



YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
2013

LIVING  
OUR  
*Relationship*  
WITH  
JESUS CHRIST



"By faith...men and women of all ages... have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christians: in the family, in the workplace, in public life"

(Porta Fidei #13)

06/2013

# Vatican II | *What Difference Does it Make?*

DOCUMENT: **APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM**  
*Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*

Lay people have been present and active in the life of the Church since its very beginning, and yet, it was not until the Second Vatican Council that their role was studied, acknowledged, promoted and expanded. The role and place of the laity are included in every Council document. The major documents, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (stating that all people of God have been made sharers in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ,) the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (speaking of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Word as the "source and summit" of the Christian life from which flow all our good works,) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (describing the vocation of the laity to witness to the Gospel in every aspect of life lived in the reality of the world,) provide a positive description of the vocation of every lay person. The Council's reflection on the laity culminated in the promulgation of the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People on 18 November, 1965.

In the introduction to this document, the Council Fathers identify the fundamental principles which underlie

the nature of the lay apostolate, the forms that it can take and ways in which it is lived out. By virtue of their baptism, the laity shares in the mission of the whole people of God. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist incorporate us into the mystical body of Christ, initiate us into the community of faith, and send us out as apostles to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with each person we encounter.

The document on the laity also speaks to the reality of the world. The Council fathers describe the secular world as the graced place that gives form and invitation to the lay apostolate; it is the place in which we live our everyday lives. The world is the mission field of the laity, and each person is encouraged to take an active role in its renewal, harmonizing the principles of the Christian life with the many spheres of the secular world – family, culture, economy, trades and professions, politics, and international relations. Nothing is exempt from the light and love of Christ! We are all the Church – we are all the one Body of Christ!

*Sr. Rita Mary Harwood, SND*

## Reflection Questions

1. In this Year of Faith, how can you better attend to your spiritual life as a layperson, whatever your vocation or state in life?
2. What does it mean to you each day to be sent as an apostle into the mission field of the world?
3. How does the way you lead your day-to-day life – in your family, work place or community – bear Christian witness to the love and peace that comes from God?

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