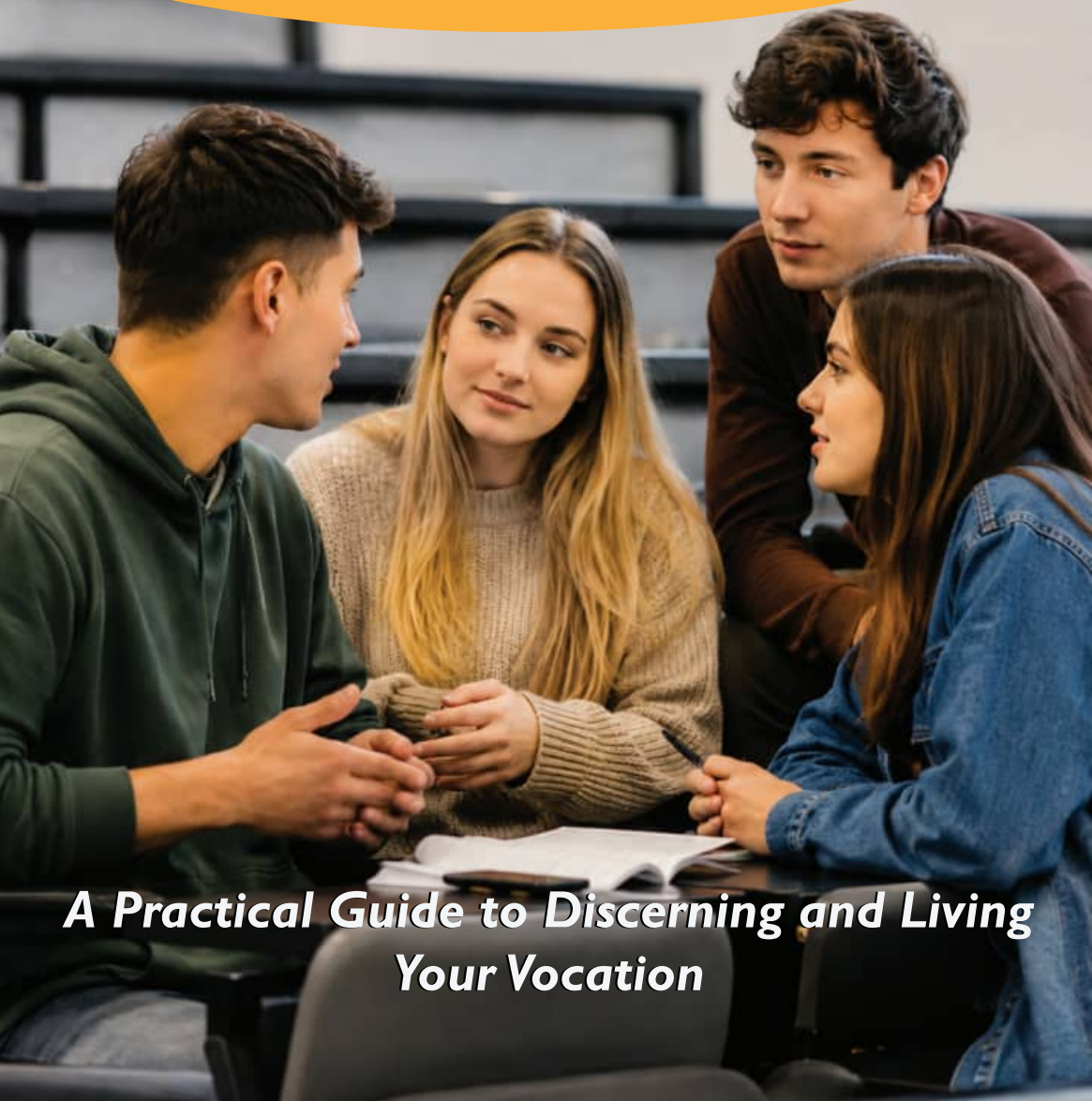


LIVING THE CALL

*DISCOVERING YOUR VOCATION
AS A CATHOLIC*



*A Practical Guide to Discerning and Living
Your Vocation*

In the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem the Council Fathers wrote: "They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelisation and sanctification of men and women and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of all. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardour of the spirit of Christ."

In this attractive publication Tim Nichols has put flesh on these words and speaks to the generations of laity today to try to wake up the 'sleeping giant' - to take Christ and His Gospel into homes and schools, into offices and factories and into the most ordinary things of each day. The canvass is vast and the task exciting and with God's help may this booklet help to contribute to the true understanding of the lay vocation and the laity's role in building up God's Church through personal holiness and the living out of one's daily roles and responsibilities.

The Most Reverend Alphonsus Cullinan, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Ireland.

Tim Nichols has written an excellent guide explaining in depth the Church's thought on our role as lay people within the Church. Tim's perspective goes beyond working as a Catholic in a secular environment, as important as that is in the sometimes challenging Corporate and Governmental Cultures that we can find ourselves in. Tim brings years of experience as a lay man working full time in ministry, serving the mandate of Jesus to go forth and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28). Tim has served the Church faithfully in both those contexts showing us, in this important work, the framework which animates how we are all called to prudently and wisely communicate our faith in whatever family, work or social environment we find ourselves in.

Tony Foy, National Director Net Ministries Ireland.

The booklet is a beautiful read capturing that lovely blend of God's gracious and human responsiveness that underpins so much of the Church's mission and our joy in living the gospel. The manner in which the website builds on the booklet is A1. As a fellow lay man I'm also grateful for both the encouragement and support both offer, especially in communicating God's invitation to younger adults to gently explore their understanding of, and the prominence they give to prayer, vocation, mission and Church.

Justin Harkin, Director of Pastoral & Faith development Services, Elphin diocese.

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Tim Nichols is a Catholic layman, passionate about helping people discover and live their vocation in the world. He is the editor of the Called2mission.org website, an apostolate which seeks to promote the vocation of the laity. Tim lives in Ireland with his wife Kathy. They have three adult children. They continue to work on mission, helping to equip young adults to learn to walk as missionary disciples.

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Introduction: Living the Call as Lay Catholics

The Catholic Church has always honoured the sacred vocation of the priesthood, recognising it as a gift at the heart of the Church's sacramental life. We continue to pray for and encourage those discerning a call to ordained ministry, knowing how essential their role is in building up the Body of Christ. We also give thanks for the men and women called to the consecrated life — religious brothers and sisters whose witness of prayer, community, and service is a powerful sign of the Kingdom of God.

Equally vital, yet often overlooked, is the calling of the laity. Through baptism, every Catholic is incorporated into the Body of Christ and commissioned for mission — not only within the walls of the Church, but in the world, as salt and light. This call is strengthened through the Sacrament of Confirmation, which empowers the faithful with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live out their vocation with boldness, wisdom, and love. As the Second Vatican Council made clear, the laity are not passive spectators in the life of the Church, but active participants in her mission to renew the temporal order in Christ.

This booklet is an invitation to Catholics to discover what it means to live the call as lay men and women. It is a call to embrace personal vocation, to take responsibility for our unique role in the Church, and to bring the Gospel into the heart of our families, workplaces, communities, and culture. The Church needs priests and religious — and she also needs lay people who understand and live their vocation with clarity, courage, and conviction.

Now is the time for the laity to step forward — not in competition to the clergy or religious, but in communion with them — as we each play our part in God's great mission of love to the world.

Tim Nichols



The Lay Vocation

“Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth... Ask the Lord what He wants from you and be brave!”- Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*

What does the ‘lay vocation’ mean?

When we hear the word “vocation,” we often think of priests or nuns and monks. But the Church teaches that every baptised person has a vocation—a calling from God to live out a life of holiness and service to others. Lay people (that’s most of us!) are called to bring the Gospel into the heart of the world: into our families, workplaces, schools, politics, and culture.

Holiness in simple terms means choosing to live in a way that’s true, good, and connected to and guided by God. It’s about becoming the best version of yourself—who God made you to be—and letting that shape how you think, speak, act, and love others.

What the Church says:-

"The laity are called to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will."

-LUMEN GENTIUM 31

Let’s go a bit deeper.....

Every Baptised Catholic is Called....

In the same way that Jesus called the first disciples, Jesus calls you. He knows your name, your family, your history. Every Catholic is called a disciple, a follower of Jesus. Where lay people differ with priests and religious is related to our vocational “State”.

Three Dimensions to Vocation

There are three dimensions we need to think of when we talk about vocation.



The First dimension – the call to follow Jesus in holiness. All of us are called by Jesus to follow him and to live a life of holiness, fully committed to him.

The Second dimension – is the call to a “form or state of life”. This could mean a call to marriage, the ordained priesthood, religious life, or a dedicated single life.

The Third dimension – is that God has given us unique gifts and abilities and that he has a mission that only you or I can fulfil on a daily basis wherever we are living. It’s our personal vocation.

*"Every person carries within himself a project of God, a personal vocation, a personal idea of God on what he is required to do in history to build his Church, a living Temple of his presence."**

-Pope Benedict XVI March 25, 2007

Every Vocation also has a public dimension

Whatever field you're in — whether it's law, education, business, the public sector, service sector or healthcare — your job is more than a way to earn a living. It's part of your calling. Your skills, your network, and your voice can help bring hope and healing to the world.

That's your mission.

**Pastoral visit to the Parish of St.Felicity and her children, Martyrs, 2007*

The Lay Vocation is not “second class”

*In 2015 Pope Francis said “The (Vatican) Council, therefore, does not look at lay people as if they were ‘second class’ members, at the service of the hierarchy and only executors of orders from on high....But as disciples of Christ who, by force of their baptism and their nature inserted ‘in the world,’ are called to animate every space, every activity, every human relation according to the spirit of the Gospel.” **

So, your lay vocation isn’t “less than” a religious or ordained vocation. It’s different—but just as vital for the mission of the Church. You are part of Christ’s mission, right where you are.

Speaking of lay people, Pope Benedict in 2012 said that they “should not be regarded as “collaborators” of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really “co-responsible” for the Church’s being and acting”¹

You are a prophet, priest and king

When you were baptised, you were given a share in Jesus’ mission as prophet, priest, and king—and that’s not just for clergy or saints.

“Through baptism, each one of us has been made a priest, king, and prophet for our brothers and sisters, and a ‘living stone’ (1 Pt 2:4) for the building up of God’s house.” Pope Leo XIV, June 2025 ²

As a prophet, you're called to speak up for what's true and live in a way that points others to God.

As a priest, you can offer your everyday experiences—your work, relationships, struggles, and joys—as a spiritual sacrifice to God.

And as a king, you're invited to lead through service, using your gifts to make a difference in your community and the world. This isn't about power—it's about living with purpose, just like Jesus did.

* Letter to the Pontifical Council for the Laity 2015
1. Message to the International Forum of Catholic Action. 2012
2. Message to seminar on Family. 2025



So, what am I called to do in the world?

Lay people are called to transform the world from within. This is done by:

- 1. Living your faith daily** – not just in church, but in every aspect of life.
- 2. Serving others with love** – especially those who are poor, vulnerable, or forgotten.
- 3. Using your gifts for the common good** – your talents, skills, education, charisms and experience to help others.
- 4. Being a witness to Christ** – through your words, actions, and choices.

Lay People have an apostolate and are referred to by the Church as Lay Apostles (Sent Ones). Pope St. John Paul II identified eight areas where this apostolate is especially needed. He spoke of:

1. Promoting the dignity of the person:

Lay people are called to affirm each person's inherent worth as being made in God's image and likeness. This isn't just for activists—it's lived out daily in workplaces, communities, and neighbourhoods. For example: a teacher encouraging a struggling student, a business owner treating employees fairly, or a neighbour speaking out against racism or gossip.

2. Fostering respect for the right to life:

Defending life from conception to natural death is a core mission for the laity. This includes sharing the Church's view with compassion—in politics, media, and daily relationships. It also means voting with life issues in mind. Healthcare professionals face these challenges daily and need support, but all Catholics are called to speak up. For example: a parish holding a prayer vigil, a voter researching candidates' life stances, or a doctor refusing procedures that go against the sanctity of life.

3. Defending freedom of conscience and religious freedom: Lay Catholics are called to defend the right to live and express faith freely. Around the world, Christians face persecution, and even in freer societies, pressure to conform to secular norms can be intense. In response, lay people can build alliances, engage the media, and advocate with politicians. For example: a parent challenging a school's anti-religious policy, a journalist exposing faith-based persecution, or a local group lobbying politicians to protect conscience rights.

4. Protecting and encouraging marriage and family life: The lay vocation includes supporting the stability and sanctity of marriage and family as fundamental units of society. For example: A married couple mentoring newlyweds or engaged couples through a parish programme. A grandparent helping raise grandchildren in the faith. A single person offering practical and emotional support to parents in their community.

5. Engaging in works of charity: The laity are called to serve the needy and practice charity, reflecting Christ's love for the vulnerable. For example: Volunteering at a soup kitchen, starting a parish food bank, or setting aside a portion of income each month for charitable giving. Even small acts—checking in on an isolated neighbour—can be a form of charity.

6. Participating in public life, the media, and politics: Lay people are urged to be active in these spheres, contributing to the common good and ensuring moral values are upheld in society. For example: A young adult becoming involved in student politics or a local council. A Catholic media professional producing content that upholds human dignity and truth. Parishioners attending local town meetings to advocate for the vulnerable.

7. Centering socioeconomic life on the individual: The Church calls the laity to promote systems that respect the person over profit, advocating for justice in economic structures. For example: A Catholic employer paying a living wage even when it's not legally required. A consumer choosing ethical brands. A lay-led initiative supporting microloans for small businesses in developing countries.

8. Evangelising culture: Lay Christians are tasked with permeating culture with Gospel values, reshaping society to reflect Christ's teachings. This involves engaging every area of life—arts, education, media, politics, and beyond—with a spirit of faith and witness. For example: A Catholic artist creating music or visual art that speaks of hope and faith. A media content creator sharing Gospel reflections on social media. A filmmaker or screenwriter producing stories that highlight human dignity, forgiveness, or moral truth. A fashion designer promoting modesty and beauty rooted in Christian values. A Catholic influencer using platforms like TikTok or Instagram to share daily encouragement or testimonies rooted in Christ.

It would be true to say that Pope Francis added during his papacy another area of responsibility for lay people – Care for Planet Earth.

9. Ecological Responsibility: Lay people, are called to love and protect the Earth as a gift from God—not just for themselves, but for future generations and the poor who are most affected by environmental damage. For example: choosing to reduce waste, use resources responsibly, and live more simply as a spiritual discipline.

Some useful links to more info



Resources



Missions



Communities



Lay people are called to witness to who Jesus is, and alongside priests and religious invite others to respond to the truth of the gospel and become followers of Christ.

This is the call to evangelise, to communicate the Gospel or Good News about Jesus. St Francis of Assisi is often quoted as saying “Preach the gospel and if necessary, use words”. Though widely attributed to St Francis, the phrase likely doesn’t originate with him. In fact, he was known for preaching boldly and often.

“The moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelisation... No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”- Pope St John Paul II

So, we need to witness to the gospel, often using words. We can share where clergy may not be able to share directly, in our family and social circle, our workplace and in the marketplace. That can happen in a one-to-one conversation, or by inviting someone to attend a course like Alpha, Christlife, Sycamore, or a Life in the Spirit seminar. Now more than ever, we cannot presume that people know the Good News about Jesus.

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” 1 Peter 3:15

How can I develop my faith?

Faith: Building a Strong Foundation

To live your vocation well, you need to grow in your faith. A strong spiritual foundation helps you hear God's voice and act with confidence.

Here are seven suggestions to help you grow:

1. Personal Prayer – Talk to God daily. Share your joys, struggles, hopes, and ask for help. Use a prayer app such as Hallow to help you.

“Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only in prayer can they persevere and bear fruit.” Pope Francis

2. Scripture – Read a few verses daily. Try Lectio Divina or follow a Gospel reading plan or listen to a bible app or join a bible study.

3. Sacraments – Attend Holy Mass regularly and receive the Eucharist. Go to Confession often.

4. Spiritual Reading – Read about the lives of the saints, the Catholic Catechism or good Catholic books.

5. Service – Help others. This teaches compassion and keeps you grounded.

6. Community – Get involved in a parish, youth group, or online Catholic group.

7. Daily Examen – A short review of the day at night to notice where God was present.

Faith grows like a plant—it needs daily attention, nourishment, and time. Don't rush—God works patiently and personally.

Reflection Questions/Action Points:

o Which of these pillars feels strongest in my life? Which needs more attention?

o What is one concrete step I can take to deepen my prayer life or sacramental participation?

* Lectio Divina means “divine reading.” It's a simple way to pray with **Scripture and listen to God**

<https://www.called2mission.org>

Hearing God's Voice, discerning my calling

God has a plan for your life—and He wants to reveal it to you. But often, He speaks quietly.

In 1 Samuel 3 in the Old Testament, the young boy Samuel hears God calling him in the night. At first, he thinks it's his mentor, Eli. But eventually, Eli realises it's the Lord, and tells Samuel to say:

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Does God still speak?

Yes. But He often speaks quietly—in the heart, through Scripture, in conversations, or through peace and longing. Learning to hear God is like tuning in to a new radio station: you start by reducing noise.

Ways God Speaks

God still speaks—through Scripture, prayer, people, and events. To discern your personal vocation, pay attention to:

- Your deep desires and gifts
- What brings you joy and energy
- What “needs” you notice in the world
- What others affirm in you
- The times you feel or felt closest to God

Take time to write and maybe share with a spiritual director or trusted friend.

- When was there a time I felt deeply at peace?
- What question do I want to ask God today?

Suggested Activity

Start a “Listening Week”: 10 minutes of silent prayer each day. Keep a journal of any thoughts, images, or Scriptures that come up. Consider also taking time out to attend a retreat or pilgrimage.

Equipped for Mission

You have gifts—and they matter

God has given you talents for a reason. Whether you're good at social media, sports, coding, cooking, or conversation - each is a doorway for mission.

Practical Skills to Grow

- Listening and empathy
- Explaining your faith simply
- Organising events
- Leading prayer
- Speaking confidently

Action Step

Take a skills/personality inventory: such as Myers Briggs test or DISC test to give you insights. Think about:-

- What do I do well?
- What do people affirm in me?
- What do I enjoy doing?

Then ask: How could I use this information to better serve in my school, parish, college, workplace or online?

Note: - When you were baptised and confirmed you were also given Spiritual Gifts or Charisms to help you serve the Church in its mission. There are field-tested Catholic discernment processes which can help to guide you in discerning your spiritual gifts or charisms". Check out www.siena.org.

You might also want to attend a catechetics or apologetics course or take time out to attend a discernment weekend. A number of organisations such as NET, Focus, Holy Family Mission and Kerygma teams offer training and mission opportunities to help you grow in your vocation.

Living the Call - My Personal Mission Statement



*You have a purpose
When you know who you are and what you're called to, you live
with direction—even in times of uncertainty. A personal mission
statement can help you focus. It's like your compass.*

A personal mission statement describes the future version of yourself — the person you aspire to become and believe you are called to be.

Here are some examples:

- "I am a child of God called to bring hope and creativity into the world through use of online media"
- "To use my creativity to bring hope to others."
- "To be a joyful witness of Christ in my studies and friendships."
- "To serve the vulnerable through healthcare."

For Saint Francis of Assisi it was "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith."

In order to write yours, think about:

1. Who are you in God's eyes?
2. What are your gifts, skills and talents?
3. What breaks your heart or energises you?
4. What's one way you want to serve others?

To help you process your thinking you can download our online discernment questionnaire which you might find useful. Go to www.called2mission.org/discern-your-personal-vocation or scan the QR Code



Lay Saints whose lives speak to us

There are several lay saints and blessed's whose lives speak to the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of young adults today.

1. St. Pier Giorgio Frassati: Known as the "Man of the Beatitudes," Pier Giorgio was a young Italian who loved sports, outdoor adventures, and deepened his faith through service to the poor. Despite living a relatively short life, he was deeply engaged in political issues and devoted to social justice—qualities that many young adults appreciate.

2. St. Gianna Beretta Molla: A modern saint, Gianna was an Italian paediatrician and a mother who chose to sacrifice her life for her unborn child. Her love for her family, dedication to her work, and commitment to her faith provide a powerful example of balancing professional life and personal faith.

3. St. Carlo Acutis: Often called the "Cyber Apostle of the Eucharist," Carlo was a teenager from Italy who loved technology and used his skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist through the internet. He also had a passion for computer programming and video games, making him relatable to young adults today who are digital natives.

4. Servant of God Dorothy Day: Although not yet canonized, Dorothy Day is highly influential, especially for young adults who care about social justice and advocacy. As the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, she dedicated her life to the poor, challenging the structures of society through her love and commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

5.Blessed Chiara Badano: Chiara was an Italian teenager who faced a terminal illness with great faith and joy. Her steadfast love for God, even in the face of suffering, and her desire to offer her life to God provide a powerful witness to young people.

6.Servant of God Chiara Corbella Petrillo: Chiara was a young Italian mother who, facing a terminal illness, chose to carry her child to term. Her story is inspiring as a modern witness of sacrificial love and profound faith, and she can appeal to young adults facing complex life challenges. .

7.Servant of God Alfie Lambe: An Irish lay missionary with the Legion of Mary, Alfie Lambe served in Latin America, dedicating his life to evangelisation. Despite language and cultural barriers, he spread devotion to Mary and strengthened local faith communities. His adventurous spirit, cross-cultural dedication, and courage inspire young adults, showing that faith and perseverance can make a global impact.

8.Venerable Edel Quinn: Irish Legion of Mary envoy to Africa, Edel worked mainly in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Though diagnosed with tuberculosis, she continued her mission with joy and selflessness. Her resilience and dedication show that personal hardship need not limit one's contribution to the Church. Her story resonates with young adults seeking purpose and courage.

9.Venerable Enrique Ernesto Shaw: An Argentine businessman and devout Catholic, Enrique Shaw lived out his faith in the world of work. He promoted ethical business practices, cared deeply for his employees, and supported the rights and dignity of workers. A founder of the Christian Association of Business Executives, he balanced success with service and Gospel values. His life shows young adults that holiness and leadership in the marketplace can go hand in hand.

To find out more about these saints and others scan this QR code



Some Questions to reflect on:

1. My Identity and Baptismal Vocation

- Who am I in the eyes of God?
- How do I understand my baptismal call to be a disciple?
- What gifts or talents has God given me to serve others?

2. My Relationship with Christ

- Do I see my relationship with Jesus as personal and growing?
- What practices help me stay rooted in Christ (e.g. Prayer, Scripture, Sacraments)?
- When have I most clearly felt Jesus inviting me to follow Him?

3. My role in the Church as a Lay Person

- What does being a lay Catholic mean to me?
- How do I contribute to the mission of the Church in my daily life?
- Do I see my work, studies, or family life as part of my vocation?

4. Discerning My Personal Vocation

- What brings me lasting joy and a sense of purpose?
- Where do I feel called to make a difference—in my community, parish, workplace, or beyond?
- Who are the people or saints that inspire me to live my faith fully?

5. My Mission and Witness in the World

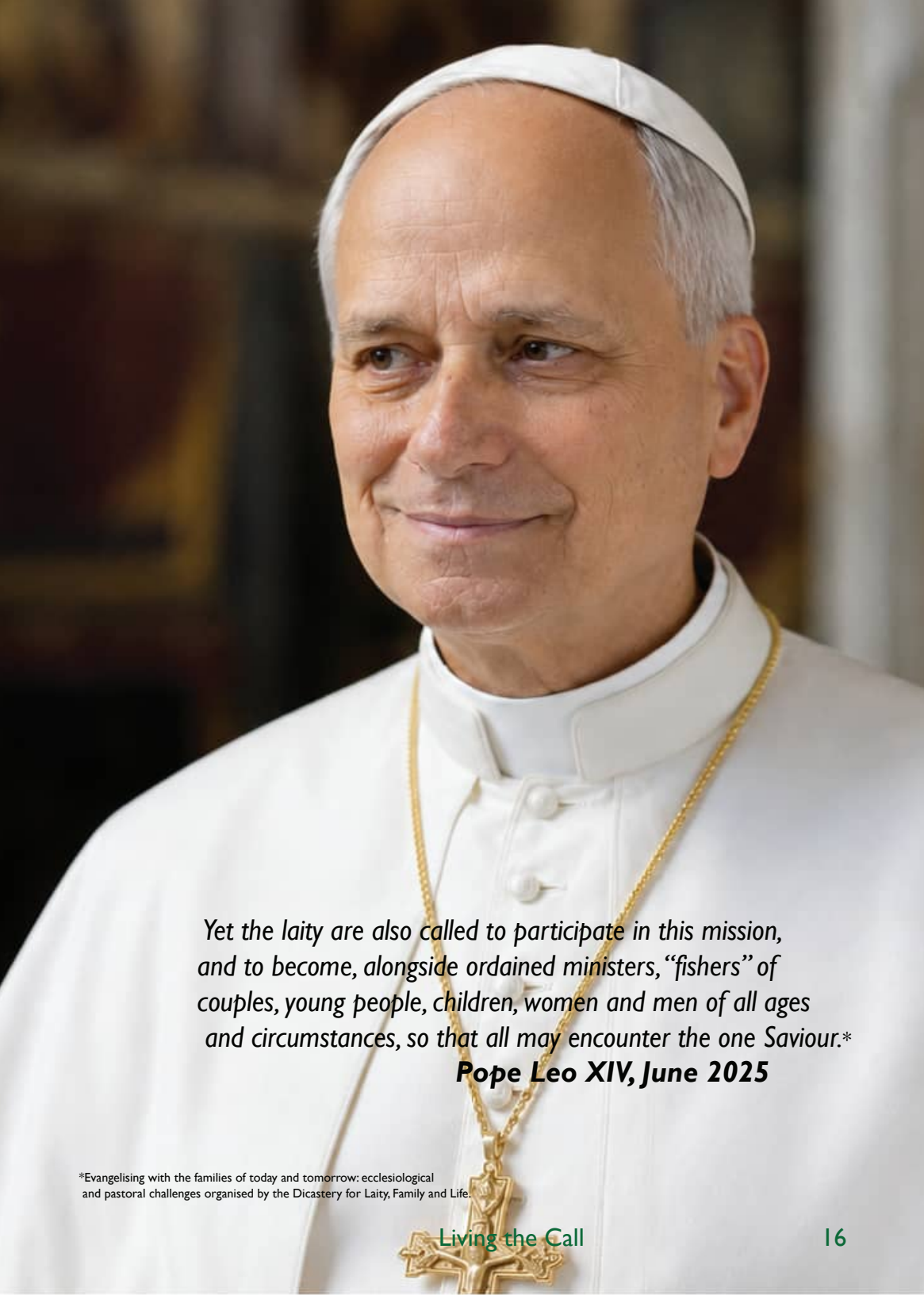
- In what ways can I be a witness to Christ in my everyday life?
- How do I respond to injustice or suffering around me?
- What are some real needs in my environment that I feel drawn to address?

6. Courage and Commitment

- What fears or doubts hold me back from following God's call?
- What steps can I take to grow in courage and commitment?
- How can I find support from others in living out my vocation?

7. My growth and next Steps

- What is one concrete way I can live my faith more intentionally this month?
- Have I asked God to reveal His will for my life recently?
- Am I open to where the Holy Spirit may be leading me next?



*Yet the laity are also called to participate in this mission, and to become, alongside ordained ministers, “fishers” of couples, young people, children, women and men of all ages and circumstances, so that all may encounter the one Saviour.**

Pope Leo XIV, June 2025

*Evangelising with the families of today and tomorrow: ecclesiological and pastoral challenges organised by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by You... Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever You require of me. Help me respond to the slightest prompting of Your Grace, so that I may be Your trustworthy instrument for Your honor. May Your Will be done in time and in eternity by me, in me, and through me. Amen.

St. Teresa of Avila

This booklet is produced by Called2Mission, a Catholic apostolate which seeks to promote the proper understanding of the role and vocation of the laity.

Website: <https://www.called2mission.org>

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