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DR. RICHARD GAILLARDETZ DOES VATICAN II THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY HAVE A FUTURE?

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Introduction

Bishop Thomas

Gumbleton

Some of you here have already heard Dr. Gaillardetz speak in the Archdiocese of Detroit; and so you are already convinced, I'm sure, that this will be a very wonderful program this afternoon. And I am sure all of you others who haven't heard him, think we are very fortunate he is with us today. He comes to us from Toledo, Ohio. You may know the history of Toledo that we exchanged the Upper Peninsula for Toledo. (laughter) I don't know who got the better part of the deal, but it seems they got the better part - but whatever.

He has been a professor at the University of Toledo where he holds the Thomas and Margaret Murray and James Bacik Endowed Chair and has there for nine years as a Professor of Theology. And after that he taught at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas for ten years. His educational background includes his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities from the University of Texas. He also has a Biblical Theology Degree from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, and a Masters Degree and a Doctorate in Systematic Theology from Notre Dame University. So he certainly is very qualified. He also worked in magnetic efforts here in the United States on the U.S. Roman Catholic-Methodist Ecumenical Council for a number of years. He has also been on the Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America and been a member of that society for many more years. He has received some significant awards. I think perhaps the one most important is the Sophia Award from the Washington Theological Union in Washington D.C. That's an award given in recognition of a theologian's contribution to the life of the Church; and he is very deserving of that award. Richard is married to Diana, his wife, and they have four children, who they are trying to put through Catholic schools, including universities; so he has to work very hard to make that happen; and I am convinced that he will do it. We can tell from his background we are very fortunate he is with us here this afternoon to help us to determine God's Vatican II teaching on the laity and the future in our Church. Dr. Gaillardetz. (Applause.)

Does Vatican II Theology of the Laity Have a Future?

Dr. Richard Gaillardetz

Let me state my thesis right at the outset, my answer to the question with which I have titled my talk is in the negative. However, the reasons for this may not be what you think. I do not answer in the negative because I am critical of the Vatican's retrenchment toward the role of the laity in the church in general, although I am. I answer in the negative because I think any theology of the laity is, to certain extent, problematic in its fundamental conception. To demonstrate why I think this the case I would like to begin with a tale of two ministries.

A Tale of Two Ministries

Consider first of all the situation of Deacon Javier Perez, an active permanent deacon in his Brownsville, Texas parish. His clerical status is, in some ways, ambiguous. On the one hand, Deacon Perez, like a priest, made a promise of obedience to his bishop at his ordination and is subject to pastoral assignment as the needs of his diocese demand. He is married but he is told that should his wife die he will be bound by the law of celibacy (though he may be dispensed from this requirement). On the other hand, not only does the church exempt him from the obligation to clerical dress (cc. 288) but in most dioceses he is *prohibited* from wearing clerical garb (apart from certain extraordinary circumstances such as prison or hospital ministry). Deacon Perez is married with several children still at home, and he owns his own petroleum engineering consultancy. He is then, immersed in the worldly affairs of marriage, family and secular profession, yet as an ordained minister. Frequently he is referred to, not only by parishioners but by his pastor, as a *lay* deacon. But of course this is incorrect. Once ordained, according to church teaching, he ceased to be a layman; he is now a cleric. Is he simply an exception, an anomaly, a pastoral accommodation like the married Protestant minister who upon converting to Catholicism can be ordained in spite of his marriage? No, the restoration of the permanent diaconate by the Second Vatican Council (LG # 29) was not conceived as a mere pastoral accommodation, it was not a stopgap measure, but rather the restoration of an ancient ministry in the church. Yet in spite of the integral and permanent status of the diaconate in the structure of the church, its concrete characteristics challenge conventional conceptions of the "clerical and lay states."

Now let us consider the situation of Mary Comeaux, a parish director of Christian formation. Ms. Comeaux works full-time in the church. She (for they are overwhelmingly women) accepted the position after years of distinguishing herself as an accomplished catechist. The parish recognized her charisms through her work as a volunteer catechist and called her to a more public ministry in the parish. She now has a graduate degree in pastoral ministry, earned in courses taken alongside of seminarians in the classroom. She is married but her children are grown, and she has dedicated her life to ministry in the church. This dedication is reflected in the extensive student loans which she accepted in order to get her education and in her acceptance of a meager salary with no contract and little job security. In sum, she has been called by the community to full-time ministry, has undergone extensive formal preparation, and is dedicating her life to service of the church. Fifty years ago that description would have been appropriate for either a cleric or a consecrated religious, but she is neither. The two ministries described above fall within acceptable norms within the church and yet both rather muddy our conventional understandings of what constitutes a cleric and a lay person. The deacon is canonically a cleric, but in most ways lives a lifestyle more typical of a lay person. Ms. Comeaux is a lay person but her work and formation are much more closely aligned with those associated with clerics. How did we get to this state? For that we must look to the history of the lay-clergy distinction.

II. Origins of the Lay/Clergy Distinction

The word *kleros*, from which we get the word "cleric", does appear at several points in the New Testament, but nowhere does it refer to ministry. Rather its basic meaning is concerned with the "casting of lots." The word *laikos*, from which we derive the word "lay person", is not found in the New Testament at all. It appears once in the non-canonical text, 1 Clement, authored around 90 CE but does not come into common usage until the very end of the second century.

Emphasis on the Priority of Christian Discipleship

By the close of the second century a distinction between the whole Christian people and church leadership began to appear. In the mid-second century St. Justin Martyr will describe Christian worship and make reference to deacons, those who liturgically proclaim the Scriptures as well as those who preside over the worship. But here again, there is no sense that these belong to a distinct subset of persons within the larger community.¹ Justin assumes a fundamental equality among believers grounded in their shared call to discipleship established at their baptism. Tertullian will distinguish between the whole people (*plebs*) and those called to particular, more formal ministries (*ordo*), but, once more, nothing suggests that those who exercised a more formal public ministry were thought to belong to a distinct class of believers set apart from others. In general we can say that early Christian reflection during the first two centuries of the church was less preoccupied with distinctions *within* the community than between the Christian community as a whole and the world in which Christians lived. Consequently, differences between lay and cleric were eclipsed by a concern for the common demands of discipleship.²

The Emergence of “Two Different Kinds of Christians”

The emergence of a distinction between two different kinds of Christians, some ordained and others not, occurred only gradually and as the result of a confluence of diverse factors.

The gradual association of celibacy with the ordained certainly strengthened the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. A tradition of adhering to celibacy as a spiritual discipline can be traced back to Paul’s own recommendation of celibacy (1 Cor. 7: 1-9) and the Matthean logion in which Jesus suggests that some are to be “eunuchs for the kingdom” (Matt. 19: 12).

We do have evidence of clerical celibacy practiced by Tertullian and, in the third century, by Origen, but this is alongside ample testimony to married clergy, including bishops and popes. Yet consecrated celibacy does not appear to have been a significant practice in the first three centuries of Christianity. Legislation proposing clerical abstinence is found in the canons promulgated by the Spanish Council of Elvira (ca. 306), and fourth century popes Damasus and Siricius both call for clerical abstinence, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which such legislation was ever implemented.

1. Changing Conceptions of Eucharist/Priesthood

What then brought about the shift toward clerical celibacy that begins to be heard with greater force in the fourth century? One reason has to do with changing conceptions of the Eucharist and the priesthood. Christianity, which had initially sought to distance itself from Jewish concepts of law, sacrifice and priesthood, began to return to these categories as a means of understanding Christian worship and ministry. The Eucharist was re-conceived in sacrificial terms, with important Christian modifications to be sure, and the ministry of those who presided over the Eucharist was described in language that in some ways paralleled then common understandings of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood. St. Cyprian of Carthage saw the Eucharist as a continuation of Jewish ritual sacrifice, albeit with an entirely new theological understanding. It followed then that the Christian priesthood ought to be governed by the purity rules that were binding for the Levitical priesthood. A new rationale emerges for clerical sexual abstinence from sexual relations in keeping with Levitical conceptions of ritual purity (Lev. 15: 1-18, 31; 22: 4-9; 1 Sam. 21: 4-5) that precluded the priest from having sexual relations immediately prior to “offering the sacrifice.” The inability to enforce such sexual abstinence would eventually elicit calls for clerical celibacy.

2. Influence of Greco-Roman Class Distinctions

A second factor has to do with the influence of Roman imperial structures on church order. As Christianity was drawn into a more public engagement with the Roman world, it encountered a Roman

¹ 1 *Apologia*, 67.

² Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 115.

society divided into different *ordines*, or orders (e.g., *ordo senatorious*, *ordo equester*). Eventually the diversity of principal ministries in the early church was reconfigured along the analogy of these civic orders. Although ordination rituals appeared by the end of the second century, a fully developed theology of ministerial ordination was almost certainly influenced by Graeco-Roman class structure. Even so, it is only in the fifth century that it becomes common for clerics to wear distinctive garb.

3. The Impact of Monasticism

Third, the emergence of monasticism also played a role in hardening the lay/clergy distinction. Monasticism arose in the fourth and fifth centuries, in part as a reaction to the increasing “worldliness” of Christianity after Constantine. Thomas Merton’s summary reflection on desert monasticism captures it well:

Society...was regarded by them as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life...These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society was purely and simply a disaster. The fact that the Emperor was now Christian and that the “world” was coming to know the Cross as a sign of temporal power only strengthened them in their resolve.³

In its origins, monasticism was largely a lay affair with no distinctive privileges given to clerics in monastic communities. Yet many bishops in the west viewed monastic spirituality as a healthy antidote to the worldliness of diocesan clergy. Such Episcopal luminaries as St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Martin of Tours and St. Paulinus of Nola all recommended a monastic lifestyle for their clergy.⁴ The Eastern Church would soon develop the tradition, one that has continued to the present, of drawing candidates for the episcopate from monastic communities. The wedding of ordained ministry and a monastic lifestyle further accentuated the distinction between the laity and the clergy.

4. Reduction of Ministries to the Ordained

Finally, In the fourth and fifth centuries we also encounter the gradual transfer and reduction of ministerial responsibility, once undertaken by many different Christians, some formally ordained and many not, to the clergy alone. By the end of the fifth century the decisive ecclesiological division between lay and clergy was fully established.

This distinction, now more of a rigid ecclesiastical division, is fortified during the Carolingian period (8th-9th centuries). It is during this period that the liturgy becomes almost exclusively a clerical affair. The laity are reduced to spectators and frequently do not bother to receive communion at all. As the church inherited the Roman legal tradition, a tradition built on subtle legal distinctions regarding class, rights and obligations, the division between lay and cleric was further strengthened and codified by Gratian in the eleventh century: “There are two kinds of Christians, clerics and lay people.”⁵

This distinction remains in place up to the eve of the Second Vatican Council. This is not to say that the laity did not make important contributions throughout this period, they clearly did. But formal recognition by ecclesiastical leadership of their active role in the life of the church was hard to come by.

In England, John Henry Newman made important contributions toward a more positive theological evaluation of the lay person, insisting that, because of their active participation in the life of the church, the bishops ought to consider consulting the faithful, “even in matters of doctrine.”⁶ His view was met with derision by one of the leading members of the Roman curia, a Msgr. George Talbot. Talbot contended that Newman’s provocative views made him “the most dangerous man in England.” Talbot wrote in a

³ Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York: New Directions, 1960), 3.

⁴ Thomas F. O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (revised edition, New York: Paulist, 1999), 98.

⁵ *Concordia discordantium canonum*, causa 12, q.1 c.7.

⁶ John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (originally published, 1859, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

letter: "What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, and to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all."⁷ Talbot's attitude was hardly the exception in many ecclesiastical circles, yet in the early and mid-twentieth century, contemporary events were calling some to question the adequacy of Talbot's view. In spite of Newman's provocative position, official articulations of Catholic ecclesiology gave relatively little attention to the laity. In the early twentieth century Pope Pius X would make the following statement as if it were a self-evident fact of the church:

It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.⁸

Although in the decades immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council new movements like Catholic Action helped promote more lay involvement in the church's mission, this was still conceived as a way for the laity to participate or assist in the apostolate of the clergy. Still, theologians like Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu and Karl Rahner explored more positive theologies of the laity,⁹ and many of their insights were incorporated into the council's teaching. Yet few were ready to challenge the theological adequacy of the lay/clergy distinction itself.

III. Vatican II

The seismic shift which took place in Catholic ecclesiology because of the Second Vatican Council is undeniable. It is possible to understand the overarching task of the council according to two terms, one French, the other Italian, often associated with the work of the council: *ressourcement*, a return to the biblical, patristic and liturgical sources for theological reflection which had for too long been neglected in Catholic tradition, and *aggiornamento*, a "bringing up to date" of the church in the light of new historical, cultural, sociological and pastoral circumstances. Measured in these terms the council was remarkably successful. At the same time, it must be admitted that the work of the council was largely transitional. Rather than consolidating well established theological and pastoral insights, the council had the difficult task of breaking out of the strictures of one framework, which associated with a certain brand of neo-scholasticism, and tentatively moving the church in directions that were often only dimly perceived. It should not surprise us then if, in forging new paths, the council was not always able to anticipate all of the implications of its new initiatives. The result was that on a number of important matters, the council documents remained somewhat ambiguous and inconsistent. Among these are the two theological axes discussed above, namely a theology of the laity and a theology of ministry.

By virtually any standard, the teaching of Vatican II constitutes a considerable advance in its consideration of the laity. Its teaching is far removed from the pre-conciliar tendency to see the laity as mere recipients of the clergy's pastoral initiatives. The council taught that the laity have a right and responsibility to be actively involved in the church's apostolate (LG # 30, 33). They are equal sharers in

⁷ I am drawing this account of the exchange between Newman and Talbot from Michael J. Himes, "What Can We Learn from the Church in the Nineteenth Century?" in *The Catholic Church in the 21st Century*, edited by Michael J. Himes (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004), 73-4.

⁸ Pope Pius X, *Vehementer nos*, # 8. The English translation is from *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 3, ed. Claudia Carlen (New York: McGrath, 1981) 47-48.

⁹ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (first published in French, 1954; Westminster: Newman Press, 1965); Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Consecratio Mundi," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 86 (1964): 608-16; Karl Rahner, "Consecration of the Layman to the Care of Souls," *Theological Investigations*, Volume 3 (first published in German, 1956; Baltimore: Helicon, 1967), 263-76.

the threefold office of Christ who is priest, prophet and king (LG # 34-6). They are called to a full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy, a participation which is demanded by the “nature of the liturgy” (SC # 14). Pastors must acknowledge the expertise, competency and authority of the laity and gratefully accept their counsel (LG # 37). The council accepts and encourages lay persons to pursue advanced study in theology and scripture (GS # 62). Finally, it is the laity who are to take the initiative in the transformation of the temporal order (LG # 31; GS # 43).

A Contrastive Theology of the Laity

One of the more common readings of conciliar teaching is to see the council articulating a positive theology of the laity based on their unique vocation to consecrate the world to Christ. Giovanni Magnani characterizes this as *contrastive* theology of the laity insofar as it seeks to contrast the identity of the laity to that of the clergy, treating each as complementary categories of membership in the church.¹⁰ This contrastive view is generally located in *Lumen gentium* # 31 which states that

[t]o be secular is the special characteristic of the laity. Although people in holy Orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities, or even practice a secular profession, yet by reason of their particular vocation they are principally and expressly ordained to the sacred ministry, while religious bear outstanding and striking witness that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. *It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs* and directing them according to God’s will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world’s occupations and callings and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, formed the context of their existence. *There they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven, in the spirit to the Gospel, by fulfilling their own particular duties* (emphasis is mine).

One can also find texts that admit of a more contrastive interpretation in *Apostolicam actuositatem*.

The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, lay people are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world....Lay people ought themselves to take on as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order (AA# 2, 7).

Some commentators have read these texts in support of a definition of the laity in terms of their “secular nature.” In her study of these conciliar texts, Aurelie Hagstrom writes:

this secular character must be an essential part of any theology of the laity since it gives the specific element in any description of the laity’s identity and function. The secular character of the laity is not only a sociological fact about the laity, but also a theological datum.¹¹

This contrastive view of the laity which emphasizes their unique responsibility for the *consecratio mundi* has appeared as well in the writings of Pope John Paul II.¹² However, I agree with Edward Schillebeeckx when he observes that this approach to a theology of the laity, in spite of its significant advances, still starts from largely “hierarchical premises”:

¹⁰ Giovanni Magnani, “Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?” in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, volume 1, edited by René Latourelle (New York: Paulist, 1988), 597ff.

¹¹ Aurelie A. Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994), 58. See also Ferdinand Klostermann, “Chapter IV: The Laity” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, volume 1, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 236-8; G. Lo Castro, “La misión cristiana del laico,” *La Misión del Laico en la Iglesia y en le Mundo*, edited by A. Sarmiento, T. Rincón, J.M. Yanguas, and A. Quiros (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1987), 441-63.

¹² *Christifideles laici*, AAS 81 (1989): 393-521.

Here it was often forgotten that this positive content [of a “theology of the laity”] is already provided by the Christian content of the word *christifidelis*. The characteristic feature of the laity began to be explained as their relation to the world, while the characteristic of the clergy was their relationship to the church. Here both sides failed to do justice to the ecclesial dimension of any *christifidelis* and his or her relationship to the world. The clergy become the apolitical men of the church; the laity are the less ecclesially committed, politically involved ‘men of the world’. In this view, the ontological status of the ‘new humanity’ reborn with the baptism of the Spirit was not recognized in his or her own individual worth, but only from the standpoint of the status of the clergy.¹³

Schillebeeckx is suggesting that there is a tension between the contrastive theology of the laity and another theology of the laity that focuses, not on the “lay state” at all but rather on the priority of baptism and discipleship.

An Intensive Theology of the Laity

The council made several moves that suggest that it was striving toward a more comprehensive approach to the topic. Principal among these was the decision to separate the material on the church as the people of God from its original moorings in a chapter on the laity and to create a separate chapter on the people of God to be placed in front of the chapter on the hierarchy. This more comprehensive perspective is also evident in the council’s frequent use of the term *christifidelis* to refer to all the baptized and by its appeal to the priesthood of all believers. Thus while at one level, because of the aforementioned ambiguities, the council documents can be read as simply presupposing the traditional lay/clergy distinctions; at a more profound level the council set into motion a significant re-consideration of this distinction precisely by using baptism and discipleship as the primary framework for considering Christian identity.

1. Forte and the Laicity of the Church

It is largely as a reaction to these hierarchological premises that we find a theologian like Bruno Forte, in any early work, predicating *laicity* not so much of some subset of persons within the church as of the church itself. If laicity pertains to that which is secular, that which is situated in the world, then it is the whole church which is lay because it is the whole church which is inserted *in* the world. Forte insists that the relationship with temporal realities is proper to all the baptized, though in a variety of forms, joined more to personal charisms than to static contrasts between laity, hierarchy and religious state...No one is neutral toward the historical circumstances in which he or she is living, and an alleged neutrality can easily become a voluntary or involuntary mask for ideologies and special interests...It is the entire community that has to confront the secular world, being marked by that world in its being and in its action. The entire People of God must be characterized by a positive relationship with the secular dimension.¹⁴

When the council situated the whole church within the world and characterized the church as “sacrament of universal salvation” it insisted, Forte contends, that all of the baptized have a responsibility toward the temporal order. This constitutes a thoroughgoing negation of any two separate spheres of existence—the sacred and the profane. Rather,¹⁵ “there is the one sphere of existence with a complexity of definite relations that make up history.”

Giovanni Magnani, another Italian theologian, wants to retain the theological notion of the laity but he rejects the idea that the laity constitutes a distinct category of persons within the larger people of God.

¹³ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (New York: Crossroad, 1985),157.

¹⁴ Bruno Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity* (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1991), 54-5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-9.

He contends that the council's larger ecclesiological framework suggests a more *intensive* approach to a theology of the laity. By intensive Magnani means an approach which presents the laity as a more intensive realization of the situation of all the *christifideles*, including those who are ordained and who belong to consecrated religious life.¹⁶

2. Typological Description not an Ontological Definition

Magnani insists that none of the passages discussed above was attempting to offer a formal definition of the laity.¹⁷ This is confirmed in Cardinal Wright's *relatio* on behalf of the sub-commission regarding *Lumen gentium* # 31 where he noted that the text should not be read as an "ontological definition" but merely as a "typological description."¹⁸ Already in *Lumen gentium* # 30, beginning the chapter on the laity, the council writes that

[everything that has been said of the people of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy. Certain matters refer especially to the laity, both men and women, however, because of their situation and mission and these must be examined in greater depth, owing to the special circumstances of our time.

Here we are told that the starting point for a consideration of the laity is found in the theological status of the whole people of God presented in chapter two. Article 31, which as I noted above, has often been cited in support of a contrastive view of the laity, carefully grounds the laity in the *christifideles* who are all those "who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are constituted the people of God..." If this more "typological" consideration of the laity excludes the clergy and the consecrated religious because of the distinctive roles those two groups play in the life of the church, it is also true that this distinction does not come into play at the level of a theology of baptism.

Consequently, in order to preserve logic, it must be stated that the *positive character of the layperson* in the practical order coincides with the pure and simple content of the ratio of *christifideles* that becomes fully "real" and present in the "layperson," whereas the positive character that distinguishes the cleric and the religious is drawn from other levels of logic that cannot be derived from the *ratio* of the *christifideles*, although they too are *christifideles*.¹⁹

In other words the positive theological content of the laity is best identified by considering the primary identity of the *christifideles* realized through baptism. This primary identity is presupposed in chapter five on the universal call to holiness:

It is therefore quite clear that all christians in whatever state or walk in life are called to the fullness of christian life and the perfection of charity....The forms and tasks of life are many but there is one holiness, which is cultivated by all who are led by God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor and humble in carrying his cross, that they may deserve to be sharers in his glory. All, however, according to their own gifts and duties must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love (LG # 40-1).

¹⁶ Magnani, 611.

¹⁷ Ibid., 604-20.

¹⁸ *Acta Synodalia* III/1, 282. This also appeared in the *relatio* introducing chapter four, see *Acta Synodalia* III/3, 62. For one interpretation of this distinction see Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Typological Definition of the Christian Layman according to Vatican II," in *The Mission of the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 90-116.

¹⁹ Magnani, 609.

This consistent assertion of the fundamental equality of the *christifideles* helps explain why even the texts which speak of the “distinctive” or “special” characteristic of the laity never present these characteristics as exclusive to them.²⁰ *Lumen gentium* # 31 admits that the ordained may also engage in “secular activities.” Similarly, *Gaudium et spes* # 43 notes that “secular duties and activity” belong to the laity “*though not exclusively to them.*” Bishop Franjo Seper (Zagreb), in a noteworthy intervention at the council, insisted that the distinction between the clergy and laity not be treated as a separation. The ordained do not cease being members of the people of God after ordination and the obligations that are theirs by virtue of baptism and confirmation still remain.²¹

3. From Secular/Temporal to Secular/Eschatological

There is one final caution against reading too much into the conciliar texts which highlight the laity’s “distinctive” vocation to the temporal order. It is possible to discern, over the course of the council, a subtle and halting shift in the council’s way of relating the church to the world. Jan Grootaers has noted a tension evident in the council documents between texts, particularly in the decree on the laity, which oppose the temporal to the sacred, and other texts, particularly in chapter seven of *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*, which would appear to relate the temporal not so much to some sacred order but rather to the eschatological order.²² This second perspective is most evident in the frequent reference to the church as “pilgrim” (DH # 12; AG # 2; DV # 7; LG # 48, 50; UR # 2, 3; GS # 45) As pilgrim, the church whole and entire lives in history but looks to the eschaton and the consummation of history. This more eschatological orientation helps explain why *Gaudium et spes* situates not just the laity, but the church itself, within the temporal order.

This gradual movement away from a depiction of the laity as the particular presence of the church in the world to one which situates the whole church in the world is evident in a similar shift in the employment of another favorite conciliar metaphor, “leaven.” The metaphor is used in six different passages. In *Lumen gentium* # 31, *Apostolicam actuositatem* # 3, and *Ad gentes* # 15 it is the laity who are to be a “leaven” in the world. *Gravissimum educationis* # 8 refers to the students of Catholic schools as those prepared to be a “saving leaven in the community” and *Perfectae caritatis* # 11 refers to members of secular institutes similarly as a “leaven in the world.” It is only in the pastoral constitution that it is the church itself, all the *christifideles*, which “is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God” (GS # 40). Later in that same article the council members spoke to the mission of the church to heal and elevate the dignity of the human person, to strengthen human society and to help humanity discover the deeper meaning of their daily lives. “The church, then, believes that *through each of its members and its community as a whole* it can help to make the human family and its history still more human” (GS # 40, emphasis is mine).

The implications of the pastoral constitution’s conception of the church/world relationship for our topic are significant. It suggests that the attitudes and actions of all members of the church, including the clergy and consecrated religious have social and political import. The groundbreaking work done by pioneers in the liturgical movement like Dom Virgil Michel on the profound connections between the celebration of the liturgy and the Christian vocation to work for justice make it difficult to situate the liturgical presider within a self-enclosed ecclesiastical/spiritual sphere. Nor does it seem possible to imagine the proclamation of the gospel having any purchase on the lives of believers if it is not rooted in the “worldly” concerns of daily living. And how is one to conceive the public profession of the evangelical counsels as “evangelical” unless it is a witness to the values of the kingdom directed to the world from within the world? It may be true that this bracing vision of the pastoral constitution will require some corrective in changing

²⁰ Ibid., 609-12.

²¹ *Acta Synodalia* II/3, 202.

²² Jan Grootaers, *IDO-C*, Dossier 67-15/16 (May 14, 1967), 10, as cited in Melvin Michalski, *The Relationship between the Universal Priesthood of the Baptized and the Ministerial Priesthood of the Ordained in Vatican II and in Subsequent Theology* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen University Press, 1996), 48-9.

circumstances.²³ Nevertheless, in its basic contours the pastoral constitution's teaching remains binding. It resists dividing the church into groups of persons only some of whom are to be immersed in the world.

IV. Beyond the Clerical Paradigm: A New Theology of Ministry

We must remember that the basis for developing the lay-clergy language was the development of ordained ministry in the church. If we are going to move beyond the lay-clergy language, we will need a new theological framework for describing ministry in the church.

A. From "Hierarchical Communion" to "Ordered Communion"

One of the more controversial phrases employed by the Second Vatican Council was its description of the church as a "hierarchical communion." It seems to have been employed as a safeguard against the danger that notions of communion might degenerate into secular understandings of liberal democratic polity. Yet the qualifier "hierarchical" can serve an important purpose if we purge it of those pyramidal conceptions it gained in the thirteenth century when medieval ecclesiology employed the neo-platonic cosmology of the late fifth or early sixth century figure, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as a structuring principle for the church. "*Hierarchia*," a term first coined by Pseudo-Dionysius, became in the thirteenth century an ontological schema for viewing the Church as a descending ladder of states of being and truth with the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*) given to the pope and shared in diminishing degrees with the lower levels of church life.²⁴ This "hierarchology" has remained with the Church, in varying degrees, up to the present. There is an alternative view of the term hierarchy in reference to the church, however, and that is to return to its literal sense of "sacred order" (the Gk. adjective "*hier*," mean "sacred" with the Greek noun "*arche*," meaning "origin," "principle" or "rule").²⁵ This leads to the key affirmation that the church of Jesus Christ, animated by the Spirit is now and has always been subject to church ordering as it receives its life from the God who, in Christian faith, is ordered in eternal self-giving as a triune communion of persons. At the same time there must be the recognition that the specific character of that ordering has changed dramatically throughout the church's history. This "ordering" of the church is manifested on numerous levels.

The most fundamental ordering of the church occurs at baptism. Baptism does not just make one a different kind of individual, it draws the person into a profound ecclesial relationship within the life of the Church as a follower or disciple of Jesus sent in mission to the world. When we consider the sacraments of initiation as a unity then we recognize that initiation carries with it its own anointing, "laying on of hands" and entrance into Eucharistic communion. To be initiated into the Church is to take one's place, one's "*ordo*," within the community, the place of the baptized. As Zizioulas puts it, "there is no such thing

²³ Here I have in mind the final document of the 1985 extraordinary synod of bishops in which the bishops affirmed the teaching of *Gaudium et spes* but also noted that "the signs of our time are in part different from those of the time of the council, with greater problems and anguish. Today in fact, everywhere in the world we witness an increase in hunger, oppression, injustice and war, sufferings, terrorism, and other forms of violence of every sort. This requires a new and more profound theological reflection in order to interpret these signs in the light of the Gospel." "The Final Report," *Origins* 15 (December 19, 1985): 449.

²⁴ See Jean Leclercq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 31; Yves Congar *L'Église de Saint Augustin à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 229-30.

²⁵ See Terence Nichols's helpful treatment of different notions of hierarchy in church tradition. Terence Nichols, *That All May Be One: Hierarchy and Participation in the Church* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997). This view of the church as an ordered communion parallels in some ways Ghislain Lafont's presentation of the post-conciliar church as a "structured communion." See his *Imagining the Catholic Church: Structured Communion in the Spirit* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000).

as non-ordained persons in the church.”²⁶ To be baptized is to be “ordained” into a very specific ecclesial relationship along with all who profess the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In addition to that most basic of ecclesial orderings established in Christian initiation, the presence in the church today of numerous institutes of religious life, secular institutes and societies of apostolic life, along with the emergence of the “new movements” (e.g., Focolare, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, the St. Egidio community, Communion and Liberation, Opus Dei) suggests that church order provides a diversity of concrete ways of giving evangelical witness to the gospel. Alongside this ordering of evangelical witness there exists within the church an ordering of ministries as well.

B. From Ordained Ministry to Ordered Ministries

For several years now a few theologians have been proposing the utility of speaking of ordered ministry in the church. The ecclesial re-positioning presupposes a relational view of the church. Ordination is a sacramental re-ordering of the *ordinand's* relationship to Christ and the church. This suggests that sacramental ordination does confer a kind of ontological change, but it is not that which occurs strictly within the interiority of the individual as would be the case with a “substance ontology” but in the ordinand's new relationship with Christ and his church. But I would argue that while there is distinctive role for sacramentally ordained ministry in the church, ordered ministries includes more than ordained ministries. In fact, it may be helpful to consider three different categories of ordered ministries constituted by three different forms of liturgical ritualization: ordained ministries, installed ministries, and

commissioned ministries.²⁷ Note that if we adopt this proposal, we no longer need to refer to “lay ecclesial ministries” at all. To define a ministry as “lay” is almost reflexively to define it by what it is not, a ministry proper to the ordained. By installed ministries I have in mind ministries that would be 1) exercised by the baptized independent of the process of preparing for ordained ministry, 2) were more or less stable (a canonical condition for a ministry to qualify as an ecclesiastical office), 3) required extended ministerial formation and 4) were subject to ritual authorization in the form of an installation.

Beyond those ministries that demand significant ministerial formation and a high degree of stability (ordained and installed ministries) there are still other ordered ministries, the undertaking of which does still place one in a new ecclesial relationship. These might include parish catechists, liturgical ministries for proclaiming God's Word (lector), leading the community in sung prayer (cantor), distributing communion to those present at the Eucharistic assembly and those absent due to infirmity (special ministers of the Eucharist), providing for liturgical hospitality and order (ushers, greeters). These ministries imply a new degree of accountability, a specialized formation and a demand for some formal authorization that distinguishes them from the exercise of other baptismal charisms evident for example in parenting or daily Christian witness. At the same time these ministries will generally be governed at a more local level. The determination of the specific requirements for formation, the particular form the ritualization of their ministry will take (liturgical commissioning) and so on will generally occur at the level of the parish or the diocese.

For centuries Catholic Christianity simply presupposed an ecclesiological and canonical framework which began with the conviction that there were “two different kinds of Christians.” Yet the distinction between the laity and clergy is essentially canonical rather than doctrinal in character. I have proposed today that Vatican II's theology of the laity has no future because that theology functioned as but a transitional treatment of church membership that must eventually give way to the council's halting but immeasurably more profound ecclesial vision, namely that church is comprised, first, last and always, of the Christian faithful sent forth in baptism to preach the good news of Jesus Christ and serve the coming reign of God.

²⁶ Zizioulas, 215-6.

²⁷ In a similar fashion, Thomas O'Meara proposes that “[p]erhaps one should speak of three kinds of activities by which an individual is commissioned in the church: ordination, installation, and presentation.” While acknowledging the three ordinations of deacon, presbyter and bishop, O'Meara adds that “[I]nstallation is for ministers who have an extensive education and whose ministry is full-time in the parish and diocese, while presentation is for readers, acolytes, visitors of the sick, assistants to other ministries.” O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 224. His latter two categories correspond almost exactly to what I refer to as installed and commissioned ministries.

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