

*From Pontiff to Pew (continued):*

priesthood (cf. LG, 10). By virtue of Baptism, the lay faithful participate in the very priesthood of Christ. Indeed, “the supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since He wills to continue His witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work” (LG, 34).

In this regard, how can we fail to recall Saint John Paul II and his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988)? In it, he emphasized that “the Council, with its rich doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral patrimony, has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission and responsibility of the lay faithful. And the Council Fathers, re-echoing the call of Christ, have summoned all the lay faithful, both women and men, to labour in the vineyard” (no. 2). In this way, my venerable Predecessor relaunched the apostolate of the laity, to which the Council dedicated a specific Document, which we will talk about later. [1]

The vast field of the lay apostolate is not confined to the Church, but extends to the world. Indeed, the Church is present wherever her children profess and bear witness to the Gospel: in the workplace, in civil society and in all human relationships, wherever they, through their choices, show the beauty of Christian life, which foretells here and now the justice and peace that will be accomplished in the Kingdom of God. The world needs to “be permeated by the spirit of Christ, and more effectively fulfil its purpose in justice, charity and peace” (LG, 36). And this is possible only through the contribution, service and witness of the laity!

It is an invitation to be the “outgoing” Church that Pope Francis spoke to us about: a Church embodied in history, always open to mission, in which we are all called to be missionary disciples, apostles of the Gospel, witnesses of the Kingdom of God, bearers of the joy of Christ whom we have encountered!

Brothers and sisters, may the Easter we are preparing to celebrate renew in us the grace to be, like Mary Magdalene, like Peter and John, witnesses of the Risen One!

