



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 3: "ELEMENTS OF ECCLESIOLOGY & THE
THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY
sheet 4

2. The Identity of the Lay Person
[III] The Lay Person & the Mission of the Church

The message of salvation is addressed to the whole world and it is precisely there, in the world and through the things of the world, that the lay faithful respond to the call of God and are witnesses of his presence., incarnating in their lives the task of revealing God.



By their very vocation, the laity seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances and social life which the very web of their existence is woven. [LG, 31]



A. 'Being lay' as a
specific theological
'place'

Lay people in their ordinary activities witness to the extraordinary in life and realise the perfection of charity.



The Church has an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word Incarnate, and which is realised in different forms through her members. [AAS, 64: 208]

...for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but...a theological and ecclesiological reality as well...The images taken from the gospel of salt, light and leaven, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because they speak not only of the deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth,...but also above all, they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation. [CFL, 15]



The universal call to holiness is made concrete in the diversity of the members of the Church which recognises in the lay state one of its fundamental characteristics.

B. Competence of
lay people

Lay people are 'competent' in the questions of ordinary life—marriage, family, human culture, political life, economics etc. It is through them that the Church is in a special way present there.

Paul VI, speaking of the laity said:



Their own field of evangelising activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. The more Gospel-inspired people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the kingdom of God...[Evangelii Nuntiandi]

For the Church, listening to the world is not limited to a reference to method and language but through them she means to welcome the newness, the hopes, the needs and the presence of God which is at work in all things.