

I would imagine that having spent my 20s working in the automotive industry; and my 30s working in the US Navy have provided me with a unique perspective on things as a priest. At age 14 my brother and I were building computers from kits, and writing programs to automate the school store. After all, it was the middle '70s, and you couldn't just fire up your tablet and download an app for \$1.99 - if you wanted something done, you did it yourself.

In industry and in the military, often there were people with "attitudes" ... in the 21st century, the word "attitude" sometimes means having "moxie," or "guts" ... but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm using "attitudes" to mean things like clock-watching - people who often started late, but dropped everything when the second hand hit 12 at 4:30 - even if they dropped it on your foot ... and even if it meant starting all over the next morning. Or maybe it was the "attitude" that things weren't their job. Not pickup up a paper on the floor in their area because they weren't a floor sweeper - people who were just too "important" to do anything helpful.

Working with people like that made me realize that if you wanted something done right, you did it yourself. That, and a strong work ethic and curiosity about how things work instilled in me by my parents, and in particular my dad.

I'd like to address what I call the "Secret of Vatican II." For some reason, despite it being promulgated 48 years ago this November, this has oddly remained un-spoken of in most circles. Certainly we've heard a lot about the new Mass, and new translations ... lay empowerment and lay ministry ...

being more inclusive and finding ways to influence the hierarchy. Yet for some reason, this very grass-roots aspect of Vatican II has for the most part remained in the lives of most “not their job.”

What I am speaking about is Chapter 5 in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church - the document often called “Lumen Gentium” which begins with the line “Christ is the Light of nations.” - and “Lumen Gentium” is Latin for “Light of nations” - from the first words of the document.

But that isn't the secret.

Chapter 1 speaks on the Mystery of the Church; Chapter 2 on the People of God. Chapter 3 on the Hierarchy - particularly bishops; and Chapter 4 on the Laity. Chapter 6 is about Religious Life. Chapter 7 is about Eschatology - what we might call “the end times.” And Chapter 8 is about Our Blessed Lady - Mary.

Yet all of those seem to have gotten plenty of air-time in regards to the Church.

The Secret of Vatican II - the untouched treasure that has been avoided for nearly 48 years can be found in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 is titled, quite simply, “The Universal Call to Holiness.”

Did you ever think that you are supposed to aspire to holiness?

For many of us, we ascribe holiness to the Saints. Statue-like people who lived far away or long ago - you know, at a safe distance from us ... people who we like to think lived perfect lives in a perfect world.

Yet the Saints were real people, just like us. Not given anything more special than we have been given - grace and mercy.

The Saints received the infused virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love at their Baptisms - just like we did. The Saints lived in times where there were wars, economic problems, political differences, moral corruption and decay.

Yet the Saints didn't consider holiness to be someone else's job. The Saints didn't watch the clock and decide that after 45 minutes ... or for some priests 90 minutes ... they'd had enough of this praying stuff - at least for another week ... if there wasn't a really good game on TV on Sunday.

But, according to Vatican II, holiness is everybody's job. Holiness isn't left to those in monasteries who've given up sex, money, and control. Holiness isn't solely the venue of priests and nuns and bishops and popes. And if you read very much Church history, you'll see that is very, very, very true. We've had a lot of whoppers in the past - because, well you know - when you have a parish to run, or a diocese to run, or the entire Church to run ... holiness is awfully hard to work on when you're that busy.

Religious, priests, bishops, and even the Pope - are all human beings ... just like yourselves. And Vatican II takes the mask off and tells the truth - everybody, no matter their state in life is called to live a life of holiness.

But this doesn't mean you have to go to a monastery and give up everything. What it means is that you need to hold onto God's grace and God's mercy in everything you do.

Years ago, many people had what was called a “Morning Offering” taped to their mirror, or next to their light switch in their bedroom. And that sort of thing is a good start. At the beginning of the day - it is an excellent start to consecrate your day to Christ.

Holiness means living your life for Christ. Make breakfast for Christ. Brush your teeth for Christ. Do your chores for Christ. Bring the presence of Jesus Christ into every aspect of your life. Don't change your life - change how you live your life. Change who you “spend time with.” Make every part of your day a gift to God and do everything you do every day a gift to Christ. Allow the grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity to penetrate every aspect of your life, and every corner of your work and home.

Being one of 5 kids, and 4 of us are boys - I'm used to competition. And I challenge you to embrace the Secret of Vatican II ... maybe I should call it the “Lost Secret of Vatican II.” And as far as competition goes, the ratio of priest to lay person in this diocese is probably 1 to 1,000 ... so even if one tenth of one percent of the people of the Diocese of Saginaw aspire to live the Universal Call to Holiness ... you'll be beating the priest's team even if we were able to get 100% participation.

So, that's the secret.

And that's the challenge.

Will you heed the Universal Call to Holiness? Or will this most important part of Vatican II remain a secret for another 48 years?

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS IN THE CHURCH

39. The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy. Indeed Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as "uniquely holy," (1*) loved the Church as His bride, delivering Himself up for her. He did this that He might sanctify her.(214) He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification".(215) However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called "evangelical." This practice of the counsels, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state of life, gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness.

40. The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and everyone of His disciples of every condition. He Himself stands as the author and consumator of this holiness of life: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect".(216)(2*) Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength(217) and that they might love each other as Christ loves them.(218) The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received. They are warned by the Apostle to live "as becomes saints", (219) and to put on "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience", (220) and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness.(221) Since truly we all offend in many things (222) we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: "Forgive us our debts"(223)(3*)

Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity;(4*) by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history.

41. The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.

In the first place, the shepherds of Christ's flock must holily and eagerly, humbly and courageously carry out their ministry, in imitation of the eternal high Priest, the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. They ought to fulfill this duty in such a way that it will be the principal means also of their own sanctification. Those chosen for the fullness of the priesthood are granted the ability of exercising the perfect duty of pastoral charity by the grace of the sacrament of Orders. This perfect duty of pastoral charity (5*) is exercised in every form of

episcopal care and service, prayer, sacrifice and preaching. By this same sacramental grace, they are given the courage necessary to lay down their lives for their sheep, and the ability of promoting greater holiness in the Church by their daily example, having become a pattern for their flock.(224)

Priests, who resemble bishops to a certain degree in their participation of the sacrament of Orders, form the spiritual crown of the bishops.(6*) They participate in the grace of their office and they should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor by the exercise of their office through Christ, the eternal and unique Mediator. They should preserve the bond of priestly communion, and they should abound in every spiritual good and thus present to all men a living witness to God.(7*) All this they should do in emulation of those priests who often, down through the course of the centuries, left an outstanding example of the holiness of humble and hidden service. Their praise lives on in the Church of God. By their very office of praying and offering sacrifice for their own people and the entire people of God, they should rise to greater holiness. Keeping in mind what they are doing and imitating what they are handling,(8*) these priests, in their apostolic labors, rather than being ensnared by perils and hardships, should rather rise to greater holiness through these perils and hardships. They should ever nourish and strengthen their action from an abundance of contemplation, doing all this for the comfort of the entire Church of God. All priests, and especially those who are called "diocesan priests," due to the special title of their ordination, should keep continually before their minds the fact that their faithful loyalty toward and their generous cooperation with their bishop is of the greatest value in their growth in holiness.

Ministers of lesser rank are also sharers in the mission and grace of the Supreme Priest. In the first place among these ministers are deacons, who, in as much as they are dispensers of Christ's mysteries and servants of the Church,(9*) should keep themselves free from every vice and stand before men as personifications of goodness and friends of God.(225) Clerics, who are called by the Lord and are set aside as His portion in order to prepare themselves for the various ministerial offices under the watchful eye of spiritual shepherds, are bound to bring their hearts and minds into accord with this special election (which is theirs). They will accomplish this by their constancy in prayer, by their burning love, and by their unremitting recollection of whatever is true, just and of good repute. They will accomplish all this for the glory and honor of God. Besides these already named, there are also laymen, chosen of God and called by the bishop. These laymen spend themselves completely in apostolic labors, working the Lord's field with much success.(10*).

Furthermore, married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path (to holiness) by faithful love. They should sustain one another in grace throughout the entire length of their lives. They should imbue their offspring, lovingly welcomed as God's gift, with Christian doctrine and the evangelical virtues. In this manner, they offer all men the example of unwearying and generous love; in this way they build up the brotherhood of charity; in so doing, they stand as the witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church; by such lives, they are a sign and a participation in that very love, with which Christ loved His Bride and for which He delivered Himself up for her.(11*) A like example, but one given in a different way, is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church. Finally, those who engage in labor—and frequently it is of a heavy nature—should better themselves by their human labors. They should be of aid to their fellow citizens. They should raise all of society, and even creation itself, to a better mode of existence. Indeed, they should imitate by their lively charity, in their joyous hope and by their voluntary sharing of each others' burdens, the very Christ who plied His hands with carpenter's tools and Who in union with His Father, is continually working for the salvation of all men. In this, then, their daily work they should climb to the heights of holiness and apostolic activity.

May all those who are weighed down with poverty, infirmity and sickness, as well as those who must bear various hardships or who suffer persecution for justice sake—may they all know they are united with the suffering Christ in a special way for the salvation of the world. The Lord called them blessed in His Gospel and

they are those whom "the God of all graces, who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself, after we have suffered a little while, perfect, strengthen and establish".(226)

Finally all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world.

42. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him".(227) But, God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us;(228) thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. For charity, as the bond of perfection and the fullness of the law,(229) rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means.(12*) It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.

Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His charity by laying down His life for us, so too no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and His brothers.(230) From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon—and some will always be called upon—to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world—as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men. They must be prepared to make this profession of faith even in the midst of persecutions, which will never be lacking to the Church, in following the way of the cross.

Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples.(13*) An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state.(231) This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls,(232) whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. (14*) This perfect continency, out of desire for the kingdom of heaven, has always been held in particular honor in the Church. The reason for this was and is that perfect continency for the love of God is an incentive to charity, and is certainly a particular source of spiritual fecundity in the world.

The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle which moved the faithful to charity, exhorting them to experience personally what Christ Jesus had known within Himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who "emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave . . . becoming obedient to death",(233) and because of us "being rich, he became poor".(234) Because the disciples must always offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ, Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Saviour who debased Himself to our comprehension. There are some who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ. (15*)

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they guide aright their own deepest

sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away.(235)(16*)