

Lumen Gentium - Chapter V - Church is Called To Be Holy

Report

by Helen Hawkins

39 Lumen Gentium states the fact that the Church is indefectibly holy. Christ loved the Church as His bride, so He united Himself to Her. Everyone in the Church is called to be holy and must give the world witness of Holiness.

40 We are taught how this is to be played out. God sent the Holy Spirit knowing that we all need God's mercies. To be holy we must realize that Jesus, being holy, is our model of all perfection. Whatever our rank or status we are called to be perfect as Christ is perfect and to use our strengths and gifts which have been given to us to conform to Christ's image and to seek the will of God.

41 As the sanctity of each person is moved by the Holy Spirit, we learn how we are to see ourselves. We are to follow Christ in His poverty and humility using our gifts and duties.

The Shepherds of the Church – the Bishops – must be holy, humble and courageous in their ministry. They must be willing to lay down their lives for their flock and to promote holiness by daily example.

Priests should grow daily in their love of God, their neighbor by exercising their office of mediator. Priests should not be ensnared by perils and hardships. Priests must nourish themselves by contemplation and remain loyal to their bishops.

Other ministers such as deacons, clerics must keep themselves free from every vice and represent goodness and to be a friend of God.

Laymen and women who are called by the Holy Spirit and chosen by their bishops, have been successful in the apostolic work of the church.

Married couples bring holiness to the Church by being faithful to each other and to the Church. Their children must be welcomed as God's gift and be taught Christian doctrine and evangelical virtues. Married couples represent unwearied and generous love.

Laborers – the working class – all who should be of aid to their fellow citizens. They must raise all society with charity and hope by sharing each other's burdens. Christ who was a carpenter and laborer with Joseph, is the example who must be imitated to climb the road of holiness and apostolate activity.

All members of the Church from the bishops, priests, religious, deacons, laymen and women who work and live in the world, will increase in holiness if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and co-operate with His divine will.

God's love - poured out through the Holy Spirit – is the first and most necessary gift that God has freely given us to achieve holiness.

We must be willing to hear the word of God, accept His will, make use of the sacraments and pray. We must practice self abnegation. My understanding of self abnegation is found in the words of John the Baptist (John 3:30) when he said, "I must decrease as He must increase."

To be holy we must give service to others, exercise all virtue and to recognize that charity (love) rules over all our efforts to attain holiness. It is charity that guides us to the final end and points out the true disciple of Christ.

We must keep in mind that Christ gave His life for us. We must accept that there will be persecution and that we need to be aware that martyrdom is possible and that all Catholics must be prepared to give his or her life for Christ. Persecution will never be lacking to the Church in following the way of the cross.

Lumen Gentium teaches that Holiness in the Church is fostered by the observation of virginity or celibacy. This is a special gift that allows certain souls to devote their entire life to God and to the service of His Church.

Mother Church has rejoiced for the men and women who have renounced their own will and take upon themselves the state of poverty. (sisters, nuns, brothers and certain lay members of the Church who renounce everything for God)

All the faithful are invited to strive for holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Let us not come to terms with the world. For the world as we see it is passing away.

My thoughts

The Church hierarchy is top-down in Her government. As lay members we must be aware that the Holy Spirit is not bound by this arrangement. The Holy Spirit moves from the Pope to each member of the Church. The Holy Spirit also moves from the lay members toward the pope. Lay members are held to the same standards of charity, purity and love that we should expect from our leaders. We can not use the failings of leadership to excuse our own failures and unfaithfulness. We must bind ourselves to our Mother Church. We have seen that the Holy Spirit has worked through many saints: St. Dominic, St Catherine, St. Therese of Lisieux, St Teresa of Avila, St. Francis and many other priests, brothers, sisters, lay men and lay women. Beginning with our hearts and souls, we can pray that holiness from individuals can rise upward to cleanse and purify the leadership.