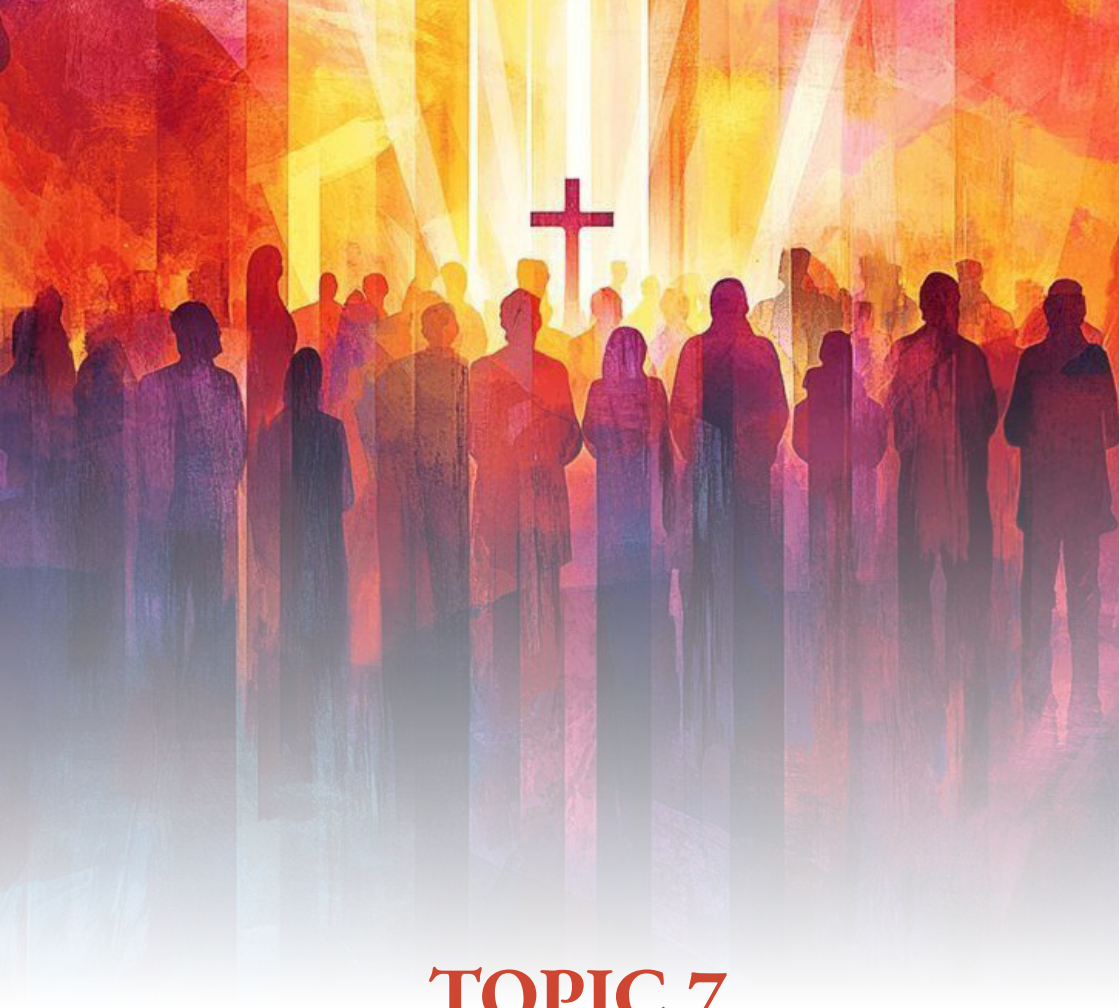
VOCATIONAL
DISCERNMENT

SECULAR INSTITUTE
LAY SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST PRIEST

INDEX

Presentation 5
Methodology 7
1. Vocation stories in the Bible 9
2. The vocation of man: life in the Spirit 19
3. The community character of the human vocation 57
4. The sacramental economy 73
5. Lectio divina 113
6. The Liturgy of the Hours: The Sanctification of the Day 151
7. The Church, the People of God, the Body of Christ, temple of the Spirit 175
8. Following Jesus Christ: Characteristic Notes 187
9. Agents of the spiritual life 195
10. Mary, model of a woman and Servant 259
11. Celebration (confession of faith in God the Trinity) 271



TOPIC 7

THE CHURCH PEOPLE OF GOD, BODY OF CHRIST, TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

METHODOLOGY

Guide to study the texts personally:

1. Read the text and underline the ideas you want to highlight or the doubts that arise. Take note of them.
2. Bring to prayer the underlined ideas that you would highlight and the doubts about the text. Explain what calls you feel God is making to you for your daily life.
3. What commitment emerges from these calls? How can you bring them to life? Where do you find resistance?

Presentation of the questions worked on to the person in charge of the formation process.

THE CHURCH PEOPLE OF GOD, BODY OF CHRIST

Temple of the Holy Spirit
(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

I. The Church, People of God

781. "In every time and place it has been pleasing to God who fears Him and practices justice. However, he wanted to sanctify and save men not individually and isolated, without connection with each other, but to make them a people so that they would truly know him and serve him with a holy life. So, he chose Israel as his people, made a covenant with them, and educated them little by little. He revealed his person and his plan to him throughout his history and sanctified him. All this, however, took place as a preparation and figure of his new and perfect covenant which he was to bring about in Christ [...], that is, the New Testament in his blood, calling together the people from among the Jews and the Gentiles to be united, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit" (LG 9).

The characteristics of the People of God

782. The People of God has characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all religious, ethnic, political or cultural groups in history:

- It is the People of God: God does not belong to any people in property. But he has acquired for himself a people of those who were not previously a people: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pt 2:9).

- One becomes a member of this body not by physical birth, but by the "birth from above," "of water and of the Spirit" (Jn 3:3-5), that is, by faith in Christ and Baptism.
- This people have Jesus the Christ [Anointed, Messiah] as its Head: because the same Anointing, the Holy Spirit flows from the Head to the Body, is "the Messianic People".
- "The identity of this People is the dignity and freedom of the children of God in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple" (LG 9).
- "His law is the new commandment: to love as Christ himself loved us (cf. Jn 13:34)." This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:2; Gal 5:25).
- Its mission is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16). "It is a very sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race" (LG 9.
- "His destiny is the Kingdom of God, which he himself began in this world, which is to be extended until he himself brings it to perfection" (LG 9).

A priestly, prophetic and royal people

783. Jesus Christ is the One whom the Father has anointed with the Holy Spirit and has made him "Priest, Prophet and King". The whole People of God share in these three functions of Christ and has the responsibilities of mission and service that flow from them (cf. RH 18-21).

784. By entering the People of God by faith and Baptism, one participates in the unique vocation of this people: in their priestly vocation:

"Christ the Lord, the Pontiff taken from among men, has made the new people 'a kingdom of priests to God his Father'. Those who are baptized, in fact, by the new birth and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and holy priesthood" (LG 10).

785. "The holy people of God also share in the prophetic character of Christ." It is so above all because of the supernatural sense of faith that is that of all the people, laity and hierarchy, when "it unfailingly adheres to the faith transmitted to the saints once and for all" (LG 12) and deepens its understanding and becomes a witness of Christ in the midst of this world.

786. Finally, the People of God participate in Christ's kingly function. Christ exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself by his death and resurrection (cf. Jn 12:32). Christ, King and Lord of the universe, became the servant of all, having "come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). For the Christian, "to serve Christ is to reign" (LG 36), particularly "in the poor and in the suffering" where he discovers "the image of his poor and suffering Founder" (LG 8). The People of God realize their "kingly dignity" by living according to this vocation to serve with Christ.

"The sign of the cross makes kings of all those who are regenerated in Christ, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them priests; And so, in addition to this special service of our ministry, all spiritual and perfect Christians should know that they are partakers of the royal lineage and the priestly office. What is more regal than a spirit that, subject to God, governs its own body? And what is priestly than to offer to God a pure conscience and the immaculate victims of our piety on the altar of the heart?" (St. Leo the Great, Sermo 4:1).

II. The Church, Body of Christ

The Church is communion with Jesus

787. From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his life (cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19); he revealed to them the mystery of the Kingdom (cf. Mt 13:10-17); he gave them part in his mission, in his joy (cf. Lk 10:17-20) and in their sufferings (cf. Lk 22:28-30). Jesus speaks of an even more intimate fellowship between him and those who follow him: "Abide in me, as I am in you. . . . I am the vine and you are the branches" (Jn 15:4-5). He announces a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56).

788. When the disciples were deprived of his visible presence, Jesus did not leave them orphans (cf. Jn 14:18). He promised to remain with them until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20), he sent them his Spirit (cf. Jn 20:22; Acts 2:33). For this reason, communion with Jesus became in a certain way more intense: "By the communication of his Spirit to his brethren, gathered from all nations, Christ mystically constitutes them into his body" (LG 7).

789. The comparison of the Church with the body sheds a ray of light on the intimate relationship between the Church and Christ. It is not only gathered around Him: it is always unified in Him, in His Body. Three aspects of the Church "body of Christ" are to be emphasized more specifically: the unity of all the members among themselves by their union with Christ; Christ Head of the body; the Church, Bride of Christ.

"One body"

790. Believers who respond to the Word of God and become members of the Body of Christ remain closely united to Christ: "The life of Christ is communicated to believers, who are united to Christ, who died and was glorified, through the sacraments in a mysterious but real way" (LG 7). This is particularly true in the case of Baptism by which we are united to the death and Resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom 6:4-5; 1 Cor 12:13), and in the case of the Eucharist, by which "we truly share in the Body of the Lord, which raises us up to communion with him and with one another" (LG 7).

791. The unity of the body has not abolished the diversity of the members: "In the building up of the Body of Christ there is a diversity of members and functions. It is the same Spirit who, according to his riches and the needs of the ministries, distributes his various gifts for the good of the Church." The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with him; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with him" (LG 7). Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body emerges victorious over all human divisions: "For all of us who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ: there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither slave nor free; neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28).

Christ, Head of this Body

792. Christ "is the Head of the Body which is the Church" (Col 1:18). It is the Principle of creation and redemption. Raised to the glory of the Father, "he is first in all things" (Col 1:18), especially in the Church through which he extends his kingdom over all things.

793. He unites us to his Passover: All the members must strive to be like him "until Christ is formed in them" (Gal 4:19). "That is why we are integrated into the mysteries of his life [...], we join his sufferings as the body to his head. We suffer with him that we may be glorified with him" (LG 7).

794. He provides for our growth (cf. Col 2:19): In order to make us grow towards him, our Head (cf. Eph 4:11-16), Christ distributes in his Body, the Church, the gifts and services by which we help one another on the way of salvation.

795. Christ and the Church are therefore the "whole Christ" [Christus totus]. The Church is one with Christ. The saints are very keenly aware of this unity:

> *"Let us congratulate ourselves and give thanks for what we have become, not only Christians but Christ himself. Do you understand, brethren, the grace that God has given us in giving us Christ as Head? Be amazed and rejoice, we have become Christ. For since He is the Head and we are the members, the whole man is Him and we [...] The fullness of Christ, then, is the Head and the members: What does the Head and the members mean? Christ and the Church" (Saint Augustine, In Iohannis evangelium tractatus, 21, 8).*
>
> *Redemptor noster unam se personam sancta Ecclesia, quam assumpsit, exhibuit ("Our Redeemer shows that he forms one person with the Church which he assumed") (St. Gregory the Great, Moralia in Job, Praefatio 6, 14)*
>
> *Caput et membra, quasi una persona mystica ("The Head and the members, as if they were a single mystical person") (St. Thomas Aquinas, S.th. 3, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1).*

A word of St. Joan of Arc to her judges sums up the faith of the holy doctors and expresses the good sense of the believer: "Of Jesus Christ

and of the Church, it seems to me that he is all one and that it is not necessary to make a difficulty of it" (Joan of Arc, Dictum: Procès de condamnation).

The Church is the Bride of Christ

796. The unity of Christ and of the Church, Head and members of the body, also implies the distinction of the two in a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed through the image of the husband and wife. The theme of Christ the Bridegroom of the Church was prepared by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist (cf. Jn 3:29). The Lord designated himself as "the Bridegroom" (Mk 2:19; cf. Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13). The Apostle presents the Church and each member of the faithful as a Bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord in order to "be with him but one Spirit" (cf. 1 Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2). She is the immaculate Bride of the immaculate Lamb (cf. Rev 22:17; Eph 1:4; 5:27), which Christ "loved and for whom he gave himself up in order to sanctify her" (Eph 5:26), which he associated himself with through an eternal covenant and which he never ceases to care for as his own body (cf. Eph 5:29):

> *"Behold the total Christ, head and body, one formed out of many [...] Whether it is the head that speaks, or the members, it is Christ that speaks. He speaks in the role of head [ex persona capitis] or in that of body [ex persona corporis]. According to what is written: "And the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, I say this concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph 5:31-32) And the Lord himself in the Gospel says: "So that they are no longer two but one flesh" (Mt 19:6). As you have seen well, there are indeed two different persons and yet they form only one in the conjugal embrace... As head he is called "husband" and as body "wife" (St. Augustine, Enarratio in Psalmum 74, 4: PL 36, 948-949).*

III. The Church, Temple of the Holy Spirit

797. Quod est spiritus noster, id est anima nostra, ad membra nostra, hoc est Spiritus Sanctus ad membra Christi, ad corpus Christi, quod est Ecclesia ("What our spirit, that is, our soul, is to our members, so is the Holy Spirit to the members of Christ, to the Body of Christ which is the Church"; Saint Augustine, Sermo 268:2). "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, it is also to be attributed that all the parts of the body are intimately united, both among themselves and with their exalted Head, since he is all in the Head, all in the Body, all in each of the members" (Pius XII: Mystici Corporis: DS 3808). The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the Temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21):

> *"In fact, it is to the Church herself that the 'gift of God' has been entrusted... It is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruptibility, the confirmation of our faith and the ladder of our ascension to God [...] For where the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace" (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Adversus Haereses, 3, 24, 1).*

798. The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly salutary action in all parts of the body" (Pius XII, Mystici Corporis: DS 3808). He acts in many ways to build up the whole body in charity (cf. Eph 4:16): by the Word of God, "which has the power to build the building" (Acts 20:32), by Baptism through which he forms the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:13); by the sacraments that make the members of Christ grow and heal; by "the grace granted to the Apostles" which "stands out among these gifts" (LG 7), by the virtues that lead to doing good, and by the many special graces [called "charisms"] through which the faithful are

"prepared and ready to take on various tasks or ministries that contribute to renewing and building up the Church more and more" (LG 12; cf. AA 3).

Charisms

799. Extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit, which have a direct or indirect ecclesial utility; charisms are ordered to the building up of the Church, to the good of men and to the needs of the world.

800. Charisms are to be welcomed with gratitude by those who receive them, and also by all the members of the Church. In fact, they are a marvellous wealth of grace for the apostolic vitality and holiness of the whole Body of Christ; charisms constitute such richness as long as they are gifts that truly come from the Holy Spirit and that are exercised in a way that is fully in conformity with the authentic impulses of this same Spirit, that is, according to charity, the true measure of charisms (cf. 1 Cor 13).

801. For this reason, discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism dispenses from reference and submission to the pastors of the Church. "It is their special task not to quench the Spirit, but to examine everything and to keep what is good" (LG 12), so that all charisms may cooperate, in their diversity and complementarity, for the "common good" (cf. 1 Cor 12:7; cf. LG 30; CL, 24).