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IDENTITY OF THE LAITY IN THE LIGHT OF POST-SYNODAL EXHORTATION „CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI" AND SOCIAL THEORY

1. Conciliar novelty in teaching about the laity

In the introduction to the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Council Fathers postulate that those aspects of social cultural or economic life which are subject to secularization should also undergo laicization[1]. The Council understands this process as

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[1] Although this is not the right place for this kind of explanation, it seems reasonable to dispel doubts as to the understanding of the concept of secularization. The author notes that in the quoted document Council Fathers indicate that rightly many spheres of human life have „become independent". In this way, they make a positive overall assessment of the process of secularization, which should be distinguished from the phenomenon of secularism, which, from the theological perspective, is a concept perceived negatively. Authors of the decree expressly refer to sociological thought of the time which underlined the social and institutional level of secularization which was realized precisely as a result of subsequent areas of human life becoming independent from the reign of religious institutions. Numerous sociologists prophesying the fall of the religion had to verify their theses based on empirical knowledge thus shifting the meaning of the phenomenon of secularization. Contemporary sociology of religion does not confirm that religion will disappear from social life, however its character, influence, form, and functions will change (more on this topic: P.L. Berger, *Święty baldachim*, Kraków 1997; J. Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym świecie*, Kraków 2005; N. Luhmann, *Funkcje religii*, Kraków 2007; T. Luckmann, *Niewidzialna religia*, Kraków 2006. In such a situation, pastoral theology should discuss the process of secularization not as a threat to the existence of religion, but as a reality that challenges pastoral care. It is worth noting, however, that the Magisterium of the Church uses the terms secularization (*Ecclesia in Europa*, 19) and secularism interchangeably (*Christifideles laici* 32, *Evangelium*

the inclusion of subsequent spheres of life and activity into the field of the lay apostolate. While emphasizing the importance of this task, the document at the same point underlines that in many countries *the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity.* (The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem,* 1). The novelty of the conciliar thesis prompts us to ask fundamental questions which, because of their obviousness, elude not only laypeople, but also clergy or monks and nuns. Since so much importance is attached to the presence of the laity in the Church, it is worth considering what meaning is attached to the laity, what is their identity and the specificity of their presence in the world.

2. Identity in social sciences

Social sciences began to consider identity relatively recently as the concept gained popularity only in the second half of the 20th century, thanks to the works of Erich Eriksson, who looked at the issue from a psychological perspective, or Zygmunt Baumann, who undertook a sociological analysis[2].

According to Bauman, we become interested in identity only when we begin to have problems with finding answers to questions like „who am I?", „Where do I belong?". It stimulates us to consider and carefully reflect upon on our identity. The need to define one's own identity is especially important when there are rapid changes taking place, when a person must define himself or herself precisely to face the challenges of the present which require changeability and mobility. As new situations cause divisions and social ties to diversify,

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vitae 21, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 17), adding the term: laicization (*Novo millenio ineunte* 6). It seems that in pastoral theology it is necessary to systematize these terms, discover their true meaning, causes and effects for the Church.

    ² E. Erikson, *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo,* Poznań 1997; Z. Bauman, *Tożsamość. Wtedy, teraz, po co?* in: *Idee a urządzanie świata społecznego,* E. Nowicka, M. Chałubiński (ed.), Warszawa 1999, p. 43; M. S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo. Problem sprawstwa*, Kraków 2013, p. 257; J. Straub, *Tożsamość osobista i zbiorowa. Analiza pojęciowa*, in: *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne,* vol. 2, A. Jasińska-Kania, L.M. Nijakowski, J. Szacki, M. Ziółkowski (ed.), Warszawa 2006, p. 1119.

overlap and cross. It is then that an individual needs to define their own unity, integrity, and continuity, as well as their identity and dissimilarity[3]. In the psychological theory of identity, this action is called self-definition, and it consists in developing a set of ideas, judgments, and beliefs about oneself. Erikson argues that such self-identification continues throughout life as we build our character. By respecting our own system of values, which we have developed in the course of our lives or accepted from others, we manifest, but also prove our personal identity, that is who we are. It means, as Taylor pointed out, that an individual's identity depends on having a moral horizon, in other words, if I distinguish between good and evil, then I know who I am[4].

3. Shaping identity

An individual shaping their own identity is present in a social environment in which there are also others. Those "others" play an important role in the process of shaping identity because they represent a coherent structure of various identities, among which the individual will shape their own. However, this is not an identity imposed normatively by some groups, societies, or nations, because those "others" are not able to form an individual human identity, which is the resultant of many roles and functions assumed in society. Apart from the individual identity, a person also finds themselves within common identity.

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[3] Cf. A. Jasińska-Kania, *Teorie tożsamości i różnicy,* in: *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne,* vol. 2, A. Jasińska-Kania, L.M. Nijakowsi, J. Szacki, M. Ziółkowski, op. cit., p. 1113.

[4] In this context, the psychological theory shows that identity can take on various types: a dispersed identity (the contents of the experience are mixed up, their structure is impermanent and unstable), an identity that organizes a whole (a person has a sense of integrity and individuality as well as continuity of existence), or a total identity (boundaries are strong, stiff, and distant from the environment). Cf. A. Brzezińska, *Społeczna psychologia rozwoju,* Warszawa 2007, pp. 247-249; Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamość,* in: *Encyklopedia socjologii,* vol. 4, Warszawa 2002, p. 252.

Based on their own experience, attitudes, and behaviours, an individual determines to what extent they identify themselves with the community representing a given identity. An individual tries to understand themselves and the world of objects and on this basis constructs and interprets a common identity to identify therewith. It binds together certain people who describe themselves with certain features that characterize them as similar. Members of a community share background, tradition, behaviours, lifestyles, orientations, and expectations[5]. However, it should be remembered that due to the interactive way in which various roles coexist, the identity created on their basis is always individual. How is the identity of an individual shaped then? We can talk about two most important factors that influence this process, namely: the reflected self and identification with the „we" group.

When shaping one's own identity, it is necessary to look at oneself from the perspective of one's own abilities and confront them with the expectations that an individual raises towards themselves, as well as those raised by the environment. This is the main principle of symbolic interactionism, according to which we think about ourselves what others think about us. Thus, a lay person has a sense of the self to know that the expectations towards the laity apply to them precisely.

A lay person, like anyone who wants to discover their own identity, defines himself/herself based on how others perceive them. They answer the question to what extent they are a lay person in the eyes of others. It is not enough to be aware of fulfilling a role and the resulting social expectations. It is necessary to have a sense of a self-regarding these expectations that will make it possible to internalize them[6]. It is worth noting at this point that such an unconscious thought

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[5] J. Straub, *Tożsamość osobista i zbiorowa. Analiza pojęciowa,* in: *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne,* vol. 2, A. Jasińska-Kania, L.M. Nijakowsi, J. Szacki, M. Ziółkowski (ed.), op. cit., p. 1130, 1134. J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, Warszawa 2008.

[6] Cf. M.S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo. Problem sprawstwa,* op. cit., p. 256.

process makes it possible to realize the features of secular identity, but also to define oneself in a social situation, and thus constantly create one's own identity.

The presence in the interpersonal space, specific to everyone, dictates the sense of who I am, what is my place in this space, who I get on with, who I think of as „we". Looking at others from my own perspective, I define my social identity by comparing myself (my own behaviours and characteristics) with others in the reference group. An individual identifies themselves with groups, organizations, social movements, or church communities. The identity of these communities is usually emphasized by their separate and comprehensive character and the continuity of existence, which give meaning to ambitions and aspirations[7].

Each of us, therefore, belongs to some communities that we call „we", it is not one group, because „we" means students, „we" means Poles, „we" means members of the Catholic Youth Association. We become bound with other people, identify with their goals, values, and rules of conduct. We also share with other people similar categories of self-description and their presence in the individual's contacts with their social environment. But the identification of the category „we" will not be possible without opposing alien groups. It is only from this perspective that can we see what distinguishes us, what characterizes us, in what space we can behave in a conformist way, whom we will perceive stereotypically.

Social identity is a group of all those who think „we" about each other and separate themselves from others, who they think of as „them". This means that there is my, our space, where I feel good and at ease, but also „their" space from which I distance myself. This distance is marked by specific boundaries: material, mental or symbolic, which distinguish me and my interpersonal space from others. Who are the others? Social sciences, depending on the scale

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[7] A. Jasińska-Kania, *Teorie tożsamości i różnicy,* in: *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne,* vol. 2, A. Jasińska-Kania, L.M. Nijakowsi, J. Szacki, M. Ziółkowski (ed.), op. cit., p. 1113.

of otherness, distinguish four types of otherness: enemies, strangers, misfits, and neighbours. Despite being helpful, this division seems to be less and less clear nowadays.

4. Theoretical doubts about the identity of the laity

Currently, traditional determinants of identity, such as the division into our own crowd and strangers, the sense of community and similarity, historical memory, etc., are losing their importance. We are dealing with a constant process of self-reconstruction of identity, continuous change. Until now, identity has been determined by one's background or religion. Nowadays our identity is evolving, it depends on mobility and openness to constant changes. How are we going to describe the identity of the laity in this perspective? Does the identity of the laity even exist?

The mere cursory review of the issue could have prompted many to ask strictly theological questions, to what extent can we talk about social identity since Christianity has led to the full individualization of a person thanks to the exposition of the soul. On the other hand, if we were to focus only on the identity of numerically identifiable persons, i.e. the followers in our case, we would not be able to grasp anything permanent except for what marks the Catholic identity[8]. Besides, how can one speak of the identity of the laity individually, since it is an object of interpretation of the Magisterium, and therefore it is assumed that a lay person is a certain identification that is characteristic of many people. At this point we face yet another theoretical problem. For if we recognize that there is such a thing as the collective identity of the laity, we must decide whether it is reconstructive or normative. In other words, is the identity of the laity what the laity is like, how laypeople present themselves as laymen, and therefore how they define their secularity through their attitudes

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[8] Cf. Z. Stachowski, *Chrześcijańska tożsamość narracyjna,* in: *Wokół tożsamości: teorie, wymiary, ekspresje,* I. Borowik, K. Leszczyńska (ed.) Kraków 2008, p. 69.

or behaviours[9]? Or perhaps the identity of the laity is imposed on members of this community by external authors. And if so, it is in some sense ideologized, if only through the guidelines of the Magisterium. Navigating through these doubts is extremely difficult, especially since these are not the only difficulties faced by a researcher of secular identity. Thus, it should not be expected that this paper will answer all these questions. They certainly provide a wider platform for discussion on the idea of secular identity, presented in doctrinal documents, and the real image of secular identity present in today's world.

5. Searching for the concept of lay identity in the documents of the Magisterium

Let us look at the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which puts our knowledge about the laity in order. It turns out, however, the very beginning of the paragraph concerning the lay faithful shows that they are negatively defined as the faithful as faithful *who are not in holy orders and those in the state of religious life*[10].

The term laity is here understood to mean *all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; and are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetical, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world* (Dogmatic Constitution on The Church *Lumen Gentium* 31, hereinafter LG).

Thus, the identity of the laity may be defined as the identity of those who have made the decision not to follow a religious or priestly vocation.

In this way, we can easily distinguish the category of „we"-the lay faithful, which is a congregation distinguished from other categories,

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[9] Cf. J. Straub, *Tożsamość osobista i zbiorowa. Analiza pojęciowa,* in: *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne,* vol. 2, A. Jasińska-Kania, L.M. Nijakowsi, J. Szacki, M. Ziółkowski (ed.), op. cit., p. 1131.

[10] *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, 897.

or „they"-priests and men and women religious[11]. It is therefore worth noting at this point that the decision to choose a vocation determines our life plans, career path meaning all our efforts to pursue the set goal, which is salvation. So what is this way? We will not find its description in the quoted fragment of the Catechism, because the only distinction in this definition taken from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is the statement that *they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetical, and kingly functions of Christ* (LG 31). The Catechism does not leave us with an unsolved question, and it shows the uniqueness of the lay faithful by describing their purpose, which is common to other states, but at the same time shows the specificity of their vocation.

The Catechism defines the common vocation of all Christ's disciples as *a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world* (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1533). This is a slightly different approach to the same vocation mentioned elsewhere in the Catechism where we read that all the faithful *are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world* (Catechism of the Catholic Church 871). In the same chapter of the document there is a detailed reference that the Catechism makes to the vocation of laypeople. It is interesting, however, that only with regard to this state does the Catechism outline a task resulting from the Christian vocation. In paragraph 898 of the section on the vocation of laypeople the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that it is their task *to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will.*

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[11] Certainly, such a division is the effect of the centuries-old distinction between the Church and the secular community, which is reflected in the provision in the Decree of Gratian from the 12th century, in which we read that: *There are two kinds of Christians. One kind is devoted to the service of God and devotes itself to contemplation and prayer. It is therefore fitting for it to be free from all the noise of worldly things; these are the priests and those who have given themselves to God, namely men religious (…). The second type of Christians are the laity. Laos means as much as the people. They are allowed to possess temporal goods, but only for use*".

The Magisterium of the Church has prepared a separate document which is a result of the Synod of Bishops and is thus entirely devoted to the discussed issue. In 1988, Pope Saint John Paul II presented the Exhortation *Christifideles laici* to the world, where he formulates the most important teaching about the lay faithful and tries to show their specific vocation. According to this document, the constructive elements of a lay person are Baptism, the offices of Christ and presence in the world.

The Exhortation reminds that Baptism gives newness to every life as it regenerates us in the life of the Son of God; unites us to Christ and to his Body, the Church; and anoints us in the Holy Spirit, making us spiritual temples[12] (Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, *Christifideles laici* 10, 13). This newness concerns every state, so it is difficult to point to its specificity in the context of lay vocation. For in the same way all the baptized, as St. Paul writes, are saints and are chosen and loved in Christ (Romans 1, 7). But at the same time, the document reminds that each state, being a spiritual temple, is equal, because they all have the same dignity and vocation to perfect love, they are all related to each other and serve one another (ChL 55). It is a reference to the Biblical image of the vineyard where the lay faithful, together with all the other members of the Church, are branches engrafted to Christ the true vine, and from him derive their life and fruitfulness (ChL 9). *Christifideles laici* points out, however, that by virtue of this common dignity, within the vocation proper to the faithful, all laypeople, priests, men and women religious are jointly responsible for the mission of the Church. The post-conciliar teaching resembles

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[12] However, the Magisterium tries to find the specificity of other sacraments of Christian initiation. Receiving the sacrament of Confirmation of the laity obliges them to strengthen their defense and spread the faith through word and deed (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 33). And receiving the Eucharist is a source of dignity and the basis of the commitment of lay faithful (ChL 16).

the thought of Pius XII who said that the laity *not only belong to the Church, but are the Church* (ChL 9)[13]. Having the same mission, they differ in their ministry (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* 2).

The participation in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King referred to in the Exhortation defines the identity of the lay faithful a bit more clearly than baptism. Participation of the laity in the *prophetic mission* of Christ means acceptance of the gospel in faith and proclaiming it in word and deed, allowing the newness and the power of the gospel to shine out every day in their life, denouncing evil and expressing their hope of future glory (ChL 14). Therefore, they are called to exercise their kingship as Christians, above all in the spiritual combat in which they seek to overcome in themselves the kingdom of sin, and to serve Jesus who is himself present in all his brothers and sisters. Special attention should be paid to the priestly mission through which the lay faithful incorporated in Jesus Christ are united to him and to his sacrifice in the offering they make of themselves and their work, prayers, and apostolic endeavours. During the celebration of the Eucharist, they offer their family life, relaxation, and the hardships of life along with the Lord's body. Here *Christifideles laici* points out to yet another presence specific to the laity in the ministry of Christ, which is the sacralization of the world (ChL14).

Since the main task of the Church is the Christianization of the modern world and its structures, its fulfilment has been entrusted to lay faithful. As they are on the front lines, inside the world, they sanctify it with their holiness. Clergy and men and women religious, being and sanctifying the world from the outside, support them indirectly with their sacramental ministry, preaching the word and sacrifice resulting from their charisma[14]. In this way, we change the perception of the Church and her salvation mission. However, for the world to be sanctified by the laity, their presence in

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[13] Pius XII, *Address to new cardinals* (February 20, 1946), AAS 38 (1946), 149.

[14] Cf. R. Kamiński, *Powołanie katolików* świeckich, „Roczniki Pastoralno-Katechetyczne", vol. 1 (56) 2009, p. 12.

the world is necessary. This is underlined by the third aspect indicated in the Exhortation, concerning the setting of the life of laypeople in the world, which is also intended to glorify God the Father in Christ.

If we recall the most important purpose of Christ's redemptive work which is the salvation of humanity, and the renewal of the whole temporal order, we have the possibility to identify the role of the Church in this work. The Church, in fact, lives in the world, even if she is not of the world and continues the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Church has its secular dimension and thus the ministry of all the faithful has its reference to this secular character. However, the Pope points out that it is primarily the lay faithful that are entrusted with this specific property of the Church, that is, the „secular character" (ChL 15). *The „world" thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation* (ChL 15).

Only now, having a more complete perspective of the various dimensions of the lives of lay faithful, as indicated by the Exhortation, can we recognize the proper and specific meaning of God's call directed to the lay faithful. They are not called to abandon the position that they have in the world. as *So, brethren–*the Apostle Paul says*–in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God* (1 Cor 7:24). Baptism does not take the lay faithful from the world at all but entrusts a vocation to them that should be fulfilled in the world, inside the world. They are in fact *called by God so that they, led by the spirit of the Gospel, might contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties resplendent in faith, hope and charity they manifest Christ to others* (ChL 15).

There is, however, a certain pastoral doubt whether in this context the pilgrim nature of man's vocation is not stressed too much as it is emphasized that our homeland is in Heaven, that we are to abandon the world and live for spiritual matters. It seems, however, that this doubt can be dispelled by sensitizing the faithful also about their responsibility in the world. Living in the world, not only in an anthropological or sociological reality, but also in theological and ecclesiological reality, as the Pope emphasizes, is the way for the lay

faithful to pursue their spiritual life. The Exhortation expresses this in the beautiful statement that the lay faithful living within the world, hear the voice of God who manifests his plan and communicates to them their vocation of *seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God* (ChL 15). In this way, the Synod very clearly formulates the most important challenges for the lay faithful. Above all, they are to participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves (ChL 15).

It is not without reason that, in the context of the explanations outlined above regarding the lay faithful, we can speak of the novelty introduced by the Council and the post-conciliar teaching regarding the lay faithful. The position of lay faithful in the Church, then, comes to be fundamentally defined by their newness in Christian life and distinguished by their secular character (ChL 15)[15]. On this basis, a new style of cooperation emerges between the laity and priests and men and women religious. The new secular character of the laity's ministry consists, among other things*, in bearing witness and, in its own way recalling for priests, women and men religious, the significance of the earthly and temporal realities in the salvific plan of God*. The sacramental presence of Christ, the Redeemer in this reality and time is to be guaranteed by the ministerial priesthood. Women and men religious are to bear witness to the eschatological character of the Church, that is, the straining towards the Kingdom of God (ChL 55).

Taking into account all the recommendations that the teaching of the Magisterium formulates for the lay faithful, it is worth considering how the lay faithful themselves fulfil the ambitious and important ministry defined in the documents? How do they respond to Christ's call to work in his vineyard? How they respond

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[15]   The lay faithful were invited to actively participate in the liturgy, in the preaching and in catechesis. In this context, it is also worth noting that the Synod also drew attention to a more significant participation of women in the life of the Church and the development of society (ChL 2).

to the call to join actively, consciously, and responsibly in the mission of the Church? The Synod uses a very strong word *idleness. If a lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so* (ChL 3). In this context, the Synod Fathers draw a picture taken from the parable of the workers in the vineyard. *Why do you stand here idle all day*? *Because no one has hired us. You go into the vineyard too* (Mt 20:6-7). *Since the work that awaits everyone in the vineyard of the Lord is so great there is no place for idleness* (ChL 3). This passage from the Gospel of Matthew is included in the chapter of the Exhortation entitled *The Pressing Needs of the World Today*. Thus, the Pope, following the indications of the Synod, notices that these needs are not only urgent, but also require the involvement of people who are present in this world with their entirety. So where does this idleness which is emphasized so much in the program document for the laity come from?

The history of secular idleness in the Church dates to the 12th century Gregorian movement, which introduced the theology of authority, which resulted in church hierarchs becoming more like secular rulers, both in their form of management and their form of life. Additionally, during the Council of Trent, which was to defend the truths of faith, a specific hierarchology is created, i.e., an apology of hierarchy and authority as those that are to defend Catholic doctrine. Currently, breaking the nine centuries of absolutizing Church authority, it is necessary to look at the Church from an ecclesiological perspective. To do this, apart from inclusion in the scientific and pastoral discourse, a very specific pastoral conversion is needed so that every believer, whether lay, priest or men and women religious, can fulfil his or her vocation in their own state. Therefore, it is worth pointing out a few elements that will help in distinguishing and valuing the ministry of three different states. It is about grasping the essence of salvation, fulfilling the offices of Christ as well as outlining the competences given to lay faithful, clergy and women and men religious.

6. Shaping the identity of the lay faithful

The postulate that conditions pastoral conversion is an appropriate approach to the essence of salvation. At this point, reference should be made to Apostle Paul's call to "be in Christ." Therefore, it is important to properly emphasize Christian anthropology and existence, and not the means of salvation, which include, inter alia, the hierarchy or the sacraments. Excessive focus on certain aspects only takes us away from the essence of salvation, that is, being in Christ. Thanks to this approach, we are able to appreciate equality of vocations we received and a similar availability of means that are to lead us to salvation[16]. However, it should be remembered that such an approach, if misinterpreted, can blur those identities, as it partially happened when the emphasis in the understanding of the priesthood was shifted.

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which compared the ministerial priesthood of bishops and priests with the universal or royal priesthood of lay faithful as members of the Church, was misunderstood. However, in the face of doubts about the priestly identity of priests,[17] it is necessary to emphasize the secondary dimension of the fulfilment of the office of Christ by the lay faithful. The fulfilment by the lay faithful of priestly, prophetic, or kingly mission is to result from their identity and the roles they assume. In this way, we refer to the identity theory presented at the beginning,

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[16] A.L. Szafrański, *Kairologia. Zarys nauki o Kościele w świecie współczesnym*, Lublin 1990, p. 248.

[17] It is worth referring to the *Presbyterorum ordinis*, where an attempt is made to restore balance in the Conciliar doctrine concerning the priestly ministry of bishops and the role of the laity in the Church. For this view of the ministerial priesthood turned out to be problematic and raised questions about the priestly identity of priests. J. Baniak claims that the departure from the tradition and the insufficient emphasis on the priestly character of priests resulted in an overly secular and typically "professional" approach to the pastoral ministry of priests. J. Baniak, *Źródła i przyczyny kryzysu tożsamości kapłańskiej księży rzymskokatolickich w Polsce – studium socjologiczne*, in: *Tożsamości religijne w społeczeństwie polskim. Socjologiczne studium przypadków*, M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska (ed.), Warszawa 2009, p. 69.

which points out that it is not identity that is supposed to result from the functions performed, but functions are the fulfilment of expectations towards specific identities. First, a lay person finds fulfilment as a lay person in the world and only then secondarily participates in the kingly priesthood. It is different with the clergy. Their identity is evidenced by the performance of a priestly ministry, even if we call it a ministerial one. Thanks to this, it will be easier to see the specificity of a priestly vocation, which is not only a profession, but a mission as unique as that of the lay faithful. The latter are to regain their place in the Church and the world by first carrying out their secular tasks, in which there is a strong hope for eternal life. In this way, they indicate and give the world eschatological dimensions and perspectives (*Lumen Gentium* 35, 38).

Therefore, one should truly understand one's identity as a lay or clergy person and discover its specificity. For, if identity is formed upon being separate or different from others, then since the lay faithful are defined as those who are to live in the world, other states should live outside the world.

Lay faithful stay in the world and priests and men and women religious leave the world. It is planned by God that the lay faithful, living in an ordinary way, develop their religiosity and, by entering worldly matters, christianize the world[18]. In this perspective, a priest, by passing on his faith, is a mediator between God and people, he is an apostle and servant of the Church community. *What the soul is to the body, the priest is to the faithful* (Gregory of Nazianzus, Logoi 2, 3). Through his prayer, fasting and suffering, he engages himself in the work and cause of God, and with his whole life he communicates to the people what is his life and treasure: God's faith and love[19].

It is supposed to be an attitude of ministration of priests to the People of God (Hebrew 5:1). It is important, however, that not only priests see their vocation in this perspective. It is necessary that

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[18] Cf. R. Kamiński, *Powołanie katolików* świeckich, op. cit., p. 11.

[19] A.L. Szafrański, *Kairologia. Zarys nauki o Kościele w* świecie *współczesnym,* op. cit., p. 249.

the lay faithful acknowledge that the ministerial priesthood is totally necessary for their participation in the mission of the Church (ChL 22). This is also the essence of ecclesial communion, which is a *great gift of the Holy Spirit*. The sense of responsibility for the Church and appreciation of the service rendered to them by the clergy should motivate them to participate in the life and mission of the Church they serve through various and complementary services and charisma (ChL 20).

The problems outlined above indicate difficulties faced in this matter by the laity, inadequately formed to accept the ecclesiological novelty of the conciliar message. First of all, it is necessary to recall two temptations which the lay faithful were not always able to face: the temptation to engage in Church ministries and tasks so much that it often led to the neglect of specific obligations in professional, social and economic, cultural and political fields, as well as the temptation to justify the unacceptable separation of faith from life, acceptance of the Gospel from concrete actions in the temporal and earthly realities (ChL 2). Meanwhile, as the Council has already shown, neither family concerns nor other secular matters should remain outside the sphere of their spiritual life, according to the words of the Apostle: *Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him* (Col 3:17). In this way, it is necessary to recognize the striving for holiness among the laity in normal circumstances of everyday professional and social life. Therefore, the lay faithful must enrich their spiritual life, join themselves to God, fulfil his will, serve other people, and lead them to communion with God in Christ (ChL 17).

7. Pastoral challenges

All in all, there are several main challenges faced by the entire pastoral ministry, the laity themselves and the clergy who form them. Certainly, one should show the specificity of the vocation of the lay faithful, who are equal to other states in the Church as to the dignity of their vocation. Using the presented theory of collective identity, it should be done by distinguishing the character and ministry of the three

states. Identifying each state with its „we" will help to establish in the laity a sense of their own, separate, and specific identity. Thanks to this, they will be able to see the other „we", i.e., laypeople around them, and to formulate specific expectations that are set for them-lay faithful. Subsequently, the sense of separateness of identity based on identification with other laypeople, may be a factor in mobilizing this community to joint action.

A separate issue related to the building of lay identity is to show what the unique character of lay vocation is about. The extraordinary and important role they need to play in the world in sanctifying it should drive their daily activities. Since the sacralization of the world is the most important expectation of laypeople, they will not be able to shape their identity until they understand this vocation. It is therefore necessary to show the complementarity that occurs between the vocations of all three states, as each of these states is needed by the others, but also for the whole Church in its saving mission.

Therefore, it seems that discovering the identity of laypeople is just as important today as discovering the identity of clergy or men and women religious. All these states, realizing their separate vocations, are to serve the Church in the work of salvation for the whole world. The post-synodal document discussed above explains the complementarity of the three states and the necessity of their coexistence. Understanding this shared responsibility for the salvation of oneself and other people is an important moment in the process of pastoral conversion of every baptized person. It is an invitation addressed to all believers, but also to the Church, as an institution which, having the necessary resources for this ministry, facilitates their missionary mission. The need to create a pastoral space in which laypeople, clergy and religious will have the opportunity to experience unity in dignity, a different vocation and interdependence in missionary activity. A space in which each state will be able to obtain the necessary support to realize their ministry in the best possible way, for example in their own piety: laypeople by strengthening themselves with the sacraments, clergy by

deepening their spiritual motivation, and men and women religious in giving meaning to the sacrifice of life.

8. Introduction instead of a conclusion

A whole new question arises that should initiate another discussion about the laity. In theology, much attention is paid to priestly and monastic piety. The piety of the laity seems to be neglected in this reflection. Until recently, popular piety played a key role, but as societies became more diverse, it is difficult to say that this approach is sufficient for the contemporary lay faithful. It is worth noting that the discussion on this issue was initiated as early as in the 16th century by St. Francis de Sales, who wrote *there is no place in such vocations, however, apart from these kinds of piety, there are also others, capable of perfecting people who live in secular professions* (…). *Wherever we are, we can and must strive for a perfect life* (ChL 56). The perspective presented by the Holy Doctor of the Church should inspire theologians, but above all priests, and the lay faithful themselves to seek what the piety of those living in the world is about.

Summary

After 10 centuries, Vatican II took a new look at the role of the laity in the Church and the world. This thought was deepened in the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles laici*, dedicated to the vocation and mission of the laity in the church and the world. Drawing attention to the difference of their vocation from other states, it emphasised the task of the laity to sacralise the world they live in every day, contrary to the clergy and religious. According to the social theory, the laity's awareness of their own identity will enable them to see their difference from other states and thus to engage in the pastoral mission of the Church. The question of identity is particularly relevant for all the faithful in the perspective of pastoral conversion.

Key words: laity, secular, identity

Streszczenie

Po 10 wiekach Vaticanum II w nowy sposób spojrzało na rolę świeckich w Kościele i świecie. Tę myśl pogłębiła posynodalna adhortacji *Christifideles laici*, poświęcona powołaniu i misji świeckich w kościele i w świecie. Zwracając uwagę na odmienność ich powołania od pozostałych stanów, podkreśliło zadanie świeckich do sakralizacji świata, w którym żyją na co dzień, przeciwnie do duchownych i zakonników. Zgodnie z teorią społeczną, świadomość własnej tożsamości świeckich, pozwoli im dostrzec swoją odrębność od innych stanów, a przez to zaangażować w misję duszpasterską Kościoła. Zagadnienie tożsamości jest szczególnie istotne dla wszystkich wiernych w perspektywie nawrócenia pastoralnego.

Słowa kluczowe: laikat, sekularyzacja, tożsamość

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