

Christ's Faithful – Hierarchy, Laity, Consecrated Life



Catholicism 101 (RCIA)

2011-12

Christ's Faithful

- Christ's faithful or the People of God are those who have been incorporated into Christ through Baptism
 - One is fully initiated into Christ and the Church through Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion
- All of the faithful are sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly office and his mission but each in their own way
 - Holy Orders
 - Multitude of charismas (gifts) that God gives to the faithful
 - Consecrated life through the evangelical councils
- The faithful are equal in dignity as Children of God
 - "With you I am a Christian and for you I am a Bishop" St. Augustine



Formation of the Faithful

- **Hierarchy** - Among the faithful by divine institution there exists sacred ministers who form the hierarchy
 - from the Greek words *iereus* which means “priest” and *arche* which means “rule”
- **Laity** – the faithful who are not in the hierarchy
 - from the Greek word *Laos* which means “people”
- **Consecrated** – In both the hierarchy and the laity there are certain faithful who are consecrated in a special manor to God by the evangelical councils of poverty, chastity, and obedience
 - From the Latin words *cum* which means “with” and *sacer* which means “sacred”

Hierarchy



Laity



Consecrated Life



The Hierarchy

- Christ instituted the hierarchy with the mission of feeding the people of God in his name and for this purpose gave it authority
- The Hierarchy consists of:
 - Pope and Bishops
 - Priests
 - Deacons
- Through the sacrament of holy orders bishops and priests act in the person of Christ the Head and deacons assist them in the service of the word, liturgy, and charity
 - *Conformity to Christ the Head* → Holy Orders
 - *Conformity to the Members of Christ* → Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist



The Pope

- Jesus made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church and the head of the apostles
 - The pope being his successor is then the Vicar of Christ, pastor of the universal Church on earth, and head of the college of Bishops
- He entrusted the keys of the Church to him
 - By divine institution He exercises full, supreme, immediate, and universal power
- Called to shepherd Christ's flock (Jn 21:15-19)
- Called to confirm others in the faith (Lk 22:31-32)



Peter

Mt 16:13-19

- Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant: laws, feasts, institutions, prophecies
- “I will build my Church”
 - Portrays the Church as a spiritual temple
 - Jesus brings the Kingdom of David to its fulfillment
- “Peter”
 - *Petros* in Greek means “rock” or “stone”
 - *Kepha* in Aramaic means “sizeable rock”
 - Christ’s Church is built upon the person of Peter
- “Gates of Hell”
 - Jesus ensures that the powers of hell, (i.e. death, evil, deception) will not overcome the Church
 - According to Jewish tradition, the foundation stone of the Jerusalem Temple capped off and sealed a long shaft leading down to the netherworld



Office of St. Peter

- “Keys of the Kingdom”
 - In the OT Davidic kingdom, the king appointed a cabinet of ministers for specific tasks in the kingdom 1 Kgs 4:1-6; 2 Kgs 18:37
 - Of these a prime minister was elevated to unique status of authority ranking second only to the king
 - The Prime minister’s office was handed on to a successor by the symbolic act of handing on the “key of the house of David” (Is 22:15-25)
 - As in the Old Covenant so in the New, Christ the King appoints a chief minister
 - The office is meant to endure as long as the kingdom itself
- “Bind and loose”
 - 1. teaching authority with the ability to make binding decisions
 - 2. include or exclude members of a community
 - 3. the power to loose/free from sins, forgive sins



Bishops

- The college of Bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff but with him they exercise supreme and full authority over the universal Church
 - This authority is exercised in a solemn way in an Ecumenical Council
- Individual Bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches
 - The variety of Bishops expresses the variety and universality of the People of God but also its unity in that they are united under one head
 - In union with the Pope and with priests and deacons as coworkers their task is to teach, sanctify, and govern the People of God



Infallibility

- **Infallibility** – is a charism of the Holy Spirit given to the shepherds of Christ's Church which prevent them from teaching error in matters of faith and morals
- Extra Ordinary Magisterium
 - **Papal Infallibility** – is exercised when the pope defines *ex cathedra* (from his office as supreme pastor) a doctrine pertaining to *faith or morals*
 - **Ecumenical Council** – Infallibility is also present when the body of bishops together with Peter's successor exercise the supreme Magisterium above all in an Ecumenical Council
- Ordinary Magisterium
 - Exercised when the Pope and the Bishops in union with him are in agreement in proposing a doctrine as definitive
- Christ's faithful must adhere to these teachings with the obedience of faith



The Lay Faithful

- The lay faithful also share in the priestly prophetic and kingly office of Christ
- They illuminate and order temporal affairs according to the plan of God
 - Leaven of society (Lk 13:18-21)
 - Salt of the earth and Light of the world (Mt 5:13-16)
 - Permeate domestic, social, political and economic life with the Gospel of Christ
 - Often it is only through the laity that people can come to know the light of Christ
- The laity don't simply belong to the Church but with the hierarchy *are* the Church



Laity's Participation in Christ's Priestly Office

- By virtue of their baptism Christ's people exercise their priestly office by offering themselves as a spiritual sacrifice to God especially in the Eucharistic
 - Spiritual sacrifice of their lives, works, family life
 - Prayers and apostolic endeavors
 - Daily work and hardships borne in patience
 - Blessings of soul and body
- They also offer God worship through their holiness of daily life
 - In this they consecrate the world itself to God



Laity's Participation in Christ's Prophetic Office

- The lay faithful exercise their prophetic office by evermore deeply receiving, living, and teaching the Gospel of Christ
 - Proclaiming the faith is the task not only of the hierarchy but of every believer
- Letting the teachings and commandments of Christ and his Church influence decisions and policies of life in the world
 - Home, business, medicinal, political, recreation
- This evangelical work has a unique effectiveness since it is done in the concrete circumstances of the world



Laity's Participation in Christ's Kingly Office

- God's people participate in Christ's kingly role because receive from Jesus the power to overcome sin in themselves and the world
 - “one is rightly called a king who makes his won body an obedient subject and, by governing himself ...refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul” –St. Ambrose
 - Self-denial, virtue, holiness
 - Concrete Charity, hospitality, etc..
- They fill the institutions and activities of society with moral values
 - Offer a remedy for unjust social conditions



Consecrated Life



- The consecrated life refers to those women and men who have responded to a special call from Christ to be totally dedicated to him by freely professing vows to practice the evangelical councils
- **Evangelical Counsels** - are advice from Christ to grow in the perfection of Charity
 - ***Chastity, Poverty, Obedience***
 - All are called to the evangelical counsels but according to their station in life
 - Religious are called to live them in a radical way and to their fullest extent
- Consecrated life is often lived out in community



Chastity

- Celibacy for the kingdom (Mt 19:11-12)
- **Good offered to God:** one offers to God their human sexuality and the good of marriage
- **Benefit:**
 - Spiritual sacrifice which advances the kingdom of heaven
 - Chastity helps one to pray with greater intensity
 - Witnesses to and begins now the way we will live in heaven, i.e. in union with God (Mk 12:18-27)
 - Witnesses to the truth that human sexuality is free gift of love not a constrained human impulse
 - It gives a person the freedom to love and serve God and neighbor more generously



Poverty

- The rich young man (Mt 19:16-30)
- **Good offered to God:** one offers to God their property and earthly belongings
 - One who has taken this vow chooses to own nothing; all incoming revenue goes to the order
- **Benefit:**
 - Freedom to be concerned about God's business
 - Poverty makes it easier to be detached from worldly things
 - It also helps one to trust in God's providence



Obedience

- This vow is taken in imitation of Jesus who followed his Father's will in all things
- **Good offered to God:** one offers to God their lives, activities, and freewill
- **Benefit:**
 - Obedience gives a person the freedom to do God's will more perfectly
 - It helps a person to overcome pride and self-will
 - It also gives one peace in knowing that they are doing God's will



Contemplative Communities

- Contemplation is a special form of prayer which brings a person to live in union with Christ
 - It is an intimate union of love
- The greatest work of contemplative sisters and brothers is their prayer and penance for the Church and the world
 - Without prayer apostolic work becomes fruitless
- Contemplative orders often live in a Cloister which means “enclosure”
 - They choose to live apart from the world and typically never leave the cloister
 - They do this freely so that they can grow in union with Christ without the influence of the world



Apostolic Communities

- The apostolate is a way of actively serving Christ and his people
- Apostolic communities dedicate themselves especially to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy
 - Schools, universities
 - Hospitals, nursing homes
 - Orphanages, youth organizations
 - Parishes
- Each apostolic community has a particular gift or charism of service
- The key to consecrated service is to serve Christ in his people; their work is rooted in prayer it is not simply social work

