

SaintsAlive!

A Periodic Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Issue
45

The Role of the Laity — A Vision of Hope

By Rich Cleveland

... the responsibility for reaching the lost and unchurched is not the responsibility of those called to holy orders or the religious life, but to those ordinary Catholics in the pews, and on the Church's rolls.

"The eyes of faith behold a wonderful scene: that of a countless number of lay people, both women and men, busy at work in their daily life and activity, oftentimes far from view and quite unacclaimed by the world, unknown to the world's great personages but nonetheless looked upon in love by the Father, untiring laborers who work in the Lord's vineyard. Confident and steadfast through the power of God's grace, these are the humble yet great builders of the Kingdom of God in history."¹

We would do well to remember this wonderful vision of Saint Pope John Paul II as we enter into 2025, which has been proclaimed the *Church's Jubilee Year — Pilgrims of Hope*. With the world seeming to be in greater disarray politically, socially, and spiritually than it was in 1988 when Pope John Paul II made this statement, one wonders what is our hope. Specifically, he was speaking of called and gifted lay people stepping up and assuming responsibility for being Christ's light in, and through, their everyday world by accepting and proclaiming the Gospel. For the laity to assume this responsibility entails a major shift in our thinking, namely that the responsibility for reaching the lost and unchurched is not the responsibility of those called to holy orders or the religious life, but to those ordinary Catholics in the pews, and on the Church's rolls.

Logically the numbers tell the story: Here in the United States, there are approximately 19,405 parishes. I will be generous and suggesting that all the priests, deacons, and religious grouped together, whom we would consider non-laity, according to the USCCB equals approximately 105,332 people. Many of us as lay Catholics live as though we believe it is *their* duty to explain and proclaim the Gospel to the citizens of the USA. Which would mean that

every priest, deacon, or religious in this country must evangelize 2330 people each. That is not a very realistic expectation. However, Catholics of all kinds make up approximately 22% of the population. If we shift our way of thinking and agree that it is the laity's responsibility to be Christ representative within their natural environments and not the clergy's, the ratio becomes manageable; each Catholic must only evangelize 3.5 people. That is the reality of it; there is one Catholic in the USA for every 3.5 people; we are next door to everyone — *Confident and steadfast through the power of God's grace, these are* (or should be) *the humble yet great builders of the Kingdom of God in history*. But how do we get there? I honestly don't know, but I have a few valid ideas for you to consider.

Ownership must be transferred: Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, that enthusiastic and highly successful Catholic evangelist tells in his autobiography² of an incident when a car dealer, who was confronted with an upshoot of labor unrest, complained, "that the workers were not giving an honest day's work for their pay," and asked, "what the Church would recommend." Bishop Sheen suggested the dealer should give the workers a share of the profits based on their longevity with the company. Consequently, when the dealer did this there was both "a considerable increase in profits and a dedication among the workers." **Ownership usually**

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¹ *Christifideles Laici: The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, paragraph 17, by Pope John Paul II.

² *Treasure In Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen*, published by Ignatius Press, chapter 21.

The Role of the Laity — A Vision of Hope

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We should not be surprised that immersion into the written Word of God has had so much prominence in the conversion, formation, and mobilization of so many people who also have embraced the mission of evangelization as their own.

results in greater conscientiousness and involvement. We are not suggesting that the Church should start paying the congregants, but we must figure out how to enable them to embrace the ownership of evangelization about which Pope Pius XII spoke: “The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church’s life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church...”³

For me that “ever-clearer consciousness” originated from Holy Scripture. It began by my having embarked on a journey of reading the Bible from Genesis 1 through to the Gospels over several months when there was awakened within me the conviction that I needed to respond in faith to Christ, which I did, followed by baptism shortly thereafter. The people instrumental in helping me grow as a Christian taught me to attend church, read Scripture daily, study the Bible within small-groups, to memorize it and love it. Three months after coming to faith in Christ I attended a weekend conference in Bavaria where the emphasis was on “Christ and his Mission.” In the last message of the conference, we were asked to stand up if we felt God was calling us to be part of Christ and his mission to make disciples — I stood up. The written Word of God prepared me to respond, and **the written Word of God continued to give me an ever-clearer consciousness to respond and personally own the mission of evangelization.** We continue the journey today as Catholics because the same written Word of God led us to the Catholic Church.

We should not be surprised that immersion into the written Word of God has had so much prominence in the conversion, formation, and mobilization of so many people who also have embraced the mission of evangelization as their own. After all the Church has pointed out that importance, ever since its beginning, and most recently through the very clear and helpful teaching of Pope Benedict XVI who explains why the Word is so important for our motivation and ownership of Jesus’ mission: “His [Jesus’] unique and singular history is the definitive word which God speaks to humanity. We

can see, then, why ‘being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction.’ The constant renewal of this encounter and this awareness fills the heart of people with amazement of God’s initiative, which human beings, with our own reason and imagination could never have dreamed of.”⁴ Having come to faith in the Word through the written Word and being constantly renewed by it, is it unexpected that a person would want to be involved in Jesus’ mission?

Lastly, I would recommend consideration of Pope John Paul II’s conviction, that; “*The situation today points to an ever increasing urgency for a doctrinal formation of the faithful, not simply in a better understanding which is natural to faith’s dynamism but also in enabling a person to ‘give a reason for their hoping’* ...small Church communities, where present, can be a notable help in the formation of Christians by providing a consciousness and an experience of ecclesial communion and mission which are more extensive and incisive.”⁵ It is obvious that this kind of formation is too extensive to be added to the pastor’s responsibilities. Rather we, the laity, must be intensely involved in this process, and small-groups whose focus is on formation and mission, should be encouraged and supported by parish leaders.

If the results you see now are the ones you desire to see, then keep doing what you are doing. However, if you desire different results, then perhaps it is time to try something different. Like I said above, I do not have all the answers but three things seem obvious:

1. We must help the lay members of our parishes take ownership for Christ’s mission of evangelization.
2. The key, “*We must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church*”⁶
3. Small groups enable the process to become more personal, more pass-on-able, more motivational, and provides co-laborers who can work together in outreach.



Rich Cleveland

After thirty-five years as evangelicals, Rich Cleveland and his wife Gail became Catholic. Rich is the founder of Emmaus Journey, and he and his wife continue to serve Emmaus Journey, and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

³ Op cit, paragraph 9.

⁴ *Verbum Domini*: The Word of the Lord, by Pope Benedict XVI, paragraph 11.

⁵ Ibid; paragraph 61.

⁶ Ibid; paragraph 121.

From the Heart

By Mike Dill

It takes faith to spread faith! No surprise there, but do we believe God can spread faith through us?

The Role of the Laity

What is the proper role of the Catholic laity? As Cardinal Francis Arinze points out in *The Layperson's Distinctive Role*, three Church documents provide the major orientation on the role of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world — *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, and *Christifideles Laici*.

There is not a single aspect of the three documents mentioned above that is not in part an answer to the question of clericalism. “Clericalism assumes that clerics not only are but also are meant to be the active, dominant elite in the Church, and laymen the passive, subservient mass. As a result, the laity are discouraged from taking seriously their responsibility for the Church’s mission, and evangelization is neglected.”¹ I like that definition, because it suggests an antidote that neither takes aim at the clergy or the laity, but at a *mentality*.

“Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch and in every land.”² The laity are called to fulfill the grand plan of God to bless the world with God’s life. To this day, we are fulfilling the promise God made to Abraham long ago that all the world would be blessed through his offspring (Genesis 12:3). Abraham is the father of faith, and his offspring are those who walk by faith in the living God. So as we laypeople spread faith into the secular sphere of life, we fulfill the promise of Abraham. But believing we will be able to spread the faith — that is, have spiritual offspring — takes faith just like Abraham who believed he would have offspring as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:3). Paul points out that the words of scripture that counted Abraham’s faith as righteousness were not written for his sake alone but for ours also (Romans 4:18–24).

It takes faith to spread faith! No surprise there, but do we believe God can spread faith through us? I’ve seen it many times before — a lay Catholic’s faith is aroused, and they feel called to spread the message burning within them, but often when they share their enthusiasm with their pastor, they aren’t met with matching enthusiasm. Instead, they come away discouraged that Father feels too busy to work with or promote their passion. Maybe Father even went as far as to curtail the activity in his parish. What are they to do? Certainly it’s no good to fight with one’s priest.

The lay person should recall that “The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head ... they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.”³ We should combine this with a proper understanding, found throughout the documents on the laity, that the laity are called to witness to Christ in the secular sphere of life. So when Christ calls you to sanctify the temporal order, it’s not a matter for your priest to veto. It’s your duty as one baptized into Christ’s mission as priest, prophet, and king. The priest is right to teach, sanctify, and govern the Church. And the layperson is right to witness to Christ in the secular world.



Mike Dill

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 **Emmaus Journey**
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1. Shaw, Russell. *To Hunt, to Shoot, to Entertain: Clericalism and the Catholic Laity*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993. 13.

2. Second Vatican Council, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*,” November 21, 1964, sec. 33, accessed November 21, 2024, Vatican.va.

3. Second Vatican Council, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*,” November 18, 1965, sec. 3, accessed November 21, 2024, Vatican.va.

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From the Heart

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If our communities are healthy places of love, then they will grow. And our communities will be healthy if they are full of mature lay disciples who take their relationship with Christ seriously.

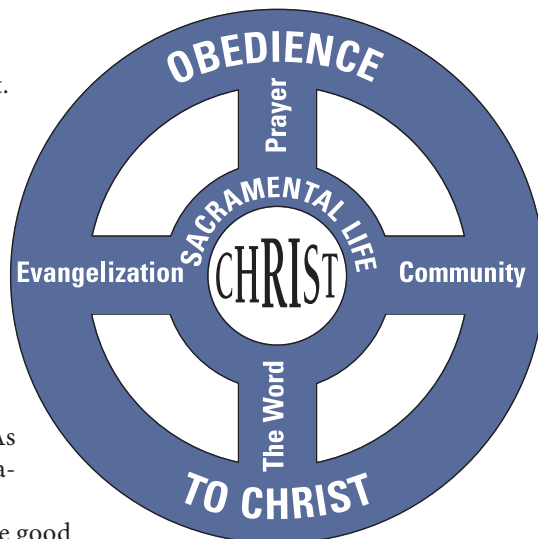
We do well not to lock horns with our pastors over how parish programming works out. Instead, we ought to discern places outside the parish walls to evangelize — such as our own homes and places of work and leisure — and leverage these as places of evangelization and for the upbuilding of souls.

As we build friendships where Christ reigns, we spread the Kingdom of God. St. John Paul II wrote, “Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.”⁴ This quote describes the horizontal elements of the discipleship wheel (evangelization and community). As members of the body of Christ, the proclamation of the Word, the worship and sacramental life gives rise to spreading the good news, which invites people into the community of the Church. If our communities are healthy places of love, then they will grow. And our communities will be healthy if they are full of mature lay disciples who take their relationship with Christ seriously.

Did you know this is the role of an Emmaus Journey Companion? EJ Companions are those who embrace the vision of Catholic laity participating in evangelization in their natural spheres of influence which Pope John Paul II expressed in *Christifideles Laici*, and then live out the process of helping people know Christ by calling them to conversion, transformation, and service through one-on-one relationships, small-groups, and other winsome means. Emmaus Journey companions receive ongoing mentoring and training from Emmaus Journey staff to help them become increasingly successful in Catholic evangelization and discipleship, and they participate annually with Emmaus Journey staff and companion position to renew their spirit and plan the future direction of Emmaus Journey.

Soon Emmaus Journey will be reviving the EJ companions program and highlighting the witness of EJ companions in their communities. Our mission is to ignite the hearts of the faithful for a lifetime of laboring. If that resonates with you, journey with us! Share your story of lay evangelization with us at info@emmausjourney.org.

Mike Dill and his wife Rachel are Emmaus Journey staff. The Dills have four children. As Emmaus Journey staff, Mike seeks to catalyze evangelization and discipleship through Catholic communities. Mike also serves as a major in the United States Army Reserves. They live in Colorado Springs, Colorado and are members of Holy Apostles Catholic Church.



4. John Paul II, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*,” December 30, 1988, sec. 32, accessed November 21, 2024, [vatican.va](https://www.vatican.va).

From the President

My own journey with the faith began in a nominally Catholic family whose religious affiliation fit neatly into the category of “Chreaster Christian.”

Peace be with you, friends!

My name is Mike Donovan and in April I was blessed when, after being asked to serve as Emmaus Journey’s new president, I was given the opportunity to steward the mission of this tiny, mighty and storied apostolate. Like the rest of the team at EJ, I am deeply inspired — compelled, even — by St Luke’s account of the two desolate and despairing disciples on the road to Emmaus, whose encounter with their resurrected and Eucharistic Lord was so powerful, that their “burning hearts” sent them running back to Jerusalem with news of this encounter. With the same burning heart, it is my hope that Emmaus Journey is able to continue to guide others towards encounters with Christ that can produce the evangelistic fervor the Bishops have called for — that enthusiasm for their faith compels them to freely share it with others.



Michael Donovan

My own journey with the faith began in a nominally Catholic family whose religious affiliation fit neatly into the category of “Chreaster Christian.” By God’s grace, however, I was presented with the life-saving message of the Gospel, which ignited a transformative faith in my life that continues to motivate me to this day. This journey led me through many Protestant Christian communities where I learned how to fan this devotion to Christ into greater flame through an intentional engagement with Christ in sacred scripture. It is that very devotion which led me to return to the home of sacred scripture — the liturgies of the Church where the Eucharist is celebrated.

The Emmaus account teaches us that a journey through the scriptures powerfully prepares individuals to recognize Christ “in the breaking of the bread.” So, In this season of Eucharistic revival, I am convinced that Emmaus Journey is poised to strengthen the mission of the Church and ignite the hearts of the faithful for a lifetime of discipleship. I am deeply encouraged, excited and confident in the Lord’s call and am looking forward to laboring alongside all of you as we grow the citizenship of the kingdom of Christ.



Did You Know...

Each specific scapular has a different history and unique devotion.

What Do You Know About Scapulars?

A scapular is a devotional item that symbolizes a wearer's commitment to a saint, a way of life, or a confraternity. The Catholic Church has approved 18 different scapulars, distinguished by color, symbolism and devotion. Most scapulars still signify a lay person's affiliation with a particular religious cause, i.e., the Brown Scapular which is devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Historically, where does the scapular come from?

The word scapular is from Latin and means "shoulder blade." It is a garment first designed by monks during the Middle Ages as protective covering to be worn over their clothing when they did manual labor, such as in the fields (think poncho). As scapular popularity grew among religious communities, laypeople also wanted to wear such garments as they sought to imitate the holy ways of the monks. They were allowed to form groups in association with the religious order, follow certain rules of the order and identify their alliance by wearing that order's scapular. Eventually the lengthy scapular became the smaller version that exists today.

Each specific scapular has a different history and unique devotion. It may be a tool to help a person deepen their faith and relationship with Christ. Remember the importance of the Eucharist and the Gospels if you choose to wear a scapular.

Why do people wear a scapular? Scapulars are part of a personal devotion that each individual needs to determine if it's right for them. They are an item that assists people in deepening their faith.

Who can wear a scapular? Everyone, but it is crucial to understand and respect its spiritual significance.

Will wearing a scapular bring me salvation? No, wearing a scapular is not a "get-out-of-hell-free" card. It should accompany a life devoted to grace and good works. Salvation comes from accepting Jesus Christ.

Can scapulars be worn under clothing? Yes, scapulars are generally worn under clothing as a private devotion and a personal choice to devote the wearer to deepening their faith.

Are there any prayers associated with wearing scapulars? Yes, prayers often accompany the wearing of scapulars, emphasizing the importance of internal devotion over external adornment. Each scapular has specific instructions.

Links to learn more about scapulars:

www.simplycatholic.com/why-wear-a-scapular

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=1312

www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-the-scapular-a-magic-charm





Mission

Emmaus Journey is a lay Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry which partners with parishes, small groups, and individuals to facilitate a personal encounter with and conversion to Christ, thereby forming missionary disciples actively living for Jesus.

Vision

By encountering Christ through scripture, discipleship, and community — individuals experience:

- 1) Conversion to Christ.
- 2) Transformation in Christ; and,
- 3) Mobilization for Christ, where they are actively involved in sharing their faith with others and living out their faith in the greater community.

Thus, achieving Goal One of the USCCB's initiative on evangelization, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Here is just a sample of what Emmaus Journey offers:

Small Catholic Communities.

Emmaus Journey offers a complete line of resources that include high-quality, thoroughly Catholic, practical small group Bible study materials, and discipleship resources. Most are also available in Spanish.

Reflecting on Sunday's Readings.

More than 30,000 individuals download this publication and use it in preparation for Sunday Mass or as a Scripture study. Also available in Spanish.

Daily Lectionary Reading Record.

The Lectionary Reading Record is a helpful tool for following the Scripture readings used in the daily mass. It also helps a person become consistent in their daily intake of Scripture.

Training Materials. Guides for small group facilitation.

PRAY WITH US

- For Emmaus Journey Indonesia as they move towards celebrating 20 years of impact at their "Silver Anniversary" in 2025.
- For wisdom and guidance in Emmaus Journey's strategic planning for 2025 initiatives.
- For success in Emmaus Journey's year-end donation appeals.
- For improved health of our ministry's Spiritual Director, Fr. Thomas.
- For healthy relationships within our Emmaus Journey Ministry family.
- For the reorganization efforts of Emmaus Journey Young Adult Ministry (EJYAM).

BECOME A PARTNER WITH US

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Or visit: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=C2SX5LGYNBK72

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