

Ministerial Association
Cuero, Tex. (NC) — Father John Flynn, assistant pastor of St. Michael's parish in Cuero, has been elected president of the Cuero Ministerial Association.

Council's 'Magna Carta' on the Laity

By JAMES C. O'NEILL

Vatican City (NC)—History was made at the Nov. 18 public meeting of the Second Vatican Council when an ecumenical council for the first time voted to accept a decree dealing exclusively with the nature, character and types of the duties of laymen and their active role in the Church's mission of preaching Christ to all people.

By an overwhelming vote of 2,305 to 2, the bishops gave their approval to a 9,000-word decree dealing with the apostolate of the laity.

Then Pope Paul VI solemnly approved and promulgated the decree which is looked upon as a Magna Carta for the future activity of laymen—not only those working in professional fields but for all Catholics wherever they are.

The decree states basic principles and gives pastoral directives to guide the lay apostolate. It derives the duty and right of laymen to participate actively in the Church's mission from the fact that all the faithful are the People of God and that their share of responsibility for spreading the Kingdom of God on earth is "proper and indispensable. . . in fact modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified."

THE DECREE consists of six chapters. Chapter one deals with the vocation of the laity to the apostolate. Chapter two treats of the objectives of this apostolate. Chapter three reviews in general terms the various fields of the apostolate. Chapter four discusses various forms of the apostolate. Chapter five treats of the relationships among the forms of the apostolate in the world. Chapter six sets down the principles to guide the formation of lay apostles.

In chapter one it is observed that just as parts of a living body cannot be merely passive, so too the parts of the Body

of Christ—which is the Church—cannot be passive.

"Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members is so compact that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church nor to himself."

Noting that in the Church "there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission," the decree states that "the laity derives the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ, the Head" through baptism into the Mystical Body and confirmation.

At the outset the decree notes that because individual laymen are united with Christ in the Church, the success of the apostolate depends upon their living union with Christ which is nourished by the liturgy, frequenting the sacraments and their constant striving for individual perfection in holiness.

Moreover, it is stated that the "plan for the spiritual life of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health and from their professional and social activity. They should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit."

Chapter two notes that the laity, in sharing the Church's mission, "exercise their apostolate both in the world and in the Church, in both the spiritual and temporal orders."

In both orders, laymen, being simultaneously believers and citizens, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience.

It is stressed that the Church's mission—the salvation of men—is in a special way entrusted to the clergy who preach the word of God and administer the sacraments. Yet, "there are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification."

Because of the conditions of the present day in which new problems are arising and serious errors tend to "undermine the foundations of religion, the moral order and human society itself," the decree of the council exhorts laymen, according to their capacities "to be more diligent in doing what they can to explain, defend and properly apply Christian principles to the problems of our era in accordance with the mind of the Church."

The decree outlines objectives of the lay apostolate and takes into account that "God's plan for the world is that men should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order."

As a consequence of this, the decree recognizes the good things that are to be found and promoted in the world. "All those things which make up the temporal order, namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations and other matters of this kind, . . . not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value."

While acknowledging the good things of this world, the decree does not ignore man's fallen nature and the errors that follow from it. It observes that some persons in the present day "who have trusted excessively in the progress of the natural sciences and technical arts have fallen into an idolatry of temporal things and have become their slaves rather than their masters."

To counterbalance this tendency, the decree declares that the laity "must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation."

The first means of this renewal to be accomplished by laymen is the undertaking of more charitable works. "These charitable enterprises can and should reach out to all persons and all needs," it is stated.

"Wherever there are people in need of food, clothing, housing, medicine, employment, education; wherever men lack truly human life or are afflicted with serious distress or illness or suffer exile or imprisonment, there Christian charity should seek them out and find them, console them with great solicitude and help them with appropriate relief. This obligation is imposed above all upon every prosperous nation and person."

The second chapter concludes by stating that in promoting these charitable works the Catholic laity "should cooperate with all men of good will."

The third chapter, dealing with the various fields of the apostolate, considers the following fields of action: church communities, the family, youth and the social milieu on the national and international levels.

Regarding church communities, it is taken into account that lay activity is so necessary "that, without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness."

On the parish level the decree urges that laymen become accustomed to working together with their priests, "bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation—all of which they should examine and resolve by deliberating in common."

But the laity's cooperation in Church communities should not be limited only to the parish. It should extend when necessary to the "inter-parochial, inter-diocesan, national and international fields."

Turning to the subject of the family, the decree stresses that today it is the greatest part of the apostolate of married couples to affirm the right and duty of parents and guardians to educate children in a Christian manner and to defend the dignity of the family.

To achieve these aims, it is necessary for Catholics to cooperate "with men of good will to ensure the preservation of these rights in civil legislation and to make sure that governments give due attention to the needs of the family regarding housing, education, social security and taxes; and that in policy decisions affecting migrants their right to live together—as a family should be safeguarded."

Acknowledging the role that young people can and should have in the lay apostolate, the decree states "they should become the first to carry on the apostolate directly with other young persons, concentrating their apostolic efforts within their own circle according to the needs of the social environment in which they live."

Adults are encouraged to engage in dialogue with young people. In social relationships, Catholic laymen can bring the influence of the teachings of Christ to bear on their surroundings, "especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world, as well as by practicing honestly in all their dealings so that they attract all to the love of the true and the good, and finally to the Church and to Christ."

"They fulfill their mission also as fraternal charity which presses them to share the living conditions, labors, sorrows and aspirations of their brethren, with the result that the hearts of all about them are quietly prepared for the workings of saving grace."

Lastly, there is a vast field for the lay apostolate on the national and international levels where Catholics can "bring the weight of their opinion" in order that civil authority may act with justice and that legislation may conform to national precepts and the common good.

These skilled in public affairs should not refuse to put their skills at the service of the community, thus working for the common good and preparing the way for the Gospel.

The fourth chapter deals with various forms of the apostolate. It begins by noting that the apostolate of the individual person "is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even of the organized type, and admits of no substitute."

The document states that there is a "very urgent need" for the individual apostolate in those places where the Church's freedom is seriously infringed and where Catholics are few in number and widely separated, since individuals can do many things which priests may not be able to do.

Yet, because man is social, it is natural that a group of lay apostles join together to accomplish their aims. Quite often this achieves "much better results than can be expected if each member were to act on his own."

The decree acknowledges the laity's "right to found and control" their lay associations for apostolic activity as long as the "proper relationship to Church authority" is maintained. The text pays special tribute to those associations which have received the title of "Catholic Action" and which in the past have been "described as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy."

But whether these associations bear the name of Catholic Action or another name, they have four characteristics in common, the decree affirms.

First, their immediate aim is that of the church—the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience to prepare the way for Christ's message.

Secondly, the laity cooperating in their way with the hierarchy contribute the benefit of their experience to these organizations and assume responsibility for their direction.

Third, the laity act together in an organic body so that the Church community is more fittingly symbolized and the apostolate is made more effective.

Lastly, whether they offer themselves spontaneously or are asked to cooperate in the apostolate of the hierarchy, the laity function under the higher direction of the hierarchy which can sanction this cooperation by explicit mandate.

The fourth chapter ends with a special recognition of "those lay people, single or married, who devoted themselves with professional experience, either temporarily or permanently, to the service of associations and their activities." It urges pastors to make sure these people receive what is demanded by justice, equity and charity "particularly as regards the proper support for them and their families."

Discussing the external relations of the lay apostolate, considered either on an individual or organized basis, the decree stresses in its fifth chapter that the spirit of union and cooperation is required for the common good of the Church. "The hierarchy should promote the apostolate of the laity, provide it with spiritual principles and support, direct the conduct of the common good of the Church, and attend to the preservation of doctrine and order."

One section of the fifth chapter specifically declares that "no project may claim the name 'Catholic' unless it has obtained the consent of lawful Church authority."

Observing that bishops may choose to work more closely with some forms of the lay apostolate than with others, the document states just the same that the laity "must not be deprived of the possibility of acting on their own accord." It is also noted that the hierarchy can give laymen functions closely allied with pastoral duties, such as teaching catechism, performing some liturgical actions and caring for souls. "By virtue of this mission the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical control in the performance of this work."

The decree calls for the creation of diocesan councils composed of diocesan and religious clergy as well as laymen to work both for evangelization and sanctification and in the charitable and social spheres. Provision is also made for a secretariat to be established by the Holy See to serve and promote the lay apostolate.

Finally, the document approves the cooperation of Catholics with other Christians and even non-Christians in various temporal matters. "By this dynamic and prudent cooperation, which is of special importance in temporal activities, the laity bear witness to Christ, the Saviour of the world, as well as to the unity of the human family."

The last chapter, dealing with the training of lay apostles, calls for a spiritual preparation accompanied by "solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics and philosophy, adjusted to the difference of age, status and natural talents." It is urged that the training should not lose sight of the temporal character of the lay apostolate.

Training for the lay apostolate should begin in the family, be continued in higher schools and colleges and in the apostolate itself. It is recognized that training will differ according to the kind of work and local circumstances.

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Assets	
First Mortgage Loans	\$24,194,024.79
Loans on Pass Books	156,995.27
Property Improvement Loans	78,875.95
Real Estate Sold on Contract	26,377.76
U. S. Government Bonds	1,531,644.63
U. S. Government Agency Bonds	551,880.33
Federal Home Loan Bank Stock	327,400.00
Prepaid Share Insurance Premiums	122,160.86
Other Investments	231,982.28
Cash	832,716.41
Office Building and Equipment	179,115.51
Accrued Interest Receivable	32,675.28
Other Resources	2,375.04
	28,268,226.11
Liabilities	
Savings Accounts	25,728,170.53
Loans in Process	107,050.00
Other Liabilities	44,094.43
Surplus, Undivided profits and Federal Insurance Reserve	2,388,911.15
	28,268,226.11

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RESOURCES	LIABILITIES
Cash on Hand and due from Banks and Trust Companies	Amount due Depositors
\$ 344,691.96	\$10,355,571.23
U. S. Government Investments	Mortgagor's Deposits
753,234.37	98,767.12
Municipal Bonds	Due Club Accounts
368,907.77	2312.25
Corporate Bonds	Other Liabilities
181,734.50	23,905.25
Corporate Stocks	Surplus, Reserves and Undivided profits
423,479.80	1,060,598.55
Other Investments	
214,836.42	\$11,561,154.40
Bonds and Mortgages	
\$195,373.17	
Interest due and Accrued	
49,127.87	
Banking House, Furniture & Fixtures	
29,768.54	
	\$11,561,154.40

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Layman Reads Scripture at Bishop's Rite

Waterford, Ireland (NC)—Premier Sean Lemass of Ireland read the epistle at the consecration Mass here of Bishop Michael Russell of Waterford and Lismore.

Both Lemass and President Eamon de Valera had special seats in the sanctuary of Holy Trinity Cathedral for the Mass.

Four prelates concelebrated the Mass in the vernacular, and the Gospel was read in Irish.

The offertory gifts were carried to the altar in procession by Mayor P. Browns of Waterford and Mayor W. Corbett of Clonmel.

Conditions of the lay apostolate, considered either on an individual or organized basis, the decree stresses in its fifth chapter that the spirit of union and cooperation is required for the common good of the Church. "The hierarchy should promote the apostolate of the laity, provide it with spiritual principles and support, direct the conduct of the common good of the Church, and attend to the preservation of doctrine and order."

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