

PAPERS READ AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SEVENTH GENERAL CHAPTER  
OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE UNION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
AUGUST 18, 1965 - SEPTEMBER 5, 1965

THE APOSTOLATE

In preparing this introduction to the presentation by the committee on the apostolate, that which has first claim on our attention are the attitudes, the virtues, the correct concept of the apostolate, rather than some concrete facts regarding specific apostolic involvement. For our Sisters in the active apostolate and for those who are being formed for it, what is of the utmost importance is the idea of what a religious apostle should be, and the clear understanding of the Mercy apostolate in all its facets. If these concepts are in proper place in the hierarchy of values, the participation in the apostolate will be effective in contributing to the glory of God, the furthering of His Kingdom, the good of the Institute and the personal sanctity of the religious.

Pope Paul VI furnishes us with a theological definition of the religious life as a basis for the apostolate:

The profession of the evangelical vows is a super-addition to that consecration which is proper to Baptism. It is a special consecration which perfects the Baptismal consecration inasmuch as by it the follower of Christ totally commits and dedicates himself to God, thereby making his entire life a service to God alone.

The religious life is a stable way of life which receives its proper character from the profession of the vows. From this flows the apostolate infused with the spirit of the particular institute. For the purpose of our discussions we define the apostolate as the extension of the work of Christ. It is a form of Divine Mercy exercised towards man. It is a symbol, a sacrament of the kerygma, a sign of eternity in time. "Every Christian because of the character received in Baptism and Confirmation has a personal responsibility to engage in the apostolate." (Constitution on the Liturgy) The religious vocation is an extension and intensification of the Christian vocation. The apostolate is at the very heart of the religious life. Pope John XXIII counselled religious in the letter, Il Tempio Massimo, that "no soul consecrated to God is dispensed from the sublime duty of continuing the mission of the Divine Redeemer." In the Apostolic Constitution, Sponsa Christi, we read: "Let all nuns be thoroughly persuaded that their vocation is wholly and fully apostolic." Nowhere in the Church is the theological sense of the apostolate more profoundly and fully exercised than in the state of evangelical perfection. Religious profession is the means by which the Church assigns to the religious a public and permanent role, and deposes her for the service of her fellow man in and through the Church. Religious, men and women, must be conscious of being entirely devoted to the needs of all the needy. Their apostolic tasks are a service in the salvation of souls. Their vocation implies mortification, purity of heart, and fidelity to grace that their hearts may be emptied of self and filled with love of God and neighbor. Each Sister of Mercy, therefore, comprehending the privilege bestowed upon her by God through the Church, is obligated to devote intense and persevering effort to make operative in her life all that is contained in the vows. Not only holiness, but eminent holiness is required. This effort is in itself a direct apostolate and is essential for the fruitful service of the Church.

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THE APOSTOLATE (Con 'd)

The world is changing rapidly; the Church is changing because in the words of the Holy Father, "We ought not to ignore the contemporary state of humanity in the midst of which our mission is to be accomplished. We must meet the world and talk to it." It is recognized that religious must change profoundly and genuinely. It is not easy to adapt the works and institutions and customs that have served so well in the past. It is difficult to form flexible yet stable personalities. However, these are the tasks that Christ and the Spirit ask of Sisters now. Religious life at present is vastly different from what it was fifty years ago and the next half century will witness more profound changes. The apostolic mandate, received from the Church by each congregation approved by the Holy See, is not carried out faithfully unless there is docility in grasping and respecting the demands of the apostolic work in the modern world. This evokes nothing short of excellence in performance and broadening of perspective. The religious is expected to cultivate a mental outlook which reflects the mind and wisdom of Holy Mother Church. She will always be alert to what the Church wishes and expects, certain that union with God becomes possible when the apostle submits to the purifications of soul which occur through the perfect accomplishment of God's Will. Apostolic action itself is powerful in producing this effect. This is what Christ requests of us through His Vicar, through the Bishops, through our Superiors. There is also the obligation to apostolic witness which is part of the official duty of the religious as applied to the whole of one's life. The apostolate of witness or example is the Christian apostolate in the broad sense. The strict sense of the term applies to those activities exercised in the name of the Church with delegation from the hierarchy to a particular Institute. Therefore, "it is our aim to determine the best means here and now for making more immediate, more efficacious, and more beneficial our contacts with mankind...Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. Church renewal, likewise renewal of religious institutes has, therefore, notable ecumenical importance." (Decree on Ecumenism)

The apostolate of the Sisters of Mercy is a communal witness of merciful love in a spirit of service to bring those who are served to the Person of Christ. It comprises all the corporal and spiritual works of Mercy. The apostolic works, determined by higher superiors, must be chosen according to the characteristic spirit of the Institute, the contemporary needs of the Church, the talents and limitations of the Institute, and the degree of personal contact with all served. For the religious, the assignment in obedience is always the primary apostolate into which she invests a deep sense of responsibility and initiative. Where there is genuine love, apostolic opportunities will never be wanting. By being Christlike, by living the Christlife fully and generously, she will be conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit in herself and in others. A direct and genuine awareness of the other is basic to an apostolic influence. The Gospels radiate the uniqueness of the human person. Their need dominates every event. Agape for each person means loving him just as he is, a unique reflection of God, a fellow-traveler to eternity...It means being concerned to

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find out the need as he sees it; to seek with compassion and empathy to enter into his problem and situation. Then together, to seek a solution or alleviation. Thus, the first conscious requisite for an apostolic act is agape, awareness that one is Christ, is acting for Christ, is serving Christ. Bringing Christ and His message to others must be the overflow of one's commitment and intensity. Openness to others means the growing ability to sense their unexpressed suffering or confusion. Christian service is gentle and joyous producing peace and serenity, the real healing of wounds. Love directs and forms and orders one's whole life from within. This is the liberty of the children of God. The apostle is one who personally has accepted the message of Divine Love for herself and who will spend her life sharing it with others. Only acts of personal love can be the means of communicating, of teaching the message. Grace will make man like God as He appeared in Christ. It will turn him toward constant love and concern for each person he contacts. The message is love; acts of love are its proclamation. It is useless to urge others to love the neighbor until they have seen the message of Divine Love communicated in word, and most of all, by example.

Animated by the spirit of Christ and that of Mother McAuley, a spirit of tender compassion and generous response in love to those who seek mercy through us, the Sisters of Mercy have followed in the footsteps of Him Who went about doing good. As in the past, they are presently dedicated to the contemporary needs of the Church while they plan to meet the needs of the future in the best Mercy tradition. We must assist the young religious to grow in patience, holy patience, as the plan of God slowly unfolds in the course of the renewal. The Church moves slowly and prudently and while caution must not yield to timidity, yet, haste is not the part of wisdom. The very waiting is a purifying process and a coin valuable in the purchase of the divine blessings for which all engaged in the great thrust forward hope and pray.

The members of the committee will present the various topics under which the proposals have been compiled. Through dialogue, through the serious listening to the Holy Spirit present among us in a very special way, by means of the willingness to detach ourselves from all that would impede the aggiornamento, may each member of the Chapter have the vision to see what is the Will of God in this hour as it will affect the Church, the vast army of Sisters of Mercy and other religious congregations and the countless souls whom we visit, relieve and instruct. The vision of the Chapter will be the vision of the entire Institute. One of the difficulties encountered in working through this topic, is the absence of the concrete. There are crucial areas and a broadening apostolate in this time of history and these we shall undoubtedly move into as higher superiors judge this to be timely and prudent. However, there are few works of Mercy in which the Sisters are not presently engaged. Not every group, every province for example, can perform all these activities. Nor would this be desirable if our aim, as it must be, is excellence. We are limited as to scope by reason of human existence. The true apostle will never lack opportunity for apostolic involvement. Beginning at home with one's sisters in Christ, and expanding to the

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wide circle of souls within the orbit of daily interpersonal relationships, there is the chance to proclaim the Gospel message, the good news of Christ. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit, openness to His inspirations, cooperation with Superiors, will enable the Sister of Mercy to be a woman of her times and a woman of tomorrow. That is her great mission to be a leaven of God in the modern world.

Sister Mary Jeanne Ferrier, R.S.M.  
Province of New York

THE CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has and is contributing much to the renewal of the Church but in many areas of the country it has little or no appeal. While it is the only organization that attempts to include the entire parish in its membership, in actual fact it rarely does. Most Confraternity organizations spring from canonical and episcopal legislation and not from the parish's conscious awareness of its needs as a worshipping community.

The present organization fails to take cognizance of the Sisters as part of the parish. This failure to apply the doctrine of the Mystical Body comes from 16th century mentality. The name of the organization reflects the Post-Reformation emphasis on doctrine rather than the present concern with Christian living as a personal response to God. Then, too, names of the various areas of activity have little or no significance for the people living in 1965.

The principal activity of the Confraternity today is the religious education of Catholic children attending public elementary and secondary schools. The Sisters engaged in this work are making a notable contribution to the Church but there is an ever growing demand for more and better trained Sisters to meet the challenge of our youth. There is also the fact that the United States Government will finance shared time programs throughout the country. This will create a new and expanding situation in which we will have the opportunity of teaching religion to that 60% - 70% who at present receive no formal religious training.

The Sister in today's teaching situation must extend her influence beyond the classroom. The religious formation of her students will be strengthened if she has time for each one personally and if she can provide activities such as retreats, days of challenge, apostolic projects and leadership training to tap their Christian potential.

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Failure to know the influences in the lives of her pupils can adversely affect the Sister's efforts. The foremost influence is the youth's family. They alone can create a Christian environment but in most cases they need our assistance. In today's world parents and catechist must work together for the child's spiritual welfare. Parent-teacher meetings, visitation of the home, individual conferences, group discussions and movies present occasions for true collaboration.

Because of their expanding function in the life of the parish, the Sisters--particularly in the elementary schools--but also in the high schools are training the laity as members of the executive boards, as teachers, fishers, helpers, discussion group leaders, parent-educators and apostles of good will. Those engaged in this work would profit greatly by attending the leadership courses given at various universities and colleges throughout the country.

In some dioceses the diocesan C.C.D. directors are planning to have one Sister in each of the city parishes to do just Confraternity work. Many priests have appealed to the Catholic high school Sisters to become actively involved in the high schools of religion and in training programs for the laity.

The people of God have been called to participate in the priesthood of Christ. This priestly activity of the people calls for an increased understanding of the mystery of Christ and of their responsibility to continue His work in the world. The Church should be able to call on the colleges to undertake this task.

Many colleges not only train their students in Confraternity work but also set up programs for the laity. Our colleges could establish a training center for lay leaders or offer courses in theology, catechetics, anthropology, sociology of the parish, ecumenism, and comparative religions. They could also open their programs, lectures, and institutes to the entire community. As witnesses of the Faith, the faculty and students should share the burdens of the neighborhood and work with other groups for the improvement of the physical, social and cultural life of the community.

The apostolate of good will presents to the faculty and students the challenge of becoming involved in the Church's on-going ecumenical endeavors. For and with other denominations they can sponsor evenings of retreat, lectures, workshops, and dialogues.

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The Newman clubs offer a new and expanding horizon to the Sister apostle. Chaplains are seeking competent Sisters to give lectures and carry on discussions on the campuses of secular universities. Our colleges should try to develop a two-way communication with these clubs through conversations, programs, publications and correspondence.

Long-range planning to effect a complete program of adult education so that the laity become exclusively responsible for the maintenance of the Confraternity in its day-to-day carrying out of activities. The function of the Sisters would be involved only in so far as they would conduct centers for the training of C.C.D. personnel. In this way the apostolate of preaching the Word of God would reach a far larger segment of society than would be possible were the Sisters to conduct only such classes as the Sisters themselves were able to teach.

Mother Mary Regina Haughney, R.S.M.  
Province of New York

THE TEACHING OF RELIGION

A new age has been ushered into the Church, an age different from the past though an outgrowth of it. In this rapidly changing situation one of the greatest needs is for theological maturity. A maturity to bridge the gap between the before-the-Council mentality and the Johannine openness to God, man, and the universe.

The profound changes taking place in the Church's awareness of herself are more than external changes--these are only symptomatic. The important changes go much deeper. They call for a thorough-going renewal in understanding the faith, to provide the insights necessary to live the Christian life in its breadth and depth. As a community engaged in the religious education of adults and youth, the implication is evident; if we are to lead the Catholic of today to theological maturity, we must possess it ourselves.

For most of the Sisters, this means relinquishing not the essentials of Christianity but the theological teachings that have their roots in the post-Reformation; the defensive apologetics, the over-emphasis on individualistic piety which neglected commitment, and the collective authoritarianism which neglected the person.

Old ways are no longer suitable. In the past we explained concepts, memorized answers and imposed commandments. Our whole mentality has to change--new categories have to be admitted. Formerly there was too much stress on doctrine and not enough on

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personal communion, too much emphasis on law and authority and too little stress on love and freedom. The Jesus of history over-shadowed the Christ of Faith.

It is difficult to adjust to change and painful to acquire new habits of thought, yet the Sisters must undergo this evolution if they are to be effective in bringing the Good News to the men, women, and youth of today. Furthermore, it seems certain that the impetus for change will be accelerated in the years ahead. This imposes a heavy responsibility on the higher superiors to provide adequate and continuing theological and catechetical training for the Sisters in service and the Sisters in formation. The steps taken now will spell success or failure for our apostolate in religious education. Great vision and courage are needed.

For the Sisters in service I would suggest something along the lines of the following: liturgical and scriptural studies that will eliminate the shallowness and insecurity we are so much aware of. A course in the Mystery of Christ in which Christ is seen as the beginning, the center and end of all creation. Added to these a course in the Church and the Sacraments as encounters with Christ, and a study of morality in which Christian life is a personal response to God in each situation, "a life of love developing" in a personal community with freedom and responsibility.

While the importance of academic and objective knowledge is admitted, it must be remembered that in the teaching of religion, the Sister's experiential knowledge of God is primary. The deeper her union with Him, the greater the possibility of effective communication. Christianity is not a set of truths to be believed, but a Person to be loved. To the degree that the Sister's union with Christ is actualized in her daily living will she be able to extend His love to others.

Monthly conferences and retreats offer opportunities for greater personal awareness and realization. Workshops, seminars and institutes are valuable aids in keeping abreast of contemporary thought. There should be open to the entire community library facilities which include books and periodicals in theology and catechetics which will enable the Sisters to be in touch with current trends. Courses in comparative religions and ecumenism will prepare the Sisters to participate in the Church's on-going dialogue with non-Catholics.

Another means of strengthening the Religion Program is to develop a dynamic community through personal relationships in which the Sisters can communicate in integrity and love. This will prepare them to respond fully to each person they meet.

It rests with the community to discover the full dimension of religious education and to provide all the helps necessary for its realization.

Mother Mary Regina Haughney, R.S.M.  
Province of New York

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HOME NURSING CARE--TEAM WORK

The Hospital Apostolate, which can be and should be one of the richest and noblest of experiences, must be viewed in the light of the total apostolate of Religious which is to be a witness within the Church and before the world as a fraternal community, formed to the image of the first Christian community of Jerusalem whose Leader, Jesus Christ, became the first Apostle of the sick as His weary steps trudged the sands of Palestine ministering to the least of His brethren.

The Sisters are our greatest asset as we go forth to meet the challenges and opportunities of this Apostolate. We must re-evaluate our present utilization of their talents in performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

We must become more deeply concerned for the people who share with us this noble task of caring for the sick. I fear we are doing too little for our hospital personnel. An awareness of the community about us and its needs will lead us to implement the request of our late Holy Father that we perform our Apostolate within the framework of existing institutions.

EXAMPLES:

1. Area-wide planning; leads to
2. Sharing facilities--non duplication of equipment and facilities
3. One of our greatest opportunities, not only because of its economic value to us but also because of the challenge it presents to reach the underprivileged, is the Hospitals' role in the War on Poverty. Since hospitals are an integral part of the community, they are slated for a big supporting role in the Anti-Poverty War. I quote from the May issue of HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT:

"About half of the \$740 million authorized by Congress for anti-poverty projects this fiscal year has been earmarked for three job training programs for young men and women. Hospitals figure importantly in these programs. Anti-poverty administrators see the hospital not only as an ideal training ground but as a sort of cultural center where a young person can come in contact with people of many fields, perform meaningful services, and generally take his place as a member of the community."

4. Home Nursing Care--this assuredly is a modern Mother McAuley Apostolate. Blue Cross Involvement in Home Care.
5. Team Work--can work in Home Care concept.  
Individual Units--must exist in whole hospital.

Mother Mary William Joseph Lydon, R.S.M.  
Province of Scranton

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VISITS OF MERCY

By a canonical mandate of the Church the Sisters of Mercy are committed to apostolic activity, the full dimension of which is determined by the specific spirit of our Institute -- Mercy. The onward expression of this activity seen in the various works assumed will change as the needs of the Church vary in times and places. The inward expression found in spiritual communal activity will always be the vital and stabilizing power productive of fruitful apostolic work for the Church.

(Definition developed by the Apostolic Committee of the Province of Baltimore.)

One of the apostolic works included in the role of the Sisters of Mercy, and one that received very special attention from Mother McAuley, is that of making visitations of mercy. In fact, the second characteristic work of the Institute is that of visitation of the sick in homes. Other charitable visits are made to those with other afflictions, spiritual difficulties, or to those suffering the loss of a loved one. Visitations to inmates of hospitals, prisons, and other institutions are also considered as works of Mercy.

To evaluate our activities of this nature in the light of the present day need to see if they have reached their full dimension as determined by the spirit of Mercy, it is essential to understand MERCY in its fullest context. MERCY, as so aptly described by Sister Mary Jeanne today would by its very nature make us aware of all situations in which we can serve to extend and promote the thoughts and desires of the Church in all aspects of our daily life.

In response to the call of aggiornamento, the Sisters of Mercy have already initiated or engaged in programs throughout the Provinces to meet some of the pressing needs of the day, and we mention a few of them for illustration:

1. Participation in the inner-city programs in making home visits to the poor, sick and suffering members of society.
2. Involvement in home visiting programs to establish better understanding and relationships with the members of the Negro race to further the cause of Social Justice.
3. Organization of Mercy Visitors -- a lay group of working girls and women who are dedicated to bring peace and happiness to Christ's sick and suffering members and potential members of the Mystical Body are to encourage other suffering members of the great opportunity to receive special graces by their complete union with His Will in their regard.
4. Organizations of McAuley Clubs consisting of high school girls who devote time and energy to visitation of the poor and sick in homes, hospitals, and other institutions.

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As we now look to the future programs, we ask, "How will the spirit of Mercy extend itself in our external activities in response to the call to go out to all men?" Pope Pius XII said, "Do what your holy Foundress would do if she were living today". As a background in considering proposals for the future, it might be well to call to mind the spirit in which Mother McAuley approached this important aspect of her work.

Mother McAuley was a true social worker of her day, so imbued with the spirit of Mercy that her love was all embracing and yet she concentrated her efforts and energies on a few most pressing needs of the day -- mainly the care of the sick.

From her letters, we see that she not only stated her objectives but also indicated how she wanted the sick and the poor cared for, as we quote short excerpts:

September 10, 1828 Objectives of the Institute ... instructing and assisting the sick poor.

In the beginning of the year, we as a community could determine activities most in need of our limited energies.

March 27, 1830 When applying to Rome for approval, she writes: They visit the hospitals and there serve and assist the sick, performing for them the most necessary and useful services.

She emphasized the interpersonal relationships that must be established with those we serve through the personal service, fulfilling the specific need of each one.

1832 During a cholera epidemic, she says: The Sisters come in groups of four from beginning shortly after eight o'clock in the morning and working in shifts until nine o'clock.

Yesterday, we, too, spoke of the flexibility in practices of community life so necessary at times to provide maximum efficacy in the apostolate.

Sister companions have said of Mother McAuley, "The presence of Catherine and the Sisters proved of considerable assistance to the Medical Staff. By example they did much to sustain the Doctors when difficulties arose. Gentle in her dealings and ready to make allowances she could be exacting in the extreme in what she considered the right performance of duty. She was severe with those who neglected their patients." Mother General has frequently emphasized the personal responsibility of each Sister and of the Superior.

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Mother McAuley was very specific in the qualifications she deemed necessary for any aspirant to the Sisters of Mercy:

She must feel a particular interest for the sick and dying; otherwise, the duty of visiting them would soon become toilsome. She should be healthy, have a distinct, impressive manner of speaking and reading, a mild countenance, expressive of sympathy and patience, caution, and prudence in the visits.

Regarding her own Sisters, besides praying for them in choir, the Foundress favored rest, preferably at the seaside, good food, comfortable sleeping quarters with sufficient light and air.

Shall Mother McAuley's spirit live on in us that we may prove to be the "salt of the earth"? The "salt" within our own walls and the "salt" without? Will we have to take risks? Yes, but Mother McAuley permitted the Sisters to nurse the sick in the Crimean War, knowing that their own interior spirit and love of God were adequate to protect them in all circumstances!

Mother Mary Celeste Waynant, R.S.M.  
Province of Baltimore

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THE LAITY

"The duty consonant with the patrimony received from Christ is that of speaking, offering, announcing it to others. . . . To this internal drive of charity which tends to become the external gift of charity we will give the name dialogue. . . . The Church should enter into dialogue with the world in which it exists and labors." ECCLESIAM SUAM, PATHS OF THE CHURCH, Pope Paul VI, First Encyclical letter, August, 1964, III, 2.

"The duty of bringing the laity into apostolic action is today an integral part of the religious vocation. 'For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another. . . . For you are all one in Christ Jesus.'" CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH, DE ECCLESIA, November 21, 1964, n. 32.

PROPOSAL That the Sisters, aware that the laity participate in the salvific mission of the Church, collaborate with them in making the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.

With the promulgation of the Constitution of the Church the LAITY have received a clear mandate from the Council, Vatican II, to participate in the salvific mission of the Church. They have been officially called by the Church to work more and more in extending the divine plan of salvation to all men. The vocation of the layman has been defined most clearly.

"But the laity, by their special vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in secular affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. . . . Today they are called by God that by exercising their proper functions, and led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. . . . Therefore, since they are bound up in all types of temporal affairs, it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may be made grow according to Christ to the praise of the creator and redeemer." (The Constitution on the Church, Chap. IV)

The Church is calling upon the laity to play a most active part in the salvation and sanctification of the world. This concept of the Lay Vocation must be thoroughly understood by our sisters. No longer can the lay person be considered a "second class citizen of the Church." Laity possess a God given vocation even as the clergy or the religious. They with the clergy and religious form the PEOPLE OF GOD. Understanding this doctrine brings with it the deep conviction of the unity of all the faithful. . . we share a common dignity as members of Christ's Mystical Body; we have the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection. We possess in common one salvation, one hope, and one undivided charity. . . . "For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3, 28)

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The Constitution on the Church quotes St. Augustine in the following beautiful passage from one of his sermons; he said:

"What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. FOR YOU I am a bishop; but WITH YOU I am a Christian. The former is a DUTY: the latter a GRACE. The former is a danger; the latter, SALVATION."

All vocations in the Church are from God. Today we are witnessing a tremendous change in the number and kinds of vocations in the Church. The number of vocations to the priesthood and to religious life is decreasing but the number of lay vocations is increasing. This is the plan of God for today's world. God is clearly showing His Church that the extension of His kingdom in this modern world is to be brought about by all the people of God. . . Hierarchy, clergy, religious, and laity. . . all working together to bring about the world's consecration.

A look at some statistics will show the necessity of recognizing the salvific mission of the layman. Only 17% of the world's population TODAY is Catholic. The percentage is dropping each year. It is predicted that by the year 2000 AD the number of Catholics in the world will be only 7%. The ever increasing population of India, Africa, China. Latin America is reducing the percentage. Relatively speaking the Church is becoming smaller and smaller. It must be clear to all that laymen and women must assume responsibility for bringing all men to Christ.

What does this demand of us? During this General Chapter when we are renewing ourselves we must be very conscious of this new direction in the Church. We must be aware of the need for our sisters to understand the role the layman is being asked to assume. This will call for a change in our attitudes toward the laymen who are associated with us in our apostolic works. We must more and more see the lay men or women who are associated with us as collaborators in the work of the Church and not as aides in OUR work. They are members of a team all contributing to the common welfare of the world. Another attitude we must develop is our sisters is the realization that we may be called upon to relinquish some of our cherished works. . . because lay men can do them better than we can. And we may be called upon to take on new and different works because they can be done better by religious! It is so necessary that we see the laymen as valued collaborators and not as so many threats to us. They must feel our sincere understanding of their role and never sense that we merely tolerate them because we do not have a religious to replace them.

There are two categories in which the lay man is called upon to exercise his vocation. The first is the one we are more or less familiar with. He assists the clergy in their ecclesial work, e.g., serving as catechists, altar boys, ushers, raising funds, etc. The second category is one that is just beginning to be understood. It is of much more importance. . . as lay men they are being called by the Church to consecrate the world to Christ by working in society as laymen. They have the obligation to bring Christ into the marketplace. . . into government, into education, into mass media communications, into business, into international relations, into the medical professions, etc. Here

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it is that the layman fulfills his unique vocation. I have heard Father Lombardi say that in today's world the Catholic leader of a state is of far greater value than a Cardinal! Who can measure the influence of an Adenauer or a Kennedy on the social structures of the world?

I have been delighted to see the trend in the community toward bringing competent laymen into our works. The use of trained laymen as development officers, as controllers in our large institutions not only is a wise policy but it is a recognition of the fact that the layman can do a better job in these areas than a sister could. Also by engaging competent laymen in such areas sisters are released for more active engagement in the direct apostolate.

The old idea that the secular administrator, the secular teacher, the secular nurse, must always be in a subordinate position to a sister must be replaced with the mentality that all are working together for the salvation of souls.

It appears to me that one of our great tasks as religious is to find the promising young man or woman and encourage them to go into society as LAYMEN and to Christianize whatever environment they enter. It can be the challenge of every teacher to encourage leadership of this kind. This apostolate is open to every sister and what a rewarding experience it would be to know that she has extended the kingdom by developing Catholic leaders capable of changing their environment to one in which Christian principles dominate.

My objective has been to bring before the Chapter the need for helping the Community to understand this new vocation in the Church; and, as a community be known as a religious congregation conscious of its place in the total Christian Community.

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An apostolic way of life is a Trinitarian mission, an ecclesial mandate to live in a personal loving relationship with God through Christ Jesus, and to diffuse this love among the People of God by continuing the life of Christ in the world today. The Mercy apostolate in general promotes perfection in the world today. The Mercy apostolate in particular promotes the perfection of theological charity by responding to human need wherever it is found: in community living, in teaching, in nursing, in social work at home and in foreign fields.

In an address to a group of Sisters on September 8, 1965, Pope Paul VI expressed the hope that the religious women in the Catholic Church might "get back a more direct and full participation in the life of the Church," and enumerated four general categories of such direct participation: the liturgy, social welfare, the modern apostolate, and the service of the brethren.

New Horizons for the Woman Religious, THE POPE SPEAKS, X

PROPOSAL 1        That the apostolic works of the Community be permeated by this principle and that this section of the Constitutions be fully explained in a Directory in the broadest terms possible in order that the Community will meet the crucial needs of the Church in the abiding spirit of compassion which is the characteristic spirit of the Institute.

PROPOSAL 2

- a. That the Sisters have the freedom to expand their social apostolate especially that within the scope of their assignment, when there exists a need to which Mercy can respond, e.g. parents of students, families of patients, etc.
- b. That Proposal #1 be treated in a Directory as to techniques and preparation of the Sisters for the social apostolate.

"The duty consonant with the patrimony received from Christ is that of speaking, offering, announcing it to others. . . . To this internal drive of charity which tends to become the external gift of charity we will give the name dialogue. . . . The Church should enter into dialogue with the world in which it exists and labors."  
ECCLESIAM SUAM, PATHS OF THE CHURCH, Pope Paul VI

"The duty of bringing the laity into apostolic action is today an integral part of the religious vocation. 'For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another. . . . For you are all one in Christ Jesus.'"  
CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH, DE ECCLESIA.

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"If we look upon the dignity of the human person in the light of divinely revealed truth, we cannot help but esteem it far more highly." PACEM IN TERRIS, Pope John XXIII.

PROPOSAL 1      That the Sisters, aware that the laity participate in the salvific mission of the Church, collaborate with them in making the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. That a commission be established to study ways and means of implementing the proposal.

PROPOSAL 2      That the Sisters of Mercy be recognized by all as a Community completely committed to the social doctrine of Jesus Christ and His Church which unmistakably sees all men as members of Christ's Mystical Body.

The social doctrine of Jesus Christ and His Church should not only be known and understood by Sisters of Mercy but the COMMUNITY (Institute) must be committed to the striving to fulfill these ideals in all its works. The COMMUNITY should be known for its spirit of charity, mercy, and sense of justice extended to all who come within its sphere of influence.

Our members should be so formed that there is not the shadow of a doubt but that we live Christ. He loved and suffered and died for all men. The COMMUNITY should be seen as corporately always striving to practice in its works the Charity of Christ seeing all men as Christ. Christ today is each man, woman, and child in the whole world. Christ continues His redeeming action in each human being suffering from want, injustice, pain, sorrow, or ignorance; through His Church He told us starkly in His Gospel that whatever is done to the least of these is done to HIM. As a COMMUNITY then we must give witness to the world of Christ's everlasting love of all men.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN???

Simply this - As a COMMUNITY we must be known by the all pervading spirit of love which governs our institutional policies and is literally palpable in our institutions and works. Our sisters must be seen as obviously striving to reflect this spirit. They must not only know the Words of Christ but they must put them into practice. A conscious effort must be made to revitalize the spirit of our foundress, Mother Catherine McAuley. She listened to the Words of Christ and was compelled to put them into action:

She fed the hungry  
comforted the afflicted

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taught the ignorant  
sheltered the homeless  
visited the sick . . .

She brought Christ to hundreds and through her followers He has been brought to millions! This heritage of Christ-like love was the heritage she left to us who have chosen to follow in her footsteps. It is to our credit that the Sisters of Mercy have maintained her beautiful spirit of kindness, generosity, friendliness, and love of the weak. But we must do more today!

Today's world . . . the MODERN WORLD . . . is demanding stronger and more convincing testimony of our corporate commitment to the ideals of the Gospel. To be worthy of Mother McAuley we must be deeply conscious of the needs of our times, we must be ready to respond with alacrity to the call of the Holy Father for an ever more public witness to the teaching of the Gospel. We must be ready to pay the price . . . we must be willing to suffer for the TRUTH. Christ, Himself, must be our Model. We must be uncomfortable in the empathy we have with the millions and millions of men who today are so uncomfortable. We must recognize Christ, the uncomfortable Christ, in all those who are suffering from hunger fatigue, and injustice.

In the booklet, THE ROLE OF THE SISTER OF MERCY IN THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE, recently distributed by our Mother General we have a beautiful description of the policies which should be directive in guiding the works of the Sisters of Mercy. Since this pamphlet was compiled from materials solicited from all the Provinces it represents the thinking of thousands of our Sisters. As a COMMUNITY then we can do nothing better than sincerely strive to make real the 12 policies listed on pages 8, 9, and 10 of the booklet. We must let these policies become the living forces driving the WHOLE COMMUNITY to become a true witness of Christ in the world, manifesting to all His love, His mercy, and His justice. It is only in this way that each Sister of Mercy can achieve the fulfillment of her desire.

The twelve policies follow:

1. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ we respect the dignity of every human person, and accord him the reverence and love of a child of God, without reference to race, creed, or color.
2. Any applicant to our institute will be admitted, provided she has fulfilled the qualifications as prescribed by the Constitutions of the religious Sisters of Mercy of the Union for admission of candidates to the religious life. Race will constitute no barrier. All will be given equal opportunities to bring to fruit the needs of spiritual perception, of intellectual acumen, and of social grace.
3. Schools owned and operated by the Sisters of Mercy will be open to all students who fulfill the admission requirements of the respective schools. Race will be no barrier.

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4. All schools and institutions owned by the dioceses and staffed by the Sisters of Mercy will follow the policies as prescribed by the Ordinary of each diocese.
5. In health and welfare institutions, the same admission and treatment policies are applicable to all regardless of race, creed, or color.
6. Applications for positions to the staff of any organization owned by the Sisters of Mercy will be considered on the basis of character, ability, training, and experience necessary to perform the duty for which the applicant has applied.
7. The virtues of justice and charity demand that in all circumstances of daily living; namely, in our schools, hospitals, and homes, we exercise and promote the spirit of Christ-like love, understanding, and personal responsibility.
8. The Sister of Mercy shall conscientiously exercise her right to vote in local, state, and national elections. She recognizes her positive duty to do all in her power to ensure this right to all citizens without reference to creed, race, or color.
9. Love for our fellowmen must urge us to coordinate our activities with other groups and cooperate to the fullest in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, and the restoration of all societies to Christ. Should this involve an outward demonstration to obtain civil rights for all members of our society, permission must be received from the Ordinary of the diocese through the Mother Provincial.
10. Books and articles on the Christian attitude toward racial justice shall be read occasionally in the refectory. A good bibliography must be made available to the Sisters. This material shall be supplemented with records, tapes, and appropriate lectures and conferences.
11. Principles of Christian social justice shall be an integral part of the total formation of the Sisters. They shall, from the novitiate on, be taught the true meaning of the Mystical Body of Christ in relation to their apostolic endeavors.
12. The Sisters shall participate actively in social justice workshops, seminars, and other inter-group activities. Opportunities shall also be provided for inter-cultural experiences.

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The Sisters shall consider it their responsibility to communicate principles of social justice in a manner appropriate to their given assignments. They shall constantly examine their attitudes towards minority groups. If they should unfortunately still hold some prejudices, they will exert every effort to correct these attitudes, and most cautiously avoid communicating these sentiments to those with whom they come in contact. In hospitals and large institutions it would be well to post the policies of the institution regarding human rights in the lobby, the administrator's office, and other conspicuous places. All communications media should be employed to implement the philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy regarding social justice and social charity.

As new needs arise and old ills have been cured the policies of the Sisters of Mercy will be reviewed and updated so that they may remain current at all times.

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