

Editorial

When the Code of Canon Law was formulated over fifty years ago its compilers barely made mention of the layman, and when they did they defined him in the negative phraseology of "a non-cleric." Today, as the Council continues to search for the fullest meaning of the Church itself, we see that the layman is gradually emanating from a position of passive obedience to the more dynamic role of Christ-witness. The present renewal of the Church, brought on by the exigencies of man in the world, has swiftly and forcefully brought this issue to the forefront. And it is hoped that the Council's treatment of this matter in the schema *De Ecclesia* will manifest the dignity and true function of the faithful, not merely as a sealed-off segment of the Church but as the People of God who, with their pastors, constitute the Church itself.

The dichotomy that existed between an "active" clergy and a "passive" laity only gave rise to a false notion of the Church that is currently being rectified. From the outside it appeared as an administrative machine made up of a dictatorial hierarchy issuing orders to the subject faithful. This appearance was further complicated by the fact that a layman's excellence was measured by the standards of faithful attendance at Mass and frequent confession. If he participated in apostolic activities, it would have to be in terms of the hierarchy's apostolate. Such a notion of Christ's Mystical Body could not be anything but erroneous, for the Church is the visible, living extension of Christ's grace among men, the "sign raised up among the nations."

The Church will be recognized as a "sign" to all men not merely by the display of the juridical and magisterial aspects of its government but, more essentially, by looking to the daily lives of the faithful: to the unlimited love and constancy of parents who bear the strain of life's burdens, to the faith and courage of the single man or woman who directs his energies in a meaningful vocation. The questions that the layman asks, the movements he initiates, the leadership and inspiration he expects from the clergy are also visible expressions of Christ's grace. Thus, the truest presence of the Church will be manifested in the labor, thought, writing and art of the faithful. And it is this area of Christian life that demands emphasis rather than a narrow and limited concept of minimal practices. Even a

fuller participation in a more intelligible liturgy will be meaningless if we do not reflect our faith in daily living, if we do not live for our neighbor. If the Church is to have a redeeming effect upon mankind, it cannot exist and flourish as an abstract ideal but only as a living, concrete reality.

The layman will extend Christ's grace among men not in a vacuum, nor will it necessarily be reflected in a myriad of parish activities, but through the dynamism of his own being. For, is not what a man *is* more essential and fundamental than what he *does*? Christians who are strong in the faith and who feed upon the Church's sacramental life will more intensely bear witness to the Word and thereby bring the holiness of God's People to the real world.