



The Role of the Laity: A Review of Literature

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Abstract: The laity has been discussed and studied for many years now. There may have been previous written works and documents, religious and scholarly, which gave definitions, elaborations, and analyses on the subject matter. Now, this research is about the laity's role, responsibilities, and the contributions that the laity has done in the field of education. There are three main foci of this paper; 1.) the conceptual and the operational definition of the laity based on religious and academic works; 2.) the general roles and responsibilities of the laity, in and out of the Church; and 3.) the role, responsibilities, and contributions of the laity on the field of education. The research paper is a qualitative and conceptual study since it discusses and elaborates the subject matter based on previous written works and documents. The ideas presented in the written documents are analyzed and synthesized to present the ideas and concepts as interpreted by the researcher. Certain issues surrounding the laity are given focus and emphasis such as the true definition of the laity and its position in the Church. In this research, the definition is established based on various perspectives—even including definitions and claims based on the negative (the not/non). As an overview of its definition, the laity is the baptized faithful of the Church and it has certain roles and responsibilities in and out of the Church that's why it is an integral, substantial, and active part of God's community. The research study presents the roles and responsibilities of the laity and it gave more emphasis on its mission in the field of Education. Since the researcher is an educator herself, she chose the topic so that she, herself, can expand her knowledge and widen her horizons on the roles and responsibilities of the laity as a potential ally and partner of the education system in nation building, youth formation, and socio-civic development.

Key Words: laity; role; responsibility; education; Church

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Laity and Education: An Introduction

The laity, the faithful members of the Church, has been an interesting point of religious and scholarly discourses throughout the centuries. There have been many writings, teachings, and encyclicals about the subject matter and even up to now, it is further studied, developed, and deepened. The laity has become one of the interesting elements of the Church because of the broad scope and the numerous points to ponder about it—

Presented at the 10th DLSU Arts Congress
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
February 16, 2017



with some that are yet to be defined concretely without gray areas. Moreover, because the laity itself is a huge part of the Church, it is very critical for the Church to lay down the concrete teachings about it: who and what is the laity, the concrete roles and responsibilities of the laity, and the laity's relevance and impact on the different realities that are happening in the contemporary society.

The researcher chose the topic since it is has been her interest since her undergraduate days and also, she would like to widen and deepen her understanding of the subject matter for she is also an active member of the Ministry of Lectors in her parish. The researcher clearly understands that the subject matter that she chose is a very broad concept that's why, being an educator herself, she zoomed in on the topic, the laity and education.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research aims to lay down the conceptual and operational definitions of the laity. It would provide a wide array of definitions from different written works—both religious and scholarly, fields and disciplines, and different bodies of knowledge and schools of thought. But still, this research will not deviate from the definition provided by the Mother Church since this is not a comparative or critical study. Secondly, the research aims to state the specific roles and responsibilities of the laity which were pointed out by many previous written works both religious and scholarly but the research would elaborate and focus more on the role and responsibilities of the laity on the field of education. Third, the research aims to find out how the laity works and operates in Christian schools. Finally, the research aims to find out how the education has changed and developed with the presence of the laity. It would also try to find the impact and the influence of laity on the field of education. With the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this research would be able to contribute to the existing knowledge and ideas that we have about the laity.

This research is a qualitative study and would look upon various written works and documents about the laity but would limit and focus more on the works about the laity's role in education and the influences and the impacts that it was able to do and contribute. The research would follow the American Psychological Association (APA) format in citing and proper documentation of the sources. The research would be an elaborative and informative work and not a comparative or critical study.

This research study would be significant to different people, groups, and fields and disciplines because of the broad scope and range of ideas and concepts that are relevant to the topic. First, it would be significant to the laity itself as it would enlighten us, the faithful members of the Church, as to what we really are as a major part in the Mystical Body of Christ throughout the ages, our roles and responsibilities in and out of the Church, and how we can reach out and create connections and impacts on the field of education. This study would also serve as an inspiration for all the laity to be proactive participants in the Church's mission of evangelizing God's people and continuing Jesus' work through His Church. Second, the study would also be significant to the people working in the academe and in the field of education for this would pave a way for a mutual connection for the two bodies. This study would be able to identify common goals and objectives and the means of how this relationship can be forged and developed further in the future. Third, this study would also be significant to the people outside the Church for they will be able to know more about the laity—who the laity is, its role and responsibilities in and out of the Church, and the major contributions that it made throughout the history especially in the field of education. This study would also serve as an inspiration and an invitation for them to know more about the Church and eventually to be a faithful part of it. Finally, the study would be significant to the future researchers who would like to do research work on this particular subject matter. Through this, more ideas, concepts, and connections will be formulated and so, the subject matter will be enriched and deepened further. May this research study widen and deepen our understanding about us—the faithful Body of Christ who is united to Him, sharing and continuing His mission and work here on Earth.



2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Who is the Laity?

The researcher was able to look upon the different definitions of the term “laity”. The different definitions from various sources express the same key elements and meanings only that can be synthesized in to one big idea. The laity are the people in the Church “who are not priests or part of a religious order”. Therefore, the laity refers to the non-ordained and baptized members of the Catholic Church. It is very clear in the definition that the term “laity” refers to the majority of the Church members who are not priests and who do not belong to any religious order or congregation. The article “Essential Role of the Laity” (2004) added that the laity are the “faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church”. The exception of priests and the religious are emphasized once more in the previous definition so it is very clear that the laity are the baptized members of the Church. Going deeper into the definition, the article also added that is through our Baptism that made us part of the laity which is “incorporated into Christ and integrated into the people of God”. Somehow, the definitions stated above are very inclusive, in other words, the definitions disregard the extent of practice, participation, and involvement of the baptized members. In these contemporary times, there are stigmas or let’s say “clusters or classifications” of Catholics (but these so called-contemporary stigmas or clusters are not stated and mandated by any encyclicals or apostolic message from the Pope, bishops, and the clergy). The following classifications were noted and internalized from a lenten homily of a priest from the researcher’s parish. The priest (who was formerly a TV mass priest in the late 90s and early 2000s) did not wish to be named in this study. Although this was not a formal and official document of the Church but rather a part of the homily of a priest, it is somehow reasonable for the researcher to use these statements from someone who is also a part of the Church but from the ordained priesthood. According to him, Catholics nowadays can be classified into groups or clusters. Though he did not directly use the term laity, still he referred to the faithful as “Catholics”. He said that the first classification is the “active/practicing Catholics”. These Catholics are the ones who attend mass regularly, participate actively and religiously (as per the term, we take it denotatively and connotatively) in the Church celebrations and activities, join actively in parish activities and programs as well. The next classification is called the “seasonal Catholics”. This type of Catholics is the ones who are present only during the significant liturgical seasons and celebrations of the Church like Christmas and Lenten seasons. The priest added that these Catholics will be gone after those seasons, perhaps the season of Ordinary time. The last classification according to his homily is the “floating Catholics”. He said that these Catholics are Catholics by name and by documents only. They seldom if not never, visit the Church and attend mass. This type of Catholics, he concluded are the ones who are prone to be affiliated with other religions or sometimes, they became atheist. In his final remark, he ought not to question the spirituality and the morality of each classification that he made for these things are quite personal and subjective. Moreover, he said that being in the “active” group does not mean that he has stronger, deeper relationship with God, while on the “floating” group, he didn’t say that these have weaker relationship with God. But what can we derive from these claims or assumptions made by a priest based from his observations of the faithful who are us, the laity? It is as simple as this; if we go back to the very definitions that we have of the laity, we can say that regardless of how active and participative we are, still, being a baptized Catholic, an individual is already a part of the laity. Once a person is baptized, he already shared the rights, responsibilities, and mission that we all share as part of the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church. Later in this research paper, the rights, responsibilities, and roles of the laity will be presented. Oftentimes, even a faithful member of a ministry doesn’t have a clear and fundamental understanding on the lay vocation—the ground where it is rooted from, the fundamental roles of the laity, and the duties and responsibilities of the laity in taking part of the Church’s

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mission. According to the same article mentioned previously, the laity is often and usually defined by what it is not—on the negative, oppositional basis. The article elaborated that the laity is oftentimes defined as “not priests” and “not religious”. If the concept about the laity is going to focus and base on these notions about the laity, even the laity themselves won’t be able to assert their position, their role and mission as an active part and member inside the Church. What implications will arise from these notions? Firstly, the laity will just be a floating entity inside the Church, without distinct position and role. This is why, based from the same article, some view that “the only real vocation in the Church is the ordained priesthood”, while the laity is just an auxiliary group of the Church that has a role of just “helping around the parish”. Secondly, with these notions in mind, the laity is belittled and somehow limited as to how much work can be done by this integral part of the Church because in the first place, its identity, position, and role in the Church is only based from the “nots”. That’s why in the article again entitled “Essential Role of the Laity” (2004), the Church provided a well-justified definition of the laity which is based from the three Christ-like roles and gifts that the faithful partake and received during baptism. According to this definition, the laity are “sharers in Christ’s office of priest, prophet, and king”. These will be elaborated more in the next part of this research. Secondly, the laity are “holders of an important vocation” and this vocation, according to the teachings of the Church, is equal in dignity with the vocation that the ordained priesthood and the religious have. In simple terms, the laity stand on the same ground with the clergy as per vocation but the laity and the clergy have distinct roles and responsibilities and with this, the laity should not be viewed only as utility and auxiliary workers of the Church but a proactive part of the Church with an authentic vocation and distinct roles and responsibilities. With the notions mentioned above, the cooperation and unity of the priests and the laity are strengthened because the two share and work together guided by equal vocation and one mission.

2.2 From Baptism and Confirmation, To Evangelization!

When a person is baptized, he is automatically incorporated into Christ and integrated into the people of God. As part of Christ’s Mystical Body, we also become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and kingly office and mission. When a person is baptized, he becomes part of the laity; the faithful part of the Mystical Body of Christ which is “strengthened in Confirmation”, thus the title of this part of the paper. Why are baptism and confirmation given emphasis and focus first? It is because through baptism that a person becomes a “citizen of two cities or kingdoms, the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God” (Olson, 2006). He becomes not just a member of the Church but rather he becomes part of the Mystical Body of Christ and so he should take part in the roles and responsibilities that the laity share with equal dignity to the roles and responsibilities of the priests and the religious. According to the same article, when a man becomes a part of the Church, he becomes “intimately” and “mystically” united to the Lord and the other faithful or laity, as Jesus said in John (15:4). What’s mystical about being part of the Church? In the normal, ordinary sense of the word “Church”, it is only viewed as a human organization or group banded together by common rights, practices, traditions, and ways of life. But when we look into the Scriptures and have a deeper reflection and interpretation of it, the Church is not just a walled structure, nor just an organization, but the actual body of Jesus Christ that He, Himself, identified and pointed out. In Acts (9:4), Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”. In this verse, Jesus didn’t mention the words “church”, “group”, “ministry”, nor “assembly”. Jesus directly used the term “me”. With the word that He used, He is not referring to the structure nor to the group or organization but he directly pointed it as His; His Body! The Church is not made of walls, of big pillars, of big doors, of paintings and images! The Church is its members themselves! The baptized person is no longer in just a state of belongingness but he becomes a direct part of the Church itself. That’s why when a lay is asked what the parts of the Church are, the lay has the rights and the dignity to say that he is directly a part of the Church. With this God-given status, a

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lay is not in his own anymore and he is no longer in isolation because the Church is made and is consist of the members who must maintain “interaction with others with a lively sense of fellowship” for the Church is a “living and functioning Body of Christ” and we as part of it must be able to contribute and share the talents, wisdom, and gifts to do the responsibilities we all share (Essential Role of the Laity, 2004). After baptism, when we reach a certain age (normally in the teenage years), we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. In this Sacrament, a person renews and reaffirms the baptismal vows that he made during his baptism as an infant. Here, the person himself responds to the questions asked by the priest. Moreover, a person also receives the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Holy Trinity that Jesus promised to His disciples before they started preaching the Good News. Thus, it is also right and valid to say that when a person is confirmed, the roles and responsibilities as being part of the laity that are derived from his baptism are now strengthened in his confirmation. With the Sacrament of Confirmation, he is now “obliged” to take part in the laity’s duties and mission. Evangelization is the basic responsibility, duty, and mission of the laity. It was one of the most fundamental responsibilities that He left to His disciples and as part of His Body, the laity is tasked to bring His message to the world and mankind. Through the laity’s work, His divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the Earth. But problems arise in these times of secularism and the isolation of the gospel teachings to the different realities of the world that mankind is experiencing right now. It seems that the present conditions of life here in this world can no longer be penetrated, influenced, and guided by Christian doctrines and teachings. Now, the challenge is now shared by both the ordained priesthood and the laity. Where does the laity stand in this current situation?

The tension and temptations. According to the article “The Role of the Laity: An Examination of Vatican II and *Christifideles Laici*”, there are two temptations that the laity faces right now. One is “having the temptation of becoming too much interested in the church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural, and political world”. Truly, some lay people find it hard to balance their so-called ordinary life and church life. Some become too much attached that their ordinary life adjusts on their church life that their academic or professional work gets affected. The other temptation is “legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel’s acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various life situations and conditions” (Olson, 2006). This second temptation is mentioned and elaborated already from the previous article. In the same article, Olson stated that a Christian lay lives in a so-called tension. As what was mentioned earlier in this research study, when a person is baptized, he now lives in the two kingdoms, the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God—in which he finds himself living in the temporal order that we call the real world; the kingdom of man while he certainly knows that his final end is God, His Kingdom. Because we are citizens of both worlds, we are also ought to be the best of both worlds, as the cliché goes! In *Lumen Gentium*, one responsibility of the laity that concerns the dual citizenship of Christians is this: The laity should seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. “What are these temporal affairs?”, some might ask. These are the experiences within the different realities of everyday life here on Earth—school work, professional work, business, politics, leisure, etc. the human experiences that we know. How will a lay person be successful in this mission? The key is balance and focus on the Gospel’s teachings and doctrines. Why balance? A normal person has to deal with so many things while he lives—family, work, relationships, economic, leisure, etc. A person, how busy he might be, should not deviate and depart from the Church life. He should be able to perform his earthly duties while fulfilling and taking part also in the laity’s mission of evangelizing and sharing God’s message, sanctifying, and renewing the world through the Christian doctrines and ways of life. How should a lay person focus on the Gospel’s teaching and doctrines? In “*Christifideles Laici*”, then Pope and now St. John

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Paul II urged the laity to listen “receptively” to the Word of God and the Church accompanied by “fervent and constant prayer”. A lay person should always acknowledge the Spirit so that he may be led by the Spirit to the Gospel and guide him in reflection and contemplation. The laity is “called to work in the temporal order in a specific manner befitting their secular character” (Olson, 2006). Olson focused and elaborated on the word “secular”. This has been a problem of the Church throughout the years. This secularism which really dismantles the bridge of the Church’s teachings from the affairs of the world is also face by the laity. The Church recognizes the condition in which the laity lives in the real world and faces its realities and situations therefore, the laity should arm themselves with enough knowledge of the Gospel, unbent and stern faith, and love and compassion towards other people.

Responsibilities, Rights, and More Responsibilities. The notable responsibilities, duties, and rights of the laity are enumerated in the “The Obligations and Rights of the Lay Christian Faithful (Cann. 224 - 231)” and are elaborated further in the article “Responsibilities and Rights of the Laity”. First of the responsibilities that needs taking note of is found in Can. 226 §1 which states that the lay persons who are married should work through marriage and the family to build up the people of God. What does this certain responsibility require? The answer can be found on the next one in Can. 226 §2 which states that the parents have both the right and obligation to educate their children; “Christian parents should take care of the Christian education of their children according to the doctrine handed on by the Church”. It is reiterated both by our Constitution which represents the temporal law made by man and the Law of the Church which is from God’s law and commandments that parents have a great responsibility in building the society and the citizenry and educating the children and the youth. Both laws express this rights but it is the Canon Law which specifies the responsibility of the lay parents to guide the children as they grow in Christian doctrine and education. Another responsibility of the laity gives focus on those who were able to acquire knowledge, prudence, and integrity. According to Canon Law, these “lay persons are qualified to assist the pastors of the Church as experts and advisors, even in councils according to the norm of law”. With this responsibility comes another prerequisite responsibility which will answer an obvious question as to what a lay person must do to be qualified as assistant to the pastors? The following responsibility stated in Can. 229 §1 that lay persons should “acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine to the capacity and condition of each”. Such knowledge will give a lay person the gift of being able to live according to the Church doctrines. Moreover, if a lay person knows enough and even beyond, he can defend the doctrines and answer questions that can be thrown regarding the teachings of the Church. Nowadays, the Church has experienced much criticisms and scrutiny by different sectors of the society and it is the responsibility also of the lay person to defend and respond to those. In the article, “Responsibilities and Rights of the Laity”, the rights and responsibilities of the laity to participate and work in associations are emphasized. Primarily, the mission and work of the laity is still rooted in the Holy Scriptures and the Church traditions. The Canon law stated some restrictions regarding the associations that must be formed. It is stated there that as such associations are vital to promote public worship and evangelization and help the ordained priesthood in achieving its goal, the associations can only bear the name “Catholic” if it is sanctioned by the Church. The article also elaborated on the pronouncements of the Canon Law that urge the laity “to be faithful, obedient, and to treat with reverence their bishops and pastors” (Can. 212 §2 and §3). These qualities and characteristics of laity that are promoted by the Canon Law will surely bring about a harmonious Christian life among the members and a productive working relationship between the religious and the laity. This will also give a perfect image of the laity so that they can inspire and invite other people outside the Church to get to know more about the teachings, doctrines, and the Christian ways of life.

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2.3 The Laity and Education: Our Role in Keeping the Torch Burning!

After discussing and presenting the identity of the laity and its roles and responsibilities in the general sense as stated by the Canon Law, encyclicals, doctrines and apostolic writings, the research paper has reached the climax which focuses on the role of the laity in education. Even in the simplest perspective, schools have the potential to be a good venue for a more effective means of evangelization since it involves the younger generation. It is a must for the Church to really penetrate the education system so that it can inject its teachings and doctrines in the curriculum through the presence of its greatest vector—the lay educators. But how should the laity, lay educators in particular, move and operate inside the education system?

Challenges. The article “Catholic Schools and the Ecclesial Construction of the Laity” (McDonough, 2011) presented the challenges faces by the education system and the lay educators as well. Schools, Catholic schools in particular, face curricular challenges. In the Philippine setting, the education system has been battling its own challenges brought about by the full implementation of K-12 curriculum; from conception, conceptualization, budgeting, and initial until its full implementation this academic year since this year, Grade 11 is officially open. Such transition caused the catechism and curriculum in Religious education to shift and adjust the curricular contents. In the article, it directly stated that “schools face the challenge of whether (or what combination of) religious education or catechesis is most appropriate for the students in their care” (McDonough, 2011). Truly, curriculum developers that specialize in the Christian Living/Religious Education subject are continuously facing the challenges as to what should be in the curriculum. The primary concern is the appropriateness of the subject matters and topics to the particular stage or level of learners. The curriculum developers who also work hand in hand with the lay educators carefully outline and plot the topics to be discussed because they also consider the diversity of learners and the differences in the students’ level of understanding and judgment on certain topics. Another challenge that the article cited is the tension. Where does this tension come from? According to the article, it “is manifest in the difference between modern professional norms of an educational institution that remains committed to the pedagogical ‘best practice’ on the one hand, and an ecclesiology where the authority to teach and govern belongs to the Pope and Bishops” (McDonough, 2011). First of all, the authority in teaching the Church doctrines come from the priesthood especially the Pope and the Bishops and so to address the question of authority, it would be a more respectable system if the schools will, from time to time, keep in touch and be informed to the current writings and guidelines released by the Vatican and the diocese where the school belongs to. As per the schools which are non-Catholic, non-sectarian, if catechism and Religious Education shall be implemented in their school, they too, shall keep in touch with the Church in terms of the curricular content and as per methodology, they should also ask for and follow the guidelines that will be handed down by the District or Division office which in turn is under the Department of Education (DepEd). As per the modern norms in terms of teaching practices and methodologies, lay educators should also keep themselves informed and well-equipped with the current practices and methods that can be used to effectively teach the Christian doctrines and teachings for example, technology integration and the use of modern equipment and tools in teachings

A social vocation. The article “Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith” (Baum, 1982) talked about the nature of the lay educator’s role in education and the social implications of their roles. In par. 19, it described the vocation of a lay educator as an agent for social development. There, it highlighted the importance of the lay educator in forming “men and women who will be ready to take their place in society; preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel” (Baum, 1982). The particular paragraph recognizes both the temporal and the eschatological components of a Christian reality. What is the temporal aspect? Again, when we say temporal, it concerns the worldly and the

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real-world setting, situations, and conditions. The first parts of the paragraph talk about the kind of citizens that the education system must be able to produce—citizens who are socially-aware and socially committed who will pay a major part in developing the conditions of life in the society. It brings about the world realities and the challenges that we face especially the youth. Nowadays, even in the most recent times, the youth, from the tertiary up to the high school (even elementary) have been keeping themselves informed the recent happenings in their environment. Most schools include social awareness in their curriculum, and in the most obvious component of an educational institution, some even include it in their vision and mission. Truly, the schools have become an integral part in honing and developing young minds in making themselves socially informed and opinionated. But still, there is a challenge that the educators, the lay in particular, face and that is the extent of our instruction about this. Clearly, educators must only become facilitators of knowledge, be it a fact about a subject matter (a historical or conceptual fact) or a fact about a certain event or issue. Educators also have the responsibility to lay out the details and the keys of both sides of a given issue to avoid bias. Educators must be careful enough not to teach their opinion directly to the students—it is the students themselves who must be able to draw out their understanding, opinion, a generalization, or a conclusion about a certain fact, subject matter, or issue presented. How about the eschatological—the part that concerns God? Again, the particular paragraph presented a very good point for it touched two components in one strike. As much as it gave importance to the social component, it also gives importance to the Gospel. As lay educators who play a part in building the youth for social development, it is also their responsibility to always direct them towards the teaching of the Gospel. It's as if the Church doctrines and teachings should serve as a fuel too. Though the concerns presented are primarily temporal or earthly, the standards to which the lay educators and the youth will stride and abide are the Gospel teachings. The same paragraph reiterated the importance of the lay educators with the Gospel as their primary input in social building. The article stated that lay educators with the Gospel teachings “will form human beings (the youth) who will make human society more peaceful, fraternal, and communitarian”. The paragraph also cited the problems that are existing right now, locally and globally. The problems of hunger, illiteracy, human exploitation, the widening gaps between living conditions and standards, aggression and violence, drug abuse, legalization of abortion (and others like same-sex marriage, human experimentation, etc.) along with numerous problems that lead to the degradation and desecration of human life. As lay educators, the article stated, they must “develop in themselves and cultivate in their students, a keen social awareness and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility. The (Catholic) educator, in other words, must be committed to the task of forming men and women who will make the civilization of love a reality”. Such weight of responsibility is being placed on the shoulders of lay educators but if they could become successful, the whole society becomes empowered! The Gospel which greatly talks about love and compassion will materialize! Moreover, it recognizes the power of the youth if they can develop in them a great sense of social responsibility and politically opinionated and inclined. These characteristics are a key to addressing the problems mentioned above. Becoming socially aware is not enough—the end goal is how to develop men and women who are socially pro-active. Citizens who will know and take a stand on the problems and issues of the society and who will do something productive to address, mitigate, and eventually erase it in the society. It is a must also for a lay educator to recognize and reflect upon the relationship of culture and Church. Par. 20 of the same article stated the “the Church influences culture, and in turn, is conditioned by culture” (Baum, 1982). Such relationship must be respected by the lay educators so that they may be able to develop in their students a mutual respect towards cultural diversity—from the personal to the societal level.

More than just a profession. Indeed! The lay educator must be able to develop a certain philosophy and perspective that his is not just a profession but a vocation. An educator must not look upon his profession in the professionalism aspect alone. The lay educator, aside from imparting the knowledge of the Church teachings

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and doctrines but he should be able to “fully respond to all of its demands and to secure in the knowledge that their response is vital for the construction and ongoing renewal of the earthly city and for the evangelization of the world” (Baum, 1982). A lay educator must be able to reflect upon himself that what he is doing is not just educating the students and helping them move up to the next level, page by page, lesson by lesson, but rather, what he is doing is he is helping his students become closer to God’s kingdom through the Scriptures while they live and study in the kingdom of man, the real-world.

A model of the Gospel, a model of Christ. Yes indeed, again! How can lay educators become a model of the Gospel and even Christ Himself? In par. 40 of the same article above stated that lay educators “should be a visible manifestation of the faith and the life witness they are supposed to manifest”. How can a lay educator achieve this? Simple. Walk and act the talk! As lay educators, they themselves must be able to join actively and consistently in the sacramental and liturgical life in and out of the school. Honestly, some lay educators only attend the Holy Eucharist in school but on Sundays, they don’t! A big no! Another thing, being a role model doesn’t end with just attending the Mass the Church activities—in par. 51, a lay educator must keep an active and harmonious working relationship with other lay educators. He must be able to discuss with them such important elements in education such as the objectives, the content, the methodologies, and the current trends and issues about the subject matter. A lay educator must also recognize, respect, and teach by the philosophy of education in which the educational institution that he is into stands. And lastly, how can he become Christ-like whom his students, colleagues, and the people around him can draw inspiration from? Our understanding and actions might still be limited but if a lay educator reflects and keeps himself in line with the Gospel and he, himself, is a model of true Christian values, as imperfect as he might seem, he can become like Christ in his own simple ways.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

On Discernment, Formation, and Vocation to Holiness: The Conclusion

From defining, to knowing the roles and responsibilities, to focusing in education, becoming a part of the laity, the faithful member of the Church is a both a gift and a challenge. As normal people would say, being a baptized Catholic is not just about going to the mass, doing pilgrimage, walking in the procession, wearing crucifix, and taking care of images. Being a baptized Catholic, a part of the laity, requires us to share Christ’s mission and be a proclaimer of His Words and an agent of His mercy and love. On this last part of this research study, our basic question from the start is still, how? How can we stay close to Christ’s message and tasks that He wants us to partake?

See, reflect, pray. It all starts with discernment. Merriam Webster dictionary gives us the meaning of discernment as “the ability to see and understand clearly and intelligently”. Yes, before we can even know the task that we must do, we must first see and understand it! We must be able to read and understand the so-called “signs” in order for us to reflect on God’s calling to serve. In St. John Paul II’s *Christifideles Laici*, he said that a lay person “need to listen receptively to the Word of God and the Church”. How do we listen receptively? Listening receptively takes one person to be humble and courageous enough to accept with all his heart and mind and conscience what he is hearing or seeing. It requires someone to erase all his pride, his doubts and fears, and all the inhibitions that might prevent him from understanding what he is receiving. This receptive listening, St. John Paul II added, is accompanied with constant and fervent prayer! Pray earnestly and consistently! A lay person must pray in his own words and these words should flow from his heart and this prayerful life should be consistent! Having a prayerful life will strengthen someone’s vocational life as an active

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lay person.

Form and be transformed! “Ongoing formation is essential for every baptized Catholic” (Essential Role of the Laity, 2004). Consistent attendance in various formation programs and seminars provided by the Church strengthens our life as part of the laity. It also strengthens further a lay person’s relationship to God who helps him fulfil his task. The article noted that “proper formation in the faith is the right and duty of all”. In the statement, it encourages the laity to keep growing inside the Church and a lay person must not depart from the teachings and doctrines from the Scriptures. It also emphasizes the duality of this formation as both a right and a duty. As a baptized Catholic, a lay person has both the earthly and heavenly rights to constant formation and he is duly tasked to undergo it consistently. Moreover, the article added that “the parish should be a lay formation just as a seminary is a house of priestly formation for the priests”. This note clearly equates the ordained priesthood and the laity as both comprise the Mystical Body of Christ. It gives respect to the equality of the two groups in terms of the dignity of their distinct roles and responsibilities in the Church. Formation will also help a lay person in discerning God’s calling and His message. These two are in a cycle for a lay person always undergoes formation and discernment all throughout his life in the vocation.

The call to holiness. All of the laity is invited to this vocation to holiness—in which the article “Essential Role of the Laity” clearly identifies as the “perfection of charity, the fundamental vocation that the Father gave to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit”. This invitation to holiness is not exclusive to the priests and the religious but rather an invitation to all the people of God in His Church. How is it to become holy? Truly, the human knowledge about holiness is not even close to perfection but to the very least, the Church provided a response. In *Lumen Gentium*, it is through engagement in the temporal, the worldly affairs but not living apart from the Gospel is a path to holiness (LG 31). It added that “the engagement of the laity with the temporal order is not an option but an appointment given by God”. So it is not a personal choice but rather a task given by God to His people. This appointed task gives the laity an opportunity to make the Gospel and the Church teachings relevant, present, and fruitful in the real-world and contemporary situations that the world is facing right now. The vocation to holiness also requires the laity to become “witnesses and living instruments of the mission of the Church”. As what a normal person would think, some say that if he joins in the parish activities, he already did his part as a laity, but no! Living and sharing the mission of the laity also requires all the lay people to grow in holiness! One must always examine and align his whole being to the vows that he made in his baptism and the God’s Words. When one heeds the call to holiness, he will be able to discern, and undergo transformation inside and out.

Truly, the laity is not just an auxiliary unit, not just the people working in the Church. It is us—all the baptized Catholics in the world. We might be weak, we might be busy at times, we might be afraid of the tasks that God wants us to do but keep in mind that God is always knocking at our hearts, He is always calling us to serve. For we are His People, we are His Body.

4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to extend her deepest gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to the persons who extended their wisdom, expertise and assistance in making this paper feasible especially *Mr. Juan Carlo B. Cervo* and *Dr. Fides del Castillo*. She would also like to thank La Salle College Antipolo, DLSU community, her family and the Almighty God-the source of all wisdom.

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De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
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