THE NEW SHOFAR

God did not remove the red Sea…He parted it. He is not going to remove the situation but he will make a way through it. Trust that God is always on time. Even when we think he is too late.

June 14th

What the 'Priesthood of All Believers' Means for our Work

At baptism—whether it is done as a child or as an adult—Christians are incorporated into Christ and Christ's Church by being cleansed of our sin, permanently marked on our souls, and commissioned to live the threefold office of Christ: priest, prophet and king. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they 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.

It is for this reason that baptism is considered entry into the "royal priesthood"(**1 Peter 2:9**) making all the faithful "priests" in a very real sense.

Called to offer sacrifice

Traditionally, the role of the priest is to offer sacrifices to God; this is the case for the Levitical priests in the Old Testament, this is what Jesus did when he offered himself as a sacrifice, and this is what priests do today on the altar. They interact directly with God and make the world holy because of their actions. But there are other ways to make the world holy than celebrating the Eucharist. Just because we as non-ministerial priests cannot offer the Eucharist on Sundays does not mean that we are free from this office of Christ! *The supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since he wills to continue his witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work*" (*Lumen Gentium* 34). *All* of us as Christians are called to be priests like Christ in the sense that we are to **offer sacrifice and make Christ present through our works.** Even the ordinary lives of the faithful—going to work, being married, praying at home, even enduring hardships—can be done in a way to consecrate the world itself to God. This is an extraordinary reminder and a powerful commission we should take seriously: we are called as baptised Christians to make the world holy through our actions.

Called to be make God known

In the Old Testament, prophets were not so much the people who *saw the future* as they were people who *saw the present as God does*. They were people so close to God and attuned to God's Word that they could look out into the world and proclaim what needed to be done to build God's world and even sometimes how God was going to react if we did not. Jesus was the greatest of the Prophets because he was at the same time the one delivering the message and the message itself; his very existence proclaimed God and taught people about what God wanted for us and the world. As sharers in this office of Christ through baptism (yup… you guessed it) all of us are called to be prophets in the world as well. While ordained ministers are entrusted to teaching and preaching in an official sense, the

council was clear that all Christians are a part of this mission, even taking on a part particular to them: *Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth* (*LG*, 33). In other words, we are all called to spread the Word of God in the world, but the laity, living and working in the secular world, can reach people and places that the ordained generally cannot. Does this mean that everyone is expected to start reading the Bible at their workplace or asking fellow soccer moms if they know Jesus? Not necessarily. Evangelization is not always so explicit. But it does mean that the way we live, all of us, needs to proclaim ourselves as Easter people, people who know the joy and life of the Resurrection and a God who loves us. There are *infinite* ways to show this!

Called to lead others through service

Finally, we all know that Jesus is the true King, the "anointed one" of God awaited in the Old Testament, ruling now on his throne in heaven. He is the all-powerful, just judge that governs all of Creation. *The king of glory comes the nation rejoices!* In an official way, ordained ministers take on this role as the ones who govern the Church, leading the people and making laws for proper life and worship of all Christians. But once again (last time!) the laity are not off the hook! As baptized Christians who live and work in the world, the laity are not only part of this commission, *they are given a special role in it*. They are the hands, the feet, the voice the presence of Christ in their world. Think about it. If we are supposed to build the kingdom of God as Jesus announced, who is going to be better able to act with justice *in the world*: the priest running a parish or a regional manager of a bank? While ordained ministers might be better equipped to govern the Church, the laity, in fact, are better equipped to build a just society because *they live and work in it*. Doctors, lawyers, bankers, sales reps, social workers, factory workers, minimum wage clerks, authors and musicians. Each one of these professions is intimately connected with the wider world and the economy, and each Christian working in these places has insider knowledge about what needs to be done to create a better world. Being incorporated into Jesus' "kingly" office means using the authority, knowledge, and ability one has to "serve others rather than be served."

Agents of reconciliation

We must mediate Christ's love into a dark and troubled world. Just as priests are agents of reconciliation to God and others, so are we to be such mediators.

God is the one who initiates the process of reconciliation: "all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us a ministry of reconciliation" (**2 Cor. 5:18).** Because of what God has done in Christ, we are given the task of carrying out this ministry of reconciliation. We as Christians act as agents of reconciliation and restoration, pointing toward the coming kingdom that God has initiated and will complete when Christ returns. Our work is one area of our lives where we bear witness to this promised consummation.

And so we should rejoice because of our union with Christ, for we share in all who he is and does. In this case, his high priestly office means that we too are holy and royal priests.