



COMING CLOSER TO THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAITY AND THE BROTHERS

THE SAME VOCATION TO BE FULLY ALIVE AND OUR COMMON CALL IN BAPTISM UNITES US AS LAITY AND BROTHERS.

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The new relationship between laity and brothers is nourished by our awareness that everyone in this world shares the same vocation to be fully alive.

In the spirit of Vatican II, we feel united in our vocation to holiness and our dignity as children of God, with the same Lord, same faith and same Baptism.

THE VERY SAME HUMAN VOCATION unites us as laity and brothers. In this vocation we also feel in union with all the men and women in our world. The new relationship between laity and brothers is nourished by our awareness of sharing with all people everywhere the very same vocation to be fully alive.

Our way forward is one of inclusion, not exclusion. We feel that the vocation to be fully alive as a pathway to everyone's holistic development is the one that is common to every man, woman and child. We are not self-sufficient beings but interdependent, intimately united with our Earth and the Universe. The human community is forging a common destiny. (Cfr. Prov. BCS – Diretrizes do Setor de Vida consagrada e Laicato).

This is not a novel perspective but it needs to become a conviction on our part. Vatican II expressed it this way: "Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all humanity, we are all called to be brothers and sisters. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, human and divine, we can and we should work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace." "For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed." (Cfr. Gaudium et Spes, § 92 and §3)

God's fundamental plan for every human being is linked to living, and living means opening ourselves up to the love-filled designs of God and wholeheartedly embracing them. These divine designs entail a plan that involves human conviviality, inter-relatedness, dialogue and communication, respecting individual differences and freedom, and striving to bring about peace in an atmosphere of forgiveness and mutual reconciliation. It's a plan based on respect for creation, for our earth, in harmony with

all of nature and living beings, in a universal cosmic fraternity able to open up paths for new generations. It's a plan for exercising solidarity with all people everywhere, especially those who are marginalized.

To be truly ourselves means each of us must be faithful to the way we have been created. God's will for a rose garden is for it to be a rose garden; God's will for a person is for him or her to be ever more fully alive. As Jonathan Livingston Seagull was told, "Your only obligation is to be true to yourself;" What a succinct way to express this fundamental task of



*Brothers and Lay Marists during reflection days,
Colombo, Sri Lanka*

every human being. We humans come together as one in our task to be persons. This “opening out” to the world around us amounts to giving the very best of ourselves, and that is the way to make it more humane. That is our vocation in life.

As believers we are certainly putting into practice the vocation to life that we share with every man and woman in our world. Paraphrasing the oft repeated expression of St. Irenaeus, we can state that “The glory of God is men and women fully alive.” That means that as believers we have the ability to sense the ineffable joy of our being a person and the joy of knowing that this is God’s joy. The human development of men and women reveals God acting for all to see.

This way of thinking makes things crystal clear. Feeling united in our same human vocation cleanses what would otherwise be a relationship of self-interest, e.g., the brothers having an interest in maintaining their educational centers..., the laity in having security at an Institution.)

Most of all, however, this human vocation promotes equality in us in our different cultures and religions, a new relationship with nature and greater care for this planet that we all call home. Here is the way our documents express this:

- Promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, in terms of respect, growth in mutual understanding and relationships based on equality among different cultures and religions. (Mendes Assembly, Brazil)
- Spreading a new, more evangelical relationship with nature, born of the desire to respect it and take care of it, a relationship that allows our young people to marvel at creation and live a lifestyle that makes possible the sustainability of the planet. (Cfr. Open Letter, Gathered around the same table, page 103)
- Practicing the simplicity characteristic of our charism keeps us in communion with the Church, the People of God, and with other Christian churches who travel with us on the path towards Christ. Also, it unites us to other people, non-believers or members of other religions, with whom we share a common commitment to build a fairer world. (Cfr. Gathered around the same table, §82)
- Brothers and sisters in a shared humanity, we seek to build networks of mutual support as a way of making the interdependence of all peoples very clear. Jesus invites us to care for our planet as a “common home” for all men, women and children. (Cfr. Gathered around the same table, §83).
- Our vocation gives us great freedom to become pilgrims with all people seeking God and to initiate an interreligious dialog based on our shared lives. Including, to be established in this boundary area that according to one author might be called a “double belonging” while others refer to it as “religious bilingualism.” (Br Emili).

As believers, our new relationship begins with a greater awareness of our COMMON CALLING IN BAPTISM. In the spirit of Vatican II, we brothers and laity sense that we share in the same vocation to be holy, are blessed with the same dignity as children of God, have the same Lord, same faith and same baptism. Therefore the People chosen by God are one: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4, 5). Its members share a common dignity through their rebirth in Christ, a common grace as children of God, a common call to perfection, one single salvation, one hope and an undivided heart. So there is no inequality at all in Christ and the Church based on one’s ancestry, nation, social standing or sex, because “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person,

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AND OUR BAPTISMAL CALLING**

there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3, 28) (Constitution on the Church, 32)

The root of all vocations is found in our baptism, and in terms of this baptism we speak of the fundamental dignity of every member of the people of God. “Christ unites all of us as the People of God, equal in dignity and diverse in our service and state of life. Each and every one of us works in the same common vineyard of the Lord with diverse charisms and complementary charisms and ministries.” (Gathered around the same table §6) “Baptismal consecration generates a community of brothers and sisters who are equal in dignity and responsibility within the mission of the Church.” (Gathered around the same table §40) As both religious and laity we are moved to follow Jesus and keep our eyes on the Kingdom. That’s where the entire people of God are to be found. That is the fascinating vista and great treasure common to all.

Our lives are summed up by our vocation in life and our calling in baptism. These bring about the deepest relationships within the common home of our world and that of our Church. This is where honors and rankings, good things and bad, states of perfection and the like disappear...

It is he who gives to everyone life and breath and everything

(Acts 17, 25)

Paul’s speech at the Areopagus

Then Paul stood up at the Areopagus and said: “You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all that is in it, **the Lord of heaven and earth**, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything.”

“Rather it is he who gives to everyone life and breath and everything. He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed **he is not far from any one of us.**”

“For, ‘In him we live and move and have our being,’ even as some of your poets have said, ‘**For we too are his offspring.**’ Since therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human heart and imagination.”

“God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now **he demands that all people** everywhere repent because he has established a day on which he will ‘judge the world with justice’ through a man he has appointed, and he has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead.”

(Acts 17, 22-31)



To deepen reflection



Members of the Secretariat of the Laity at the Hermitage

Suggested Readings:

- Circular of Brother Charles Howard, 15 October 1991
- *"The Lay Marist Vocation," in Gathered around the same table, Chapter 1*

Take another look at the people with whom you come in contact the most, (brothers, lay women and men) and describe how you relate to them in terms of **our vocation to be fully alive and our baptismal calling**. Are these areas that you work on in your relationships?

What do I need to change in my life?

We speak of a new relationship between brothers and lay people. Now it's clear that the word "new" is not an adjective to be taken lightly. It refers to a change in thinking, attitudes and ways of doing things. Not necessarily a change on the part of others but one starting from within myself. What ought to change in my life? (Br. Emili)

Challenging myself to

- Fully realize that having the same vocation to live out my baptism does not allow me to exclude others or feel self-sufficient.
- Respect differences and to dialogue in dealing with diversity.
- Be involved in caring for our planet as the home we share.
- Believe in equality among cultures and religions that are different.
- Experience that I am united with non-believers.
- Participate in a common destiny with and for all men and women in our world.
- Form part of the people of God, having equal dignity and responsibility in carrying out the Church's mission.
- Recognize that following Jesus is the overriding vision we have in common as laity and brothers.