lay Catholics held positions of authority and oversight in the Roman curia, national episcopal conferences, and diocesan administration? Richard Gaillardetz contends that the crisis of child abuse is in the end a crisis of ecclesiology:

The real crisis is not so much moral as ecclesiological. What we have discovered is that, in spite of all the pro-Vatican II rhetoric, significant segments of our Church still operate out of an ecclesial vision uninformed by the vision of the Council. We have seen the soft underbelly of our Church’s decision making processes, and it hasn’t been pretty.³

The laity’s sense of being the Church fostered by the reforms of Vatican II means they are no longer willing to accept a hierarchy that simply imposes its will on dioceses and parishes without authentic dialogue between the clergy and the laity. In a parish environment where a person feels they have no voice or sense of belonging they will, if theologically and spiritually free, walk away and look elsewhere for fellowship in the Lord. The hierarchical Church must accept some culpability for the large numbers walking away from the Church and not simply blame consumerism, relativism, and factors external to the Church. The clergy need to see the questioning of the institution by the laity as an expression of the laity’s maturity and love. In the Western hemisphere the culture of questioning is essential in forming a just and mature society and political order. To expect the laity not question the agenda and practices of their pastors is not to view them as mature and committed Christians. Given that the Church expects the laity, as

citizens, to question the decisions made in the name of the common good by political leaders, it is somewhat ironic that such debate is discouraged within the Church and stifled by appeals to Tradition and God’s will. Speaking just weeks before the opening of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the Laity, Donna Hanson, Chairwomen of the U.S. bishops National Lay Advisory Council, addressed John Paul II on behalf of the U.S. laity. In her speech she noted the duty to question that is the mark of mature citizenship and adult faith along with the reality of not feeling heard:

My culture compels me to continue questioning those in leadership positions. I question them about public policies related to abortion, development of nuclear arms, and the exploitation of our environment. Not to question, not to challenge, not to seek understanding is to be less than a mature, educated and committed citizen. When I come to my Church, I cannot discard my cultural experiences. Though I know the Church is not a democracy ruled by popular vote, I expect to be treated as a mature, educated and responsible adult. Not to question, not to challenge, not to have authorities involve me in a process of understanding is to deny my dignity as a person and the rights granted to me by both Church and society….Your holiness, please let me know that you are also willing to walk with me. Accustomed as I am to dialogue, consultation, and collaboration, I do not always feel that I am heard. In my cultural experience, questioning is neither rebellion nor dissent. Rather, it is the desire to participate and is a sign of both love and maturity.4

At the same gathering Patrick Hughes spoke of the awareness of being called and sent as an approach to ministry:

Our certainty of vocation, however, comes from the personal discernment of our baptismal call and of our particular gifts. The declining number of priests and members of religious communities are not the cause of our response to the church’s needs. For many of us the Second Vatican Council was a significant personal turning point. We began to see ourselves as active adult participants in the life of the church. This new awareness came to some of us through an adult conversion experience.5

John Paul’s reply did not address the concerns raised but rather spoke of the need to affirm the secular mission of the laity. Taking Lumen Gentium 31 as his starting point he stated:

The Council taught that the specific task of the laity is precisely this: to ‘seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God’ (Ibid. 31). You are called to live in the world, to engage in secular

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professions and occupations, to live in those ordinary circumstances of family life and life in society from which is woven the very web of your existence. You are called by God himself to exercise your proper functions according to the spirit of the Gospel and to work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven.⁶

In many ways this address is a summary of what appears in John Paul’s exhortation Christifideles Laici. In his San Francisco address John Paul emphasises the laity’s role as spouses and parents (paragraph 3), women’s vocation to motherhood (paragraph 4), and the challenge of consumerism, relativism, and secularism (paragraph 7). For John Paul, “positive developments are always rooted in the sound Catholic ecclesiology taught by the [sic] Council.”⁷

What constitutes “sound Catholic ecclesiology” and its implications for ministry is what is debated and disputed.

1.2. Reasons for Undertaking this Study.

Undertaking this study on ministry is part of my own theological preparation and reflection for ordination. There are two particular reasons why I have chosen to reflect upon lay ministry. The context of my priesthood will be as a Jesuit serving in the Church in Ireland with a rapidly diminishing priestly population and in recovery mode after successive scandals. These scandals are the product of a domineering hierarchy who equated criticism with dissent and fostered a submissive laity. The need for a formed, articulate laity is essential to the rebuilding of the moral integrity of society and the Church. I hope in the future to work with laity and clergy in the area of adult faith formation and parish development to ensure that discipleship and evangelisation continue whether or not there are resident pastors in parishes. In undertaking this

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⁷ Ibid., paragraph 5.
study I hope to deepen my appreciation of the theological possibilities for lay ministry in the Church along with a deepened appreciation of the historical evolution of ministry in the life of the Church. My rationale is not the decline in vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the consequent lack of resident pastors but belief that ministry is an authentic expression of the grace of baptism and the laity, as ministers, being a legitimate development of conciliar ecclesiology. This thesis will help clarify the theological and pastoral issues around lay ministry.

Secondly, in 2001, the Holy See, granted permission to the Irish Episcopal Conference to establish the permanent diaconate. While re-establishing the permanent diaconate as a permanent grade within the hierarchy open to married men is a powerful example of the Church’s authority to reorder its miniserries, the question remains, whether this development is the best approach to developing ministry. The plan to establish the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of Killaloe reveals some of the tensions involved. In his pastoral letter, Bishop Kieran O’Reilly spoke of the main role of the Deacon as “facilitating the continued development of lay ministry in the diocese.” Bishop O’Reilly does not explain why the facilitation of lay ministry and its development throughout the diocese requires individuals to be ordained. Reaction in the diocese, especially among laywomen, was negative. At a public meeting to oppose the decision one speaker noted: “what was needed in the Catholic Church was not another layer of male-only clergy but arrangements which could accommodate all” while another spoke of ordaining deacons “to undertake work mainly done at present by women.”


10 Ibid.
times resources associated with that formation not have been directed towards forming lay Catholics for spiritual ministry and leadership? Was the decision made in part on the basis that the magisterium was emphasising the laity’s secular character and doing so with increasing forcefulness throughout the 1990s? In undertaking this study I hope to deepen my understanding of the seminal magisterial and curial documents relating to and shaping ministry in the Church today.

1.3. Methodology.

In this thesis I undertake an historical, analytical and synthetic approach to the study of lay ministry with particular reference to how the laity is presented in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation Christifideles Laici (1988). My introductory remarks conclude with a reflection on Church ministry in light of three tropes: fidelity to the future, discipleship, and evangelisation.

Chapter Two is an historical review. Ministry, which is my primary focus in this thesis, was from the fourth century until the thirteenth century, little more than the ordained giving blessings and confecting the Eucharist. This review shows how ministry evolved through the course of Church history in response to need. This response was often led by lay people who responded to new challenges and needs that given structures were unable to address. My historical review continues with a review of how Trent institutionalized the relationship between ministry and priesthood. I conclude the chapter with a review of developments associated with Vatican II.

Chapter Three addresses the question of hermeneutics. We shall review the issues around interpretation during the post-conciliar period before we make a detailed review of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla’s 1972 publication Sources of Renewal, which outlines his interpretation of the
Council. An analysis of this text reveals the fundamental attitudes of Wojtyla towards the role of the laity and how his papal pronouncements are a continuation and application of that teaching.

Chapter Four examines the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, which is John Paul’s most extensive reflection upon the laity’s mission and ministry. I examine John Paul II’s emphasis on the laity’s secular character. I conclude the chapter with a review of two subsequent magisterial and curial reflections on the mission and ministry of the laity: a 1994 speech made by John Paul to the Congregation for Clergy and Cardinal Ratzinger’s reflections on the 1997 *Instruction on Collaboration*. These subsequent addresses and documents reveal how the magisterium’s opposition to lay ministry increased and hardened through the 1990s following the publication of *Christifideles Laici*.

Finally Chapter Five presents an alternative theological framework to underpin an alternative theology of ministry that is broader than the laity’s mission and ministry as expressed in *Christifideles Laici*.

1.4. Reflecting on Ministry by way of the tropes of Fidelity to the Future, Discipleship, and Evangelisation.

The issue of the laity and their place in the life and ministry in the Church is not simply academic but essential to the proclamation of the gospel, nurturing discipleship, and developing a theological programme for the future. Structures that are incapable of responding to the challenges posed by de-Christianization and unable to address the spiritual needs of people need to be reassessed for the sake of what is deepest in the Church. Seeking refuge in old forms and divisions because they are viewed through the lens of nostalgia will achieve little. What might be gained by holding on will be outweighed by what is lost. There is a need for discerned risk
taking, trusting in the Spirit and the fidelity of the People of God to ensure the future and the laity’s place in that future.

Hearing the Word of God with reverence and proclaiming it confidently, this most sacred synod takes its direction from these words of Saint John: ‘we announce to you the eternal life which was with the Father, and has appeared to us. What we have seen and have heard we announce to you, in order that you may have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ’ (1 Jn 1:2-3).\textsuperscript{11}

The opening words of \textit{Dei Verbum (DV)} succinctly express the faith and mission of the Church.

The faith of the Church is God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our Christian faith is in Jesus Christ, whom Paul VI spoke of as:

\begin{quote}
The beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega; he is the king of the new world; he is the secret of history; he is the key to our destiny. He is the mediator, the bridge, between heaven and earth. He is more perfectly than anyone else the Son of Man, because he is the Son of God, eternal and infinite. He is the son of Mary, blessed among all women, his mother according to the flesh, and our mother through the sharing in the Spirit of his Mystical Body.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

The mission of the Church is to proclaim this faith and its promises to all people so as to form a single community of believers living the values of the Kingdom of God. This mission of the Church to announce what it has received directs the focus of the Church as institutional structure and People of God beyond itself into the world of men and women in their concrete existence.

Contrasting the ceremonial of a pontifical audience with daily life, Congar noted in his journal that the Church seemed in such moments to lack this outward focus to the world:

\begin{quote}
There is an apparatus known as “Church” which functions by itself, without any contact with ordinary men and women…a kind of breach between the theology that one expresses and the Christian people…what was there in common between our magnificent
\end{quote}


ceremony and the good people in the narrow, insalubrious streets through which I had walked. The Church is FOR PEOPLE.\textsuperscript{13}

As he notes in \textit{The Wide World my Parish: Salvation and its Problems} what he understands the Church to be:

The Church is the Church only because of Christ, but she is made up of human beings. She is a gathering of men among other gatherings of men, but bearing among them the mystery of Jesus Christ. She is the company of witnesses to him. \textit{Inasmuch as it depends on men’s faithfulness}, she brings Christ to the world, offering it opportunities to recognize him as the key to its destiny.\textsuperscript{14}

How are contemporary men and women going to recognize Jesus as the key to their destiny? The answer is not to be found in repeating old forms belonging to another age. The answer is found in the Church recognising itself as a part of, and not separate from, the unfolding human story. Each disciple of Christ lives out his or her faith and mission within a particular moment of that unfolding story. Each is a disciple and evangelises within his or her particular time, culture, and place. As cultures change and move forward, the form in which the faith is expressed and lived out must change so as to be able to communicate with the wider world.

Many of the documents of the Second Vatican Council recognise this. At the Council the Fathers spoke less of the \textit{societas perfecta} and more of the pilgrim people journeying towards a deeper and fuller contemplation of the mystery of God.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Gaudium et Spes} (GS) acknowledges not only the necessary adaption of intellectual and cultural forms to preach and to evangelise but goes so far as to say: ‘this accommodated preaching of the revealed Word ought to remain the


law of all evangelisation. For thus each nation develops the ability to express Christ’s message in its own way.  

Bonaventure Kloppenburg in his book *Ecclesiology of Vatican II* acknowledges:

> In order to understand and interpret correctly the present situation of the Church and its characteristic movements we must put it into historical context, that is, the context of what is happening today. The Church is a pilgrim, set down in the midst of history and therefore inevitably and deeply marked and conditioned by events.  

Kloppenburg points out the danger of an ahistorical approach to practices and doctrines. He notes the consequences of such an approach. Certain theological practices and insights

> receive[d] a value and emphasis which they had perhaps not had in earlier times and which, from a purely theological point of view, they may not have deserved. Nonetheless it was on such declarations of dogma and such defences of practices, as gathered together in Denzinger’s famous *Handbook of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations concerning Faith and Morals*, that theology came to be based.

Kloppenburg is not dismissive of past teaching but notes when aspects of that teaching gets emphasised other aspects are downplayed. At a particular moment in history a particular decision might be the correct one but that decision, taken out of that original context, might be a hindrance to the Church’s mission at a different moment in history. In *Du bon Usage de ‘Denzinger’* Congar notes building, “an entire system of thought based on Denzinger can produce deplorable results.” As I show in Chapter Four *Christifideles Laici* uses the documents of the Council in a way Congar warns against. Quotations are taken from a conciliar document and placed within *Christifideles Laici* without reference to its original context. An ahistorical theology follows.

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18 Ibid.

When Congar speaks of being faithful to the future he understands the Church as a living organism that is at once its past, its present, and its future. One cannot separate anyone of these three moments. Neither theology nor pastoral practice can wholly embrace or simply abandon the past for the present or the future. What is demanded of discipleship and evangelisation in the contemporary situation must be discerned in light of what is abiding, in light of the principles of the faith made known through the Word of God and reflected upon through the course of the Church’s history. Congar writes of this:

Fidelity to Christian reality can be a fidelity to the present state of things, to forms presently expressing this reality, that is, fidelity to what is presently achieved. It can also be fidelity to its future development or a fidelity to its principle. The two expressions come to the same thing...A profound, not shallow, fidelity to this dimension of Christianity is at once a fidelity to principle, to the tradition, and to the future, that is, to what Christianity can and ought to become in order to arrive at the truth given at the beginning, in substance, in its principle. Catholic (=embracing the whole) fidelity will have to embrace the two aspects.  

Given the challenges facing the Church, is fidelity to the future, discipleship, and evangelisation best served by emphasising the secular character of the laity’s mission? Is such a focus a particular reading of the Council’s teaching on the laity? Can such a focus take full account of the notion of discipleship as the living out of a specific call and mission given by God to an individual believer? Does the secular focus recognise that laypeople through baptism are conferred with a sacred ministry and can be called by God with a mission to serve the People of God directly as ministers in and of the Church? In a word is the secular emphasis an adequate adaptation of the Church’s “forms of life and activity to the requirements of today [sic]”?  

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One such adaptation to the requirements of today includes the recognition of and support for those laypeople who discern a call to ministry in the Church. Many lay people who feel called to minister to the community of the faithful do so without feeling that bishops and pastors support, let alone, understand this call. These are the people Patrick Hughes is referring to when he says, “consciousness of ourselves as church came as a gradual awakening to the reality of our being called and being sent.”

He noted an important practical point but one which has yet to materialise: “It is important that diocesan vocation offices promote the universal call to ministry, including the call to full-time lay ministry as a vocation and value to the Church.”

For many laypeople the secular emphasis given to the laity’s mission is regarded as a means of clerical control and the maintenance of authority. It is the failure to recognise that the laity has come of age. Congar noted the sad truth that ‘when lay people are kept in tutelage and treated more or less as children, they become indifferent to the Church’s faith as to her life…the good health of the Church requires that the faithful be active, even if (as we see in families and schools) robustly healthy children are a bit more difficult to keep in hand than those who are ailing and spiritless.’

The new is always unsettling for the Church and perceived as a threat to the continuity of Church teaching. With the new there is

A sense that something is incompatible with what has been taught up to the present can cause enormous resistance…It does not happen without confrontation or debate. Change and novelty –however much care is taken with the language to describe what is happening –appear to be a foreign body and a danger to Tradition. It is only a posteriori, sometimes decades later, that what was seen to be new now seems entirely appropriate within the Tradition and the continuity of the Church.

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23 Ibid. 322.

24 Congar, Church, Laity, and World, 38.

25 Br. Emile of Taizé, Faithful to the Future, 46.
This was the initial experience of the mendicants, the Jesuits, active women religious, and Eucharistic liturgy in the vernacular – these were opposed by some in the name of the Tradition, but have, by their fruit, been proved a proper and correct development. Lay ministry must follow the same course. Developments must be discerned by the community of faith and not simply by the hierarchical Church. As Pope Francis reminds us “we should not even think therefore, that ‘thinking with the Church’ means only thinking with the hierarchy of the Church.”26 Regarding lay ministry it seems the laity as recipients of that ministry has given the development its blessing and they regard it as an authentic form of discipleship and a mark of the future. As Edward Schillebeeckx notes,

The present theological disagreement and obscurity lies in the fact that on the one hand the supreme leadership of the “universal church” has made it clear beyond all doubt that it refuses to recognise male or female pastoral workers as ministers of the church, while on the other hand in local communities the believing people with its presbyters who are already there in practice recognizes these pastores as de facto ministers (which used to be the essential feature of ordination).27

As has often been the case in the Church the hierarchy needs to catch up with the Spirit at work through the laity.

1.5. Conclusion.

The Church exists to serve the Word by the proclamation of the Gospel. Ministry is the life blood of the Church. It is the expression of discipleship and evangelisation and a statement of confidence that there is a future. Through ministry every Christian is both disciple and evangelist and through ministry every Christian is orientated towards the future. The Gospel proclamation to evangelise and create discipleships is orientated towards the future: “go,


therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Matthew 28:19-20). This commission is a clear exposition of the New Testament Church’s self-understanding and remains normative – the Church exists to proclaim Christ, evangelise, and are the community of disciples. These are the Church’s goal and it has no other. The task of theology is to reflect upon given structures to see how they help or hinder the future, discipleship, and evangelisation within the unfolding human story and propose new structures that will better realise the purpose for the Church’s existence. It is with that task in mind that I examine moments in the development of ministry.

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Chapter Two: The Development of Ministry.

2.1. Introduction.

To understanding the mission and ministry of the laity today necessitates a review of history. The situation of the laity in the life of the Church changed through history. Historical events shaped the choices made and the choices rejected. The present emphasis on the laity’s mission as “secular” in focus represents the consequence of particular theological developments and historical events. I will show how many ministerial initiatives were due to the activity of laypeople rather than the hierarchy.29 Such activity in the second millennium grew out of a desire for deeper discipleship that the given ministerial structures couldn’t achieve. As Schillebeeckx notes, “renewals in the church usually begin with illegal deviations; renewals from above are rare”30 and it is as “illegal deviations” that many of these developments were first adjudged by Church authorities.


Once the concept of categories of the faithful took root in the Church, ministry was altered. Categories or states of life determined the ministry “proper” to an individual. This situation evolved through the course of the history of the Church of antiquity. In his work The Christian in Society, Jeremiah Newman, writes of the New Testament ekklesia,

There was no dichotomy between clergy and laity. These did not constitute two separate classes, two groups representing two different states of life. They were united, all as members of the ‘People of God’. All lived the same state of life, in the world and in Christ, but with differentiation of function.31

29 While many lay initiatives such as the Franciscans, the Beguines, and the Beghards were later co-opted into the formal ecclesial structure as religious orders it does not take from their initial origins in lay initiative. Such co-opting also reveals the capacity of ecclesial structures to adapt to changing circumstances. These circumstances will always be tied up with need and history.

30 Schillebeeckx, Ministry, 84.
Kenan Osborne’s study *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* notes

The major emphasis for the followers of Jesus was not so much on the difference between a cleric and a lay person within the Church structures, but rather on the difference between the Christian environment and the “world.” Internal Christian division, such as the cleric/lay, appeared only tangentially, while the centre of attention focused on the difference between those who accepted the Christian faith and those who had not.\(^{32}\)

While modern scholarship demonstrates that the terms *Kleros/laikos* do not have the meaning in Scripture later applied to them, it does not claim that the early Church was egalitarian to the point of not having leadership or ministries. What is meant by the term *episkopos, presbyter*, and *diakonos* in the New Testament is far from clear. These terms existed alongside many others without clear agreement among New Testament authors what was implied by each term.\(^{33}\) Osborne writes, “one does not find in Paul’s letters any indication that the non-leaders, or non-ministers, correspond to the later-appearing name of *laikoi.*”\(^{34}\) In *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, Osborne writes, “in the Pauline community, as far as we can discern from textual data, the use of the titles episkopos and diakonos, much less presbyter, were not common, whereas apostle, prophet, and teacher were.”\(^{35}\) The ambiguity around the New Testament church’s use of these terms makes the present day claims of the magisterium around priesthood and priestly ministry is difficult to maintain: “the tension between historical research on early Christian ministry and certain magisterial and episcopal statements which do not reflect this historical data has raised mixed signals. Today’s lack of

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\(^{34}\) Osborne, *Ministry*, 97.

\(^{35}\) Osborne, *Priesthood*, 45.
clarity in the understanding of ordained ministry and lay ecclesial ministry has been exacerbated by this conflict of interpretations."\(^{36}\)

Passing from the first century into the second century the focus of ministerial leadership and pastoral care shifted from house-churches to purpose built, if disguised, structures such as found at Dura-Europas. With this change, other structures became more formalised. Carolyn Osiek notes that as the second century progressed leadership began to increasingly focus on teaching and on the authority to teach. While there is evidence of bishops, priests, and deacons there is no clear understanding of their role up the end of the second century.\(^{37}\) Osiek argues that from the third century on, the practice of hospitality and patronage was increasingly replaced by a centralised system of coordinated care under ecclesial leadership. The bishop directed both the community and the deacons overseeing the care of those in need. What is left for the non-leaders? They are left with little apart from living a moral life and paying whatever tithe was obligated of them.\(^{38}\) This distinction between community leaders and non-leaders is functional rather than ontological. The ontological distinction arises from the development of a Christian ordo and the ‘ontologising of the issue of ordination.’\(^{39}\)

In the Graeco-Roman cultural and political world orders were groups of specific people who had a particular function within society; the order separated its members from the rest of the population. They were highly respected, even sacrosanct. Orders provided an obvious exemplar


\(^{39}\) Osborne, Ministry, 26.
for the Church. As Thomas O’Meara notes, “the church could not help but be modified in its self-understanding by the powerful and useful thought-forms and political institutions of the Roman world.”\textsuperscript{40} It is only within this framework, Osborne argues, does talk of ordination make sense.\textsuperscript{41} A Christian became a member of the order of bishop, priest, and deacon through ordination thus separating them from the rest of the community of believers. This means the “use of \textit{klerikoi/laikoi} did not give rise to \textit{ordines}; rather, the incorporation of \textit{ordines} into the Church structures gave rise to the meaning and subsequent usage of \textit{klerikoi/laikoi}.”\textsuperscript{42} Theologies of ordination developed under the reality of orders and ordination rather than preceding them; “\textit{Ordo} became the hermeneutic through which \textit{klerikoi/laikoi} received their ecclesiastical meaning.”\textsuperscript{43} 

Summing up these developments, O’Meara writes, “the reduction of Church life during the second and third centuries –necessary perhaps at that time of expansion –prepared for the unfortunate separation of the Christian community into a large passive laity directed in word and sacrament by a very small separate group, who alone were publicly constituted in full-time service, i.e., ordained.”\textsuperscript{44} O’Meara speaks of this theology as “among forces obscuring or diminishing the life of the Spirit in the baptised.”\textsuperscript{45} Once the role of the Spirit in the life of the baptised is diminished and the link between baptism and mission increasingly neglected the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} See Osborne, \textit{Ministry}, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{42} O’Meara, “Order and Ordination,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Osborne, \textit{Ministry}, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{44} O’Meara, “Orders and Ordination,” 724.
\end{itemize}
ministry of the laity diminishes in favour of the ministry of the cleric (and later religious). This development and subsequent developments must not be thought of in terms of the intentional diminishment of the laity but rather the unintended consequence of choices made and later augmented by theological reflection with all the dangers that Kloppenburg warns against.46

2.3. Responses and Developments.

One of the major responses to the perception of the increasingly worldly focus of the Church and growing laxity associated with the fourth century was monasticism. Monasticism, a predominantly lay movement cannot be understood in terms of the forms we are familiar with in modern day Benedictines or Cistercians. As Francine Cardman notes, “the ascetic and monastic movements of the fourth century and beyond provided a critique of the ways in which the Church was becoming enculturated and accommodated to its culture.”47 Over time monasticism was clericalized in the broad and narrow sense; broadly meaning the monks and monastic communities were increasingly brought under the authority of the bishop and the ecclesiastical authorities and narrowly in the sense that monks increasingly became clerics. The primary ministry of the monks was liturgy especially the celebration of the Eucharist which was “greatly increased in bulk and in solemnity, as the monks adored God vicariously for contemporaries in the world.”48 By the eleventh century “evangelisation, catechetics, and other traditional forms

46 See Chapter One, 10.


had practically disappeared in any organized form, and even preaching was considerably curtailed."\textsuperscript{49}

The success of the early monks as witnesses to the evangelical life, indirectly, and unintendedly, further diminished the place of the laity. The laity was between the rock of the clergy and the hard-place of the religious; between those ordained and those living the life of evangelical perfection. As a consequence the laity felt themselves or was believed to be less “strictly bound by the ideals of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{50} As the world was corrupt and they were in the world their state of life was perceived as antithetical to achieving Christian perfection and so “not everything possible was done to develop a lay morality and lay perfection…reflection on the specifically Christian values of secular life still left much to be desired.”\textsuperscript{51}

This unfulfilled desire left the eleventh century laity looking for a deeper spirituality than was being provided by the parish (in as much as there was a parish structure in the sense we are familiar with) and the monastery. Eleventh century versions of modern day faith-sharing groups were formed and people increasingly turned to Scripture and focused their prayer on the Word. Encountering the Word led to a re-imagining of the evangelical life. Groups such as the Lollards, the Waldensians, and the Albigensians offered an alternative vision of Christian living not centred on the institutional Church and the sacraments. Examining their respective theologies in detail is not my point I simply want to note that by their existence they indicate that “a spiritual vacuum existed in the Church of this period, particularly for lay people. The hierarchy did not


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 143.
provide the leadership necessary to remedy the situation, so laypeople tried to do it themselves.”

Under the influence of these lay movements both ministry and religious life would evolve. Saints Dominic and Francis adopted the practices of the lay movements: preaching, mobility, and poverty. With mobility there comes an emphasis on the Word and preaching. With Francis and Dominic and others such as the Beguines we have a movement from below in response to pastoral need. John O’Malley speaks of the experience as “the recognition of a pastoral need or some kind of personal conversion or vision, or a combination of both. The movement, thus, was from below, not top-downward…Its most immediate inspiration was the story of Jesus and his disciples, not ecclesiastical legislation.”

Despite their later clericalization the mendicants represent a bottom up pastoral movement that radically altered ministry. Kevin Seasoltz says of the mendicants

They abandoned the seclusion and withdrawal of the cloister in order to engage wholeheartedly in pastoral ministry. Preaching and service to the people were their major concerns. They preached a message that was often different from that of monks and canons, namely, that salvation need not be sought by flight from the world but could be found by faithfully fulfilling one’s normal obligations in the secular world…the mendicants went where people were and tried to minister to them in terms of their concrete needs.

In the sixteenth century Ignatius of Loyola confronted the same difficulties as earlier lay movements. His Autobiography recounts the difficulties he confronted when as a layperson he

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desired to help souls: “without condemning him for anything they shut his mouth so he might not help his neighbours in what he could…for it seemed to him that the door had been closed to helping souls.”\textsuperscript{55} Joseph Conwell notes, “he found that when it came to helping people in spiritual matters the door was closed to laymen…If he wanted to help souls, as God was calling him to do, then he needed the Church to mission him, and since the Church was obviously not missioning laymen to that task, he could have to become a priest.”\textsuperscript{56} Ignatius’ warrant for ministry was his personal encounter with God and discernment of God’s will rather than ordination or the evangelical counsels though like the mendicants before him, his options were limited by the ecclesiology of the day that emphasised ordination as the warrant for ministry.

Thomas O’Meara notes “religious life and priesthood were ‘baptismal surrogates.’ For centuries, baptism was pushed into the background, religious life and orders created a first-class citizenship, while the baptised were placed in a state passive and bland…Its purpose may be control, for to diminish baptism helps control the baptised.”\textsuperscript{57} As I noted at the end of section 2.2 the role of the Spirit was diminished in the baptised. Baptism was less a consecration for mission and more a means of remitting Original Sin and the basis of personal sanctification. O’Meara’s image of “baptismal surrogate” serves to mean that the function that should have been proper to baptism, namely mission, became a part of religious life and priesthood. It would not be until the Second Vatican Council that the link between baptism and mission would be restored.

With Ignatius and the first Jesuits co-opted into the Church as a religious order we cannot say that the position of the laity and their role in the Church changed. We can say, however, that


\textsuperscript{57} O’Meara, “Lay Ecclesial Ministry – What It Is and What It Isn’t,” 72.
what constituted ministry changed. Ignatius expanded the vision of vocation and so ministerial possibility. To help souls was not simply to offer masses, prayer, or preach but engagement in the world. Ignatius continued the process begun by the mendicants. Building on what had gone before, and a point shared with the Reformers, Ignatian spirituality pointed towards the “dignity and Christian value to the various activities of secular life and particularly to man’s trades and professions.” Doing one’s daily tasks whether as a priest, religious, statesman, teacher, or parent was vocational if it corresponded to God’s specific call for your life. That was the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises, to help people discern God’s will in their life. For Ignatius, a vocation is therefore not a specific call to priesthood or religious life, though it can include these calls, but a discerned activity an individual undertakes in response to the specific and unique call God makes to him or her. I return to this point in Chapter Five.

2.4. From Trent to Vatican II.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) had little to say directly about ministry especially ministry independent of the secular clergy. John O’Malley notes Trent’s silence on the “explosion of ministerial initiatives actually taking place; retreat, spiritual direction, preaching, missionary active, spiritual reading, and social ministries.” Trent’s primary focus was the defence of the ordained priesthood and the sacramental economy over against the attacks of the Reformers. In as much as ministry was addressed it was within these two parameters. The sacramental ministry alone was emphasised and so the link between priest and sacraments was

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59 See Congar, Lay People in the Church, 13.


affirmed to the exclusion of most other pastoral activities. As non-ordained the laity could not participate in the ministry of the priest; laypeople were not endowed with sacred power. Laypeople were seen as the recipients of the secular clergy’s ministrations. Of the layman, John Bossy writes

[He was] to attend Mass every Sunday and holy-day in his parish church. He was to receive the Church's sacraments, other than confirmation, from the hands of his parish priest, who would baptize him, marry him, give him extreme unction on his deathbed, and bury him. He would receive the Eucharist at least once a year, at Eastertide, and with the same regularity the priest would hear and absolve his sins in the sacrament of penance.62

The laity’s “ministry” consisted of faithful reception of the sacraments. The Tridentine identification of such ministrations within the parish meant parish and pastor became synonymous for many Catholics and remains so: “‘happy to meet you Father! What’s your parish?’ This question is the almost inevitable initiation into a conversation about being a priest.”63 Ministry became synonymous with the local pastor. Apart from faithful reception of the sacraments the laity’s ministry consisted in the practice of the corporal works of mercy – doing good deeds in the secular sphere.

While laymen might join a religious order and be engaged in ministry to varying degrees this option was not initially available to women. Strict claustration of female religious only ended in 1633 with the founding of the Daughters of Charity and so began the tradition of active women religious committed to charitable and social ministries outside the convent. Despite the secular focus of these ministries recent social histories of convent life from the period (17th - 18th


century) has also shown that many convents went beyond concern for temporal needs and provided spiritual direction and faith sharing for laywomen.\textsuperscript{64}

As O’Meara noted with reference to the changes that occurred during the third century expansion such a development may have been necessary but Trent highlights that other truth O’Meara notes when he speaks of theologies being limited in their value by time: “like all theologies they have a limited shelf life, are partial truths; what was once their truth can in different times be half-truth.”\textsuperscript{65} The attitudes and pastoral practices associated with the reforms of Trent remained entrenched in the Church despite the radical intellectual, political, cultural, and economic changes going on around the Church from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Attempts throughout the nineteenth century to reconcile the Church to the changed political and intellectual situation resulted in excommunications and condemnations of theologians and especially historians and culminated in the modernist crisis of the early twentieth century.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the Church had stultified amid the world around it. The Church seemed incapable of change; particular theologies and practices had become sacrosanct. Theologians who championed dialogue and reform were condemned. Pius X spoke of such efforts as “thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church.”\textsuperscript{66} O’Malley notes of Pius X’s Holy Office that it operated with “a vigour it had not known since it was instituted in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, issuing excommunications and forbidding

\textsuperscript{64} See Osborne, \textit{Lay Ministry}, 452.

\textsuperscript{65} O’Meara, “Lay Ecclesial Ministry –What It Is and What It Isn’t,” 72.

discussion of crucial issues." Congresses and lay movements suppressed or brought under the control of the hierarchy through the agency of Catholic Action. Writing in 1905, Pius X stated:

All those works which directly come to the aid of the spiritual and pastoral ministry of the Church and which labour religiously for the good of souls must in every least thing be subordinated to the authority of the Church…the restoration and promotion of true Christian civilization and which, as explained above, constitute Catholic Action, by no means may be considered as independent of the counsel and direction of ecclesiastical authority.

The laity was spoken of as “collaborators in the auxiliary apostolate of the hierarchy.” The papacy and local hierarchies were happy to support lay movements aimed at fostering the Christian re-animation of the social order so long as these movements did not concern themselves with matters of internal Church discipline and practice. Thus where the laity had a mission it is firmly under ecclesiastical control and limited to the secular order.

Given the operative theology this should not surprise. An inadequate pneumatology alongside an inadequate ecclesiology contributed to this. When Pius X writes, “with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors,” it is because of the limitations in the prevailing pneumatology and ecclesiology at the time and not reflective of a negative personal attitude towards the laity. The role of the Spirit in pre-conciliar magisterial pronouncements was

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understood as given to the hierarchy to guarantee the truthfulness of what they teach while in the laity the Spirit is given for their personal sanctification and growth in holiness.71

Despite such clear teaching, pre-conciliar ministry was often not so rigid but more responsive to need. This was especially the case in dioceses that lacked clergy and religious. It is the reality of committed lay Catholics active in pastoral ministry and desiring to be even more active that gives rise to the theological reflection upon that reality; practice precedes theological reflection.72 Schillebeeckx writes, perhaps somewhat provocatively, “practice must never wait for the permission of theologians before it gets going. This is certainly true. Whether justifiably or not, practice follows from faith (i.e. the spontaneous or implicit “theory”), so practice does not precede faith, but theology.”73 The insights of these theological reflections along with the other developments in biblical scholarship, historical criticism, pneumatology, liturgy all questioned theologically the status quo within the Church. As Joseph Ratzinger notes, “the anti-modernistic neurosis which had again and again crippled the Church since the turn of the century here seemed to be approaching a cure.”74 These developments, however, needed a Council to be vindicated. Only then could a fundamental re-orientation of the Church’s self-understanding begin and if the Church’s self-understanding changed, how ministry was conceived would also be re-orientated. The Church cannot change without her understanding of ministry changing.


72 Early and influential works reflecting theologically on the laity include Leo Suenens’ Theology of the Apostolate (1951); Yves Congar’s Lay People in the Church (1954) and Lay, Church and World (1960); and Gerard Phillips’ The Role of the Laity in the Church (1955).

73 Schillebeeckx, Ministry, 101-102


The Second Vatican Council was the first time that an ecumenical council reflected systematically upon the laity and their mission in the Church. It is only with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council that we can speak specifically of lay ministry. Whether Vatican II was “the Council of the Laity” is disputed. Yet within their historical context the Council’s writings on the laity represent a remarkable achievement given where Church teaching and practice were coming from.

Among the achievements of the Council, and of particular importance for this study, is the recovery of such theological principles as the Church as the People of God and the universal call to holiness. Interwoven with these principles are the principles of the priesthood of all believers, baptism as a consecration for mission, and charisms. While these principles are broader than the laity, they have implications for the laity and their place in the life and mission of the Church. The movement of the People of God from what Ratzinger terms “a marginal phenomenon to the central concept” reflected the growing break with the pyramidal ecclesiology that had dominated since the fourth century. The impact of this is, as Jan Grootaers notes:


76 While speaking positively of the common priesthood, Lumen Gentium 10 did not develop in detail the relationship between the common priesthood and that of the ministerial priesthood or claim to be a definitive theological statement. This will be a point of major discussion and disagreement in the post-conciliar period and remains theologially unresolved. The primary purpose of the article was to speak positively of the common priesthood. See Aloys Grillmeier, “The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter 2” in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, volume I, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1969), 158. And Peter Drilling, “Common and Ministerial Priesthood: Lumen Gentium, Article 10,” Irish Theological Quarterly 53 (summer, 1987), 81-99.

77 Maximilian Heinrich Heim, Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 78.
A fundamental reorientation of ecclesiology that would put an end to the pyramidal vision of the Church. It showed that bishops, laity, and religious were all part of the people of God, the description that took precedence over the chapter on the episcopate. The first two chapters laid the foundations for membership in the Church in a spiritual dimension in which all members are equal by reason of their baptism, prior to any differentiation by the functions described in the next two chapters.  

Conciliar teaching on the People of God reveals the fundamental equality of all believers rooted in baptism which makes them sharers in the common priesthood of Christ and confers on them, through the graciousness of the Spirit, charisms for mission. This baptismal consecration takes precedence over all subsequent consecrations. The universal call to holiness is a way of speaking of the unity of consecration, mission, and charism. Holiness is the engagement with and our surrender to God’s unique mission; holiness is the fruit of vocation not the basis of it. If holiness is realised through obedience to one’s mission then charisms are necessary and given to achieve that end. Of charisms and the Holy Spirit the Council wrote

> Allotting His gifts ‘To everyone according as he will’ (1 Cor. 12:11), He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church…These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simply and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church (LG 12).

Conciliar talk of the baptismal priesthood restored to Catholic theology a concept looked upon with suspicion because of its associations with the Reformation and Protestant theology. It was an important recognition of the Christological identity and the missionary imperative received through baptism; being baptised a priest, prophet, and king is for mission. Before the Council, consecration and mission were linked to ordination rather than baptism. When Congar writes, “one of the most characteristic steps taken, perhaps the most characteristic of the whole

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Council, consists in rediscovering and affirming the link between consecration and mission.\textsuperscript{79} He is speaking of baptismal consecration.\textsuperscript{80} The Council Fathers wrote: “the laity derives the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ’s mystical body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself.”\textsuperscript{81}

I believe, however, that focussing on these theological principles: the People of God, universal call to holiness, common priesthood of all believers, consecration for mission, and charisms rather than focussing on the laity’s secular character will provide the theological framework necessary for a theology of lay ministry that does fuller justice to the dignity of the laity and addresses the challenges of the contemporary situation and points beyond the secular as the specific mark of the laity’s mission. I return to these principles in Chapter Five.

Because of the importance that will be ascribed to the laity’s secular character in the post-conciliar period especially by John Paul II it is necessary to look in how this matter was addressed by the Council. The Council Fathers made significant references to the laity’s secular character: “secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen” (\textit{GS} 43); “since it is proper to the layman’s state in life for him to spend his days in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, he is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven” (\textit{AA} 2); and “a secular quality is proper and special to laymen… the laity, by their vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in


\textsuperscript{80} That Congar is speaking of the link between baptismal consecration and consecration for mission is clear as he is speaking specifically of laypeople and Christian initiation as the basis of mission. See Ibid., 242.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem} (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity) in Walter M. Abbot, \textit{The Documents of Vatican II}, article 3.
temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God” (LG 31) can be taken as representative of the sentiments expressed throughout Lumen Gentium 30-38 and Apostolicam Actuositatem.

The Council’s teaching on the secular focus of the laity’s mission is heavily emphasised because that was firmer ground regarding the laity than much else that was proposed and discussed. The Council Fathers’ theology and experience of the Church was rooted in the clergy-laity/sacred-secular divide. They understood this theology and were aware of the fruits it borne in the life of the Church.

The secular characteristic of the laity’s mission and ministry fits in well with the older pre-conciliar two-states ecclesiology, which is present in the documents of the Council and is juxtaposed alongside the newer ecclesiology of the Church as the People of God in Lumen Gentium. The Council was breaking new ground regarding the laity and the difficulty of that struggle can be seen in the way the laity is defined in Lumen Gentium 31 – the struggle to define them positively and independently of clergy and religious. The issue is not that what is said about the laity’s secular character is incorrect but whether the Council Fathers intended what they said regarding the laity’s secularity to be the ultimate characteristic defining their mission and so ministry. In Chapters Three and Four the heavy emphasis placed on the laity’s secularity by Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II, while a legitimate reading of the Council documents, is a limited one.

According to the relatio for Lumen Gentium 31, it was intended to be a typological description of the laity rather than a theological statement: “in this sense, the lay vocation and mission are seen from more of a sociological viewpoint. Secular character, according to this
view, refers to the life situation of the laity rather than a theological or ontological condition."  

Aurelie Hagstrom, however, argues that a theological and ontological interpretation is possible:

The laity’s secularity does not stem from the fact that a majority of laity live in the world, but from their vocation in Christ. Secularity is not something external and sociological; it is vocational. Through baptism, the laity is called to full participation in the mission of the Church, and their participation is characterised by secularity. This interpretation gives secularity a theological and ecclesiological value. The secular character is rooted in the Incarnation and based on the nature of the Church, which is sent into the world to continue the salvific mission of Christ. 

Hagstrom is not incorrect when she says a theological and ontological interpretation of the laity’s secular characteristic gives “secularity a theological and ecclesiological value.” Hagstrom seems to be arguing for this theological and ontological possibility so as to deepen appreciation of secularity as “a dimension of the entire Church, which is ‘ministerial’ in its entirety” rather than limiting the laity’s mission to secularity, which she does note “will be typically carried out in and through engagement in temporal affairs.” She does not deny the laity a ministry in the church as I show in Chapter Four.

2.6. Conclusion in Light of the Tropes.

What can be learned from reflecting on the historical evolution of ministry in light of the tropes spoken of in Chapter One: fidelity to the future, discipleship, and evangelisation? Firstly, fidelity to the future necessitates change. The Church exists within history and as it changes, the Church must change. This is not a facile change but one rooted in the question: what helps the Church fulfil its mission of deepening discipleship and evangelising. It is not particularly


83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 168.

85 Ibid., 156.
difficult to write a history critical of choices taken when that history is examined in light of the present – historical decisions should only be examined within their proper historical context. During the expansion of the fourth century, as O’Meara pointed out, the adoption of Roman organisational and thought forms was necessary; it is enculturation – the adaptation of the message to the wider cultural context in which it is being preached.\textsuperscript{86} This was regarded as the best means to evangelise and form disciples in the new context in which the Church was to proclaim the Gospel. The difficulty is less the initial decision but the failure to recognise that new models are always needed because history is not static and conditions change. Niall Humphreys notes:

\begin{quote}
Structure exists for the Church to facilitate its development as a Christian community - the structure itself cannot be central and in particular should not conflict with what emerge as fundamental human values. What form the structure should take cannot be predetermined and should naturally evolve - but it cannot evolve effectively if existing structures are canonized and sacralised as divinely-given absolutes.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

Humphreys points out two truths. Firstly, structures exist to facilitate discipleship and evangelisation and secondly, that structures must change so as to make the Gospel message comprehensible in a changed cultural and intellectual context.

The challenge is to know when to adapt and evolve: adaptation and change in light of the Gospel is fidelity to the future. Paul Tillich writes: “thinking pervades all the spiritual activities of man. Man would not be spiritual without words, thoughts, concepts.”\textsuperscript{88} Proclaiming the Gospel and expressing the truths of the faith must be in a way comprehensible to the language

\textsuperscript{86} See O’Meara, “Order and Ordination,” 29.

\textsuperscript{87} Niall Humphreys, “The Lay World,” \textit{The Furrow}, Vol. 37, No. 3 (March, 1986), 175.

and culture of a particular time and place as noted in Chapter One with reference to *Gaudium et Spes* 44.\(^8^9\)

The Second Vatican Council was a moment in history in which the Church recognised the need to adapt its structures so that the message of the Gospel would penetrate a new world wide context. The challenge to update – *aggiornamento* – is only ever an updating at a particular moment in time and is conditioned by that moment – notice the optimism of the 1960s in the documents. The Challenge for the Council Fathers was not simply to update but to orientate the Church towards the future. The Council Fathers did this by recognising their own historical situation. The Council Fathers were conscious of the Church as the pilgrim people, a part of the unfolding human story and not a *societas perfecta* independent of the world. This understanding is a powerful impetus for the Church as both institution and community to recognise its continual need to examine its Gospel proclamation and ecclesial structures in light of the demands of discipleship and evangelisation. To this end Vatican II is not the end but the beginning – a resource to help realise discipleship and evangelisation going forward.

\(^8^9\) See Chapter One, 10-11.
Chapter Three: Post-Conciliar Interpretation and Application of Vatican II: Karol Wojtyla and *Sources of Renewal*.

3.1. Introduction.

Having examined the historical evolution of ministry from the New Testament period through to the Second Vatican Council, I now turn to the post-conciliar period. I begin with an examination of issues relating to post-conciliar hermeneutics along with an outline of how I approach and interpret conciliar and post-conciliar texts before examining Karol Wojtyla’s (John Paul II) interpretation of the Council. As Archbishop of Cracow, he published *Sources of Renewal* (translated 1979), a vade mecum for the 1972 Cracow diocesan synod.\(^90\) Wojtyla, like all the Council Fathers, returned to his diocese following the conclusion of the Council charged with the responsibility of overseeing the renewal of the Church in Cracow in light of the Council’s teaching. *Sources of Renewal* helps us better understand the continuity in Wojtyla’s interpretation of the Council before and during his papacy.

3.2. Hermeneutical Intermezzo.

All Councils need to be enacted, that is, need to be interpreted and applied if they are not to become dead letters or pious sentiments. Implementation, however, is not without conflict. The post Vatican II conciliar process of clarification, elimination, interpretation, and adaptation has been both joyful and painful; for some, joy turning to pain and for others, pain turning to joy. Massimo Faggioli writes that “it has become common to affirm that the first years of the history of the reception of Vatican II were marked by exuberance and were soon followed by a sense of disappointment among those who were exuberant.”\(^91\) The division within the

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Council between the majority and the minority continued in the post-conciliar period. For the Council majority, reception of the Council meant “completion of the liturgical reform, the implementation of collegiality in light of the new ecclesiology, the limitation of juridicism in the Church, the reform of the Roman curia, the opening to the modern world, and the deepening of ecumenical dialogue.”\textsuperscript{92} In contrast the Council minority “opposed the direction of the Council documents in all the major issues: liturgical reform, biblical renewal, a ‘People of God’ ecclesiology, reform of the Roman curia, ecumenism, religious freedom, and the Church and the modern world. The idea of change in the Church was the real enemy of the Council’s minority.”\textsuperscript{93}

Conflict over implementation and direction is not simply a part of the post Vatican II conciliar experience but is constitutive of all councils as deeply held convictions are debated and scrutinised, reformed or abandoned. Conflict is not necessarily a mark of the Spirit’s absence but a mark of vitality in the Church. What does mark the absence of the Spirit is the refusal to accept the Spirit as active and present in the other; a consequence of which is schism and ghettoization, which does little for the Church’s witness to the world.

The intentional ambiguity of the conciliar texts and the juxtaposition of conflicting ecclesiolgies so as to guarantee a moral majority during the Council probably did not help the formulation of common positions following the Council. Despite the potential for conflict this juxtaposing can be useful. Otto Hermann Pesch notes that the conciliar texts reflect a “contradictory pluralism”\textsuperscript{94} that “deliberately sets in tension two positions, leaving the issue open

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 25.

for future synthesis.”

For the first time in conciliar history the Second Vatican Council was historically aware. This awareness would have seen a value in juxtaposing contrary positions that would be synthesised following further theological reflection, pastoral experience, and discernment of the activity of the Spirit. Giuseppe Ruggieri speaks of this historical consciousness as the “truly innovative” conciliar insight. This future synthesis is what Joseph Ratzinger refers to in Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology as “the process of clarification and elimination that takes place subsequently in the life of the Church.”

Addressing the Roman Curia in 2005, Benedict XVI asked the question: “What has been the result of the Council? Was it well received…Why has the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult?” For Benedict XVI “the problems in its implementation arose from the fact that two contrary hermeneutics came face to face and quarrelled with each other. One caused confusion, the other, silently but more and more visibly, bore and is bearing fruit.” These two contrary hermeneutics are discontinuity and continuity. Benedict XVI speaks rather of a hermeneutic of reform, which he understands as “renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She [sic] is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying

95 Ibid.

96 Giuseppe Ruggieri, “Vatican II as Church Enacted,” Concilium 2012/3, 43.

97 See Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 53.


99 Ibid.
People of God.”\textsuperscript{100} For Benedict XVI those who ascribe to the hermeneutic of discontinuity do not see in the texts the true spirit of the Council: “the true spirit of the Council is not to be found in these compromises but instead in the impulses toward the new that are contained in the texts. These innovations alone were supposed to represent the true spirit of the Council…In a word: it would be necessary not to follow the texts of the Council but its spirit. In this way, obviously, a vast margin was left open for the question on how this spirit should subsequently be defined and room was consequently made for every whim.”\textsuperscript{101}

Benedict XVI’s rejection of the hermeneutic of discontinuity should not surprise. Writing in 1966 he warned: “we would misunderstand the Council’s teaching were we to take it as a sudden switchover, a sudden shift from “conservatism” to “progressivism” in the Church.”\textsuperscript{102}

While John O’Malley notes that the hermeneutic of rupture is rejected, the use of the term hermeneutic of reform by the Pope is itself of major theological importance: “In that instant reform was immediately and powerfully rehabilitated. It was authoritatively readmitted into Catholic theological vocabulary. The way was now open for historical and theological examination of it as applied to Vatican II.”\textsuperscript{103} In rejecting a hermeneutic of rupture Benedict XVI aligns himself with Otto Hermann Pesch’s general rule that no council of the Church should be “interpreted as fundamentally against the ecclesial tradition.”\textsuperscript{104}

O’Malley interprets the papal address as implicitly supporting aggiornamento, development, and ressourcement and consequently a “validation of the dynamic character of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{102} Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights}, viii.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} John O’Malley, “Ressourcement and Reform at Vatican II,” \textit{Concilium} 2012/3, 53.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Pesch, \textit{Das Zweite Vaticanische Konzil}, 149 in Rush, \textit{Still Interpreting Vatican II}, 7.
\end{itemize}
Council’s enactments, a dynamism many conservative commentators have denied or decried.”

In his public debate with Cardinal Avery Dulles in America Magazine, O’Malley notes, “while always keeping in mind the fundamental continuity in the great tradition of the Church, interpreters must also take due account of how the Council is discontinuous with the previous practices, teaching, and traditions.”

Ormond Rush comments:

Reception of the past involves judgement and selection, where, for the sake of continuity of a greater tradition, certain elements of the past are deliberately placed in the background, or even rejected, in a new Gestalt of the great tradition….A distinction should be made, therefore, between “micro-ruptures” and macro-ruptures” for the sake of a finer reconstruction of Vatican II’s intention. Whatever of the micro-ruptures, whatever of “innovations” and “discontinuities” that Vatican II introduced, the Council never intended a macro-rupture, never intended to sever itself from the great tradition; innovations and discontinuities (micro-ruptures) were seen to be ways of rejuvenating that broader tradition.

A similar sentiment can be seen in Benedict XVI’s address when he defines true reform as consisting of the “combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels.” The different levels are principle and contingency. What changes is only an outward expression of a principle: “It was necessary to learn to recognize that in these decisions it is only the principles that express the permanent aspect, since they remain as an undercurrent, motivating decisions from within…On the other hand, not so permanent are the practical forms that depend on the historical situation and are therefore subject to change.”

The principle is: “what the Church’s proclamation is supposed to do at all times: to lead the way on the journey of faith…the

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105 O’Malley, “Ressourcement and Reform at Vatican II,” 54.


107 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 7.

108 Benedict XVI, “Christmas Address to the Curia, 2005.”

109 Ibid.
objective is that Christ may become understood.”

What is contingent – the historical situation – is the contemporary situation that confronts the Church within the unfolding human story.

What hermeneutical principle underpins my interpretation and use of conciliar documents and subsequent documents of the magisterium and the Roman Curia?

My first premise: the conciliar documents as we have them are not the final word on any given issue but a means to discern a way forward that embraces the experience of the Church in fidelity to the future, discipleship, and evangelisation at a given moment in history. The Council texts are “not a collection of clear-cut recipes”\(^{111}\) that when followed will successfully bring about the same result in socially, culturally, and intellectually diverse settings. I agree with Catherine Clifford who notes that “a correct interpretation must attend to more than their verbal content and form. A simple repetition of the content of the Council texts cannot adequately convey their meaning. Such an approach neglects the inevitable tensions evoked by the differing situations of authors and receivers, a reality that calls for a creative effort of transposition.”\(^{112}\) Clifford argues that the spirit of the Council is necessary if the texts are to be understood; “the ‘spirit’ of the Council makes itself known from the direction given in the texts”\(^{113}\) and adds, “to grasp the spirit of the conciliar teaching, one must attend to more than words on the page; one must observe the structure and form of each document within the entire corpus of documents and place the whole body of teaching in historical context, within the broader horizon of tradition.”\(^{114}\)

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\(^{110}\) Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights*, ix.

\(^{111}\) Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, viii.


\(^{113}\) Ibid. 11.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 45.
My second premise: neither the conciliar spirit nor text is enough. Both spirit and text must be analysed in light of the contemporary situation and experience of the Church, which itself exists within diverse situations and experiences. As Council teaching is received and reflected on in light of experience and under the continuous working of the Spirit new understandings might reveal shortcomings and suggest future development; “Readers of the documents of Vatican II who approach them from the perspective of a profoundly changed social and historical context might perceive new meanings or new applications of their teaching, exceeding at times what the Council fathers themselves may have considered.”

Ormond Rush’s model for interpreting conciliar texts illustrates this second premise. Rush’s threefold model involves a partnership between the hermeneutic of authors, texts, and receivers.

Firstly, any conciliar interpretation must recognise the hermeneutics of the authors. What is important here is the historical evolution from beginning to final promulgated form. Rush understands this as constituting the “spirit” of the Council: “reconstruction of this authorial intention constitutes a reconstruction of the so-called “mind” or “spirit” of the Council.”

Gaillardetz notes that such an approach seeks to examine the themes that grew increasingly important through the event. We can see this in what Ratzinger wrote at the end of the first session:

Some may have been discontent because no text emerged from the session, nor any really palpable result. Yet the response to this should be clear from all that has been previously said, for it was precisely in this apparently negative outcome that the greatness, the surprise and the truly positive effect of the first session lie. For it was in this negative

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115 Ibid., 46.
116 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 1.
outcome that the spirit of the preparatory work was completely reversed. Here lay the truly epochal character of the first session.\textsuperscript{118}

Secondly, conciliar interpretation must examine matters related to the texts. The importance of intertextuality was recognised by the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops. The Synod recognised that the Council documents especially the Constitutions needed to be interpreted in relation to each other: “special attention must be paid to the four major constitutions of the Council, which contain the interpretative key for the other Decrees and Declarations”\textsuperscript{119} An important related factor is to recognise the development of teaching found in later documents but absent from earlier ones:

Those later understandings should impact on our contemporary interpretations of the earlier documents. So just as the four Gospels are to be interpreted in the light of one another, so too the four major documents of Vatican II must be interpreted in light of one another and the developing understanding expressed in each. And only then do they \textit{together} constitute the hermeneutical key for interpreting the totality of the Council’s library of documents.\textsuperscript{120}

In chapter IV I note that the term “lay” is used only six times in \textit{Gaudium et Spes}. Does this mean that as the Council progressed the bishops began to think less in terms of the traditional categories of cleric/lay and more in terms of Christian and if so how should this development impact on our reading of earlier documents?

Thirdly, interpretation must involve the receivers: how are the texts received and developed in the post-conciliar period by pastors, parishioners, and theologians. Rush defines the receiver as “one who takes them up and reads them and attempts to understand, interpret, and

\textsuperscript{118} Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights of Vatican II}, 54.


\textsuperscript{120} Rush, \textit{Still Interpreting Vatican II}, 42.
apply them."121 Important questions include what themes have not received sufficient attention from the magisterium and from theologians along with what conciliar teaching has resulted in changes to Church law, structures, and pastoral activity.122 For example, John O’Malley argues that during the Council the universal call to holiness was a “particularly pervasive and particularly important”123 theme. But as Timothy O’Brien noted, this theme has received “scant theological study in the years since the Council”124

Why this hermeneutical intermezzo? Firstly, it highlights the complexity around the issue of interpreting the Council and so applying the texts in the life of the Church. Secondly, it outlines my approach to interpreting conciliar and post-conciliar texts and so underpins my analysis of Sources of Renewal and later Christifideles Laici. Different interpretative models give rise to different textual interpretations and finally, I reflect on Wojtyla’s interpretative model in light of my premises.

3.3. Sources of Renewal and Karol Wojtyla’s Interpretation of Vatican II.

Robert McAfee Brown in his review of Sources of Renewal notes that “were the author not the Pope, such a book might attract little attention.”125 But as he notes it does warrant attention “to discover what one particular council father, now the Holy Father, actually thinks.”126 The purpose of the text is not, according to Wojtyla, to “provide a commentary on the Council

121 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 51.
122 See Gaillardetz, The Church in the Making, xix-xx.
126 Ibid.
documents…it is not to be considered as a scientific study but rather an extended ‘working paper’ on the subject of the Church’s activity in the world, especially in Poland.”  

If not a commentary on the Council texts what is it? According to Adam Kubiś who edited the Polish edition “it is a work of research and, at the same time, a reply to questions concerning faith and the whole life of believers: what does it mean to be a Christian, to live in the Church and in the modern world…they relate to faith not only in the sense of pure content of revealed truths but in regard to its fullness in the dimension of Christian life.” For Kubiś the text is a “synthesis of the main points of the teaching of the Council, omitting none of the principle problems treated by the Council, and quoting the Council documents in such a way as to maintain a just balance between them.” One of the difficulties in reading the text is the volume of quotations from Council documents. McAfee Brown notes that at least half the text is quotations from the council documents followed by Wojtyla’s reflection/commentary. This makes the text somewhat difficult and cumbersome to read as large sections of the Council’s documents are inserted into the text and commentary made. In these commentaries little is of the original context of the quoted text.

While Kubiś is correct in his assertion of a “just balance” between the use of conciliar documents there is a question regarding whether that just balance is maintained within the

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128 Ibid.

129 Adam Kubiś, Preface to *Sources of Renewal*, iii.

130 Ibid, ii.

131 See McAfee Brown, “Review of Sources of Renewal,” 430.
documents. For example, an imbalance in terms of Wojtyla’s use of articles from *Lumen Gentium* could reflect a favouring of one of the particular ecclesiolgies juxtaposed in that constitution over other possible models of the Church. Wojtyla writes: “through the Council, the Church has not only shown clearly what it thinks of itself, but also in what way it wishes itself to be realised.” 132 This is true but the answer one interpreter gives to “what it thinks of itself and “what way it wishes itself to be realised” is a product of an underlying ecclesiologica emphasis.

The relationship between the text and the Cracow Pastoral Synod should be noted. *Sources of Renewal* was produced for the Synod and presented a theological framework for what had to be put into practice. The Synod’s “fundamental task was to translate the programme set forth in the ‘study’ into the life of the Cracow diocese.” 133 As such the Synod was debating and discerning how to implement Wojtyla’s interpretation of the Council rather than debating and discerning how to implement the teachings of the Council. In setting the parameters of the Synod, the outcomes are, in some sense, predetermined.

Wojtyla divides his text into “The Formation of Consciousness” (Part II) and “The Formation of Attitudes (Part III). These parts correspond to “what the Church thinks of itself” (Part II) and “what way it wishes itself to be realised” (Part III)

Wojtyla’s reflections on the formation of consciousness begin with *Communio* and its basis, which is the mission of God and the human response. The mission of God is the action of the Trinity in history. While this mission culminates in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus it continues in the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Church exists solely to continue this mission. The Second Vatican Council expressed this as follows: “For this the Church was founded: that by spreading the kingdom of Christ everywhere for the glory of God the Father,


133 Kubiš, Preface to *Sources of Renewal*, iv.
she might bring all men [sic] to share in Christ’s saving redemption; and that through them the world might in actual fact be brought into relationship with him” (AA 2). The Church is the community of those moved to respond to the revelation of God. As Wojtyla writes:

Everyone in the Church is in a “state of mission”, as is the whole Church – by which we do not yet as mean any particular function or specific task, particularly of an institutional kind. It is a question simply, and above all, of the attitude which is the proper response to revelation. Revelation is not identical with Mission, but is realized in it. The Christian believer who responds to God’s self-revelation must find himself within the sphere of the divine mission…man [sic] commits himself to God by taking whole-heartedly on himself the divine mission in which revelation becomes a reality.134

Passive membership of the Church through baptism is not enough and a dynamic response in faith is required. Wojtyla notes that “the consciousness of the Church as People of God is profoundly permeated by the consciousness of personal vocation.”135 Peter McGregor notes the need for a dynamic profession of faith:

Is not merely the passive acceptance of what God reveals but a willingness to bear witness to it. Faith requires witness. This witness should be made manifest through both the example of Christ-like lives and the explicit testimony of a Christian’s words about Christ…Christian testimony about Christ, through which the reality of faith is expressed, does not take place outside of, but through, participation in Christ and his mission.136

The dynamic profession of faith and participation in Christ’s mission is the basis of the People of God who are the community of those who are orientated towards both God and each other. For Wojtyla the teaching of Vatican II is oriented towards the reality that “man’s vocation as a person in a community constitutes the basis of the reality of the People of God.”137 Here we have echoes of Lumen Gentium: “God has, however, willed to make men [sic] holy and save them not

134 Ibid., 207.
135 Ibid., 120.
137 Wojtyla, Sources of Renewal, 114.
as individuals without any bond or link between them but rather to make them a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness” (LG 9).

Wojtyla’s initial reflection is on the Church as mystery – a communion of the people of God united in the dynamic profession of faith. But this communion is as Lumen Gentium points out, “constituted and organised as a society in the present world” (LG 8) and so requires an institutional structure and so as Wojtyla writes, “from, the fundamental dimension, the almost invisible structure of the People of God which constitutes the essential element of the mystery of the Church, we pass gradually to the visible structures.”

Wojtyla’s initial reflection on the Church on the relationship between Communio and visible structures remains equality:

The Church’s hierarchical nature…presupposes a “true equality” among all members of the People of God. This equality manifests itself ‘with regard to the dignity of all the faithful and their share in building up the Body of Christ.’ This dignity is at one and the same time human dignity, which belongs to each man as an individual, and Christian dignity in the order of grace…All take part equally in this task, each with his own specific ability; and the action of a lay member of the People of God may be more effective than that of a member of the hierarchy or of a religious order. The history of the Church seems to give ample evidence of this.

Wojtyla speaks of equality based on human dignity, the order of grace, and the responsibility/share each person has in building up the kingdom of God. Wojtyla is highlighting an important point, namely, a mission with a spiritual end is not more important than a mission whose focus is more temporal/secular, all mission’s contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God. To express this in the language of the tropes, no mission as an expression of discipleship or evangelisation is better than another: “both the Church as a whole and its individual parts are strengthened by the gift which each of its parts brings to every other

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138 Ibid., 125.
139 Ibid., 143.
and the whole Church." Whether true equality exists at the level of human dignity especially with regard to gender remains an open question.

Having established the basis of equality Wojtyla continues by examining how the structure expresses itself and the responsibility of each part. What follows is a clear division of the People of God into categories or as Wojtyla refers to them, “orders:”

The People of God is composed of many orders within itself. Here we enter another dimension of the structure of the Church, one which is closer to the vocation of individuals and at the same time delineates ad intra a certain composition of the Church as a community and society of an altogether special kind...Lumen Gentium speaks of estates and offices as elements distinguishing individuals within the church community. These estates and offices, i.e. the human beings who occupy or belong to them, serve the community and thereby serve other men, or, in the language of Lumen Gentium, they bring their own gifts to the complex structure of the Church...The expression of that enrichment is both the consciousness of man’s vocation in general, to which the Council devote great attention, and the concrete and particular vocations delineated in the structure of the Church.

Wojtyla’s analysis makes reference to “the concrete and particular vocations delineated in the structure of the church.” Firstly, it should be noted that in this context particular vocations refers to the diverse categories of the faithful rather than in the sense it was used when speaking of “The Formation of consciousness.” For Wojtyla each of categories indicates an exact position within the structure of the Church and so indicates the exact position of the individual vis-à-vis the Communion. Wojtyla writes: “communio thus indicates the proper place in that community not only of particular estates or social groups like the hierarchy, the laity, or religious orders, but also of individuals in the Church.”

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140 Ibid. 135-136.
141 Ibid., 137.
142 Ibid., 139.
For Wojtyla, *Lumen Gentium* 13 “can be taken as a concise summary of the whole of *Lumen Gentium*.” In that article the Council Fathers note, “not only, then, is the People of God made up of different peoples but even in its inner structure it is composed of various ranks” (*LG* 13). Part of the difficulty is that Wojtyla presents the structure of the Church as an ahistorical given rather than an evolution. Simply put, the structure and its offices are an ontological given.

When Wojtyla turns to Part III, “The Formation of Attitudes,” he makes a detailed examination of the delineation of responsibilities between the various categories of the faithful in relation to the threefold office of Christ. For him the Council’s teaching allows for considering participation in Christ’s threefold office in an ontological sense. The implication of this “ontological sense” is discussed below. Wojtyla does not reflect on this participation from the perspective of the most fundamental state in the Church, namely, the Christian state but from the perspective of the category of cleric and laity. Wojtyla’s task is to “define the attitudes” which derive from sharing in Christ’s threefold office of priest, prophet, and king meaning both spiritual disposition and proper mission.

Wojtyla begins his reflections with the priestly office. This office “contains within itself the authentic Christian relationship with God…the vocation of the person in its existential nucleus.” This vocation of the person is “offering spiritual worship” to God (See *LG* 34).

The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all the works of Christian men they may offer spiritual sacrifices…Therefore all the disciples of Christ, preserving in prayer

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143 Ibid., 137.
144 See Ibid., 220.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid. 224.
and praising God (cf. Acts 2:42-7), should present themselves as a sacrifice, living, holy and pleasing to God (cf. Rom. 12:1) (LG 10).  

As Peter McGregor notes, “this offering of themselves and the world to God expresses the essence of faith, for in faith human persons respond to God’s self-revelation and commit their entire selves to God.” Wojtyla contrasts the spiritual worship offered by clergy and laity with reference to Lumen Gentium 34 and Presbyterorum Ordinis 2.

For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family, and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit –indeed the hardships of life if patiently borne –all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world to God (LG 34, see Sources of Renewal, 223).

The same Lord has established certain ministers among the faithful in order to join them together in one body where ‘all the members have not the same function’ (Rom. 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful would be able by the sacred power of their order to offer sacrifice and to remit sins. They would perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ. (PO 2, see Sources of Renewal, 225.)

The distinction between both cleric and layperson is clear. Baptism confers a responsibility to personal sanctification and a mission in the world while ordination confers a particular responsibility to offer sacrifice and remit sins. It is a public role within both Church and the world while the laity’s is a public role within the world. They bear witness to their sharing in Christ’s priesthood in the world.

Regarding the prophetic office, Wojtyla notes that the prophetic mission of Christ is to “express divine truth in human language.” The proclamation of the Word as person and message touches the heart of discipleship and evangelisation. Discipleship is rooted in fidelity to

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147 See Ibid., 222.


150 Wojtyla, Sources of Renewal, 242.
the Word made flesh and the Word preached. All the faithful have a responsibility towards the Word but this “is differently manifested in lay people, priests, and religious.”¹⁵¹

The ordained exercise a public ministry of preaching and teaching backed up by the authority received through ordination. Ordination confers the “particular mission of preaching.”¹⁵² The charism to preach, to break open the Word of God for the community, and to teach is a gift of ordination. The preaching office of bishops and priests is subordinate to the magisterium, which “exercises a directive function.”¹⁵³ The laity’s task is outlined in *Lumen Gentium* 35:

> He [Christ] made them his witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Apoc. 19:10), so that the power of the gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life…in the framework of secular life let them express it by a continual turning towards God and by wrestling ‘against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness’ (Eph. 6:12)...This evangelisation, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary circumstances of the world.

As with the laity’s share in the priestly office, their responsibility towards the prophetic office is directed towards the secular order. While the language differs to Leo XIII, who spoke of the laity’s role as “communicating to others what they have themselves received, becoming, as it were, living echoes of their masters in the faith,”¹⁵⁴ the sentiment and result remains the same. Laypeople preach the Word of God through the quality of their life and in explaining the faith as it has been interpreted for them.

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¹⁵¹ Ibid., 250.
¹⁵² Ibid., 249.
¹⁵³ Ibid. 94.
¹⁵⁴ Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*, article 16.
The distinction of responsibilities is continued with participation in the kingly office of Christ. Wojtyla begins his reflection with *Lumen Gentium* 27 and 28 affirm that “authority and sacred power” (*LG* 27) rest with the bishops and priests, through their ministry the “kingly mission of Our Lord finds expression.”

For the laity, participating in Christ’s kingly office is identified with both self-abnegation expressed as obedience leading to freedom. Reflecting on *Lumen Gentium* 36, Wojtyla writes:

> The text of *Lumen Gentium* clearly connects the kingly mission of Christ with the vocation of his disciples and confessors to the state of ‘royal freedom.’ This, we read, consists in leading the kind of life in which a Christian conquers the ‘rule of sin’ in himself by means of self-denial…Every Christian who conquers sin by imitating Christ achieves the royal self-dominion that is proper to human beings; by so doing he shares in the munus regale of Christ and help’s to bring about Christ’s kingdom.

Laypeople also participate in Christ’s kingly office through their particular apostolate. They humanise technology, social institutions, and culture through the Christian values they bring to their secular endeavours.

It is very clear from Wojtyla’s reflection on participating in Christ’s threefold office that the laity grows in discipleship and conformity to Christ in and through their engagement with secular affairs. For Wojtyla, the key article for understanding the laity is *Lumen Gentium* 31, which “contains the essential truth concerning the laity’s vocation and mission”

In this short article the secular nature of the laity’s mission is emphasized four times:

> A secular quality is proper and special to laymen.

> The laity, by their vocation, seek [sic] the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to God’s plan.

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156 Ibid. 263

157 Ibid., 341.
Exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within.

The layman is closely involved in temporal affairs of every sort. It is therefore his special task to illumine and organize these affairs in such a way that they may always start out, develop, and persist according to Christ’s mind.

Commenting upon *Lumen Gentium* 31, Wojtyla writes: “By its nature “laity” implies connection with the world, and the vocation of lay people is thus different from that of priests and religious…this link with the world, this ‘lay character’ which is proper to the laity, is the basis of their specific apostolate, whereby they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world.”\(^{158}\) This is an ontological claim regarding *Lumen Gentium* 31 and as I noted in Chapter 2, during the Council, the *relatio* for this article emphasised the typological and sociological rather than the theological and ontological. Thus if the secular characteristic is an ontological aspect of the laity and inherent to their category then, despite Wojtyla’s claims that *Lumen Gentium* 31 cannot claim to be a “definition of the laity,” he does in fact understand it this way.\(^{159}\)

This ontological understanding of the laity as secular then shapes his understanding of how people participate in the threefold office of Christ, which as I noted above is possible because Wojtyla contends that the teaching of the Council allows for considering participation in Christ’s threefold office in an ontological sense. For Wojtyla it is laypeople’s secular character

\(^{158}\) Ibid., 341. At this point in the text Wojtyla quotes large sections of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2, 3, 5, and 7. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 6, which could be interpreted to support a preaching and teaching ministry for laypeople, “a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ be words addressed either to non-believers with a view to instructing and strengthening them, and motivating them towards a more fervent life,” is not commented upon in *Sources of Renewal*. In a footnote to this article, Abbot notes, “the ‘passive’ apostolate of leading a good life is not sufficient for lay Christians today. They must ‘preach’ the gospel to Christian and non-Christian alike, as the opportunity presents itself.” See Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II, 496. *Lumen Gentium* 33 declares: “the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she [sic] become the salt of the earth, shows an awareness of the contemporary situation, which necessitates a more active and fundamental ministerial role for laypeople in complex political situations beyond a temporal focus (See also *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 6). *Lumen Gentium* 33 with its reference to the laity “cooperating in the apostolate of the hierarchy” is not referred to or commented upon when examining participation in Christ’s threefold office.

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 341.
that requires an interpretation of their participation in the threefold office in a secular manner. His interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* 31 shapes his interpretation of the laity’s priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. In being secular the laity is consecrated with a secular mission. The parameters of the laity’s mission are set by virtue of secularity.\(^{160}\)

Wojtyla’s reflection is informed by a particular reading of the Council documents especially *Lumen Gentium*. It is a legitimate reading of conciliar ecclesiology yet the question remains is it an adequate reading. In section 3.2 I outlined my hermeneutical premises. If I review Wojtyla’s interpretation of the laity mission and ministry in light of those premises then questions of method arise. Wojtyla’s method anticipates the hermeneutical principle of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops that gives priority to the Constitutions and the principle that all conciliar decrees and declarations must be interpreted in relation to the constitutions. However, Wojtyla remains selective in the articles he uses to construct his interpretation. These articles are presented without any reference to their evolution through the course of the council and their subsequent implementation in the life of the Church. Documents are quoted in as much as they support each other rather than analysed in the sense of how later documents reflect developments in teaching and so should be used to interpret earlier documents. Neither can we assess how the themes that grew increasingly important are reflected in *Sources of Renewal*.

In the final analysis *Sources of Renewal* remains within the traditional two-states ecclesiological model; clerics have a pastoral ministry by virtue of ordination while the laity have a mission in the world. The relationship between baptism, mission, and charisms is not developed. Outside of a secular end, the mission and ministry of the laity is not developed and

\(^{160}\) Wojtyla’s interpretation makes no provision to explain the secular orientation and focus of the many vowed religious clerics whose charism is service in the secular sphere for the sake of the common good. His model of the priest is that of a secular cleric and in this he follows the framework set in *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, which is more properly a decree on the ministry and life of secular clergy rather than on the priesthood *per se*. See John O’Malley, “One Priesthood: Two Traditions,” 9-24.
cannot be as long as secularity is conceived as proper to the lay state. Wojtyla’s model determines everything that follows. In the end the vision of the layperson in Sources of Renewal remains limited. Baptism is not developed as an independent category in the text and there is no reference to baptism in the index. It is spoken of as a means of becoming a part of the People of God but the full import of baptism as a consecration for mission is limited by secularity. McAfee Brown notes in his review of Sources of Renewal:

> It is not surprising that the continuity of the Council with its tradition is emphasized. By the time the book was written (1972) and revised (1980), the author, along with other “progressives” at the council, was concerned that the council did not become an instrument of dissolution. So, the book supports the impression that John Paul II is distinctly conservative, pursing his course faithful to conciliar intention…the direction of this book is at least as backward-looking as it is forward-looking.¹⁶¹

> The text is forward-looking “in a much as” it seeks to place the Church firmly within the world in relation to social, ethical, cultural, and political matters through the secular orientation of the laity. But it is backward-looking in terms of matters pertaining to Church structure and so the related issue of ministry. As McAfee Brown notes, “the book illustrates [the] enigma [of] the pope’s relatively progressive attitude on social issues…and his entrenched conservatism when dealing with in-house Catholic matters.”¹⁶²

In Chapter Four, I examine the commonalities between Sources of Renewal and Christifideles Laici.

3.4. Conclusion in Light of the Tropes.

What can be learned from reflecting on Sources of Renewal in light of the tropes? Firstly, the future, discipleship and evangelisation are important themes for Wojtyla and the purpose behind the book. The book is about the formation of Christians in both identity and mission and as such is a statement of intent regarding discipleship and evangelisation. Given its commitment to both

¹⁶¹ McAfee Brown, “Review of Sources of Renewal,” 430-431.

¹⁶² Ibid., 431.
these tropes it can be regarded as oriented towards the future in its intent. Thus it is a vision for the implementation of the renewal of Vatican II is “a historical stage in the self-realization of the Church”\textsuperscript{163} as Wojtyla conceives that Church and interprets the conciliar documents.

Wojtyla presents a vision of how to deepen discipleship and evangelise based “in” his ecclesiology. For Wojtyla “the formation of the Christian life, should, according to Vatican II, correspond to the prophetic, kingly, and priestly function of Christ the Lord.”\textsuperscript{164} As noted above in section 3.3 Wojtyla interprets the threefold office within the framework of the laity’s secularity as an ontological given. Therefore, the discipleship of laypeople is lived through engagement in the temporal sphere and they evangelise by their witness to the values of the kingdom in their given social, cultural, political situation and through communicating what they have received from those who have the authority of teachers. The laity’s state of life determines the mission and ministry. While this is no irrelevant or unimportant task in Wojtyla’s ecclesiology it does limit the forms of discipleship he regards as proper to the laity.

\textsuperscript{163} Wojtyla, \textit{Sources of Renewal}, 11.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 93.
Chapter Four: *Christifideles Laici* and the Vocation and Mission of the Laity.

4.1. Introduction.

The apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988) was John Paul II’s most extensive reflection on the laity’s vocation and mission. Bishop Josef Clemens, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, refers to this text as the “magna carta” of the lay apostolate.¹⁶⁵ Clemens’ use of the term “lay apostolate” and not “ministry” reflects the magisterium’s animus towards the use of the term ministry to the activity of laypeople.¹⁶⁶ Before examining the text of *Christifideles Laici* I briefly review the pre-history of the text in the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity. Being a post-synodal exhortation does not mean that *Christifideles Laici*’s theology and vision of the laity’s mission reflects the diversity of opinions expressed by the Synod Fathers on the vocation and mission of the laity. It is rather, John Paul II’s reflection on the Synod theme. Following this review I examine how *Christifideles Laici* addresses key conciliar motifs. I conclude the chapter with an examination of two subsequent statements of the magisterium on the laity’s life and mission.

4.2. The Origins and Role of the Synod of Bishops in the Life of the Church.

Pope Paul VI announced the formation of a permanent synod at the opening ceremony of the Fourth Session of the Council.¹⁶⁷ Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk recorded in his journal: “this is putting into practice episcopal collegiality. The Fathers of the Council welcomed the decision with loud applause. All were overjoyed that finally the bishops will occupy their proper


¹⁶⁶ See Chapter Four, section 4.5.

¹⁶⁷ 14th September 1965. The *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* (15th September 1965) established its purpose and regulations.
place in the leadership of the universal Church of Christ.”

In the mind of Pope Paul VI the Synod would foster closer collaboration between the papacy and the worldwide episcopacy and thus assist the pope in his leadership of the universal Church. Paul VI spoke of the Synod as an adaption of the “means and methods of the holy apostolate to the changing circumstances and needs of our day.”

The regulations of the Motu Proprio establishing the Synod were later incorporated into the 1983 Code of Canon Law and established the Synod as a permanent office of the curia under direct papal authority. The Synod as an expression of episcopal collegiality is disputed. Writing in 1966, Joseph Ratzinger spoke of the “profound difference between the synod, as conceived by the Council, and its papal realization. A collegial organ has been turned into an instrument of the primate to be used as he wished.”

John Paul II spoke of the Synod as “a way of expressing the collegiality of the bishops…cum Petro et sub Petro” [with Peter and under Peter]. Raphael Gallagher notes: “the structures which now surround the Synod need to

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170 Canon 344 states ‘the Synod of Bishops is directly subject to the authority of the Roman Pontiff who: 1° convokes a synod as often as it seems opportune to him and designates the place where its sessions are to be held; 2° ratifies the election of members who must be elected according to the norm of special law and designates and appoints other members; 3° determines at an appropriate time before the celebration of a synod the contents of the questions to be treated, according to the norm of special law; 4° defines the agenda; 5° presides at the synod personally or through others; 6° concludes, transfers, suspends, and dissolves the synod. See *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition* (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1999).

171 Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 203.

be carefully looked at if the Synod is to be a truly “ecclesial” event, as distinct from a merely “ecclesiastical” one.”  

Whether the model of a Synod of Bishops rather than a wider Synod of the People of God is an adequate means of addressing contemporary and urgent questions and providing new insights and responses is debatable. James Coriden says of the Synod structure that “the unremitting struggle between the forces of papal monarchy and episcopal collegiality prevented its proper conception, normal growth, and healthy development. The synod today cries out for serious therapy and a radically revised lifestyle.” A gathering of bishops and male religious superior generals to discuss contemporary challenges to faith and the Church without female religious or the laity suggests a pre-conciliar ecclesiological model; the ordained discuss, the ordained decide, the ordained hand down, and everyone else enacts. Gallagher comments regarding the specific Synod of Bishops on the Laity: “much of the theology of the laity with which we still operate is a theology devised by clerics in order to explain the role of the laity. In a sense the laity are [sic] the object of theological reflection by others instead of being a subject-source of theological insight themselves.” Reflecting on her relationship with the “official Church,” meaning the clergy, one woman noted, “as a lay person I have the impression that the official leaders of the Church often speak for me and sometimes at me but rarely or ever with me. To speak with, implies relationship.”  

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4.3. The 1987 Synod of Bishops on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful.

A Synod of Bishops gathered to reflect upon the laity was deemed necessary in light of two post-conciliar developments. Firstly, the deepening of faith and discipleship among the laity expressed in terms of participation in ministry and, secondly, arising from the first, the perceived crisis regarding the laity’s understanding of their identity and mission. The Synod’s Lineamenta noted the need for “greater understanding and evaluation of the place and the tasks of the laity in the Church and the world of today.” The Synod process begins with the publication of a set of proposals (Lineamenta) inviting reflection by the People of God on the given theme of the Synod. It is the responsibility of national episcopal conferences and local bishops to ensure the opportunity exists for all the People of God to share their perspective.

While aimed at facilitating debate the Lineamenta reflect the concerns of the Synod secretariat. As an office of the Roman Curia it can be presumed that its concerns reflect those of the magisterium. Regarding the laity, the Lineamenta spoke of what it termed, “responsible participation in its mission of salvation” (par 11). What constitutes “responsible” varies according to one’s ecclesiology. The Lineamenta noted the “demand for participation in the pastoral activities of the Church” (par 8) and “the danger of confusion in the correct relationship which must exist between clergy and laity in the Church” (par 8). According to the Lineamenta such “demands” by the laity impoverish the mission of the Church because the laity’s mission in the Church is in and for the world. The laity’s ecclesial role is limited to the temporal sphere; their primary and immediate task is not building the ecclesial community, which is the “specific role of the pastors” (see par 8) but building up the Kingdom of God in the world. The thrust of

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the Lineamenta’s vision is clearly towards directing the laity’s mission and ministry towards the world. Claims regarding the “impoveryment” of the Church’s mission because laypeople are seeking a more ecclesial pastoral role are not substantiated with evidence in the text.

The Synod’s Instrumentum Laboris was published in March 1987 and ostensibly represents the responses to the Lineamenta though this is difficult to access as secrecy was enjoined on episcopal conferences regarding what they forwarded to the Curia following the public debate around the Lineamenta. The Instrumentum Laboris is the formal working document of the Synod. It outlines the matters for discussion and deliberation. The overall tenor of the Lineamenta was maintained in the Instrumentum Laboris but with two important additions: the “situation of women” (par 9) and the “relationship between vocation and mission” (par 14 & 15). During the Synod the positive presentation of women’s equality in the political and social sphere would be contrasted by some of the bishops with their position in the Church. For example, the motu proprio Ministeria Quaedam (1972) only allowed laymen to be instituted into the stable office of lector and acolyte and so women, who often fulfil these roles can only be deputed in the case of pastoral need.

Regarding vocation and mission: “vocation is broader than mission because it is composed of both a call to communio and a call to mission” (par 14). The Instrumentum Laboris emphasises the link between call and the one who calls, “Christians are called (vocati) by God to a personal relationship with him in love” (par 15) and elsewhere, “the personal dignity of the

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179 Synod of Bishops, Instrumentum Laboris on the Vocation and mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council, (Vatican: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1987).


laity arises predominantly from the fact that each one of them has been called by God himself…the Christian vocation is one of participation in the *communio* of love in the Holy Spirit” (*par* 15). The Christian response to being called is expressed through mission but what exactly does mission mean in the text? The *Instrumentum Laboris* seems to equate mission with category; the category of the laity has the specific mission of “progressively transforming the world by means of a love that comes from God through faith in Christ” (*par* 18). The content of one’s mission is predetermined by one’s state of life. This can be seen in the attitude expressed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* towards the emphases given to the ministerial priesthood over the common priesthood. Laypeople, through the common priesthood, share in the priestly office by self-offering, in the kingly office through apostolic labour in the world, and in the prophetic office through living out the gospel in daily life. The focus for the laity is on personal sanctification and the temporal order. The ordained, however, are given sacred authority to participate in Christ’s prophetic office in a direct sense as authoritative teachers. Laypeople participate only in an “indirect sense” (*see par* 25).

The value of the Synod discussions with regard to its influence on the formation of *Christifideles Laici* is difficult to assess.\(^\text{183}\) Of the Synod's closing documents, O’Riordan notes that the “ecclesiological framework of the *Instrumentum Laboris* is preserved in Synod’s

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\(^{183}\) *Christifideles Laici* has a total of 224 references of which 54 are synod propositions. Out of these 54 propositions 22 are not referenced in the document. Proposition 10 on the lay Christian in the diocese and parish is quoted 5 times. Proposition 47 on recognition of the dignity of women is quoted 4 times while Proposition 46, also on the dignity of women is quoted 3 times. Proposition 11 on parish renewal and Proposition 18 on the notion of ministry are each quoted 3 times. The Synod propositions have no standing except that which the pope wants to give to them and he alone determines how to interpret them and apply them. While Proposition 10 on the diocese and parish speaks of lay-clerical collaboration it makes no mention of revising the Code to give diocesan and parish councils more than a consultative voice. Likewise, while Proposition 46 and 47 are positive with regard to the dignity of women the heavy emphasis on marriage, motherhood, and virginity leaves questions regarding the mission of women who do not feel called to marriage or motherhood. See John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988.
“Message to the People of God” and the Papal homily,184 which suggests the contributions of the bishops during the plenary stage did not particularly impact upon the formation of Christifideles Laici. James Coriden in his study The Synod of Bishops: Episcopal Collegiality Still Seeks Adequate Expression writes, “these ‘apostolic exhortations,’ although sometimes referencing propositions from the synod that preceded them, are distinctly papal, not synodal documents.”185 He speaks of the negative experiences of many of the participants that suggest the synod’s proceedings to be of minimal importance to the post-synodal exhortation:

Participants sense a total and tight control of the synodal process by papal and curial officials; many of the bishops’ initiatives and suggestions are smothered or lost…Suggestions from the language groups get winnowed out and revised by a drafting committee; many items "get lost" in this process…Propositions eventually reported out to the pope are limited to those which draw approval from 95% of the voting members of the assembly.186

When reading the closing documents of the Synod and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation little of the vitality of the plenary session debate can be seen.187 Concluding his reflections on the Synod, O’Riordan notes:

The synod was a disappointment for those whose people-of-God theology emphasizes first the sharing of new life in Christ among all the baptized and then opens up the actual

186 Ibid., 125.
functioning of church order to new scrutiny and evaluation... How will the debate between these two ecclesiologies fare in the future? Can some middle ground be found between them which could serve as a rallying-point for all parties? Only time can tell.  

4.4. Analysing *Christifideles Laici*.

I shall begin with a question: Can we establish whether or not *Christifideles Laici* was written by John Paul II? Peter Hai notes in footnote to his article *Reflections on John Paul II’s Theology of the Laity: 20th Anniversary of Christifideles Laici (1989)* that:

> Avery Dulles observes that while many of the Pope’s official writings are personal in tone, it is difficult to be sure whether works published under his name were actually written by him. The Pope has no doubt relied on his assistants to compile many of the footnotes, and they most likely wrote parts of the actual text...Robert Mickens also notes that “popes tend to say and write a lot of things—but most of it comes from the hands of others…. It’s a long-standing game among Vatican watchers to try to discern which of these come directly from the Pope’s hand and which from his ghost-writers.”

Whether or not John Paul wrote the exhortation alone or in collaboration his signature is a public declaration of his authorship and the content a reflection of his sentiments. It is unlikely that ghost-writers would have written content that did not express the pope’s view and more unlikely that the pope would sign a document whose theological content he disagreed with. However, when *Christifideles Laici* is read in light of *Sources of Renewal* we can see a consistency between the two texts. The secular character as proper to the mission and ministry of the laity and theme of *Communio* are central motif of both documents.

As with *Sources of Renewal*, which devoted much attention to the mystery of the Church as the community of those who dynamically respond to God’s revelation – the People of God, *Christifideles Laici*, begins with a similar formation of consciousness. Chapter One is entitled

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190 See *Sources of Renewal*, Part II, “The Formation of Consciousness.”
“The Dignity of the Lay Faithful in the Church as Mystery” (CL 8-17) and emphasises the Trinitarian source of Christian identity and dignity while Chapter Two, entitled, “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Life of Church as Communion” (CL 18-31) speaks of the role of the laity in the Church understood as a communion. – “this communion is the wonderful reflection and participation in the mystery of the intimate life of love in God as Trinity” (CL 18). It is in this Chapter that John Paul speaks of ministers and charisms (CL 23). Chapter Three (CL 33-44) looks at the laity’s role in the new evangelisation while Chapter Four (CL 45-56) discusses the variety of lay vocations with a special focus on women.

The secular character of the laity is central in both documents and informs in a concrete manner the mission particular and proper to the laity. While Christifideles Laici devotes only one article to the threefold office of Christ it reflects Sources of Renewal’s more detailed but equally secular orientated focus of the laity’s participation (See CL 14). For Christifideles Laici, as with Sources of Renewal, secularity is not simply sociological but theological and ecclesiological. It is ontological. While acknowledging that all the baptised have responsibility for the Church’s mission (see CL 15), the laity’s responsibility is in the secular sphere. Christifideles Laici does not seek justification for this position from Sources of Renewal but from Lumen Gentium 31 and as noted above this is a key text for Wojtyla – “contains the essential truth concerning the laity’s vocation and mission.”191 The following can be presented as a summary of John Paul’s aim in Christifideles Laici: “To understand properly the lay faithful’s position in the Church in a complete, adequate, and specific manner it is necessary to come to a deeper theological understanding of their secular character in light of God’s plan of salvation and in the context of the mystery of the Church” (CL 15).

191 Wojtyla, Sources of Renewal, 341.
Peter Hai notes that “in John Paul II’s theology of the laity, the dignity, identity, equality, vocation, communion, mission, spirituality, and secularity of the laity spring from baptism.”192 If secularity springs from baptism then all the baptised and not just the laity have a secular character. If the baptism of a lay person and one who later became a cleric cannot confer something different at the time, then this theology implies that until an individual Christian is ordained his identity, person, and mission has a secular character. Does ordination in conferring a character on the ordained “remove” the previous character of secularity conferred at baptism and confer a new ontological character that orientates the cleric towards a sacred-pastoral ministry?

Likewise, if baptism confers a secular character then the term laity and Christian (as baptism make Christians) can be used interchangeably, which may explain some of the imprecision of language in Christifideles Laici 16 where the terms “lay faithful” and “Christian” are used interchangeably.193 In Chapter Five I suggest baptism does not confer a secular character per se but confers membership of the Church and consecrates a believer for mission.

As with Sources of Renewal, Christifideles Laici understands the Church is not simply a mystical-theological entity but an institutional-sociological one and so structures are necessary. Given John Paul’s definition of communion – “union with God brought about by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit” (CL 19) and of communion ecclesiology – “the communion of each Christian

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193 It may also explain why the set of descriptors of the laity are applicable to the People of God: “Children of the Son” (CL 11); “One body in Christ” (CL 12); “Holy and Living Temples of the Spirit” (CL 13); “Sharers in the Priestly, Prophetic, and Kingly Mission of Christ (CL 14); “Called to Holiness” (CL 16). Two other descriptors of the laity that are particular alongside secularity are firstly, by way of what they are – neither priests nor religious (CL 9 cf. LG 31) and secondly, “Called to Holiness in the World” (CL 17). Secularity, and called to holiness in the world are descriptors whose adequacy is debated by theologians and questioned by the laity as a definition of who they are. See Michael Himes, “Lay Ministers and Ordained Ministers,” 79-87.
with Christ and the communion of all Christians with one another” (CL 19) there is no fundamental conflict between this ecclesiology and a hierarchical ecclesiology. When John Paul passes from the invisible to the visible the hierarchical nature is emphasised:

In a primary position in the Church are the ordained ministries, that is, the ministries that come from the Sacrament of Orders. In fact, with the mandate to make disciples of all nations, the Lord Jesus chose and constituted the apostles-seed of the People of the New Covenant and origin of the hierarchy – to form and to rule the priestly people” (CL 22).

John Paul continues by outlining the charisms given to ministers through ordination: authority and sacred power to act in the person of Christ (see CL 22). Consequently, without ministerial priesthood the laity would be unable to participate in the mission of the Church – “the lay faithful, in turn, must acknowledge that the ministerial priesthood is totally necessary for their participation in the mission of the Church” (CL 22). From John Paul’s theological perspective this is true as only bishops have the authority to preach and interpret the Word and the laity’s role is to live according to that interpreted word and preach that as “living echoes of their masters in the faith.”

What of parishes that lack a resident priest? Without a cleric are these communities of believers not real or authentic? In the absence of resident clergy many parishes have created new liturgical forms and new ministries that the parishioners accept as legitimate and life giving. This does not mean these parishes do not feel the lack of a resident pastor or the lack of Eucharistic liturgy. The primacy of the ministerial priesthood was stated by John Paul in his 1979 Letter to Priests to mark Holy Thursday which Christifideles Laici 22 directs readers:

This sacrament [ordination], dear Brothers, which is specific for us, which is the fruit of the special grace of vocation and the basis of our identity, by virtue of its very nature and of everything that it produces in our life and activity, serves to make the faithful aware of their common priesthood and to activate it (cf. Eph. 4:1-12).

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194 Leo XIII, Sapientiae Christianae, paragraph 16.

If the People of God precede any distinction of rank or ministry within the Church then the common priesthood of all believers must precede the ministerial priesthood and cannot be dependent upon it in the sense of “activate.” Baptism activates the common priesthood and the capacity to offer spiritual sacrifices. Participation in the threefold office is dependent on baptism not ordination even if ordination changes the nature of that participation.

All that has come before, namely, secularity as ontologically proper to the laity and John Paul’s theology of priesthood, with its emphasis on the conferral of authority and sacred power explains what follows in Christifideles Laici 23. In Christifideles Laici 23, John Paul acknowledges that the laity “in a measure proper to each person…participate in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ” (CL 23). We know from the ontological character of the laity as secular that that participation is directed towards the secular sphere. Laymen who are instituted into the stable offices of lector or acolyte can participate in the prophetic and priestly office in the liturgy. Women cannot for the reasons outlined on page 62. In the case of necessity laypeople can be deputed to fulfill certain roles connected with the pastoral ministry of priests but which do not require ordination but arise from their baptism such as presiding over liturgical prayers, baptising, distributing Holy Communion, and proclaiming the Word. Engaging in these practices does not make a pastor of a layperson. While John Paul states that what is not proper to the ordained should be carried out by the laity he is speaking of participation in the Eucharistic liturgy (see CL 23). It should be noted that what is proper to the laity and priesthood is a factor of history. As Michael Himes points out, “it is extremely difficult, I believe impossible to establish a list of functions that have always and everywhere throughout the history of the Church been the exclusive preserve of the ordained.”

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One can say with historical confidence that there has never been a theological model of either *episkopos* or *presbyteros* which has remained unchanged…Each major historical change in the role of *episkopos* and *presbyteros* has produced a change in the theological definition of bishop and priest. If the historical and theological definitions of bishops and priests have changed, then their relationship to lay ministers has also changed. A clear boundary between what only a bishop and priest does in sacramental life and what a layperson might do is not that clear.\(^{197}\)

The reality of the growing number of parishes without resident priests is passed over in silence. John Paul is concerned that the laity’s proper secular character and the cleric’s proper sacred character are confused when laypeople engage in pastoral ministry. In *Christifideles Laici* 23, John Paul warns against five trends:

A facile yet abusive recourse to a presumed situation of ‘emergency’ leading to an ‘too-indiscriminate use of the word ‘ministry’, the confusion and the equating of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood, the lack of observance of ecclesiastical laws and norms, the arbitrary interpretation of the concept of “supply”, the tendency towards a “clericalization” of the lay faithful and the risk of creating, in reality, an ecclesial structure of parallel service to that founded on the Sacrament of Orders. (CL 23)

While warning of against the indiscriminate use of the word “ministry” he does use it to describe the activities undertaken by laypeople (see *CL* 23). This will change as I show in section 4.5.

As *Christifideles Laici* 23 is concerned with the ministry of laypeople John Paul speaks of the appropriate and proper forum for lay activity – “in conformity with their specific lay vocation” (*CL* 23). The laity’s own field of evangelising activity” (*CL* 23) is “the world of culture, of science and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, and suffering” (*CL* 23). These areas of activity are further developed in the course of the text.\(^{198}\)


\(^{198}\) See *Christifideles Laici* 37-44 and 51, which deals with the specific mission of women.
This definition of the laity’s field of evangelising activity comes from Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* yet Paul VI’s vision of what was possible for the laity is broader than what might be suggested by referencing *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 70 alone. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 73 Paul VI writes:

Laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them… We encourage the openness which the Church is showing today in this direction and with this solicitude. It is an openness to meditation first of all, and then to ecclesial ministries capable of renewing and strengthening the evangelizing vigour of the Church. It is certain that, side by side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, the Church recognizes the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.

Paul VI and John Paul II seem to have contrasting theologies of ministry. Paul VI does not downplay the importance of the laity’s role in the secular sphere – “Laypeople, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization.” Paul recognises that the majority of laypeople will exercise their mission and ministry in the secular sphere but he also recognises that some laypeople will feel called to serve the Church in a more direct ministerial role. Paul VI’s theology of ministry shows itself open to ministry developing along the line of “call” and “charisms” rather than ministry being a factor of an individual’s state of life. Paul’s ecclesiology makes a distinction between being a lay person and a baptised-

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200 Ibid., paragraph 73.

201 Ibid., paragraph 70.
eucharistic Christian. For Kenan Osborne being a layperson is not a definition applied to a person who is neither a priest nor a religious but refers to a committed Christian who takes:

An active and specific role in the church as servant-leader…Lay status, as a result, is not a private issue, but rather a choice made, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by an individual, but also a choice made, under the guidance of the same Spirit, by that community in which the lay person will serve. Like priestly vocation, lay vocation is a two-way street, requiring both an individual’s assent and the assent of the community. Osborne is giving primacy to baptism as the basis of ministry. The individual’s assent and the assent of the community highlights the importance of discernment to which I return in chapter Five.

Before analysing the methodology rather than content of the exhortation I turn to the threefold office of Christ given its prominence in Sources of Renewal. In Christifideles Laici, the threefold office is dealt with in Christifideles Laici 14. The pope acknowledges that baptism is the source of participation in the threefold office. What is presented is “in summary form [the] essential elements of that teaching” (CL 14). The paragraph quotes Lumen Gentium 12, 34, 35 and emphasises the laity’s temporal orientation, especially in “family and social life” (CL 14).

Osborne challenges this reading of the threefold office as applied to the laity. He notes: “the ministry of the tria munera, however, has a far more fundamental arena of ministry and mission within the Church, and it is this more profound meaning of tria munera which one looks for in vain throughout Christifideles Laici.” For Osborne the grace of participating in the tria munera received through baptism includes a mission in the Church and not simply in the secular order. For him the inadequacy of John Paul’s position rests on the emphasis he gives to the ordained priesthood over the common priesthood: “whenever there is no developed grounding of

202 Osborne, Ministry, 598.
203 Ibid., 693.
clerical and lay ministry in the common priesthood of all believers, any and every conclusion on clerical and lay ministry will remain unsatisfactory.”

An important question requiring attention is how conciliar texts and other ecclesial documents are used in Christifideles Laici. Questions can also be raised with regard to the use of Scripture in Christifideles Laici. I noted similar difficulties when reviewing Sources of Renewal. As with Sources of Renewal, Lumen Gentium 31 is an important conciliar text used in Christifideles Laici. Lumen Gentium 31, which deals with the laity’s secular character, is quoted six times in Christifideles Laici 9 & 15 with the ontological rather than typological emphasis. Kenan Osborne says of Gerard Philips’ commentary on Lumen Gentium 31 that, “the uncharacteristic length given to this section, 31a/b, in Philips’ commentary indicates that there was a strong need for explanation, because there had been –and still is- a major degree of unclarity about the passage.” None of this unclarity or theological dispute can be discerned in Christifideles Laici. The laity’s secular character is an ontological given and not simply is it an interpretation of Lumen Gentium 31 it is THE interpretation.

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204 Ibid., 204.

205 At various times Christifideles Laici justifies particular positions with reference to the activity of the Lord: “the Lord chose and constituted the apostle-seed of the People of the New Covenant and the origins of the hierarchy...from him they received the authority and sacred power to serve the Church” (CL 22); “the apostle Paul is quite clear in speaking about the ministerial constitution of the Church in apostolic times” (CL 21); and “in her participation in the life and mission of the Church a woman cannot receive the Sacrament of Orders, and therefore, cannot fulfil the proper function of the ministerial priesthood. This is a practice the Church has always found in the expressed will of Christ, totally free and sovereign, who called only men to be his apostles” (CL 51). These claims are presented without reference to their original Scriptural context and as Brian Gleeson notes “difficult if not impossible, to reconcile with the insights from contemporary biblical, historical, and theological scholarship.” See Brian Gleeson, “Ordained Persons and Their Ministries: New Testament Foundations and Variations,” Australian eJournal of Theology 7 (June, 2006), 2. A question remains outstanding: how does modern scholarship impact upon the formulation of documents of the magisterium? As Osborne notes, “the historical data on episcopal development cannot help but impact all other Christian ministries.” See Osborne, “Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry,” 215.

206 Osborne, Ministry, 692.
When addressing hermeneutics in Chapter Three I referenced one of the hermeneutical principles of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops as the basis for interpreting and applying conciliar texts, namely, that primacy must be given to the Constitutions and that all documents must be interpreted in relation to each other. Given this, *Christifideles Laici*’s lack of reference to *Gaudium et Spes* 43 is significant, “it is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong” and “although those in holy orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities, or even practice a secular profession, yet by reason of their particular vocation, they are principally and expressly ordained to the sacred ministry” (*GS* 43). I noted in the hermeneutical intermezzo that commentators note the importance of interpreting conciliar text in terms of the development of teaching found in later documents to earlier ones.\(^{207}\) *Gaudium et Spes* is the most mature document of the Council – its final document. Does *Gaudium et Spes* 43 recognise that the emphasis given to secularity in earlier documents was too strong and needed to be moderated. *Gaudium et Spes* 43 is not referenced in *Sources of Renewal* when Wojtyla speaks of participation in the threefold office.

Terms, such as “not exclusively” and “principally,” are not random words but suggest the Council Fathers understood roles in a much more fluid way than is suggested by reading *Lumen Gentium* 31 alone. It should be noted that the term “lay” only appears six times in *Gaudium et Spes*, which suggests to Kenan Osborne that the text is concerned with the activities of the Christian, “whether lay or cleric, rather than specifically on the Christian qua lay.”\(^ {208}\) Osborne notes: “to deduce that the proper sphere of mission and ministry for a non-ordained, non-vowed

\(^{207}\) See Chapter Three, Page 43.

\(^{208}\) Osborne, *Ministry*, 562.
religious Christian is primarily or exclusively to the secular arena is again a reading beyond the text and context of the Vatican documents.”

_Cristifideles Laici_ is an important for the reason of its subject matter, namely, the laity and its subsequent influence on magisterial and curial documents. _Cristifideles Laici_, like _Sources of Renewal_, places the baptised firmly in the heart of the Church’s mission but it is the mission in the secular sphere to leaven the temporal order with the values of the Kingdom of God and the witness they give to the Gospel in their lives. The strong emphasis on the secular character as proper reflects a particular reading of the Council and moves the Church towards a pre-conciliar ministerial model.

4.5. Hardening of Magisterial Attitudes: Lay Ministry post _Cristifideles Laici._

Pope Benedict XVI spoke of _Cristifideles Laici_ as “an organic revisiting of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching in regard to lay people.” Revisiting, however, is not reassessing in light of the contemporary situation. One hermeneutical principle I mentioned in Section 3.2 was that simply repetition of a text cannot adequately convey their meaning. In what follows I review a 1994 speech on lay ministry given by John Paul II to the Congregation for Clergy and the 1997 joint dicastery _Instruction on Collaboration_ (1997). Both interventions are marked by an increasingly hostile attitude on the part of the John Paul II and his curia towards lay ecclesial

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209 Ibid. 563.


211 See Chapter Three, Page 41.


ministry. John Paul’s reference to such ministry as the “darnel of a certain ideology”\textsuperscript{214} reflects that increased hostility.

As we noted with regard to \textit{Christifideles Laici} the same ahistorical use of previous conciliar magisterial teaching is applied in this address. The laity, according to John Paul cannot participate in the ministry of priests because of the “unchangeable differences willed by Christ and the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church”\textsuperscript{215} and they have “the duty of accepting the Church as a gift that God himself has conceived in advance.”\textsuperscript{216} In effect the structures of the Church are a divine given rather than a product of historical circumstances, which place the ordained in “a primary position in the Church” \textit{(CL 22)}. As Osborne notes, “in the course of Christian history there have been several distinct theologies and functions of both priest and bishop which do not coincide with the positions of the Scholastics, of the Tridentine documents, and of the manual theologies of the last two centuries.”\textsuperscript{217}

In his Address John Paul refers to the priest as “a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd”\textsuperscript{218} and consequently he concludes that the ministry and service of the laity “are never, properly speaking pastoral, not even when they supply for certain actions and certain concerns of the shepherd…pastoral ministry highlights the ontological bond which unites the priesthood to Christ the high priest and good shepherd.”\textsuperscript{219} Does an ontological bond not also exist between Christ and the baptised? Gaillardetz notes that John Paul’s magisterial

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214} John Paul II, “Address on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry,” paragraph 2.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid. paragraph 3.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Osborne, “Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry,” 196.
\item \textsuperscript{218} John Paul II, “Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry,” paragraph 4.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
pronouncements “have continued to give priority to the Christological strand of the Council’s teaching on the priesthood, a strand that continues to stress the priority of the priest acting in *persona Christi Capitis*, the person of Christ the head of the Church”\(^{220}\) and that the “pneumatological foundations of contemporary ecclesiology have not been adequately explored in either Church law or magisterial teaching.”\(^{221}\)

There is a hardening of attitudes towards the word ministry with John Paul noting that its present use in the Church was “doubtful, confused and hence not helpful.”\(^{222}\) As John Paul notes behind the use of terms “lurk dangers far more treacherous than one may think. It is a short step from current language to conceptualization.”\(^{223}\)

John Paul, however, makes an interesting and important recognition of the theological basis for lay ministry when he addresses the issue of lay ministry and necessity. He notes that when the laity exercise a ministerial function it is “rooted ontologically in their ‘common’ participation in Christ’s priesthood”\(^{224}\) and a fruit of their baptism and not “an ‘ontological’ participation (either temporary or partial) in the ordained ministry proper to priests.”\(^{225}\) While John Paul’s primary concern seems to be the preservation of the uniqueness of priestly ministry and its essential difference with the common priesthood he acknowledges that baptism confers a ministerial function. Through baptism the laity shares in Christ’s priesthood and so share in his ministry. If baptism confers a ministerial function then it must be by “right” and not something


\(^{221}\) Ibid., 151. See also Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay–Clergy Distinction,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (1999), 115-139.


\(^{223}\) Ibid. paragraph 5.

\(^{224}\) Ibid.

\(^{225}\) Ibid.
that is simply activated due to pastoral necessity. If it is a “right” then surely the laity have the “right” to exercise such functions in the life of the community of faith whether there are pastors or not. Perhaps it is less an issue of theology and more that of control:

Some balk at the articulation of any ecclesiology that would give a formal and constitutive role to the charisms of the baptized as anything more than a helpful augmentation to ordained ministry. One begins to suspect that what is actually at work here has to do with fear and power. Some Church leaders would acknowledge the contributions of the lay faithful as long as Church power remains exclusively in the hands of the ordained.226

While laypersons were appointed to positions in the Curia during John Paul’s pontificate they were to positions that did not “involve the exercise of the power of governance.”227 Any confusion regarding the theological basis of the laity’s ministry must rest with the magisterium’s failure to develop a theology of ministry rooted in the common priesthood and the grace of baptism in favour of a theology that emphasises ordination as the gateway sacrament into ministry.

In 1997 eight dicasteries of the Roman Curia published, with papal approval, the Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest.228 The Instruction aims to “to provide a clear, authoritative response to the many pressing requests which have come to our dicasteries from Bishops, Priests and Laity seeking clarification in the light of specific cases of new forms of ‘pastoral activity’ of the non-ordained on both parochial and diocesan levels.”229 The document is divided into two


227 Ibid., 135.

228 See Footnote 213, 75.

229 Instruction on Collaboration, Premise.
parts; theological principles and practical provisions. Of the theological principles Osborne writes:

It is theologically unbelievable that the authors of this document felt that this brief section of the instruction could possibly resolve the serious questions on lay/ordained ministerial collaboration. Much less could this section establish clear “theological principles” for an issue that remains profoundly unresolved. The bishops during Vatican II and the canonists in their formulation of the new code engaged in intensive discussions on these same issues. In both sets of discussions, no resolution was attained. The theological resolution of this issue of the common priesthood of all believers and its relationship to the ministerial priesthood was left to future investigation.\textsuperscript{230}

The “resolved questions” referred to by Osborne is that of the laity’s identity as ontologically secular and orientated towards the temporal – “the priority of the task of the New Evangelisation, which involves all the People of God, requires…there be [a] full recovery of the awareness of the secular nature of the mission of the laity”\textsuperscript{231} is presented definitively and without ambiguity. This is despite what Osborne identifies as a serious problem with the Instruction: “This official instruction represents simply one of many such documents that give only a brief mention of systemic factors and move immediately to symptomatic factors. As noted on Page 73: “whenever there is no developed grounding of clerical and lay ministry in the common priesthood of all believers, any and every conclusion on clerical and lay ministry will remain unsatisfactory.”\textsuperscript{232}

Apart from the lack of grounding of ministry in the common priesthood, Osborne identifies the lack of grounding of such documents in contemporary historical research on episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate, as a serious failing.”\textsuperscript{233}

\textsuperscript{230} Osborne, “Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry,” 204.

\textsuperscript{231} Instruction on Collaboration, Premise.

\textsuperscript{232} Osborne, “Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry,” 204.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 203.
As one of the authors of the *Instruction on Collaboration*, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s reflections in *L’Osservatore Romano* are worth examining.\(^\text{234}\) According to Ratzinger, the *Instruction* makes no claims to be a new coherent theological framework but rather claims *Christifideles Laici* and the 1992 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the formation of priests as its doctrinal basis.\(^\text{235}\) *Christifideles Laici* is referenced 7 times in the section on theological principles. He identifies four reasons that necessitated the *Instruction’s* publication: a devaluing of the ordained ministry; the “Protestantization” of ministerial concepts; the clericalization of the laity; and the growth of lay pastoral assistants giving rise to the risk of a perceived parallel ministry to that of the priest. While a text on collaboration these reasons all affirm the position of the ministerial priesthood over against the common priesthood.

Cardinal Ratzinger repeats a claim he made previously at the Synod of Bishops on the Laity that “a member of the lay faithful who over a long period of time or over a lifetime actually exercises the pastoral duties proper to a priest with the exception of celebrating mass and sacramental confession, is in fact no longer a true lay person and has lost his true identity in the life and mission of the Church.”\(^\text{236}\) But what are the duties proper to a priest? We have noted previously that these proper duties have been historically conditioned.\(^\text{237}\)

Cardinal Ratzinger’s reflection, however, leaves us with an unresolved question: if doing pastoral duties “proper” to the priest is possible by deputation and without ordination can such duties be truly proper? Is it not the case that what is regarded as proper, but which can be


\(^{235}\) Ibid.

\(^{236}\) Ibid. See also Joseph Ratzinger, “Who is the Lay Person?” *Origins* 17, No. 19 (1987), 344.

\(^{237}\) See Chapter Four, Pages 69-70.
delegated, is not rooted ontologically (to take John Paul’s phrase) in ordination but baptism and so proper to any of the faithful to exercise? If this principle is accepted then the idea of the “clericalization of the laity” would in fact be the restoration to the laity of their proper pastoral and ministerial roles. The fact that lay ministers do not preside at Eucharistic liturgy or hear confessions suggests they are very clear about their role and the fundamental distinctiveness of priestly identity and the grace conferred by ordination.

How do laypeople “properly” participate in the mission of the Church? According to Cardinal Ratzinger the layperson participates in the one mission of the Church and lives out his true identity by faithful participation in three tasks:

1) Tasks and services concerning the apostolate of the laity, that is, their specific way of making Christ present in temporal and civil structures; 2) tasks and services in the Church’s various organizational structures which are entrusted to the laity by competent ecclesiastical authority; 3) tasks and services proper to sacred ministers which are temporarily exercised in specific, serious circumstances, in practice because of the (it is hoped, temporary) shortage of priests and deacons, by lay persons who have received the juridical faculty or mandate from competent ecclesiastical authority.²³⁸

Tasks 2 and 3 in particular recall Catholic Action and the pre-conciliar hierarchical model of church with the emphasis on the juridical mandate. The laity and clergy are separated by sphere (secular versus sacred), by ministry (secular versus sacred), and by priesthood (common versus ministerial). Apart from Osborne, other theologians have commented on the Instruction’s emphasis on the laity’s secular character. Aurelie Hagstrom whom we noted in Chapter Two spoke positively of the ontological interpretation of Lumen Gentium 31 writes of the Instruction:

It seems that the instruction relies on the theological interpretation of the secular character of the laity. The whole thrust of the document seems to be toward a hard and fast separation and distinction between the clergy and the laity. Therefore, the secular character of the laity is described ontologically, and not simply typologically…the 1997 instruction apparently goes back to the pre-conciliar understanding of “two-realms” — sacred and secular. That is, the instruction seems to promote the view that there are two

distinct spheres of action, with temporal sphere belonging to the laity and the sacred to the clergy. This is evidenced in the emphasis on the ontological interpretation of the secular character of the laity in the document. Also, the word “sacred” is applied only to the clergy and the ministry of the ordained. This distinction is the basis for exclusion of the laity from service within the Church.²³⁹

While Oonagh O’Brien, writes of a “reversion to a pre-conciliar ‘two realm’ theory of the mission of the church. In other words, by stressing the sacred dimension of the ordained priesthood as being for the Church, and stressing the purely secular dimension of the laity, as being in the world, this document has reverted to the pre-conciliar teaching.”²⁴⁰ Note John Paul’s comment to the Congregation for Clergy: “We cannot jeopardize the church's hierarchical constitution in order to summon pastors to a humble, loving awareness of service or out of a desire to bring the lay faithful to a full realization of their dignity and responsibility. We cannot increase the communion and unity of the church by "clericalizing" the lay faithful or by "laicizing" priests.”²⁴¹ The question is why not?

The common thread that runs through Christifideles Laici, the Address on Lay Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry, and the Instruction on Collaboration is the ontological interpretation of the laity’s secularity that is the essential feature of the lay state in Sources of Renewal. However, Sources of Renewal is not the source of the authority for the papal and curial documents. Christifideles Laici does not claim Sources of Renewal as its source of authority even though they have the same author. These texts are in continuity with each other only because they interpret the secular character of the laity in Lumen Gentium 31 in an ontological sense. It is this interpretation that permeates what is then written on the mission and


ministry of the laity. An alternative reading of the Council’s documents will give rise to an
alternative theology of ministry.

4.6. Conclusion in Light of the Tropes.

What can be learned from reflecting on Christifideles Laici in light of the tropes? Firstly,
the future, discipleship and evangelisation are important themes in Christifideles Laici. Given
that Christifideles Laici (CL 33) and the Instruction on Collaboration (Premise) speak of the
“New Evangelisation” the commitment to the future cannot be denied. In both these documents
there is a clear and central role given to the laity. Like Sources of Renewal, discipleship and
evergilisation are conceived of in terms of the secular sphere because the lay state is properly
secular. The laity’s discipleship is lived through a variety of particular vocations in the secular
sphere. These vocations bring about holiness, which is the “perfection of charity” (CL 16). This
fundamental vocation is shared by all the People of God and the laity realise this holiness in the
world, “the vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit
expresses itself in a particular way in their involvement in temporal affairs and in their
participation in earthly activities” (CL 17). This is how Christifideles Laici sees discipleship
being lived out and the means by which the laity will evangelise, in the ordinary circumstances
of daily life: “The [lay] faithful can be active in this particular moment of history in areas of
culture, in the arts, and theatre, scientific research, labour, means of communication, politics, and
the economy.”[842] The issue is not that these documents are wrong. The majority of laypeople
will discover their discipleship within the world and evangelise amidst “family and Social life”
(CL 14). The difficulty is that neither Christifideles Laici nor subsequent magisterial documents
have provided a theological framework for those baptised-eucharistic Christians who feel called

[842] Instruction on Collaboration, Premise. See also Christifideles Laici 23, and Evangelii Nuntiandi 70.
to a ministry more traditionally identified with the priest. They are caught in a bind because of the ontological emphasis given to the laity’s secularity. These believers cannot be disciples or evangelise in the way they feel God is calling them. Perhaps Ben Kimmerling experience reflects their feelings:

As a Christian I am convinced that I and all other believers are empowered by Christ. I not only believe this to be true, I sometimes even experience it as true. I find this experience of Christ's power and life exhilarating but not surprising - after all it is what he promised would happen: 'I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly.' So my feeling of 'What's the point?’ my feeling of powerlessness and lifelessness (because that is really what it is) - is not to do with Christianity itself; rather it has to do with a very particular aspect of my Christianity, i.e. my relationship with the official Church. The truth is that this relationship frequently fails to mediate to me that abundant life which Christ promised. Instead I often feel despairing, frustrated, angry and blocked. These life-diminishing feelings stem mainly from the quality – or more precisely the inequality - of that relationship.243

I noted in Chapter One that the task of theology is to reflect upon given structures to see how they help or hinder the future, discipleship, and evangelisation within the unfolding human story. Theological enquiry needs to examine whether the limiting of the laity’s ministry to the temporal order due to a particular reading of conciliar documents is the most adequate reading for today’s circumstances. I am going to assume that such a reading is inadequate and suggest an alternative set of presuppositions for a new theology of ministry.

Chapter Five: Beyond Christifideles Laici: A New Foundation for a Theology of Ministry.

5.1. Introduction.

As noted in the previous chapter, I regard Christifideles Laici as a limited interpretation of the identity, mission, and ministry of the laity. The documents of the Second Vatican Council allow for alternative interpretations. John Paul’s reading of the Council emphasises an ecclesiology that remains fundamentally pre-conciliar in essentials: the laity have a mission in the world and the clergy in the Church and only in the case of pastoral need ought the laity have a pastoral ministry with a more immediate spiritual end such as leading the community of faith in worship and that ministry can only be what is not proper to the ordained. However, the ministry of the laity must not simply be conceived of in terms of secularity or pastoral necessity due to a shortage of clergy.

A new vision of the laity’s mission and ministry must in fact be a new vision of the believer or committed Christian. Theology of ministry must be grounded more completely in the baptised as the primary category in the Church. The full meaning of baptism as consecration for mission must be developed. The starting point cannot be secularity.

I suggest the following presuppositions must underpin that vision and be the basis on which to construct a theology of ministry appropriate to the present age: 1) The common priesthood of the baptised is the basis of ministry, discipleship and evangelisation; 2) Absolutist claims arising from history are neither helpful nor binding on the present; and 3) Church teaching on ministries can be changed to meet the needs of the present day. These presuppositions are coda drawn in part from what has been written in Chapters Two to Four. These presuppositions provide a basis for an alternative theology of ministry (going forward it may be more appropriate to talk of theologies of ministry that reflect the complex, diverse,
universal nature of the community of believers) that moves beyond the two-states model that in recent years appears to have become the ecclesiastical authorities approach to practice of ministry in the Church.

5.2. Presuppositions for a Theology of Ministry.

5.2.1. The priesthood of the Baptised is the basis of ministry, discipleship, and evangelisation.

As we look to the future the recovered conciliar motif of the priesthood of all believers must be the starting point for any future theology of ministry. It is this essential equality of the members of the Church that makes possible the image of the Church as the People of God. Related to this motif is that of the relationship between consecration and mission, which we noted in Chapter II was regarded by Yves Congar as of seminal importance, we are “consecrated for something.”

This something is a mission given by God to each of the baptised so as to proclaim the Kingdom both in the Church and in the world. This mission is not only exterior to the individual but consists of a particular manifestation of discipleship through which the individual believer discovers his identity and how God is manifesting God’s life in him or her. An adequate theology of ministry must take full account of this and not assume, as happens when a two-states ecclesiology underpins ministry, that certain charisms belong almost exclusively to certain states of life. At present two-states ecclesiology remains quite evident in official Church teaching, even if wrapped in the language of communion. There exist two classes of Christian – the clergy and the laity. Within the Church all power resides, as a right of ordination, with the clergy while laypeople remain subservient. The radical insight of the Second Vatican Council into the

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244 Congar, “The Laity,” 241.
primacy of baptism and the primacy of the Christian state has not been followed through in the pastoral or juridical life of the Church. Laity has no juridical authority in the Church, not even in their own parishes. Laypeople have a consultative voice but not a deliberative one.\footnote{Canon 536 states: 1°“If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a parish council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity. 2° A pastoral council possess a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.” Parishioners are not entitled to establish one or decide its way of proceeding independently of the bishop.}

The Christian or baptised state of life has primacy because it is what is commonly shared and from which all subsequent functions and missions arise. The Christian state of life is a consecration for mission. While baptism is foundational to the Christian state of life this life presupposes conversion and personal commitment on the part of each believer. This is a religious conversion and not simply a moral one. It is the total self-surrender without “conditions, qualifications, or reservation.”\footnote{Bernard Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology} (London: Longman, Darton, and Todd, 1975), 242} This being grasped by ultimate concern as an encounter with Christ makes conversion possible and sustainable. Such a believer is open to hear God’s call for them: this discipleship involves a unique mission given by God. To accept one’s mission is a dynamic state of daily surrender to the object of our love. In our surrender, Christ becomes our model. Ellero Barbini speaks of Christ as the “man who lives and dies to fulfil the mission received.”\footnote{Ellero Barbini, “Jesus Christ, Form and Norm of Man According to Hans Urs von Balthasar,” \textit{Communio} 16 (fall, 1989), 447.}

This Christological model of obedience to mission reflects the relationship of the persons of the Trinity to each other. This model presupposes a mature Christian faith on the part of the baptised, a real personal appropriation of faith and a willingness to be shaped and directed by that faith and encounter with God. According to Mark McIntosh the key to Christian life for Von
Balthasar is the “willingness to renounce personal calculations and make oneself available for the mission in life that God intends one to enjoy. This stance of generosity towards one’s mission has its basis in the prevenient intimacy that God offers. Humanity’s surrender of itself to God always comes about through recognition that life in God is humanity’s intended vocation.”  

Christ is our model for such a self-surrender and for the obedience necessary to live as God intends us to live. Understanding Jesus’ obedience to the Father is the key that “unlocks the mystery of his identity…the centre of Jesus’ existence is his obedience” and thus the motif by which we should understand our identity and mission as persons. The Johannine motif of “doing the will of him who sent me” (John 4:34) is central to von Balthasar’s understanding of self-surrender and obedience. Intimately linked to obedience is mission. For Balthasar the individual with will and intellect only becomes a unique person through his mission. Taking Christ as model he writes, “He [Jesus Christ] is person par excellence because his whole being is obedience to the Father. Jesus’ Sonship and his obedience go hand in hand. It is his being as Son to be totally available for the will of the Father. Because Jesus is Son, he is radically open to the Father’s mission.” Embracing such a model requires the capacity to let go of one’s agenda and plans for the sake of the divine plan as manifested in one’s life. Our model to imitate in this letting go is Christ

Christ’s total and complete self-emptying on the Cross is the model for all Christians to follow especially in the light of the victory of the Cross and the validation of Christ’s obedience in his resurrection. The Cross is the heart of Jesus’ identity and mission; his identity as love and

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248 Ibid., 59.


250 Ibid. 462.
his mission as redeemer. A person’s cross must, like Christ’s, be the “external representation of
the inner reality out of which he or she lives.” Discipleship involves “taking up one’s Cross” not Jesus’ Cross. It is the warning before we commit ourselves to authentic living of what God might demand of us as so to bear fruit. Without freely accepting this reality and desiring to be used as God desires, we will be like the seed that fell among the thorns, it was choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures (Matthew 13: 1-9). Von Balthasar speaks of this desiring in terms of a “boundless readiness to be used.” This “boundless readiness” needs to be cultivated by the individual believer in prayer so they can hear the Word of God and their mission.

In *Who is a Christian?* Von Balthasar contrasts two attitudes towards listening to God. Of the Christian who does not want to surrender fully to God he writes: “this is where the holding back from true commitment so frequently met among young Christians today is questionable? They want to commit themselves but at the same time they tighten their grip on the controls.” At the heart of this attitude is a partial self-surrender and refusal to accept the mission God is calling to be fulfilled. It is inauthentic discipleship because it has not resulted in the freedom to assume the mission given by God.

They talk with God in the rear –about things (*vox temporis vox Dei*) that are allegedly demanded by present circumstances and the structures of contemporary man. But they don’t ask what Christ demands. They lay down the terms of the mission themselves. They think they know how the kingdom of God can be best served, so they don’t hesitate to mutilate those parts of revelation that are really most essential to life yet don’t suit their own conception of modernity.  

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254 Ibid., 91.
Thus for Balthasar, “anyone who is not prepared to listen to God in the first place has nothing to say to the world. Like so many priests and laymen today he will meddle in and concern himself with a great number of things to the point where his awareness is deadened and he is completely exhausted.”

The second disposition is that of the heart that listens to God, “only the fresh and living power of a continual readiness to listen offers any opportunity of hearing and understanding the Spirit. This presupposes an extreme docility and a fully prepared and supernaturally instinctive obedience – the opposite of what we crudely think of as maturity.” Such a Christian alone is able to give up his plans for what God wills for him and through, him the world. Such were the Saints and the mystics who did nothing more than carry out their mission in complete obedience to the Father to the point for some of martyrdom. Their extraordinary fecundity is due to their prayerful listening and obedient response, not their extraordinary human resources and gifts.

Listening to divine calculation through discernment of God’s will allows limited finite human beings to participate in the task of building up the Kingdom of God without being overcome by the reality of the challenge. The listening heart does what God asks of it and recognises that the work is God’s work and that God has reserved to himself primary responsibility for building up the Kingdom. We can see this pattern in the Ignatian rite of election, a method by which a believer can come to understand their unique mission, their way of living discipleship.

The individual believer discerns how God is calling them to serve God. In Ignatian spirituality the first principle to this discernment is that the purpose of every human life is to

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255 Ibid., 78.

256 Ibid., 86-87.
“praise, reverence, and serve God.”\textsuperscript{257} There is a fundamental equality in all missions and an equal value because each is assigned by God. In \textit{The Spiritual Exercises} Ignatius writes, “it is more opportune and much better that in the search for the divine will the Creator and Lord communicates himself to the faithful soul, inflaming that soul in his love and praise, and disposing her towards the way in which she will be better able to serve him in the future.”\textsuperscript{258}

Basic to Ignatius’ concept of election is, as Michael Ivens writes, a concept of decision as relational. The believer does not tell God how he intends to serve God nor does the Church tell the believer how to serve God rather the believer listens attentively to where God is leading and then responds, says yes or says no. Nothing precludes the believer saying no but it should be noted that authentic discipleship is not possible. This approach emphasizes that a “good and sound decision requires two conditions, namely a previous disposition of availability to God’s word, whatever that word might be, and the discernment of what is in fact more pleasing to God in my case.”\textsuperscript{259} For Ignatius discipleship and holiness are intimately linked and developed in the \textit{Three Classes of Persons} (Sp Ex 149-157) and the \textit{Three Kinds of Humility} (Sp Ex 165-168). The third class of person desires only that their “wanting or not wanting [is] in accordance with whatever God our Lord inclines them to want, and as might appear to be more for the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.”\textsuperscript{260} We need to be indifferent and leave the choice to God. The importance of this indifference can be seen from an early commentary on \textit{The Spiritual Exercises}

\begin{quote}
At the time of election it is helpful to place before Almighty God on a given day one of the alternatives at issue and on the next day the other –for example, on one day the counsels (religious life) and on the other the commandments (lay state). He should them
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{257} Ignatius of Loyola, \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius}, paragraph 23.

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid., paragraph 15.

\textsuperscript{259} Michael Ivens, \textit{On Understanding the Spiritual Exercises}, (Leominster, Gracewing, 1998), 128.

\textsuperscript{260} Ignatius of Loyola, \textit{Spiritual Exercise}, paragraph 155.
observe toward which side God gives a greater sign of his will by these methods of election – as when one offers a prince various dishes and watches to see which of the he likes best.\(^\text{261}\)

In the *Third Kind of Humility* (*Sp Ex 167*) Ignatius is really proposing a loving commitment to Christ’s person. This is the key to discipleship in Ignatius’ spirituality, to desire only what the Lord wishes. This means that all the faithful need to create a real, deep, intimate, and personal relationship with the person of Christ without which one’s relationship with the Church remains at a superficial-institutional level. In the Ignatian vision, discipleship and holiness complement each other. As Ignatius writes, “my objective should be in the first place to desire and serve God…nothing should induce me to adopt such means or to reject them except the sole service and praise of God our Lord and the eternal salvation of my soul.”\(^\text{262}\)

The tropes of discipleship and evangelisation are realised in mission. Each believer has a unique God-given mission that demands their obedience so as to achieve these twin ends: discipleship finds expression in a uniquely given mission while evangelisation is realised through living one’s given mission. Through our mission we become what God calls us to be and when we become what God calls us to be we become holy. Holiness is the fashioning of the individual in the image of God who is self-surrendering love. Holiness is expressed in discipleship and through discipleship (which includes a concrete mission and not just a personal moral code) the individual believer evangelises, bears witness and proclaims Christ to the world.

Evangelisation is not something independent of discipleship but rather through discipleship the goals of evangelisation are realised. The believer’s journey through conversion,

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\(^{262}\) Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, paragraph 169.
prayer, self-surrender, and obedience to discipleship and holiness marks mature commitment and faith. It is from this journey that his mission flows and his discipleship lived out.

The believer who believes themselves called to a particular mission of service to the Church and the world must be very carefully listened to by the community of believers because it involves not simply an external action but a central aspect of their Christian identity and their growing into Christ. The community must discern and not simply dismiss because of a perceived incompatibility between missions/charisms and states of life. The community of believers has the right to discern whether or not a believer has in fact received such a mission from God: discernment is twofold involving both the individual and the community. Susan Woods writes, “a person must be called by both God and the ecclesial community. These are not two separate calls unrelated to each other, for God calls through the discernment of the community.” Pope Francis offers a good litmus test: “a sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all.” The community can discern by testing the claims of the individual and examining how this mission is shaping the individual’s growing conformity to Christ and the fruit it bears in the community of believers and wider world. Michael Himes notes: “if you want to know the work of the Spirit, anytime anybody is enabled by anyone else or anything else to be

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more loving, more intelligent, freer, more responsible, more generous, more open, more insightful, more creative, that is the work of the Spirit.”

At present it would seem that it is not the community of believers but the ministerial priesthood who has the right to discern the charisms and call of the believer. *Lumen Gentium* reserves the right to discern charisms (and so missions) “to those who preside over the Church and to whose special competence it belongs” (*LG* 12) and Canon Law states that “those who have received sacred orders are qualified, according to the norm of the prescripts of the law, for the power of governance, which exists in the Church by divine institution” (Canon 129). Yet it should be noted that *Lumen Gentium* 12 also speaks of the *sensus fidelium*, “the body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief.” As noted in Chapter One, Pope Francis acknowledges that “thinking with the Church” does not mean only thinking with the “hierarchy of the Church.”

Robrecht Michiels speaks of theologians and Church leaders needing to “listen attentively to the many questions and impulses to answers which come from the wider community of the faithful and the whole of society. Then it will become evident that dissensus is almost as widespread as consensus. The capacity of the faithful to interpret and appreciate on their own has increased enormously.”

At present many believers feel marginalised from the community because their charism is not recognised by the ecclesial authorities and so they are not authorized to minister to the community of believers. Thomas O’Meara notes that “repression of human life causes anger and

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266 Chapter One, 13.

frustration.”268 This frustration has less to do with the community rejecting an individual’s call following the community’s discernment and more to do with the structures that do not allow for a genuine discernment by the community of believers in the first place. Many leave the community to seek a community that will accept their charism and mission while others remain feeling frustrated and unfilled. I recall again Congar’s warning, “but it is quite certain that, when lay people are kept in tutelage and treated more or less as children, they become indifferent to the Church’s faith as to her life…the good health of the Church requires that the faithful be active, even if (as we see in families and schools) robustly healthy children are a bit more difficult to keep in hand than those who are ailing and spiritless.”269

If we accept that each of the faithful has a mission given to them by God and if we accept that it is through fulfilling this mission that the believer realises his or her identity and so become what God has created him or her to be then Church leadership needs to make greater recognition of charisms present in the life of the believer. Church leadership, presently entirely clerical, needs to accept that the Spirit is calling people to serve the Church in a manner more traditionally identified with what is proper (though historically determined) to clergy –preaching, teaching, and governance. The Spirit is endowing believers with the grace necessary to perform such functions in the life of the community of believers.

Accepting such a situation is not tantamount to saying the Church is without structure or leadership but it is suggesting that going forward the ecclesial leadership must separate the automatic link it makes between charisms of preaching, teaching, and governance and ordination in favour of recognising the link between these charisms and baptism.


269 Congar, “Laity, Church, World,” 38.
5.2.2. Absolutist claims arising from history are neither helpful nor binding on the present.

In Chapter Four when reviewing *Christifideles Laici* I noted how earlier documents such as the conciliar documents were used in a decontextualized manner. Quotes were extracted from their original text and context and placed within the new document. I also noted how claims of the magisterium are difficult to reconcile with modern day scholarship especially around questions that pertain to the New Testament era and so that of ministry in the early Church.\(^{270}\)

The Magisterium’s claim of divinely instituted structures is questioned by theological and biblical scholarship and research so the question needs to be asked: why are such claims perpetuated by Church leadership? Writing in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, John Paul states:

> In granting admission to the ministerial priesthood, the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing the twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church (cf. Rev 21:14). These men did not in fact receive only a function which could thereafter be exercised by any member of the Church; rather they were specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself (cf. Mt 10:1, 7-8; 28:16-20; Mk 3:13-16; 16:14-15). The Apostles did the same when they chose fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry. Also included in this choice were those who, throughout the time of the Church, would carry on the Apostles' mission of representing Christ the Lord and Redeemer.\(^{271}\)

This very confident interpretation of Scripture and the structures for leadership and ministry that arise from this interpretation stands in marked contrast to the 1972 report *The Priest and Sacred Scripture* commissioned by the United States Catholic Bishops Conference as part of its study on priestly life. Here the authors warn about the difficulties contained within the Scriptural text regarding matters relating to Christian ministry:

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\(^{270}\) See Chapter Four, 73-74.

In the New Testament we should not expect to find a clearly formulated definition of
Christian ministry from the beginning, or at any single point in the development of New
Testament revelation. Christian ministry was never “frozen” in any one mould but
continued to develop and to be adapted in the succeeding moments of history. This does
not mean that there is no normative character to the New Testament canon. But the
normative character will not be seen in a definitive, “canonizing” of one exercise of
ministry without regard for another, or of one historical manifestation at one time or
place in isolation from other such manifestations. Development itself is canonical and
therefore normative. The canonical character of New Testament revelation also would
indicate that development in the post-biblical period would have due respect for the
biblical forms and would proceed in living continuity with them.272

The Report speaks of “an evolution in the concept of ministry, which is eminently in keeping
with the nature of the church as a pilgrim people of God.”273 The Church as the pilgrim People of
God is marked by its situation within history. As shown in Chapter Two, historical developments
were strongly influenced by the wider social, cultural, and intellectual forms the community of
believers confronted and hence our approach should be recognising the limited use of continuing
with theological content and method that no longer speaks to the contemporary situation of the
Church.

The Church is as much a sociological (institution) reality as a theological-mystical (The
Body of Christ) reality and must adapt the proclamation and the means to a given age.
Schillebeeckx writes, “according to sociological laws, in an established church which needs a
church order, the various forms, including that of ministry, develop a tough structure and in the
long run no longer fit different situations.”274 For Schillebeeckx changes in ministry are not
excogitative in advance but arise from changes in historical circumstances and such change may
be necessary from the pastoral perspective, “even today, changes in the practice of ministry can

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272 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Priest and Sacred Scripture, ed. Eugene Maly (Washington,

273 Ibid., 3.

be quite legitimate in light of the gospel (in the sense of being legitimate dogmatically) and that from the pastoral perspective they may even be said to be necessary for the vitality of the gospel in Christian communities at the present time.”

Often it is at local level that new structures-practices begin in light of the community’s need for their continued growth in discipleship. In other words practices arise out of a particular set of circumstances and a concrete situation. This does not mean that every development is valid; “only theological theory can demonstrate whether the direction of the practice is orthos, right (orthopraxis) in the light of the inspiration and orientation of the great Christian tradition, even if this practice should be completely new.”

The key hermeneutic needs to be: does a particular historical structure that arose out of a particular set of historical conditions facilitate the primary purpose of the Church to proclaim Jesus and his Kingdom to the circumstances of the present day?

In conclusion I want to suggest that John Dadosky’s “ecclesiology of friendship” might have something to offer going forward.

While Dadosky’s purposes are not directed towards the theology of ministry and his primary concern is with the Church’s self-understanding based on the Other and the discontinuity that the Council’s teaching represents on this point it remains a useful motif.

The dominance of communion ecclesiology, which rightly acknowledges the essential equality of the baptised, must be balanced by the ecclesiology of friendship, which recognises the Church’s obligation and mutual relation to the Other.

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275 Ibid., 2.
276 Ibid., 11.
278 See Ibid., 745.
or it can be within the Church such as an alternative theological perspectives, pastoral practices, or a counter tradition. Dadosky notes that Vatican II “inaugurates a specific moment in Church history when the Church explicitly realizes that she not only mediates grace, salvation, Good News, and healing to the Other, but that she is enriched by the Other.”\footnote{Ibid., 745.} For Dadosky the Church becomes “more herself [sic] by receiving from the Other.”\footnote{Ibid., 746.} To receive from the Other the Church must become a listener, a student, and dialogue partner. This process has been part of the Church’s history though the Church has never “formally understood and expressed her self-constitution in these terms.”\footnote{Ibid., 747-748.} The encounters with the Roman world, Aristotelianism, post-Reformation Protestantism, were encounters with the Other with positive and negative consequences. As no encounter can be wholly neutral or without tension the discernment of the community is essential.

From the perspective of ministry this ecclesiology of friendship recognises that the Church has something to learn and receive from the Other that might challenge a present ecclesial structure but which ultimately may facilitate discipleship, evangelisation and a living future for the Church. The Other can point out how ministerial structures can hinder the mission of the Church. There is balance to be achieved.

The Church strive[s] for the ideal of being at home in both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’. In terms of the ‘old’, this means that one strives to retain the tradition of the Church, not as a preservation of ashes, but as the feeding of a fire. The study of tradition is important in and of itself, and is to be preferred to a subjective conception of tradition, which could be stagnant or non-historical. Each ecclesiology will also have to reckon with the ‘new’. The theology of the Church develops and grows as historical-cultural contexts grow and call
for transpositions of the old into the new – it is not appropriate to pour new wine into old wineskins. This requires a critical engagement with the contemporary context.\textsuperscript{282}

5.2.3. Church teaching on ministries can be changed to meet the needs of the present day.

As I noted in 5.2.2 structures in the Church evolved out of particular historical circumstances. Present day ministerial structures are the product of particular historical choices made in response to particular historical events and the Church has the authority to change these structures. In the motu proprio \textit{Ministeria Quaedam} Paul VI gave expression to the conciliar acknowledgement that laypeople have a ministry within the Church. In the reforms of \textit{Ministeria Quaedam}, Paul opened the ministries of Lector and Acolyte to laymen, abolished minor orders (tonsure/porter, exorcist, and sub deacon), recognised that it was ordination to the diaconate and not admittance to tonsure that admitted an individual to the clerical state, and acknowledged that new orders might be required for circumstances of the times. This is a substantial change to the church’s structure, a change that altered long established practice and ecclesiastical law. Paul VI acknowledged that some of these functions came to be “reserved to those who received them as steps toward the priesthood”\textsuperscript{283} and hoped that with the reforms of \textit{Ministeria Quaedam} this historical development would be rectified. Paul VI writes: “since minor orders have not always been the same and many functions connected with them, as at present, have also been exercised by the laity, it seems fitting to re-examine this practice and to adapt it to contemporary needs. What is obsolete in these offices will thus be removed and what is useful retained; also anything new that is needed will be introduced.”\textsuperscript{284}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{282} Ibid., 756.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
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The importance of *Ministeria Quaedam* is not to be found primarily in what it says about ministries given that its vision for stable offices remains to be fulfilled but its recognition of the need for the church to adapt its ministries to contemporary circumstances and the Church’s authority to do so. This recognition of adaptation to contemporary needs can be seen in the decision of the Second Vatican Council to re-establish the permanent diaconate and admit married men into the ordained ministry of the Latin Rite.\(^{285}\) Paul VI is not talking of a simple return to historical practice but an adaptation that will address contemporary needs; the obsolete removed and the useful retained. As part of that adaptation Paul allowed national episcopal conferences to petition the Holy See to establish or re-establish other orders “judge[d]…to be necessary or very useful because of special reasons.”\(^{286}\) What constitutes “special reasons” could be unique to a particular ecclesiastical territory such as communities that lack resident pastors.

Going forward hierarchal leadership needs to be more discerning of changes needed to the ministry for the sake of the mission. Obvious changes could include admitting women to the ministerial priesthood, married clergy, restoration of lay cardinals, parish councils with deliberative rather than consultative authority, and laypeople holding positions of governance in the Curia and diplomatic service. The presuppositions of Chapter Five are an alternative basis for constructing a theology of ministry and function as a foundational reference upon which more particular theologies of ministry can be developed. Accepting the full implication of these presuppositions will quite possibly alter the two-states ecclesiology that remains evident in post conciliar magisterial documents and theologies of ministry constructed upon it.

\(^{285}\) See *Lumen Gentium*, article 29.

\(^{286}\) Paul VI, *Ministeria Quaedam*. 
5.3. Conclusion in Light of the Tropes.

What can be learned from reflecting on these presuppositions in light of the tropes? Firstly, these presuppositions point towards the future. The presuppositions do not reject the past or the present but acknowledge the limitations in looking back without adequate adaptation of historical developments to present and future needs. The Church is most authentically Church when it reflects the face of Christ to the world. Fidelity to the future is firstly fidelity to that task. With such an aim for its future, the Church must look at its present (inherited) structures so as to ensure that those structures, which once existed to facilitate that reflection, are now not a hindrance.

In Chapter One I noted Patrick Hughes’ comment on the growing awareness among lay Catholics of their consecration for mission – “consciousness of ourselves as church came as a gradual awakening to the reality of our being called and being sent.” These presuppositions acknowledge that awareness. It is through the discipleship and evangelisation of believers that Christ’s face will shine through the Church and the World. For the laity that discipleship and mission to evangelise cannot be limited to the secular sphere simply because they are “lay.” To maintain that position suggests that the full import of baptism has not get been accepted by the magisterium. The presupposition that the priesthood of the baptised is to be the basis of discerning one’s mission demands mature discipleship on the part of the believer and acknowledges that God through the charisms of the Holy Spirit call people to particular forms of discipleship. Through living out his or her given mission the believer evangelises. The starting point for all ministry must be a real recognition of God active and calling each of the baptised to his service. The Christian “yes” to God’s call manifests itself in a divinely inspired activity that

God has equipped with charisms necessary to realise for the sake of the Church and the world. Until the theologies of Church authority and ordained priesthood are re-examined and the theology of baptism as a consecration for mission further developed and integrated into ecclesial thinking, the promptings of the Spirit may not be heard by the community. Reflecting on the role of the Spirit amid the present “crisis in ministry,” Thomas O’Meara says:

I think it is very hard not to think that the Holy Spirit decided that the original view of the community was to come back, and the ministry was not simply the providence of a few people...you can also go back and see that, in the founding of all the religious orders and movements, in a way the Holy Spirit is always trying to get the ministry out of being just one form, but in our time it has set this in motion with tremendous force and change.288

Sentiments I find myself agreeing with. Discerned risk taking is required if the challenges to faith and the values of the Gospel are to be confronted in the present age. Wrong roads will be taken but the community of believers must trust in the Spirit and the Spirit’s capacity to make right mistaken paths. What is forever young must be brought forth anew from the treasury of the Church for the sake of each new generation and the Spirit knows best how to achieve this.

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Conclusion: Pope Francis and *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Does *Evangelii Gaudium* offer a way forward? The Pontifical Council for the Laity refers to *Evangelii Gaudium* as “an essential new reference point that complements the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988) in promoting the vocation and mission of the laity.”\(^{289}\) Does this suggest that *Christifideles Laici* was incomplete with regard to its understanding of the laity’s mission and ministry? While *Christifideles Laici* remains the Church’s “official” statement on the mission and ministry of the laity, *Evangelii Gaudium* moves beyond it. The content, language, and tone are very different to the magisterial documents I have referred to in this study. This is significant if you agree with John O’Malley that language and tone are hermeneutical tools useful and necessary for interpreting the text.\(^{290}\) O’Malley writes: “I have learned from exegetes, as well as from my colleagues in the historical profession, that I will not understand what a document is saying unless I pay as much attention to form as content.”\(^{291}\)

For O’Malley the documents of the Council represent an epideictic genre. Of this genre he notes: “the appropriation of the epideictic genre redefined what a sermon was supposed to do: rather than proving points it was now to touch hearts and move hearers to action for their fellow human beings. Like any good oration, these, of course, "taught," but in a different mode than did the Scholastic sermons.”\(^{292}\) If as I noted in Chapter Four, the intemperance of John Paul’s address to the Congregation for Clergy marked a hardening of attitudes towards the ministry of the laity, then it stands to reason that the openness of Francis’ language reflects a new openness towards


the ministry of the laity. Francis’ reflections are rooted firstly, and remain rooted, in the People of God –there is very little division of responsibility between the different categories of the faithful. I think the significance of his repeated use of the words “evangelisers” as a description of all the People of God and “pastoral workers” should be noted for its radical departure of the language of *Christifideles Laici*. Perhaps this term arises from Francis’ experience of the Latin American Church and its dependence on lay ministers in the absence of clergy.

Can anything be discerned in relation to our presuppositions? Yes. Francis notes:

Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the sources and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world.

Categorizing the mission and ministry of the faithful on the basis of ordained-non-ordained is perhaps one such dull category that is inhibiting the Gospel’s penetration of today’s world. To link particular ministries with particular categories is to try and control the freedom of the Spirit. Francis continues, “the Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the Word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking” (*EG* 22).

When Francis turns his attention to the structures of the Church he is even more forceful regarding the need for structures to adapt to the circumstances of the day, “there are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelisation” (*EG* 26). He laments the fact that episcopal collegiality has not been authentically realised and that juridical structures hinder this development –“excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church’s life and her missionary outreach” (*EG* 32). Of structures in general and of the future role of women he notes:

In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heat of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be
beautiful, but they no longer serve as a means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people’s lives. (EG 43)

I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families, and groups, and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church…in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures. Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions that cannot be lightly be evaded. (EG 103-104)

These are sentiments absent from Christifideles Laici. How these sentiments influence changes to juridical structures and pastoral norms going forward remains to be seen.

I speculate that Francis’ vision for the Church as expressed in Evangelii Gaudium is influenced by four sources: the Jesuit experience of collaboration in ministry; the Ignatian trust that the Creator communicates directly with the creature especially with regard to mission (fifteenth annotation of the Spiritual Exercises); a generous and magnanimous spirit on the part of the faithful towards God’s will (fifth annotation of the Spiritual Exercises) –“evangelisation aims at a process of growth which entails taking seriously each person and God’s plan for his or her life” (EG 160); and finally his non-euro-centric ecclesial experience –the Latin American Church has by necessity adapted pastoral structures in the absence of clergy. The fruit of these structures and movements and what they achieve as well as their shortcomings no doubt shape his ecclesiology. I conclude sharing in Francis’ hope, “Because we do not see these seeds growing, we need an interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks…The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills, and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary” (EG 279).
Bibliography


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