



POST-SYNODAL
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI
OF
HIS HOLINESS
JOHN PAUL II
ON THE VOCATION AND THE MISSION
OF THE LAY FAITHFUL
IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD

CHAPTER IV

LABOURERS IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD
Good Stewards of God's Varied Grace

The Variety of Vocations

45. According to the gospel parable, the "householder" calls the labourers for his vineyard at *various* times during the day: some at dawn, others about nine in the morning, still others about midday and at three, the last, around five (cf. *Mt 20:1 ff.*). In commenting on these words of the gospel, Saint Gregory the Great makes a comparison between the various times of the call and the different *stages in life*: "It is possible to compare the different hours", he writes, "to the various stages in a person's life. According to our analogy the morning can certainly represent childhood. The third hour, then, can refer to adolescence; the sun has now moved to the height of heaven, that is, at this stage a person grows in strength. The sixth hour is adulthood, the sun is in the middle of the sky, indeed at this age the fullness of vitality is obvious. Old age represents the ninth hour, because the sun starts its descent from the height of heaven, thus the youthful vitality begins to decline. The eleventh hour represents those who are most advanced in years... The labourers, then, are called and sent forth into the vineyard at different hours, that is to say, one is led to a holy life during childhood, another in adolescence, another in adulthood and another in old age"(167).

We can make a further application of the comments of Saint Gregory the Great to the extraordinary variety of ways the Church becomes "present" in life; one and all are called to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God according to the diversity of callings and situations, charisms and ministries. This variety is not only linked to age, but also to the difference of sex and to the diversity of natural gifts, as well as to careers and conditions affecting a person's life. It is a variety that makes the riches of the Church more vital and concrete.

Young People, Children and Older People

Youth, the Hope of the Church

46. The Synod wished to *give particular attention to the young*. And rightly so. In a great many countries of the world, they represent half of entire populations, and often constitute in number half of the People of God itself living in those countries. Simply from this aspect

youth make up an exceptional potential and a *great challenge for the future of the Church*. In fact the Church sees her path towards the future in the youth, beholding in them a reflection of herself and her call to that blessed youthfulness which she constantly enjoys as a result of Christ's Spirit. In this sense the Council has defined youth as "the hope of the Church"(168).

In the letter of 31 March 1985 to young men and women in the world we read: "The Church looks to the youth, indeed the Church in a special way *looks at herself in the youth*, in all of you and in each of you. It has been so from the beginning, from apostolic times. The words of St. John in his *First Letter* can serve as special testimony: 'I am writing to you, *young people*, because you *have overcome the evil one*. I write to you, children, because you *know the Father... I write to you, young people*, because *you are strong* and the word of God *abides in you* (1 Jn 2:13 ff.)... In our generation, at the end of the Second Millennium after Christ, the Church also sees herself in the youth"(169).

Youth must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concern for the Church: in fact, young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as *leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society*.(170) Youth is a time of an especially intensive *discovery* of a "self" and "a choice of life". It is a time for *growth* which ought to progress "in wisdom, age and grace before God and people" (Lk 2:52).

The Synod Fathers have commented: "The sensitivity of young people profoundly affects their perceiving of the values of justice, nonviolence and peace. Their hearts are disposed to fellowship, friendship and solidarity. They are greatly moved by causes that relate to the quality of life and the conservation of nature. But they are troubled by anxiety, deceptions, anguishes and fears of the world as well as by the temptations that come with their state"(171).

The Church must seek to rekindle the very special love displayed by Christ towards the young man in the Gospel: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him" (Mk 10:21). For this reason the Church does not tire of proclaiming Jesus Christ, of proclaiming his Gospel as the unique and satisfying response to the most deep-seated aspirations of young people, as illustrated in Christ's forceful and exalted personal call to discipleship ("Come and follow me." Mk 10:21), that brings about a sharing in the filial love of Jesus for his Father and the participation in his mission for the salvation of humanity.

The Church has so much to talk about with youth, and youth have so much to share with the Church. This mutual dialogue, by taking place with great cordiality, clarity and courage, will provide a favorable setting for the meeting and exchange between generations, and will be a source of richness and youthfulness for the Church and civil society. In its message to young people the Council said: "The Church looks to you with confidence and with love... She is the real youthfulness of the world... Look upon the Church and you will find in her the face of Christ"(172).