

Lay Spirituality

A lot is said today about “the hour of the laity.” Father Kentenich, the Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, explains it: The total mobilization of hell demands that we become aware that each one of us must be present, each one of us must be an apostle and a soldier of Christ. Today, the laity must be in the foreground, doing battle for Christianity.

We can add: “The hour of the Marian laity has come.” I believe that all of this should give us a clearer awareness of our lay status and of our lay mission. We have to cultivate this awareness within us. It does not suffice that we know it, it has to penetrate our feelings and our hearts. That is also the basis in order for us to be an autonomous laity.

What has been said about “the hour of the laity” also refers to the laity’s vocation to sanctity.

In former times to be a saint, one had to enter a convent or become a priest. Using an example from Father Kentenich, those people traveled on an express train to Heaven. Now, the laity is also invited to board the same train to sanctity.

For a lay spirituality, it is important to integrate all which forms part of the laity’s world: the world, work, family, society. It all has to help the laity on its way toward sanctity. Therefore, it cannot be a copy of a monastic or priesthood spirituality. It must focus on the Christian mystery from the lay perspective.

Mary, prominent example of a lived lay spirituality

She is the prominent example of a lay life amidst the world. Neither miracles nor extraordinary visible signs in Her life, characterize the Virgin Mary. The greatest things take place in Her amid the simplicity of everyday life, while about her chores as housewife and woman of the community. She does not practice a “flight from the world,” rather, She sanctifies Herself amidst the world.

Mary is centered on the God of life. She follows Him in the light and the shadows of faith. She believes in the Providence of God the Father, in all consequences: Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth and Golgotha.

Mary’s lay spirituality is not bookish. Everything in Her has the youthful vigor of a personal relationship with the Lord and a maternal concern for mankind and its daily necessities. Her sanctity develops within “secular” tasks: her duties as a mother, wife, home owner and good neighbor.

Mary knows and feels She is deeply committed to the people of Israel. She knows that because of having accepted to be the Mother of the Messiah, She occupies a key position in history. She is not frightened even though Her commitment will place Her at the foot of the cross and a lance will pierce Her heart.

This Virgin, our sister and mother, companion and collaborator of the Lord, finds sustenance for Her spirituality in the living contact with the God of Life. She hears His words, meditates on them in her heart, and puts them into practice. Her participation

in the early Christian community, in the Eucharistic gatherings, must have been extraordinarily profound. Who, other than She, could better understand the renewal of the sacrifice of Christ after having offered Herself with Him as one host to the Father.

Through all of this, Mary is a prominent example of a lay life, of sanctity amidst the world. We must guide ourselves by Her and we must imitate Her spirituality.

Questions for reflection

1. As laity, how can we assume more responsibilities in life and work for the expansion of the Church?
2. What do I understand by the phrase?: All are called to become saints within their own environment.
3. How do I see daily life with Mary?