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Message from the Spiritual Advisor

Edwin F. O'Brien

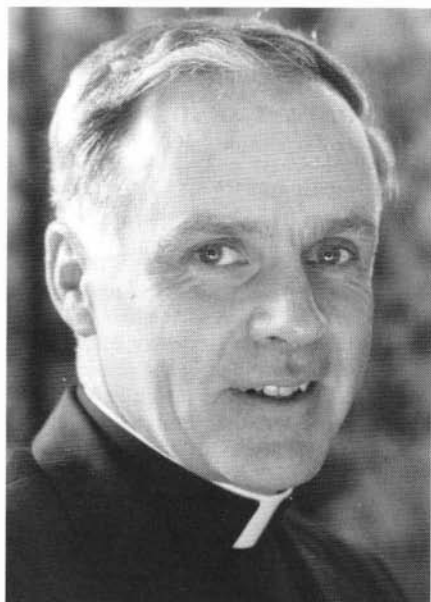
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Message from the Spiritual Advisor



A Gathering of Reflections

“Christ’s Faithful People” (Christifideles Laici) is the title of the Exhortation of Pope John Paul II written to all in the Church, gathering together the far-reaching reflections of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the “vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world”.

It is truly an exhortation: as individuals and groups, lay people enjoy a gift and a responsibility in promoting “the communion and the mission of the Church”. At this threshold of history, as we face the third millennium, there is a particular urgency for all the baptized to understand their unique vocation in the Church. In full communion with the Pope, with their local bishop and with one another, all the baptized are called to confront secularism which the Holy Father calls “truly serious” and which is encountered in the attitudes of religious indifference and atheism so prevalent in every stratum of every society.

If ever the laity were seriously identified as those who are not priests or religious, let it be no more. Action on the part of lay people, uniquely called, gifted and graced, is a divine mandate in these times: “it is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.”

The encyclopedic breadth of this document demands careful individual reading and study. In this short space, I would pull out but one single point relevant to those “lay women and men (called to become) the living sign of Jesus Christ and His Church in showing love toward the sick and suffering” (#53):

“To rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person makes up an essential task, in a certain sense the

central and unifying task, of the service which the Church and the lay faithful in her are called to render to the human family . . . Personal dignity is the most precious good which a human being possesses. As a result, the value of one person transcends all the material world" (#37).

Were you to crystallize all the goals and aspirations and beliefs which distinguish your professional strivings - if you were to seek the core principle which sets the Church and its teachings apart as counter-cultural—you might read those words again.

— Rev. Msgr. Edwin F. O'Brien

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