

“WHY THE CHURCH?” PART IV
Mark Hellinger | Most Precious Blood Parish
Summer Series | 2020

Preface 1 for Sundays in Ordinary Time:

**For through his Paschal Mystery,
he accomplished the marvelous deed,
by which he has freed us from the yoke of sin and death,
summoning us to the glory of being now called
a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people for your own possession,
to proclaim everywhere your mighty works,
for you have called us out of darkness
into your own wonderful light.¹**

Lumen Gentium:

10. Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men, made the new people "a kingdom and priests to God the Father". The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.

34. The supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since he wills to continue his witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work.

For besides intimately linking them to His life and His mission, He also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For

¹ *The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II*, Third Typical Edition (Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 572.

all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

35. Just as the sacraments of the New Law, by which the life and the apostolate of the faithful are nourished, prefigure a new heaven and a new earth, so too the laity go forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for, when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world.

Recommendations for starting to exercise your priesthood in an intentional way:

1. Pay attention at Mass:
 - a. Listen to what the prayer is actually saying/asking.
 - b. Notice a few prayers and do what they are saying:
 - i. "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father."
 - ii. "Lift up your hearts"
 1. This is the moment where we can truly "complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ."
2. "Offer it up:"
 - a. Sometimes overused/used poorly.
 - b. Actually a good practice.
 - c. Sacrifice requires intentionality.
3. Read Saint Paul's Letters:
 - a. Saint Paul gets it.
 - b. It's hard to find someone who suffered more, physically and spiritually.
4. The Sacrifice of Praise:
 - a. To praise another is a sacrifice.
 - b. Affirmation of God is affirmation that we are not Him.
 - c. Praise puts us in right relationship and also makes a true offering of the heart, because we a) don't have to offer praise and b) don't gain anything from praise.
 - d. Take time every day to offer praise as a priestly offering to God.
5. Engage your priesthood actively in the act of receiving communion:
 - a. Approach the altar.
 - b. Lay it all down there.
 - c. Be fed by the living bread.
 - i. For the Passover, it is required that you *eat* the lamb that is offered.
 - ii. In our sacrifice and offering up of first Christ and then ourselves, we eat what we offer: the Body and Blood of Jesus.