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William Orbih

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, worbih001@csbsju.edu

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CLERICALISM:
ADVANCING THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR VATICAN II'S CALL
FOR AN ACTIVE LAITY

Rev. William Ikhianosimhe Orbih

ABSTRACT It is the purpose of this paper to re-echo the Second Vatican Council's call for a more active laity by, on the one hand, drawing attention to the theological basis of this call (baptism), and, on the other hand, identifying and denouncing clericalism as the biggest obstacle to a more active laity in the church.

INTRODUCTION

The call for a more active laity in the church, is louder today than it has ever been in history of the church. In recent years, several church documents and theological reflections have highlighted and emphasized the indispensability of an active laity to the survival, growth, greater effectiveness and continual relevance of the church in the contemporary world. They have often noted how an active laity is directly proportional to a healthy and effective church. So also, has been the call for the rejection of clericalism in all its different forms and manifestations. While the basis for the call for an active has been a deepening in the theological understanding of the identity of the laity, beginning from the revolutionary renewal initiated at the Second Vatican Council, the basis for the call for the rejection and eradication of clericalism has been an identification of not just how terrible a disease it is, but

also how it constitutes the biggest obstacle to the laity becoming as active in the church as they should be. Thus, while this call has been essentially multidimensional, it has primarily oscillated between the call itself and the identification and condemnation of the obstacles on the path of the laity becoming as active in the church as they should be. And by far the major obstacle that has often been identified and condemned is the clericalism.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to re-echo the call for an active laity in the church vis-a-viz identifying how clericalism constitutes the major obstacle to an appropriate response to this call. And secondly to draw attention to the significance of baptism as the theological basis for the call, as highlighted by Vatican II and post-Vatican II theological enterprises. To achieve its aims, this write-up will effectively argue that underlying every human obstacle to an adequate response to the call for a more active laity, is a lack of understanding of this theological basis, that is the essential identity which the sacrament of baptism confers on all the baptized, making them bona fide members of the church, having a share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and been called by Christ unto discipleship and mission. In other words, this paper will argue that clericalism itself, only exists or thrives primarily because this lack of understanding of the essential identity of the laity and the implication of this identity still exists and thrives.

CLERICALISM AND THE CALL FOR AN ACTIVE LAITY

While clericalism has diverse manifestations, at its core, “it is a vision or worldview of the Church that emphasizes its institutional, patriarchal structures, and the privileged position of clergy over the laity.”¹ According to Russell Shaw, clericalism in all its forms and manifestations has done and goes on doing great harm

to all the members of the church individually, priests as well as laity and also to the church as a whole. It is systematic and pervasive and until it is recognized and eradicated, it will continue to poison Catholic life in countless ways.² This is chiefly because, as Shaw earlier noted in the same book, “clericalism assumes that clerics not only are but also are meant to be active, dominant elite in the church and laypeople 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.”³

Another direct consequence of clericalism, in addition to lay inactiveness in the church is what Shaw describes as spiritual mediocrity among the laity. According to him, one aspect of clericalism that remains very visible in the church is the idea of clerical spiritual superiority. This is the idea that “both interiorly and exteriorly, the lives of clerics must be more holy than the lives of laymen,” and it is a view which the 1917 Code of Canon Law affirms and one which Pope Pius in his 1935 encyclical on the Priesthood *Ad Catholici Sacerdotti*, cited.⁴ Shaw therefore argues that “whatever effect exhortation to spiritual superiority may have upon clerics, for laymen they easily translate into an invitation to spiritual mediocrity.⁵ Thus, we can rightly surmise that clericalism, in whatever form or manifestation, essentially thrives on an inaccurate vision or worldview. It thrives on the worldview that essentially puts the clergy over the laity, one that conceives the role of the laity as inferior and subordinate to that of the clergy and one that sees the role of the laity in the church as passive and of less importance, especially in comparison to that of the clergy. And thus, by its very nature, wherever it exists and in whatever manifestation, it thrives on a worldview, that makes the laity, passive, dispensable, unimportant and as constitutes the major obstacle to their activeness in the church.

Discussing the reality of clericalism from the perspective

of the Western Churches, Michael W. Higgins and Douglas R. Letson, basically define clericalism as an abuse of power of the priesthood and this exploitation of clerical power, they argue, is to be seen in the different instances of sexual abuse cases by the clergy as recorded in Canada, and in similar cases in the United States, Ireland, England, or Australia.⁶ And the manifestation of this disease in this context has been identified to be, not just in the cases of abuses themselves, but in the more scandalous and even more criminal attempts at cover ups by church authority. Often underlining this deliberate bid to protect the identity of the abusive cleric at all cost, usually to the detriment of the abused and even other potential victims is this fundamentally wrong vision or worldview of the Church that emphasizes its institutional, patriarchal structures, and the privileged position of clergy over the laity, that has being have already identified as a manifestation of clericalism.⁷ Of course, if the clergy are regarded as more important and more central to the church and possess a superior dignity to the laity, then the tendency is to want to protect them at all costs, since protecting them is misconstrued as protecting the church.

We can likewise deduce the version of clericalism that is prevalent in the Asian church when we look closely at Archbishop Socrates Vilegas' condemnation of it, in his circular to the priests of the Archdiocese of Lingayen Dagupan, in the Philippines on January 1, 2015. According to the prelate, "Clericalism speaks of privilege, prerogatives, entitlement and special treatment. Clericalism prefers sacristies to the slums. Clericalism is more concerned with embroidered vestments than reconciled souls."⁸ In this brand of clericalism, the only group that matters is the clergy.

Similarly, in a letter addressed to Cardinal Marc Querlet, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, two years ago, Pope Francis spoke out against clericalism, calling it one

of the greatest distortions affecting the Church in Latin America. He accused the hierarchy of generating a “lacial elite” formed by those who work in the “things of the church” instead of helping ordinary baptized people live their faith in everyday situation. He insisted that helping the laity to become the real protagonists, is not a concession of the clergy’s good will, but the right of the laity, noting that clericalism “nullifies the personality of Christians” and it also leads to the “functionalization of the laity,” treating them as ‘errand boys’”⁹

Africa is definitely not left out in this disease of clericalism in any way. In fact, it is perhaps the region most afflicted. According to Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, “the African Church, and particularly the Nigerian Church, still operates with structures that merit its ecclesiology being called a “hierarchology,” which sees the bishop as an extension of the pope, the priests as extensions of the bishops, and the lay people as the commanded serfs, comparable to the feudalistic structure of the middle ages”¹⁰ In general, the business of running the church remains almost exclusively on clerical shoulders, since for the most part, the clergy is still seen as superior to the laity. This, Benezet Bujo painfully notes, when he observed that in Africa, while some bishops exaggerate their authority at the level of the diocese, many priests do the same at the level of parishes and as a result, outside clerical ranks are often condemned to a passive role as the impression often given is that the parish and ecclesial life in general is the private property of the parish priest, or, at best, the professional religious personnel.¹¹

However, in order to properly articulate the specific ways that clericalism constitutes an obstacle to the call for an active laity in the church, it will be very helpful to properly define what this call is all about, as well as what is meant by a rejection of clericalism, by first highlighting some of many common misconstructions of what each of these entails. First and most

importantly, while this is a call towards the integral involvement and participation of the laity in the life, leadership and mission of the church in close collaboration with the clergy, it is definitely not the call for the clericalization of the laity or even the laicization of the clergy.¹² While it might be rightly interpreted as a call for a less clericalized church, it is not a call for an anticlerical church, and definitely not a call for a church where roles reserved by law and tradition to the ordained ministers are usurped by the laity. And while it is a call for the rejection of clericalism in all its forms and manifestations, it is by no means an invitation to anticlericalism.¹³ Both are extremes, both are diseases, and both must always be avoided. Shaw observed that within the Church the dialectic of clericalism now generates still other bad results, notable among which is the exaggerated interest on the part of some laity and clergy in power sharing arrangements based on the assumption that the advancement of laymen requires admitting them to offices and functions previously reserved for clerics- allowing them to look and act like priests.¹⁴ “God,” St Paul cautions us, “is never the God of disorder, but of order” (1 Cor 14: 33).

In similar vein, it is also not a call that seeks to put an end to the hierarchical church or one that seeks to obliterate the ordained ministry in the church, but one that seeks reshape the essential understanding of what constitutes hierarchy in the church, its true purpose and its appropriate exercise.¹⁵ One among the many duties of the hierarchy is to favor the lay apostolate, furnish it with principles and spiritual assistance, direct the exercise of the apostolate to the common good of the Church, and see to it that doctrine and order are safeguarded.¹⁶ Likewise did Pope John Paul II explain that the hierarchical constitution “is founded on the will of Christ and, as such, is part of the *depositum fidei* which must be preserved and integrally transmitted over the centuries.”¹⁷ In other words, seeking a deeper understanding of the legitimate

exercise of hierarchy is not synonymous to seeking to obliterate it. Instead, it is the realization that the essential difference that exists between the ministry of the ordained and that of the laity, does and should not in any way connote a sense of superiority of the clergy over the laity. It is the understanding that just as the ordained ministers are called to leadership by virtue of sacred orders, lay people are also called to leadership. And the authority of the laity, rooted in baptism and confirmation, is related to but distinct from the authority of the clergy that is grounded in holy orders. Both are however legitimate, interrelated and essential to the life of the church.¹⁸

In other words, the rightful place of lay people in the church at the side of the clergy, and neither behind nor ahead and whatever erroneous vision and worldview that still tends suggest or promote otherwise must be challenged and rejected. This is so because, if the laity must become more active members and leaders in the church, and active missionaries of the church to the world, then the church must stop regarding them as “children” and the traditional relationship between the clergy and the laity which resembled that between a responsible, all-knowing parent and a dependent, ignorant child, must be promptly eradicated.¹⁹ If the laity must attain to holiness, then holiness must be made available to them in the same way that it is available to the clergy and vowed religious.²⁰ And since there are no distinction among believers in their common call to holiness, there should also be not first-, second-, or third-class notions of holiness, but one holiness to which all believers have been called.²¹ If the laity must cooperate and collaborate with the clergy in the business of the church, then the clergy must become willing to recognise, respect, and even enable as much as possible this collaboration and cooperation. And, this of course, can only take place when both clergymen and lay people recognise not just their equal dignity, but also their

equal stake in the church. It can only take place, when it is clear that the notion of mission of the church is the responsibility of all its members, which means that there are to be no purely passive members of the Body of Christ.²²

Similarly, if this call implies the call for a well-formed laity, formed adequately enough to know its rights, duties and responsibilities in and to the church, then it also implies a better-formed clergy that recognizes the central place of the laity in the life of the church. The ordained ministry, says David Donovan exists within the church in order to serve and foster the faith and life of all its members. And in his opinion, the clergy will only be able to do so to the extent that it recognizes and respect the equality and dignity of everyone and calls forth their gifts and talents so that they too can be put at the service of the community as a whole.²³In summary, for the call for a more active laity to be properly heard and adequately responded to, it is not just enough to resound it loudly or repeatedly, it is essential that the many obstacles to an adequate and appropriate response to it are duly identified and effectively challenged. To do this, every vision or world view that places the clergy over the laity in dignity, must be radically rejected. So also, must any vision that regards the church as the domain of the clergy, with the power, leadership and mission of the church concentrated on the pope and the hierarchy.²⁴

Above all, it is a call for renewal in the church, a call for greater sense of identity and a greater understanding of the mission of the church. It is a call to a greater awareness of the indispensable part, both the clergy and the laity, have got to contribute towards the realization of the ultimate mission of the church. And ultimately, it is a call that flows from a deeper understanding of the identity of the laity and the practical implication of this identity and one that recognizes that clericalism and all the other obstacles to an adequate and appropriate response

proceed from a misunderstanding of the essential identity of the laity and the implication of this identity.

VATICAN II AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

On the topic of the laity, it is interesting to note that Vatican II, was the first ecumenical council to deal specifically and at length with the role of the laity and to do so in a positive manner.²⁵ And the council's treatment of the topic was in two dimensions: an appreciation of the serious obligations that behoves the laity as far as the mission of the church in world is concerned, as well as the dignity belonging to the laity by reason of their status as members with their clergy, of Christ's faithful.²⁶ We therefore, find the call to a more active laity not just resounding in many documents of the council, but as the very posture of the Council, one of its enduring legacies, as well as the primary hermeneutic that shaped even the documents in which the call was not explicitly made. *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, embodied this rich theology of the laity which is in many ways an unprecedented theological development. For Aurelie Hagstrom, the Second Vatican Council ushered in a new Pentecost for the laity and from the very first line of the very first conciliar document published, the chief aim of the council, to "impart an ever-increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful" is described.²⁷ Also according to him,

Before Vatican II revived the New Testament vision of the church, it was quite common to think of the church in political terms. That is, the church was described as an unequal society. In an equal society, all the members have equal status, dignity and rights. Put simply, the clergy had the power of authority and the laity did not. Only the clergy were empowered to teach, sanctify, and govern the rest of the faithful. This image goes back centuries and was even ingrained in the 1917 Code of Canon Law. This Code had hardly any laws or canons concerning the laity besides those regulating

the sacrament of marriage.²⁸

In the same vein, J. Peter Nixon, reflecting on legacy of the council on this issue and the amazing development its treatment in the council has inspired over the years, rightly surmised that the Second Vatican Council unleashed a wave of lay participation in the church – and there is no turning back.²⁹ And for Tim Muldon, “if the First Vatican Council represented the calumination of extended reflection on the roles of bishops and of the pope in particular, the Second Vatican Council represented the culmination of extended reflection on the laity.”³⁰

The significance of the Second Vatican Council’s teachings on this issue is not just about what took place during the council, but instead, what has taken place so far, after it, because of it and inspired by it. This refers to the many visible developments that have taken place in the church as it continues to progress towards a greater understanding and realization of the vision of the Second Vatican council on the laity. It is about the many official documents the council has inspired, the abundance of theological reflection on the identity and vocation of the laity that has taken place since the conclusion of council, in contrast to the dearth of theological reflections on the subject matter before the council. Hagstrom rightly observes that while prior to Vatican II the laity had not been the specific subject of conciliar teaching for four hundred years since the Council of Trent, the renewed teaching on the laity in Vatican II has produced numerous publications, conferences, debates and discussions concerning the vocation and mission of the laity and indeed during the years since the close of the council, Catholics have witnessed an ongoing deepening of the theological understanding of the laity.³¹ For him, some of the fruits of the Spirit that have resulted from Vatican II’s teaching have been: a deeper appreciation and emphasis on the fundamental equality and

dignity of the lay faithful as members of the Body of Christ, their share in the mission of the church, the significance of their call to holiness, and the sacramental grounding of their vocation and mission. And this tremendous work of the Holy Spirit, Hagstrom concludes, can perhaps only be more fully appreciated when we consider the role of the laity in the church before Vatican II.³²

Unfortunately, however, while immense progress has been made in understanding of the identity and role of the laity in the church, the situation is still far from ideal. While these post-Vatican II theological efforts have, in different ways, continued to radically re-echo the call that went forth from the council, making it not just louder but also clearer, the level of response to the call has not been quite commensurate. While this call abounds in many papal encyclicals, exhortations as well in tons of theological reflections, pastoral responses to it have been far from ideal. Though varying from parish to parish and from region to region, with some parishes and regions more commendable than others, the response has remained overall still very poor. In many regions, the dominant model of the church has remained a very hierarchical institution that is clerical-centred. The understanding of the identity and place of the laity in the church has remained intrinsically negative and subservient to that of the clergy. Clericalism remains very visible and active in the church the world over since the misunderstanding that fires it persists and remains active in its different manifestations.

Sadly too, we can also note that while the hierarchy in the different regions of the church have continued to condemn the different manifestation of clericalism and even take concerted steps to promote the theological formation of lay people and encourage their active participation in the actual business of running dioceses, parishes and other ecclesiastical structures, these efforts have often not borne the required fruit. Of course,

while some regions have fared better than others in this regard, clericalism however remains rife and active in all the regions of the universal church, manifesting itself in different forms already mentioned above. In general, while it will definitely be a most interesting venture to go around the Catholic world, comparing ecclesial structures to examine the different levels and dimensions of lay activeness, or perhaps even to conduct surveys to see how the various regions and local churches are faring in this matter, one can almost accurately predict that the very best that one will find, will still fall conveniently short of the ideal embodied in recent church documents and theological reflections and this will likely remain the case, in so far as the misunderstanding of the essential equality of both the clergy and the laity and their co-responsibility to the church persists.

This obviously already gives us the clue that the issue at hand is far from being a simple one. In other words, the simplistic explanations for lack of lay activeness, that have often been proffered such as clergymen's unwillingness to share their administrative and pastoral duties, or the lay people's unreadiness to step up and become more active in their parishes, or even the lack of resources to set up the needed structures for lay formation as is often acquiesced as the major constraining factor in the poorer churches in the developing world can no longer be taken as adequate or exhaustive. It has become important to see the intimate relationship between knowledge and praxis as well as see that underlining the prevalence of clericalism and other obstacles to an active laity in the universal church is the lack of understanding of the essential equality of both the clergy and the laity. It is the lack of understanding that the church is the church of the laity in the exact same way that it is the church of the clergy and that both the clergy and the laity integrally embody the life and mission of the church.

For instance, while the lack of resources is often acquiesced as the major constraining factor for lay inactiveness in the poorer churches in the developing world, the fact that the reality is equally present even in the richer churches in the developed regions of the world, clearly betrays it as an explanation that is inadequate and one which must never be taken in isolation. In other words, while sociocultural realities such as lack of resources can be mitigating factors, even where these factors are absent, a lack of understanding of the theological basis of the call can still mitigate against an appropriate response. Put more directly, a clergyman who thinks collaboration with the laity primarily in terms of pastoral efficacy, may be well disposed to collaborate in a region where the laity is well formed or where there exist structures that makes this formation easily possible, or even where there is acute shortage of clergymen; but may find it hard to do so in a region where these factors are absent! So also, will the clergyman who thinks of collaboration in terms of it being his prerogative, rather than collaboration in the deeper sense of co-responsibility that flows from equal dignity and universal call to ecclesial ministry of both clergy and the laity, find it difficult to collaborate no matter the circumstances.

UNDERSTANDING VATICAN II'S THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE CALL FOR AN ACTIVE LAITY

It is therefore, in appreciation of how critical and complex the issue at hand, that it has become not simple enough to have yet another a theological enterprise simply re-echoing the call to active laity, but one going back to the very heart of this call itself, to highlight and emphasize theological basis of the call. This involves the process of redefining concepts and putting them in their proper perspective. More fundamentally however, it involves going back

to different official documents, both Vatican II documents and some of the documents the council has inspired since. Once there, we would immediately discover the theological basis of the call for greater lay activeness in these documents always lies primarily on the essential identity of the laity and only secondarily on its necessity for pastoral effectiveness. And almost immediately too, one would equally realize that perhaps the biggest obstacles to an appropriate pastoral response, has been a misplacement or at least a misunderstanding of the theological ground for the call in the first place. One would also realize that perhaps what has not been voiced loudly enough is not the call itself, but the proper understanding of the theological ground on which it was made.

It is thus on the theological basis of the effect and implication of baptism that Vatican II and the several theological efforts ever since have based this call for an active laity. For instance, the call to lay apostolate in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, does not merely rest on what the document excellently described as diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission to which both the clergy and the laity have been called.³³ Rather, it rests on the fact that this oneness of mission arises from the equality in dignity made possible by one baptism. The laity derive their right and duty to the apostolate from their “union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.”³⁴

This is also an important component of the theology of *Lumen Gentium*, a document which perhaps highlights the identity of the laity better than any other document in the council. In the various places *Lumen Gentium* makes the call for a more active laity or a greater collaboration between clergy and laity, it does so by calling attention to the common identity and equal dignity of all the people of God whether clergy or lay, an identity and dignity

conferred by the waters of baptism.³⁵ We find this enshrined in the theology of the one and eternal priesthood of Christ vis-a-viz the two modes of participation in it, since as *Lumen Gentium* notes: “the baptized by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood that through all the works of Christian men [and women] they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection for him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (cf. 1 Pet. 2: 4-10).”³⁶ Carol Dempsey tells us that the language used in this scripture passage above is the language of “election,” rooting the Christian community in its ancient Jewish ancestral heritage adding that this “election” was not intended for personal satisfaction, gain, or sanctification but was for the sake of mission.³⁷

We also find it in the theology of the universal call to holiness, for the theological basis of this, is equally baptism.³⁸ One can even state that the motivation behind the decision of Vatican II to begin its treatment of the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood, easily discernible from the methodology it adopted, is clearly in a bid to forestall any potential misunderstanding that the difference in the two kinds of priesthood connotes a sense of superiority on the part of the clergy over the laity and second as much as it is equally the clear awareness of just how the two kinds of priesthoods are so interrelated that to treat one without the other is to treat it inadequately.³⁹

Thus, the image of the church that *Lumen Gentium* succeeds in gifting us is that of the church as truly a kingdom of priests, where all the baptised are “priests” and where there are two modes of participation in the one priesthood of Christ. It is the image of a church where both the clergy, sharers in the priesthood of Christ by virtue of the sacrament of holy orders and the laity, sharers of that one priesthood in lieu of their baptism exist side by side and collaborate in the one business of witnessing to the kingdom of

God. It is the image of a church where every member share in an equal dignity and where both ministries and diversity of ministries flow from the one spirit and are all ordered for the building up of the one body of Christ. According to *Lumen Gentium*,

In the Church not everyone marches along the same path, yet all are called to sanctity and have obtained an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:1). Although by Christ's will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastor for the others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ. The distinction which the Lord has made between the sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God involves union, for the pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship: the pastors of the church following the example of the Lord – should minister to each other and to the rest of the faithful; the latter should eagerly collaborate with the pastors and teachers. And so amid variety all will bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ: this very diversity of graces, of ministries and of works gathers the sons [and daughters] of God into one, for “all these things are the work of the one and the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:11).⁴⁰

Post-Vatican II documents have continued in the tradition of the council, calling for an active laity and drawing attention to the radical reform initiated by the council on the issue of the laity. Most notable among the lots have been Pope John Paul's *Christifidelis Laici* of 1988 and Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* of 2013. In *Christifidelis Laici*, issued twenty years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II did not merely re-echo the Council's call for a more active laity, he also called attention to the theological ground on which the council made this call. He observed how in giving a response to the question, “who are the lay faithful,” the council went beyond

previous interpretations which were predominantly negative and instead opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting “the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery.”⁴¹ By doing this, John Paul noted how the council, succeeded in drawing attention to the essential importance of baptism, the sacrament that enables the whole people of God to truly share in the threefold mission of Christ: Priest, Prophet-Teacher and King and perpetuate this mission in the world.⁴² Pope Francis equally re-echoed this call for an active laity in his Apostolic Exhortation of 2015, *Evangelii Gaudium*. He began by rightly observing that lay persons are the vast majority of the people of God and the ordained ministers, which constitute the minority are to be at their service, before going on to insist that the identity and mission of the laity is grounded in their baptism and confirmation, lamenting that this clear awareness does not appear in the same way in all places.⁴³

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

These previous predominantly negative interpretations prior to Vatican II, which Pope John Paul II refers to in his apostolic exhortation, can basically be seen in two senses. It can be seen in the negative language that was predominantly used to describe the laity prior to the council, that is in terms of what they were not.⁴⁴ Or even in language that refuses to recognize their identity, or even denied their true worth. Hagstrom highlights that prior to the council correcting these negative interpretations, lay people were simply expected to “pay, pray and obey” and simply allow themselves to be led like a docile flock by the pastors of the church. They were to express their fidelity to the church by following the pastors like sheep follow a shepherd.”⁴⁵ Hagstrom did not fail to highlight how this misuse of biblical metaphor of

shepherding placed the laity into a state of nearly total passivity when it came to the mission of the church. And this, he notes, was the disposition that persisted to the very dawn of the Second Vatican Council.⁴⁶ It is as such not surprising that all that it took for the Second Vatican Council to set the process of the reform of the central place of the laity in motion, was to call attention to the essential identity of the laity and to bring baptism back to the centre of Catholic theology of vocation. Hagstrom observes that while for a long time the theology of vocation in the church was the theology of holy orders, Vatican II succeeded in putting baptism back into the centre of the theology of the church and, baptism, rather than holy orders, became the fundamental identity of any member of the church and the starting point for any consideration of vocations.⁴⁷ And once this was done, what followed is a progress, unprecedented in the history of the church. Today, the pastoral challenge is to continue to build on Vatican II's revolution and all the amazing post-Vatican II efforts until the ideal envisaged by the council is achieved.

One very contextual way to continue to build on the reform initiated by Vatican II is to engender as much as possible greater collaboration between the clergy and the laity at the different levels of ecclesial life. To do this however, the theological term "collaboration" must be properly defined first and put into a perspective that truly reflects the ideal of Vatican II. In other words, just as the theological basis for the call for a more active laity rests chiefly on the baptismal identity of the laity and only secondarily on pastoral exegesis, likewise does the theological basis for the collaboration between the laity and the clergy. Collaboration, as such is to be better understood in terms of co-responsibility, that proceeding from a fundamental understanding

of equal dignity and equal stake of all the members of the church rather than merely a cooperation between clergy and the laity that depends primarily on clergy's prerogative or pastoral needs. Pope Benedict XVI a few years ago, aptly challenged the status quo and mindset behind regarding lay people as "collaborators" of the clergy and prefers instead to see the laity as people who are really "co-responsible" for the church's being and acting.⁴⁸ And Norman Cooper provides us with a definition of collaboration that reflects Vatican II theological ideal. For him,

Collaboration in ministry is as a response to the call received in baptism and confirmation to recognise the Spirit's charism in all. It is rooted in understanding the church as a communion of the people of God in which each member shares in the universal call to holiness, mission and ministry. Collaboration is a way of acting more effectively and is a communal expression of all the baptized to participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ. It requires mutual respect, is a sign of equality in faith and calls all the baptised to seek the truth and serve the common good, confident that all have gifts to contribute to the mission and ministry of the church.⁴⁹

In essence, collaboration must now be seen as engraved in the baptismal identity and mission. "Baptism" says Kathleen Cahalan "is vocational."⁵⁰ "It is the Sacrament that initiates us into the way of discipleship. Through the waters of baptism, Christians together heed God's call and promise to embrace a common way of life, a life of discipleship in communion for mission. This she concludes, "is the most basic, elemental and foundational reality, identity and promise of the Christian. It is what constitutes a people, a holy people, the people of God."⁵¹ In like manner, Shaw

urges that the authentic vocation of the laity is to be seen in three senses: the common baptismal vocation, vocation as a state in life or special service and unique individual vocation. It is thus through baptism, and not sacred ordination that every member of the church has been called unto the life of discipleship.⁵²

In summary, baptism must truly regain its place of prominence in Catholic theology of vocation and mission. The sacrament of baptism, much more than make an individual a member of the church, also makes the individual co-responsible with all other baptized for the life and mission of the church. Jesus' call to discipleship is a universal call and all the baptized in the church have equally received this call. And because all have equally received this one call, all are essentially equal, irrespective of the specific ministry the divine master has conferred on each. The mission of the church is the mission of all Christ's disciples, and both the laity and ordained ministers are part of this community of disciples and though in varied capacities, they all have an equal stake in the church.

In conclusion, it is needless to reiterate just how important it is that this process of reform that was initiated by the Second Vatican Council be continually watered until it achieves its desired result: a church where the clergy and laity, like true comrades in arms, will work together as equals in propagating the mission of the church in the world. For the meantime, however, clericalism remains active in the church, across the different regions in the world, preventing the laity from rising up to its full potential. And this, as this paper has noted, is because the clericalist world view and vision that enables somehow still persists and it persists because somehow, there is still a misunderstanding of the theological basis for an active laity by Vatican II. The full implication and centrality of baptism is yet to be fully understood

by the average clergy and lay person in the church. It is important to state categorically that if an adequate and appropriate response to the call for greater lay activeness in the church must be expected, the call must not just be sounded and re-echoed, it must be sounded in terms that pay adequate attention to its theological basis, it is only through this means that the call will not just be heard, it will also be properly and unambiguously understood and responded to by both clergy and laity.

Notes

1. Richard P. McBrien and Harold W Attridge ed., *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 1st Edition. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 324.
2. Russell Shaw, *To Hunt, To Shoot, To Entertain: Clericalism and the Catholic Laity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 30-31.
3. *Ibid.*, 13.
4. *Ibid.*, 28
5. *Ibid.*
6. See, Michael W. Higgins and Douglas R. Letson, *Power & Peril: The Catholic Church at the Crossroads* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2002), 255.
7. Charles Kenney and James E Muller, *Keep the Faith, Change the Church: The Battle by Catholics for the soul of their church* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2014), 10.
8. "Priests in the Year of the Poor: Archbishop Vilegas Circular to Priest" January 2, 2015, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://njviehland.wordpress.com/tag/clericalism>.
9. Ines San Martin, "Pope Blasts Clericalism, Says Clock Has Stopped on 'Hour of the Laity'" in *Crux* (April 27, 2016), accessed February 21, 2018, <http://>

en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/04/26/pope_francis__clericalism_distorts_the_church_/1225638.

10. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 104.
11. Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, trans. John Donohue (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 98.
12. “Laity Must Not Be Clericalized Nor Clergy Laicized, Says Pope” in *National Catholic Register*, May 19, 2002, accessed February 18, 2018, http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/laity_must_not_be_clericalized_nor_clergy_laicized_says_pope Pope John Paul II famously warned against what he described as the tendency to clericalize the laity or laicize the clergy. According to him, “it is not service but power that shapes all forms of government in the Church, be it in the clergy or the laity, [when] opposing interests start to make themselves felt.”
13. For a comprehensive treatment, see “Anti-Clericalism” in *New World Encyclopedia*, accessed February, 25, 2018, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Anti-clericalism>.
14. Shaw, 15.
15. “Lumen Gentium” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1975), No 18, unequivocally described the Church as hierarchical and in this it says it is following the steps of the First Vatican Council.
16. “Apostolicam Actuositatem” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1975), No 24.
17. “Preserving a balanced Relation between Pastors and Laity” in <https://catholicexchange.com/preserving-a-balanced-relation-between-pastors-and-laity>
18. Carolyn Wier Herman, “The Sensus Fidei and Lay Authority” in *Catholic Identity and the Laity*, ed. Tim Muldon, *College Theology Society Volume*

- 54:2008, 155-168 (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 159.
20. Aurelie Hagstrom, *The Emerging Laity: Vocation, Mission and Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 12.
21. *Ibid.*, 13.
22. *Ibid.*, 14.
23. *Ibid.*, 15.
24. David Donovan- *What Are They Saying About The Ministerial Priesthood?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 18.
25. Hagstrom, 15.
26. Shaw, 98.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Hagstrom, 20.
29. *Ibid.*, 15.
30. J Peter Nixon, "The Great Awakening: How Lay People Have Shaken The Church" in *US Catholic Faith in Real Life* (Vol. 75: No. 8, pages 12-17), accessed February 18, 2018, <http://www.uscatholic.org/church/2010/07/great-awakening>
31. Tim Muldon, "Introduction" in *Catholic Identity and the Laity*, College Theology Society Volume 54:2008, 155-168 (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 4.
32. Hagstrom, 11.
33. *Ibid.*, 11-12.
34. "Apostolicam Actusitatem," No 2.
35. *Ibid.*, No. 3.
36. "Lumen Gentium," 32.
37. *Ibid.*, 10.
38. Carol Dempsay, "Be Holy for I am Holy: Clothing Ourselves in Our Biblical Identity (1 Pet. 1: 13- 2: 10), in *Catholic Identity and the Laity*, ed. Tim Muldon, College Theology Society Volume 54:2008, 34-44 (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 40-41.
39. "Lumen Gentium," 39.

40. According to “Lumen Gentium,” No.10, on the Ministerial and Common Priesthood, “Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered to one another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.”
41. Lumen Gentium, 32.
42. John Paul II’s Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifidelis Laici*, On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, par 9, accessed 21 February, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html. See also Lumen Gentium, 31.
43. *Ibid.*, 14.
44. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, no. 102, accessed February 25, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm
45. Hagstrom, 15.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. Hagstrom, 24.
49. See “Message of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on the Occasion of the 16th Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action” accessed February 18, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120810_fiac.html.
50. Norman P. Cooper, *Collaborative Ministry: Communion, Contention, Commitment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 6-7.
51. Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2010), 26.
52. *Ibid.*, 27.
53. Shaw, 37.