

LAY APOSTOLATE AND THE EUCHARIST

John Hittinger, PhD

Year of the Eucharist Lenten Symposium

Holy Trinity Apostolate

Sterling Heights MI

March 5 2005

Introduction

There is a revolution waiting to happen. The cadres number in the millions. They are spread throughout this country and throughout the world, in all nations, every continent. Their leader and instigator has been traveling around the globe, preaching radical change for well over twenty five years; he is now a silent witness to the civilization of love. His name is Pope John Paul II. His many troops are slow to respond. They are somewhat uncomprehending, much like the apostles when they muttered to their master about loaves of bread (Mt 16.7) and scratched their heads about how many swords they had at hand (Lk 22.38) But the Vicar of Christ, like his Master, is patient. Time is on his side; faith has conquered the world. Still the revolution is waiting for our response, the response of the lay faithful. John Paul II says that the time is ripe for the lay faithful to go into the harvest, the time is ripe for lay apostolate. As he said in on the *Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People* – “This [is a] **great moment in history**, made especially dramatic by occurring on the threshold of the Third Millennium. A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.” (#3) To elaborate on this parable of our Lord, Pope John Paul II says: The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord's vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labor in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. Mt 13:38) which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.” The Pope says “the call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. The Council, has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission and responsibility of the lay faithful.” My topic this afternoon is lay apostolate and the Eucharist. I hope to provide an explanation of the notion of lay apostolate and why it is so vital to the renewal called for by Vatican II; and I hope to make it clear that this apostolate is intimately connected to the Eucharist. The idea that brings all into focus is the much misunderstood idea of the way in which the laity are to share in the mission of Christ's priesthood.

I have provided you with a few handouts; the students may let you know that my nickname, acquired many years ago is “Handout Hittinger.” So I do come prepared. On sheet, with the chart, a Key to Vatican II, I have along the outside various quotes about the significance of Vatican II – the Council is called the "Magna Charta" for the future; the council contains precisely all that "the Spirit says to the Churches" with regard to the present phase of the history of salvation. The Council is quite simply said to be THE gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

The green sheet has some important texts about the Eucharist and lay apostolate. You see the opening quote is from the Holy Father, his apostolic exhortation on the laity. He says – “With this Exhortation the lay faithful are invited to take up again and reread, meditate on and assimilate with renewed understanding and love, the rich and fruitful teaching of the Council which speaks of their participation in the threefold mission of Christ.” It is my ardent hope to share with you some thoughts concerning the Eucharist and Lay Apostolate, which I believe is the key to Vatican II, and therefore the gist of what the “Spirit says to the Churches” in our day.

1. Eucharist and Apostolate

At a conference devoted to the Eucharist, in a special year of the Eucharist, it is surely fitting to begin our meditation upon the Blessed Sacrament and to see its special connection to apostolate. A favorite writer of mine, Gerald Vann, an English Dominican who died in 1963, elegantly said in *The Divine Pity*:

“I draw all things to myself”; and “Behold I make all things new”; that is the summary of the doctrine of the Eucharist; and to say that we must share in this double movement is to summarize our part in the doctrine of the Eucharist.

Through the Eucharist we are drawn into communion with Christ and we share in the renewal of the Holy Spirit, restoring all things in Christ. (Eph 1.10, Pope Pius X). I found the most moving part of Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion* the moment in which Our Lady runs to her son after he fell under the weight of the cross and the blows of the Roman soldiers – he looks up at her with his bloodied face and said “Behold, I make all things new.” That scene took my breath away and filled me with wonder and gratitude. Thus, should we not daily respond to our Lord’s sacrifice with that same wonder and gratitude – the documents of Vatican II reiterate the doctrine of Trent concerning the Eucharist that “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.” (SC #47) Do you see the connection between the Eucharist as the perpetuation of the sacrifice throughout the ages and apostolate? Without fail that sacrifice “draws all things to Christ” and “makes all things new.” We participate in the sacrifice and must thereby draw all things to Christ and work to make all things new. I found it striking that the famous passage from Vatican II, on your sheet number 1.1, that the liturgy is the “summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows,” is followed by a sentence not usually mentioned in the same breath, although it should be: “For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper.” (SC #10) So the source and summit of the life of the Church must frame for us an “apostolic goal,” that is, the Eucharist must send us forth to draw things to Christ and to renew the world in the Spirit. In receiving the sacred Body and Blood of Our Lord, must we not desire to serve him in love? We must be apostolic.

We need to be more familiar with the term apostolate, a term deliberately chosen by the Council Fathers, and yet a term rarely heard in present discussions about lay “ministry.”¹ *The Decree on Lay Apostolate* explains the notion of apostolate as follows: “The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of “apostolate”; the Church exercises it through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the Christian vocation is, of its nature a vocation to the apostolate as well.” (AA #2) Christian vocation is vocation to apostolate. As we shall, the laity have a very important, quite essential role to play in the apostolate.

But before looking at the specific character and scope of lay apostolate, we need to dig deeper into the relation of apostolate to Eucharist as exhibited in two key passages in the *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Per Father Vann “the summary of the Eucharist” is in drawing all things to Christ and renewing all things. If we turn to section 8 of EE we find a beautiful statement about the renewal and restoration of the world through the Eucharist see [1.2]:

Even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated *on the altar of the world*. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly this is the *mysterium fidei* which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to him redeemed by Christ. *Ecclesia de eucharistia* #8

The “coming forth” and “return” is a variation of St Thomas Aquinas’ account of the structure of *Summa*, called in Latin the “*exitus/reditus*.” All things come forth from God, rational creatures return to God through reason and virtue, law and grace. The incarnation of Christ redeems man, body and soul. The coming forth and return is reiterated in a key section of *Gaudium et spes* on the proper autonomy of secular affairs; the world is good and has a “proper autonomy” deriving from its creaturely status. False autonomy asserts that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator. The proper framework for apostolate is to understand the proper origin and end of creation in the Creator God. Without the creator, the creature is lost and becomes unintelligible. The Eucharist therefore leads us to a deep affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation. Father Vann says that Thomas Aquinas is the Doctor of the Eucharist because he is “the expounder of this great affirmation: all things are good in themselves though evil has damaged and twisted them.” To restore what is damaged by sin; to straighten what is twisted and perverted by human willfulness – that is the effect of the Eucharist; that is the challenge to the lay faithful to bring to the altar God’s good creation, now wounded by sin, but redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ.

It is easy to give into discouragement, to yield to sloth, when we see how deformed the world really is and how strenuous and arduous the work of redemption is. So Father Vann also follows St Thomas in linking the Eucharist to the gift of fortitude. We need the gift of fortitude to go on

¹ Ferdinand Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), Vol. 3, pp. 272-316.

day by day with the work given us. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the daily bread, the sacrament which is intended precisely to give us the daily renewal of strength for the daily task, and to fill us with the energy, the life and power, which will make us do great things for God. *Et ambulavit in fortitudine cibi illius* – In Kings, we learn that the prophet “walked in the strength, the fortitude of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God.”² During our forty days of lent we can develop a deeper appreciation for this bread of heaven. Christians should be a sign of strength and hope in a world torn by sin. You need to hunger and thirst for justice and the gift of the spirit so as to avoid despair and cynicism. Such a character will attract people to you and to the image of Christ you bear within. We have come full circle now – through the daily renewal of the Church in the Eucharist, Christ draws all things to himself through the magnanimity of his members.

John Paul says that the Eucharist should “spur us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us.” [see 1.3] As participants in the Eucharist we should develop a greater sense of responsibility for the world. The Vatican Council said the neglect of temporal duties is a sin which jeopardizes our salvation. Indeed in a council known for the absence of anathema we find one or two round condemnations. One involves crimes against human life, branded abominations before God. The other involves the Christian who shirks his temporal duties by divorcing his life from his faith; this, the Council says, is the grave error of our time. Summarizing the rich detail of Vatican documents, the Pope mentions as few key areas for our special concern -- to defend human life from conception to its natural end, to attend to the plight of the poor, and the urgent need to work for peace, justice and solidarity. For good reason does St Thomas connect fortitude to the beatitude of “hunger and thirst after justice.” The saints have always formed large and magnanimous plans – “something beautiful for God.”

We are always transfixed by the tales of St. Francis, St Philip Neri, St. Ignatius, St. Benedict – because apostolate is the “fruit of a transfigured existence and a commitment to transforming the world in accordance with the Gospel.” *Ecclesia de eucharistia* #20 All things are made new through Christ present in the Eucharist – we are transfigured and we can transform the world. It is the hour of the laity. We must now turn to face the precise call of the lay faithful to apostolate as the fruit of the Eucharist.

2. The Character and Scope of Lay Apostolate

The apostolate of the laity lies close to the heart of the vision of Vatican II. We need to understand lay apostolate according to Vatican II; we must draw upon the four major Documents of Vatican II -- *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)*, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation (Dei verbum)*, and *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*. See my second handout for an overview. The new, central and vital role for lay people emerges from the original intention for the council and from the deepest aspirations for reform and renewal. They provide the backdrop for the notion of lay apostolate put forward in the document *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicum Actuositatem)*. The nature of the apostolate and the variety of possibilities for its implementation are quite inspiring.

² 3 Kings xix.8

The core document is *Lumen Gentium* – the Church is the light of the nations; a sacrament -- a sign and instrument of union with God and the unity of human beings. The core notion of lay apostolate that we shall elaborate derives from this vision of the mystery of the Church in *Lumen Gentium*: “The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal" (#33). This is a positive definition, not a negative one (not priest or religious).³ The laity are a witness and instrument primarily in the world, in secular activities, structures, and communities: “Even by their secular activity they must aid one another to greater holiness of life, so that the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may the more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace. The laity enjoy a principle role in the universal fulfillment of this task. Therefore, by their competence in secular disciplines and by their activity, interiorly raised up by grace, let them work earnestly in order that created goods through human labor, technical skill and civil culture may serve the utility of all men according to the plan of the creator and the light of his word.”(#36) The Church in the Modern World outlines the hopes and joys of the present world. The areas of family, economics, politics, culture, and international relations – varied aspects of the places where the laity must take the light of the Gospel.

The notion of the lay apostolate is developed and amplified by John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici* and other documents such as *Ecclesia in America*. Pope John Paul II has encouraged the Bishops to emphasize lay apostolate. He assembled a special synod to take up the issues surrounding lay apostolate. The document produced after the synod, *Christifideles Laici*, is a masterful exposition of the nature and scope of the lay person in the Church and world today. The key idea is the laity's "secular character" see [3.2]:

To understand properly the lay faithful's position in the Church in a complete, adequate and specific manner it is necessary to come to a deeper theological understanding of their secular character in light of God's plan of salvation and in the context of the mystery of the Church. Pope Paul VI said the Church "has an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word Incarnate, and which is realized in different forms through her members." The Church, in fact, lives in the world, even if she is not of the world. She is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which "by its very nature concerns the salvation of humanity, and also involves the renewal of the whole temporal order" . . . In fact the Council, in describing the lay faithful's situation in the secular world, points to it above all, as the place in which they receive their call from God: "There they are called by God". . . . The "world" thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation, because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ. The Council is able then to indicate the proper and special sense of the divine vocation which is directed to the lay faithful. They are not called to abandon the position

³ In giving a response to the question "Who are the lay faithful", the Council went beyond previous interpretations which were predominantly negative. Instead it opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery. At the same time it insisted on the unique character of their vocation, which is in a special way to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God"

that they have in the world. . . . In fact, in their situation in the world God manifests his plan and communicates to them their particular vocation of "seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. Precisely with this in mind the Synod Fathers said: "The secular character of the lay faithful is not therefore to be defined only in a sociological sense, but most especially in a theological sense. The term secular must be understood in light of the act of God the creator and redeemer, who has handed over the world to women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves in marriage or the celibate life, in a family, in a profession and in the various activities of society". The lay faithful's position in the Church, then, comes to be fundamentally defined by their newness in Christian life and distinguished by their secular character. The images taken from the gospel of salt, light and leaven, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because they speak not only of the deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth, the world and the human community, but also and above all, they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation. John Paul II *Christifideles Laici*, 15

We can see now why the Pope has warned the Church about the errors or temptations surrounding lay ministry, within the Church. This is a legitimate assignment for lay people, but it is secondary. In *The Church in the Americas* two areas in which lay people live their vocation – one is “intra-ecclesial.” This area involves ministry within the Church community itself. But John Paul II says that the another area is best suited to their lay state – apostolate in the secular world. He judiciously says that: “while the intra-ecclesial apostolate of lay people needs to be promoted, care must be taken to ensure that it goes hand in hand with the activity proper to the laity, in which their place cannot be taken by priests: the area of temporal realities.”⁴

But there is a deeper temptation, reflecting the grave error of our day, the split between the faith we profess and the life we lead in its day to day, secular, activity. “Two temptations can be cited which they have not always known how to avoid: the temptation of being so strongly interested in Church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural and political world; and the temptation of legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world.”⁵

⁴ There is a need to promote positive cooperation by properly trained lay men and women in different activities within the Church, while avoiding any confusion with the ordained ministries and the activities proper to the Sacrament of Orders, so that the common priesthood of the faithful remains clearly distinguished from that of the ordained. In this respect, the Synod Fathers recommended that the works entrusted to lay people be clearly “distinct from those which constitute steps on the way to the ordained ministry” and which are carried out by candidates for the priesthood before ordination. It was also noted that these lay works “should be undertaken only by men and women who have received the necessary training in accordance with clearly defined criteria: a stable presence, a real readiness to serve a determined group of persons, and the duty of accountability to their Pastor”. In any event, while the intra-ecclesial apostolate of lay people needs to be promoted, care must be taken to ensure that it goes hand in hand with the activity proper to the laity, in which their place cannot be taken by priests: the area of temporal realities. *The Church in America* #44

⁵ John Paul II *On the Lay Faithful*, 2

We can conclude this section specifying lay apostolate with a sense of the great scope and challenge: the laity must therefore strive to evangelize the various sectors of family, social, professional, cultural and political life. This shall be done through achieving the unity of life and faith. With very poignant words the importance of this apostolate is made clear in *Ecclesia in America* #44: “On a continent marked by competition and aggressiveness, unbridled consumerism and corruption, lay people are called to embody deeply evangelical values such as mercy, forgiveness, honesty, transparency of heart and patience in difficult situations. What is expected from the laity is a great creative effort in activities and works demonstrating a life in harmony with the Gospel.” Now you see why I say that we have a revolution waiting to happen, although happen it will. When the used car salesman and the candidate for the Presidency, and all in between, act on those evangelical values, with the unity of faith and life, formed by an integral Catholic conscience – the revolution will have transpired and the transformation will be underway.

Eucharist and Lay Apostolate

How is such character formed, and how is such scope truly forged? In Apostolate of the Laity, the council fathers said: “Charity, which is, as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate, is given to them and nourished in them by the sacraments, the Eucharist above all.” (#3) This phrase no doubt alludes to the famous book, *The Soul of the Apostolate* by Dom Chautard, in which he explains how apostolate must be the fruit and overflow of interior life, an interior life centered on the Eucharist: “Our Lord wanted to institute this Sacrament in order to make it the center of all action, of all loyal idealism, of every apostolate that could be of any real use to the Church.” (184) He says “the living memorial of the Passion revives the divine fire in the soul of the apostle when it seems on the point of going out.” (185) He draws the necessary conclusion or law of apostolate if you will: the efficacy of the apostolate almost invariably corresponds to the degree of Eucharistic life acquired by a soul.” (186) He brings before our mind the figure of St Thomas Aquinas, who “practically entered the Tabernacle, so to speak when he wanted to work out a problem.” We know that Pope John Paul II would also “work” before the Lord in a prayer state of mind.

But we need to take one more step. What is the manner of lay participation in the Eucharist. We have heard it said “all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations.” But full active conscious participation means much more than singing songs and the use of the vernacular. It is the dedication of the head and heart in sharing in the priestly office of Christ. We need to grasp how the laity in their apostolate share in the priestly office of Christ, as well as in his prophetic and kingly offices as well. It is a tremendous privilege that derives from our baptism and confirmation. Drawing upon Vatican II, Pope John Paul II hits the most eloquent and inspiring note of lay dignity see [2.3]:

The lay faithful are sharers in the **priestly** mission, for which Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity. Incorporated in Jesus Christ, the baptized are united to him and to his sacrifice in the offering they make of themselves and their daily activities. Speaking of the lay faithful the Council says: "For their work, prayers and apostolic endeavours, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labour, their mental and

physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life if patiently borne—all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2:5). During the celebration of the Eucharist these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus as worshipers whose every deed is holy, the lay faithful consecrate the world itself to God". Through their participation in the **prophetic** mission of Christ, "who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father by the testimony of his life and by the power of his word" the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil. United to Christ, the "great prophet" and in the Spirit made "witnesses" of the Risen Christ, the lay faithful are made sharers in the appreciation of the Church's supernatural faith. They are also called to allow the newness and the power of the gospel to shine out everyday in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory even "through the framework of their secular life". Because the lay faithful belong to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe, they share in his **kingly** mission and are called by him to spread that Kingdom in history. They exercise their kingship as Christians, above all in the spiritual combat in which they seek to overcome in themselves the kingdom of sin (cf. Rom 6:12), and then to make a gift of themselves so as to serve, in justice and in charity, Jesus who is himself present in all his brothers and sisters, above all in the very least. But in particular the lay faithful are called to restore to creation all its original value. In ordering creation to the authentic well-being of humanity in an activity governed by the life of grace, they share in the exercise of the power with which the Risen Christ draws all things to himself and subjects them along with himself to the Father, so that God might be everything to everyone. The participation of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King finds its source in the anointing of Baptism, its further development in Confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist. Pope John Paul II *On the Lay Faithful*, 14

The field for apostolate is vast; *Gaudium et spes* outlines and elaborates upon key areas such as family, culture, economics, politics, and international cooperation. Apostolate of the Laity specifies many important areas for insertion of the cross into the world of man. A sound education is vital because the lay apostolate requires both faith and reason – one must know the matters of faith so that by a “well-formed Christian conscience” they may “see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city.” But also they must develop their own competence and training and make a unique contribution to the problems at hand. What is demanded of the lay person is a “vital synthesis” of “humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises” with religious values, under whose “supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory.” In *Apostolicum Actuositatem* the training of lay people is said to require “an integral human education” (#29). The foundation for this education must be “living by faith in the divine mystery of creation and redemption.” The knowledge of revelation through scripture and tradition (*Dei verbum*) must come first in the education for lay apostolate. And the training must include participation in the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*). In addition to this spiritual formation, the lay people need to be educated in theology, ethics, and philosophy (*Apostolicum Actuositatem* #29). He concludes the document with an articulation of “a total integrated

formation for living an integrated life.” Most of all, the lay people need “an exact knowledge of the Church’s social teaching” (*Christifideles Laici* #61)

The mission of lay apostolate is daunting indeed; “without me you can do nothing,” says the Lord. We should not be surprised then that many efforts to date are awkward and sputtering. This is not just a problem of the post-Vatican II Church. Again we can turn to Dom Chautard who observed in 1945 that “orators, leaders, lecturers, catechist and professors” all had nothing but a mediocre success “simply because there has not been, about us, a strong enough reflection of nearness to God.” (189) This revolution has been in the making for many years, nay 2000. Chesterton, in his truthful exaggerations, said Christianity has not yet been tried. But now is the time of grace according to Vatican II; indeed this is why the Holy Spirit convoked Vatican II. To proclaim the time for the laity. With the leadership of the Pope, and the aid of the ministerial priests, with the encouragement of each other – we come before the Lord’s presence and declare ourselves his apostles – to draw all things to Him and to make all things new.

And of course we have the help of Mary. The Second Vatican Council says that the “Church, therefore, in her apostolic work too, rightly looks to her who gave birth to Christ, who was thus conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, in order that through the Church he could be born and increase in the hearts of the faithful. In her life the Virgin has been a model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church's apostolic mission for the regeneration of mankind should be animated.”⁶ Note that apostolate is concerned with the regeneration of mankind. This in turn leads us to the Eucharist, where again the lay apostle will encounter Mary. I refer you to *Ecclesia de eucharistia* #62 – “Gazing upon Mary, we come to know *the transforming power present in the Eucharist*. In her we see the world renewed in love. Contemplating her, assumed body and soul into heaven, we see opening up before us those “new heavens” and that “new earth” which will appear at the second coming of Christ. Here below, the Eucharist represents their pledge, and in a certain way, their anticipation: “*Veni, Domine Iesu!*” (*Rev 22:20*.)” So we should end our meditation praying the Marian prayer Pope John Paul II offers at the close of the Exhortation on the Lay Faithful:

O Virgin full of courage, may your spiritual strength and trust in God inspire us, so that we might know how to overcome all the obstacles that we encounter in accomplishing our mission. Teach us to treat the affairs of the world with a real sense of Christian responsibility and a joyful hope of the coming of God's Kingdom, and of a "new heaven and a new earth" // You who were gathered in prayer with the Apostles in the Cenacle, awaiting the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, implore his renewed outpouring on all the faithful, men and women alike, so that they might more fully respond to their vocation and mission, as branches engrafted to the true vine, called to bear much fruit for the life of the world.// O Virgin Mother, guide and sustain us so that we might always live as true sons and daughters of the Church of your Son. Enable us to do our part in helping to establish on earth the civilization of truth and love, as God wills it, for his glory. Amen

⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 65.