

Apostolate in the Workplace

A. Areas of Connection

There are several areas of possible connection between the laity's experience in the workplace and their apostolate. These are ways in which people participate in Christ's service, evangelization and stewardship of the world.

1. "Being" - By being people that have become more and more "in Christ"; light, salt, leaven. Christians can serve, evangelize and act as stewards just by being people who are in the process of falling and rising, living in the context of stability, conversion and obedience.
2. Responsible Participation in the Life of the World - To participate in the human drama of creating, serving, and producing simply by working in an organization; to be part of the economy of God's world. Also, to earn our own living; for some, to contribute to the well being of a family.
3. Community - The joy of being in relationship with other workers, being part of a community; opportunities for compassion, fun, and shared experience.
4. Intrinsic Meaning in the Work - The particular work may be of value to the world. It matters to the well being of people that this service or product is available.
5. Change Agent - Acting from within the job to humanize the work place for employees and clients/customers and to facilitate the organization in taking a socially responsible stance. This involves us in a "ministry to structures."

B. What the Parish Might Do

1. Nurture and coach people in their own renewal. Help people make use of the resources of the church. Once people grasp and are grasped by the Eucharist, the liturgy and the whole pattern of Eucharist living, then the Sunday Eucharist may become the most important contribution the parish makes to a person's apostolate.
2. Affirm the areas of connection. In sermons, in the prayers, in teachings and announcements, find ways to acknowledge and affirm. Give people a way to think about it, e.g. Renewal-Apostolate Cycle.
3. Establish support-prayer groups around workplace vocational issues. A large parish or several parishes working together can bring together people in business, or medicine, law, social work, teaching, etc. Smaller congregations will need to have cross-vocational groups. Such groups might range from a focus on contemplation and intercession to problem solving and strategizing.

C. Reflections on the Apostolate in the Workplace

(From Order of the Ascension Rule)

BAPTISMAL IDENTITY, PURPOSE, AND DESTINY

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. 1 Peter 2:9

Our vocation is not simply to be but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny -- to work out our own identity in God, which the Bible calls 'working out salvation,' is a labor which requires sacrifice and anguish, risk and many tears. - Thomas Merton

In considering the challenges facing the Christian Church in the fast moving, urban, technological world of today, there is ground for the thesis that nothing is more urgent for the renewal of the Church than a radical look at the apostolate of the laity. - Cynthia Wedel

You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen. - Book of Common Prayer, Holy Baptism

*Here once more we exhort our sons to take an active part in public life, and to work together for the benefit of the whole human race, as well as for their own political communities. It is vitally necessary for them to endeavor, in the light of Christian faith and with love as their guide, to ensure that every institution whether economic, social, cultural or political, be such as not to obstruct but rather to facilitate man's self-betterment, both in the natural and in the supernatural order. And yet, if they are to imbue civilization with right ideals and Christian principles, it is not enough for our sons to be illumined by the heavenly light of faith and to be fired with enthusiasm for a cause; they must involve themselves in the work of these institutions, and strive to influence them effectively from within.
- Pope John XXIII*

The lay person's primary function is out there in the world. There is a problem when the church becomes the primary focus of their lives. I can remember that when I was most unhappy on my job, I was most active in the church. - Verna J. Dozier

When the church baptizes a child, that action concerns me, for that child is thereby connected to that which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. - John Donne

EUCCHARISTIC LIVING

It is you who lie upon the altar; it is you, your very life within the cup. - St. Augustine

You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the tabernacle if you do not pity Jesus in the slum ... it is madness to suppose that you can worship Jesus in the Sacrament and Jesus on the throne of glory, when you are sweating Him in the bodies and souls of His children ... Now go out into the highways and hedges, and look for Jesus in the ragged and the naked, in the oppressed and the sweated, in those who have lost hope, and in those who are struggling to make good. Look for Jesus in them and when you have found Him, gird yourselves with His towel of fellowship and wash His feet in the person of His brethren. - Bishop Frank Weston

For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life; that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls. - Evelyn Underhill

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Worksheet: Apostolate in the Workplace

Please use the worksheet to reflect on the relationship between your work life and your status as a baptized person, part of the Body of Christ. Allow yourself to begin by attending to areas that interest you, draw your attention and energy, make sense to you. Then explore areas that seem more distant. Make notes as you find it useful. If this exercise includes group sharing -- only share what you want to share, receive the sharing of others with respect.

In what ways have you experienced?

- 1. How your being in the workplace made a difference** in that it showed or helped others show compassion/justice, good conflict management, improved listening, self giving, increased sense of responsibility, openness to consider change that would serve people, etc.

- 2. The experience of satisfaction in being part of humanity's drama;** of participating with others in a job; of taking responsibility for your own financial support, etc.

- 3. The joy of being in relationship** with others at work; being part of a community; establishing friendships, etc

- 4. How the service or product has value for others.** Being involved in creating or offering value in other lives.

- 5. Acting in the organization to humanize the workplace.** Increasing workers voice, having the organization be more values centered in its management, improving safety, increasing opportunities for self development, getting the organization to be more socially responsible (do no harm, do some good), etc.

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