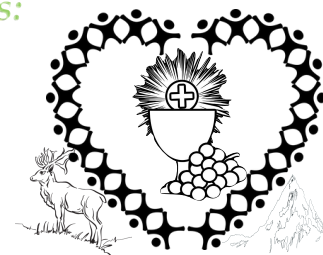


Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:

*Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



The Sunday Mass is broadcast via Zoom from Fernie & Sparwood (see below).

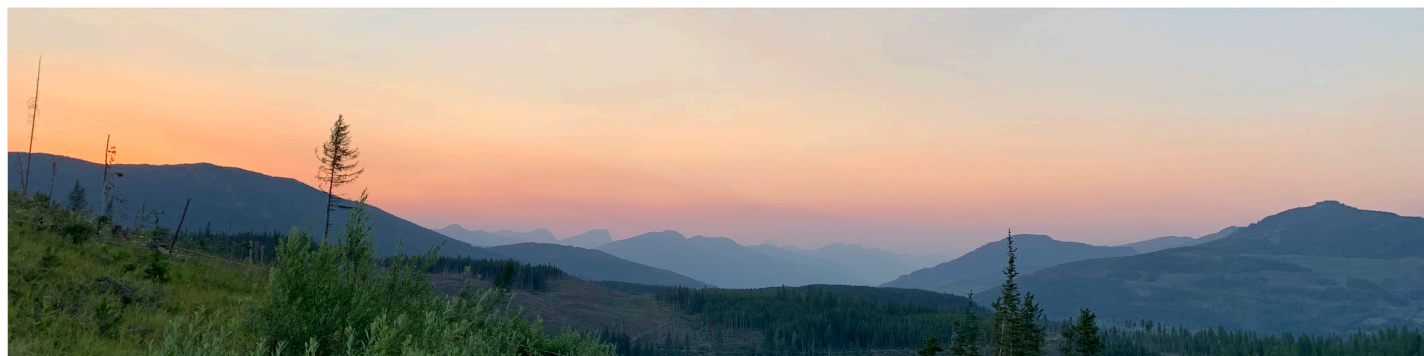
17th/18th July

Dear All,

This week the smoke from the forest fires across B.C. has reached our valley. Last night the moon was a rich 'peach' colour. Fortunately, perhaps because of the bursts of heavy rain that we have had, there are no fires in our Valley as yet, but our thoughts and prayers are with the rest of B.C. and Yukon who are affected by these fires. While, as of Thursday morning, I read that there are 309 fires in B.C., 93 of which are out of control, I don't know how this compares with other years. So perhaps the best thing to do is keep our province in our prayers and let the 'B.C. Wildfire Service' inform us of what is happening on a day to day basis.

I have to say, in these weekly e-mails I include things about what is effecting the parish at the moment, and obviously Covid is up there as one of the most important. And my thoughts are with the wider issues, of which the legacy of the Residential Schools is very much front and centre. And then there is the issue of how we move forward in a society that, rightly or wrongly, see us as a symbol of everything that was disordered in a bygone age. All of these issues are difficult and I suspect that many people won't want to read yet more on these subjects, and I understand that, but I really don't want to ignore them. So please bear with me.

This week what I have done is put a 'Covid' piece as a separate section at the end. We keep the Residential Schools situation in our prayers; I should also add that as a newcomer to Canada in this century, I have been trying to inform myself more about our history, and not just starting with the Residential Schools, but going back beyond the first visit by Europeans to a full history of this land, so honestly I am not forgetting about this subject. And all the many other needs of our world we also keep in our prayers.



A slightly smoky sunset over the East Kootenay Mountains.

Rules verses Expectations: Society's struggle and our struggle?

On Monday the Prime Minister of Britain, Boris Johnson, made an announcement that mask wearing would no longer be *mandatory* in public spaces in England, but the government still *advised* people to wear masks if a space was crowded. So, for example, if someone was the only person in a carriage on a train – *which is a public space* – then they no longer have to wear a mask. But if the compartment on the train is full, the government advise people to wear a mask. One might think that this is very straight forward and common sense. But one of the reporters, Ben Kentish from a London radio station, asked the following question:

*“You’ve talked today about people needing to wear masks, expecting people to wear masks; but our country doesn’t run on **expectations** it runs on **rules**... Why in the middle of a global pandemic do you think that wearing a mask should be one of the few areas of public life where people are **expected** to behave in a certain way rather than being **told** to do so?”*

Of course, both sides had a valid point. But for me, this interchange brought into focus one of the issues we face in the Church, and not just with masks and Covid, but more generally.

Vatican II, and especially the Decree on the Laity (*see below*), gave us a renewed vision of the Church. The laity, that is, those who are not bishops, priests or religious, have a role in the Church by right. In a previous parish a very good lady would always say to me, “Do you want me to take Communion to Mrs. So-and-So for you?”, to which I would reply, “Please don’t do it just for me, but please take her Communion for the good of the whole parish and in the name of the whole parish.” Inevitably I would be greeted with a blank look! The point is that we don’t have a parish council, Eucharistic ministers, readers, catechists and alike just because there are not enough priests to fulfil these ministries – the laity are the proper ministers of all these tasks. You don’t read for the priest, you read for the parish; you don’t serve on council for the priest, you serve for the parish.¹

It is through our Baptism that we become part of Christ, and thus a co-worker with Christ in the building up of the Kingdom. The sacrament of Confirmation confirms and through the Holy Spirit empowers this, but no other calling is needed; we don’t have to have some additional holiness to be a co-worker in the Church.

Part of the difficulty was that before Vatican II the way to holiness was seen primarily in the monastic tradition, that is, a path that lead us out of this world to a place apart. So to be holy one had to retreat from the world, thus monastics and hermits could obtain real holiness; others like priests tried to keep one foot firmly in the recluse part of their lives as they, by necessity, had to step into the world with their other foot. This made it hard for everyone else, everyone sitting in the pews, to see themselves as following a path of holiness. But this was not how it was in the early church or through the majority of the Church’s history.

¹ I am so pleased how sensitive Deacon Stephen is to this with the altar servers, trying to let them continue to do the role which is proper to them while fulfilling his role as a Deacon assisting at the table.

While some are called to solitude and to be apart (*and while I personally long to walk down this path a bit further*) Vatican II reminded us that in Scripture and Tradition the normal road to holiness starts exactly where you are standing now, and will take you forward through your married life, your single life, your widowed life, or whatever is the life to which God has already called you.

To see how you understand the nature of the Church, answer this question:

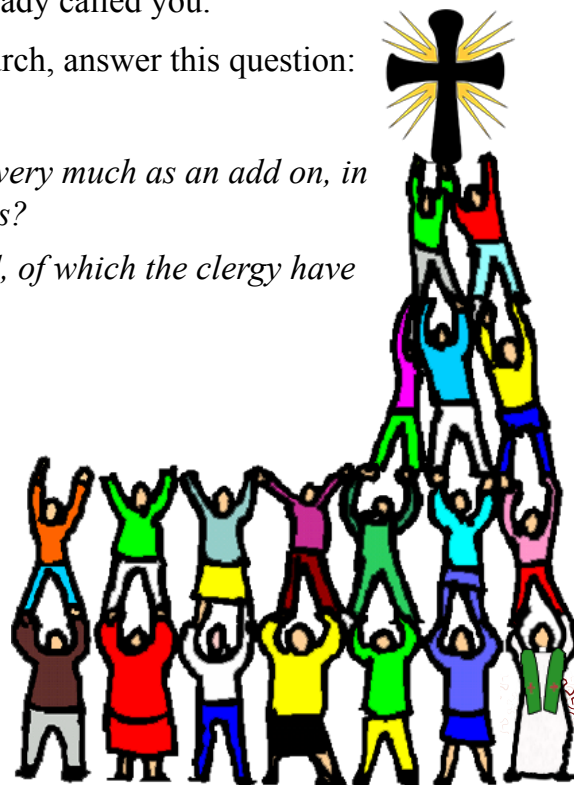
Think of “The Church”, what do you see?

- *Is “The Church” primarily the clergy, and very much as an add on, in second place, the people who sit in the pews?*
- *Or rather, is “The Church” all the baptised, of which the clergy have a particular role, as does everyone else?*

Vatican II clearly told us the latter.

And a second question:

- *Do you follow your Catholic faith because the rules say that you have to and because, like a little child, you fear God will be angry with you if you don't?*
- *Or do you follow it because you are in a loving relationship with Christ, and because of your love for Christ, you are wanting to follow in Christ's ways?*



Again, Vatican II clearly told us the latter is what we should strive for.

We can see that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not only conferred upon clergy at ordination but are widely shared among all the Baptised. More than one theologian reflecting on the work of Vatican II has commented that Vatican II opened the way for us to be an adult Church, which means we take on our roles within the Church because we have chosen to do this out of love of God.

Saint Pope John XXIII said the Church had to be opened to the world and it had to support the world. It no longer saw the world as a profane place separate from the sacred, but as God's creation where we had an indispensable role. As a result, today the laity is involved in almost every aspect of both the Church and the world.

So going back to the question about masks asked of Prime Minister Boris Johnson at a press conference, we can see that during this current pandemic people in our society are searching for the right balance between following rules and taking responsibility for our own behaviour. That same searching is within the Church. Within today's Church all the baptised are invited to take up their role not just because there are *rules* saying that they should, but because this is the *expectation* that our faith brings to our lives. Yet how widely is this known? Would an outsider know that the baptised are adult-Christians called to take personal responsibility for their lives and for the building up of the Kingdom of God?

In psychology there is a phenomenon called “The Stockholm Syndrome”, and while very complicated it revolves around the idea that if we are forcefully and repeatedly treated like young children, then many will take on that role, and what is more, give the same trust and loyalty that a young child gives to their parents, even when the parents are abusing them. I do seriously wonder if we have a bit of this syndrome in the Church: for so long, intentionally or not, many clergy and laity have presented The Church (or at least, its clergy) as this strong parental figure and told us that our response should be one of unquestioning obedience, like a young child. And many have taken this on and have been incredibly loyal to the Church, even when an individual within it has been abusive in some way. Yet many others have sensed this infantilisation of the laity and intrinsically felt that it was wrong, and sadly, as a result many have walked away from us.

Don’t get me wrong, before God I am a child, and I rejoice in the forgiving, parental, unconditional love of God; but within the Church, God the Father has chosen to raise us up to be brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, adults called to bring all our maturity to the work of the Church. (cf. Ephesians 2:6)

Going forward, I think this idea of how we see ourselves within the Church – *whether as adults sharing in the life of the Church or as children who are told what to do* – radically effects us in so many ways; how we see the future, how we understand what has gone wrong in the past and how we can start to put it right.

When we look back on the Residential Schools, isn’t a significant part of the failings of those who were working in the schools that they were trying to follow rules that they had been given, and in the process they lost sight of the big picture which was that they were being asked to share the love of Christ with children who didn’t know about Christ? Yet so many of the survivors of the Residential Schools say that love, compassion and any sort of warmth was totally absent in the schools. It is hard for me to believe that people who were encouraged and empowered to grow as mature adults would then, in the name of Christ, enforce rules to the exclusion of love, compassion or even basic warmth!

The irony is that rules are very important exactly because they are meant to protect everyone, and for this reason must not be ignored. Yet following the **rules** does not absolve us from the **expectation** that we will keep our eyes clearly focused on our mission which is always to bring God’s love more fully into the world.

This parent/child dynamic does not explain the tragedy of the Residential Schools, but for me it is clear that one of the ways we can try to rebuild a Church that will never make the same mistakes again is to embrace the concept of an adult Church, especially of an empowered laity that shares in the vision of the whole organisation.

Yet it is hard to say that this is the reality, even today. In every parish I have been in, when I have arrived I have been asked, “How do you want this-or-that to be done?” To which I answer, “I can tell you what the Church asks of us for this task, and then perhaps you can help me work out what is the best solution for us in our particular situation?” Of course, people look at me as if I am talking a foreign

language because they were expecting to be told, like a child, what to do; they weren't expecting to take on the adult role of making a judgement themselves. Why? Because this is what priests have done and what the people have accepted.

I do seriously wonder how many of our younger people wouldn't have walked away from us if they had been treated a bit more like adults within the Church. How many of them knew that taking on a child-like relationship to the clergy and their appointees was not the way to the fullness of life, and thus they walked?

On Thursday in a sermon to the clergy of the Plymouth Diocese, Bp. Mark said,

For most of our contemporaries, our Christian way of life is seen as merely one option among many. Even for what we thought were committed Catholics, Covid has revealed the distinction between those who 'engage' and those who merely 'attend'.

It's a reminder to us that there is no simple return to a secure land, but an invitation in this moment to go, like Moses and those early Israelites, on a new journey into a new land. And in this new journey we come today to pray together for the courage to be like the earliest apostles; to propose Jesus Christ anew to the people of our day.

Our task as adult members of the Church is to reach out to those we have lost, and to reveal to those who might be 'attending' but not yet 'engaged', that God is calling them in all their abilities. Christianity is not an imposition, it is not something to which we should be subjected, we are not defined purely by our **rules**; rather Christianity is our calling to a relationship with God and neighbour, a relationship in which we learn of God's love for us and we learn to share this love with our neighbour – this is the **expectation** that our faith brings to our lives.

In doing this we will be taking on the "New Evangelisation" that Saint Pope John Paul II talked of, a journey to a new land where the loving, caring, self-giving face of Jesus is shown again to his people.

I hope all the above doesn't sound like theoretical ramblings, but my attempt to connect a current debate within our secular society to a similar debate within our Church. We must not let either Covid or the mistakes of our past drive us into a bunker; our task as Christians is always to go outward, not only to journey towards a renewed Church but indeed a whole new society that is transformed and liberated by knowing the Gospels. And I dare to hope that this might even spill into our relationship with the environment as well!

We already have the calling of God, we already have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, now is the time to take on our adult role and follow Christ. This is what we should pray for, this is what we need to re-enable our church to do: to help us "*be like the earliest apostles and to propose Jesus Christ anew to the people of our day*".

(At the end of this e-mail I include the first section of the Vatican II document, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity". I have included 1,500 words of this 12,000 word document.)



Thank You Deacon Stephen

I am so grateful to Deacon Stephen for preaching last weekend. Apart from the fact that I was somewhat sleep deprived so really appreciated not having to preach, I do enjoy hearing another take on the scriptures. I have my ‘spread sheet’ that reminds me of my blessings; and I keep saying to myself that all true blessings come through Christ.

Sergio de Dios, the Father of Fr. Aaron from Cranbrook

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Fr. Aaron’s dad, Sergio. He died in the Philippines. I don’t know for sure but I believe that Fr. Aaron was with his family when his dad died. Our love and prayers go out to Fr. Aaron and his family; I know that Fr. Aaron was very close to his dad. Sergio’s funeral is this weekend and obviously Fr. Aaron will be away from Cranbrook for the rest of the month. In the meantime, our old friend Fr. Harry Clarke is stepping in and covering for Fr. Aaron. So if you are in Cranbrook and you know Fr. Harry, do pop in and say hello (although I am not sure if he is there mid-week).

And Finally...

It was just after the sun had set that I took Thumper for his long walk, so he is pictured high above Sparwood with that peach coloured sky. With prayers,

Fr. David @ Thumper



Our churches are now open *without* a limit on numbers.
But Covid is still in the population – so caution is needed!



The Covid Pages

Our Next Stage of Reopening

You might read on the B.C. Government's website that it says, "There are no capacity limits or restrictions on indoor or outdoor religious gatherings and worship services." It also goes on to say that masks are "recommended" for those who haven't been fully vaccinated, but it then says, "Some people may choose to continue to wear a mask after they're fully vaccinated and that's okay."

Here I would like to share with you two more reasons why you might want to wear a mask while moving around in church or when you are close to people.

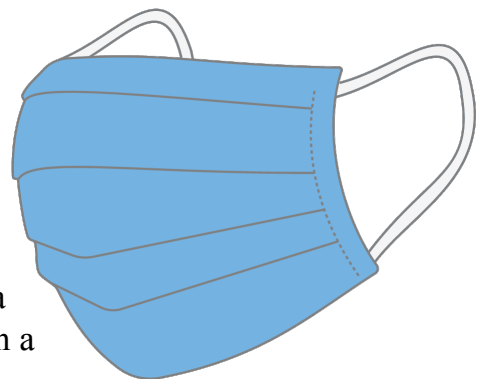
Have You Had a Cold or Flu-like Episode Lately?

One interesting fact is that over the past year or more, very few people have had a common cold or any of the mild viruses that we normally encounter. Now while we might rejoice at not having been ill, we must also be aware that we haven't built up our immunity to any of these conditions as would normally happen.

So just as a plug for another reason to wear a mask; you might not have Covid, but the normal run of the mill illnesses like the common cold are likely to have a more serious effect on some people because their immunity to these every-day illnesses will be diminished. Thus when it comes to mask wearing, the question isn't 'have I got Covid or haven't I got Covid', it is, 'Might I pass on anything to people who might be more vulnerable because they haven't had the usual wheezes and sneezes that we all get regularly?'

How Our Masks Help Others Do Their Job!

As mentioned above, masks increase the protection to others from a lot more than just the Covid virus. And we know that mask wearing affords greater protection to the people you are interacting with than to yourself. Or to put it another way, the primary benefit of wearing a mask is the protection of others, our own protection is then a secondary benefit.



With this in mind, here is another way that wearing a mask might help others: imagine that next week you do contract Covid, particularly if you don't have any symptoms, then what will happen? Once you produce a positive test for Covid, Health Canada will contact you and ask you who you have had close contact with. If you say that you were in church without a mask having close and extended

contact with many people, then it is possible that Health Canada might decide that everyone in the building needs to self-isolate for two weeks – even if you have been vaccinated and the other people have been vaccinated. (Currently in B.C. we don't have exemption from self-isolation just because a person is double vaccinated. It might come but it is not hear yet.)

Can you imagine how that might effect our community? Certainly if I had to self-isolate it might mean that a family couldn't have a funeral, or a wedding might have to be cancelled. If it was someone else, perhaps they might have to close down their small business, or cancel a holiday to see family, or perhaps that person is a care-giver to an elderly relative who will then be left on their own. And there are many more shocking and many more mundane yet significant examples.

Our aim is to try to make the church a safe place where people can come and know that everyone else is looking out for their well-being.

Now I will put my hands up here; in the first instant I was sceptical about the effectiveness of masks and I am still not good at the mask wearing game. And just like my glasses, I am always forgetting to put my mask on, and I do find it a real impediment to clear speech. So I apologise and give everyone complete permission to remind me when I am not wearing the mask but am interacting with others.



Zoom Links

Link to Weekend Masses

To get the link to our two weekend Masses please send an e-mail to one of our parish offices with your name and you will then receive the link each week.

info@holyfamilyfernie.ca

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Audio Only

So don't forget, if you are off camping and your data plan does not allow you to watch Sunday Mass on Zoom without using up all of your month's data in one go, then you can always call in and listen. Again, e-mail the office for the link for this.

Audio Only

So don't forget, if you are off camping and your data plan does not allow you to watch Sunday Mass on Zoom without using up all of your month's data in one go, then you can always call in and listen.

For audio only, tap: +17789072071,,2504236127#,,#

Or if you are manually dialling this number:

1 778 907 2071 (pause and wait for the prompt) 250 423 6127# (pause and wait for the prompt) #

Chat:

Feel free to greet people via the chat when you join our broadcast, and if you are praying for anything particular, do share this with others on the Chat.

Hopefully our "1A - Chat (Co-Host)" will pick this up and pass it on to me.

If you don't want everyone to see your message you can send your message directly to "1A - Chat" and it will remain private.

Waiting Room:

Please note when you log on you will be put in a "waiting room".

Hopefully as soon as we see you waiting we will let you in.

If there is a bit of a delay, please just wait;

the co-host or myself will be with you as quickly as we can.

Everyone still needs to be careful:

Even having a Covid vaccination doesn't prevent you carrying Covid and giving it to others! Thus if you are vaccinated, please don't say, "I'm okay, I have had the jab, so I can go back to what we used to do before; I can shake hands and be close to people." This might be given as a gesture of love and kindness, but the virus is still about. ***Everyone still needs to be careful.***

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity

“Apostolicam Actuositatem”

Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on 18th November 1965

Introduction

1. To intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God, the most holy synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church has already been dealt with in other documents. The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it. Sacred Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the very beginning of the Church (cf. Acts 11:19-21; 18:26; Romans 16:1-16; Philippians 4:3).

Our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a degree of departure from the ethical and religious order and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few or, in some instances, deprived of due freedom for priestly work, the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity.

Remember:

This was written back in 1965, how much more true is this today!

An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances.

In this decree the Council seeks to describe the nature, character, and diversity of the lay apostolate, to state its basic principles, and to give pastoral directives for its more effective exercise. [...]

Chapter 1 – the Vocation of the Laity to the Apostolate

2. The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all people to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church, “the whole body... in keeping with the proper activity of each part, derives its increase from its own internal development” (Ephesians 4:16).

Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members are so compact that the member who fails to make their proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to themselves.

In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.

They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelisation and sanctification of all people and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of all people. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.

3. The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the 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. They are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-10) not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world. The sacraments, however, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate.

One engages in the apostolate through the faith, hope, and charity which the Holy Spirit diffuses in the hearts of all members of the Church. Indeed, by the precept of charity, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, all the faithful are impelled to promote the glory of God through the coming of His kingdom and to obtain eternal life for all people – that they may know the only true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). On all Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all people throughout the world.

For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies the people of God through ministry and the sacraments gives the faithful special gifts also (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7), “allotting them to everyone according as the Holy Spirit wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11) in order that individuals, administering grace to others just as they have received it, may also be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10), to build up the whole body in charity (cf. Ephesians 4:16). From the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of all people and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who “breathes where the Holy Spirit wills” (John 3:8). This should be done by the laity in communion with their brothers and sisters in Christ, especially with their pastors who must make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts not to extinguish the Spirit but to test all things and hold for what is good (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12,19,21).

4. Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord's words, “He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much

fruit, for without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy. These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God’s will they grow in that union. In this way the laity must make progress in holiness in a happy and ready spirit, trying prudently and patiently to overcome difficulties. Neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life, in keeping with the words of the Apostle, “Whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

Such a life requires a continual exercise of faith, hope, and charity. Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognise God in Whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to our final goal.

[...]

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labours, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Saviour. Having now been assumed into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers and sisters of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy homeland of God. All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her maternal care.

*(This is just the first section of the document, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity”.
The full version is available at the Vatican website, Vatican.va)*