

CATHOLICS, AWAKE!



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Fellow Catholics: Read this Manifesto not hastily but meditatingly, not for entertainment but for action. This Manifesto is an echo of the voice of Christ, the Apostles, the Popes, Bishops and Priests. It aims to remind you of what you have—the Catholic Faith—and of your duty to make as many as possible have it abundantly. This Manifesto carries a Message which should be engraved in letters of gold in the heart and mind of every Catholic. May you, in turn, be a Bearer of this Message wherever you go so that the time will soon come when the entire Filipino Catholic Population will rise up as one man to fulfill the command of Christ: “Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . .” (St. Matthew 28:19)

OUR GREAT TREASURE

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is our Catholic Religion. The Patriarchs of the Old Testament have yearned for this religion but they did not taste it. The Prophets before Christ have spoken about this religion but they did not live to see it. It is our privilege to be nurtured in this religion from our youth. Rightly can the Lord say to us: “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you there have been many prophets and kings who have longed to see what you see and never saw it, to hear what you hear and never heard it.” (St. Luke 10:24)

Where is the greatness of our Catholic Religion? Her grandeur can be summed up in one word—Sanctity. Our Catholic Religion is holy because the Founder, Jesus Christ Himself, is holy. In Him are found all perfections in their highest degree. He is without blemish. He is incarnate sanctity.

Our Catholic religion is holy because she has a holy mission—the salvation of souls. In the words of the Vatican Council, the Catholic religion was founded by Christ so that all the faithful, united in the Faith and bond of Charity, may live in it as in the house of the living God.

Our Catholic religion is holy because her Sacraments are holy. She has Baptism which cleans us from the stains or original sin and renders us children of God. Her sacrament of Confirmation makes of us strong soldiers of Christ. Our religion's sacrament of Penance removes our personal sins and restores our friendship with God. There is the Holy Eucharist where Christ Himself is present under the lowly appearances of bread and wine; the Holy Orders by which we are furnished with priests—the ministers and ambassadors of God; Matrimony which renders holy the union of man and wife; and, finally, Extreme Unction by which our religion strengthens us at the hour of death and helps us pass over safely to eternal life.

Our Catholic religion is holy because her doctrines are holy. She teaches that God is the last end of man and all his actions, and that in God alone, not in creatures, can man find his true and lasting happiness. She teaches the law of charity so much emphasized by Christ: "Thou shalt love God with thy whole heart . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." She teaches men to do good to each other by echoing the Master's Golden Rule.

And as regards the social problems, she teaches the worker to carry out honestly and well all just agreements, never to injure the property or person of his employer, never to resort to violence in representing his own cause. To the rich and the employers, our Catholic religion teaches that the workers are not slaves nor mere tools to amass fortunes but men with dignity because they are created unto the likeness of God and redeemed by Christ and, consequently, are entitled to a human treatment.

In fine, our Catholic religion is holy because many of her members are holy and we who are not yet holy are striving hard to become one. Which religion has ever produced such inspiring masterpieces as Dominic of Guzman who left his castle to work among the Albigensians, or Francis of Assisi who gave up his fabulous wealth to embrace voluntary poverty for the love of God, or Ignatius of Loyola who turned his back to a brilliant mi-

litary career for the greater glory of God? St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Therese of the Child Jesus and many more are children of our Catholic religion.

One of the greatest converts of Catholicism in America is a man named John Stoddard. He was a Protestant at the beginning, just like his parents. Later, he became an agnostic. After about forty years of unbelief he became a Catholic. Later, he wrote a book about his conversion. And about our Catholic religion, he wrote these stirring lines:

“When I asked what I have found within the Catholic Church superior to all that Protestantism gave me, I find that language is inadequate to express it. One thinks of the familiar metaphor of a stained-glass window in a vast cathedral. Seen from without by day, this seems to be an unintelligible mass of dusky glass. Viewed from within, however, it reveals a beautiful design where sacred story glows resplendently in form and color. So it is with the Church of Rome. One must enter it to understand its sanctity and charm.

“When I reflect upon the Church’s long, unbroken continuity extending back to the very days of the Apostles; when I recall her grand, inspiring traditions, her blessed Sacraments, her immemorial language, her changeless creed, her noble ritual, her wondrous unity of doctrine, her Apostolic authority, her splendid roll of Saints and Martyrs; . . . and last, not least, when I consider the abiding presence of the Savior on her altars; — I feel that this One, Holy, Apostolic Church has given me certainty for doubt, order for confusion, sunlight for darkness, and substance or shadow. It is the Bread of Life and the Wine of the Soul, instead of the unsatisfying husks; the father’s welcome, with the ring and the robe, instead of the weary exile in the wilderness of doubt. . .

“Favored are those who, from their childhood up, are nurtured in the Catholic Church, and to whom all her comforts, aids and Sacraments come no less freely than the air and sunshine.”
(Rebuilding a lost Faith.)

Favored are we indeed, for we possess, as if by inheritance, this holy Catholic religion so highly praised and so beautifully described by a convert — John Stoddard.

A LAMENTABLE SITUATION

The very thought that we possess this great treasure of Faith cannot but cause joy in us, Catholics. But if we look around us, if we make a survey of our faith's sphere of influence in the world and in our country in particular we would discover that the situation is indeed lamentable.

The world has a population of approximately 3 billion souls. Of these, only about 550 million are Catholics. And to make matters worse, we would be lucky if just one half of the 550 million Catholics really know, appreciate and practice their faith.

Let us look at the situation in the Philippine. Centuries ago this land was pagan. Then missionaries came from Spain. They converted our forefathers to the Catholic Faith and schooled them in the same. Now we claim to be a Catholic nation — the only Catholic nation in Asia — and we are proud of it. Of the 31 million Filipinos about 25 millions are baptized Catholics.

But let not these figures deceive us for religious illiteracy in the Philippine is proverbial. Of these 25 million Catholics only a few may be called upon to render account of the Catholic religion satisfactorily. The vast majority — and this is a tragic truth — have a very superficial knowledge, if any at all, of the Catholic religion.

The fruit of this religious ignorance cannot but be deplorable. In the first place, many do not use the Sacraments which are God's instrument in giving us graces. Then indifference to the Catholic religion if not the complete loss of the same. Some of our elite leave the Church and in their high positions they strive to destroy Catholicism with very little opposition. Our people in the barrios become victims of Communism and false religions. In short, our holy Catholic religion which is the only true guide to right living cannot exert her wholesome influence on many Filipinos.

CATHOLIC ACTION IS THE ANSWER

What are we to do in the face of such a situation? Shall we leave the whole work of winning souls to the priests and Bishops alone? Shall we shrug our shoulders with indifference and say, like Cain of old, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Or shall

we roll our sleeves and work hand in hand with our priests under the direction of our Bishops not only because our services are badly needed but also because it is our duty, out of justice as well as of charity, to do so?

There are two truths every Catholic must bear in mind. First, the Bishop and priests alone cannot do all the work of winning souls to Christ. Second, the laity, both men and women has the grave obligation of participating in this work.

The Bishops and Priests cannot do all the works of the apostolate alone, specially under the circumstances prevalent in the Philippines. The apostolate has two main activities — the teaching of Christ's doctrines and the administration of the Sacraments. There are about 4,557 priests for the 31 million Catholics of the land — an average of one priest for every 6000 Catholics. And we say "average" because there are actually parishes where the number of Catholics ranges from 15,000 to 43,000 with only one or two priests.

The 1969 Catholic Directory of the Philippines has these statistics:

Binondo Parish:	31,000 1 Priest	Malasiqui Parish:	43,000 3 Priests
Gagalangin Parish:	39,000 1 Priest	Tondo Parish:	156,700 3 Priests
Sampaloc Parish:	47,000 2 Priests	San Carlos Parish:	71,000 3 Priests

These figures amply prove that the Priests cannot perform the two apostolate works mentioned. It is imperative then that the Catholic laymen and women be mobilized to work with the Hierarchy. An army of devoted lay men and women working in cooperation with the clergy will multiply the fruitfulness of a priest's efforts a hundredfold. The handful of Apostles converted souls to Christ by the thousands, not alone, but with the zeal of the early Christians — men and women — who threw themselves into the gigantic task of preaching Christ and His truths to all the peoples of the then known world. Similarly, the handful of Bishops and Priests we now have in the Philippines can lead the 31 million Filipinos to the green pastures of the Catholic religion, not alone, but with the assistance of fervent Catholic lay men and women.

One of the reasons why many Catholics are not interested in drawing souls to Christ is because they think it is not their duty. They think they should keep out of all religious discussions and leave them to the priests, that they should not lift so much as a finger to win a soul for Christ. When asked by non-Catholics about their religion they change the topic of conversation instead of joyfully giving the desired information. This is a wrong attitude, a harmful error, for, as a convert once said, "the greatest menace to the Church today is not the opposition or antagonism of those who attack it from the outside; it is the laxity and indifference of so many of its own members."

Catholic Action — the teaching of the Faith by lay men and women — is a duty. Christ himself commanded it when he said: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19) He called His followers "Fishers of Men", "Light of the World", "Salt of the Earth." And by word and example He taught His followers to have interest in those who are outside the fold. How can Catholic lay men and women claim to be Christians — followers of Christ — if they fulfill not His command, if they follow not His example?

The teachings of the Apostles and the Popes clearly show that to bring souls to Christ is a duty. St. James said: He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20) St. Peter adds: "But you are a chosen generation a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare his virtue. . . ." (I Peter 9:13) — Pope Leo XIII called upon the laity to take upon themselves the task of communicating to others what they themselves have received" (Sapientiae Christianae).

And Pope Pius XI said that one of the effects of charity is "that the just soul in whom God dwells by grace, burns in a wondrous way to call others to share in the knowledge and love of that infinite good which he has attained and possesses." Mens Nostra)

One last thought to show that lay apostolate is a duty. By Baptism all Catholics become members of Christ's Mystical Body. As members of that Body they are bound to assist the weaker

parts. By the Sacrament of Confirmation they reach maturity in the Mystical Body, and as matured members, they are expected by Christ, their Leader, to win every soul for whom their Master shed His Blood.

Yes, Catholic Action — the participation of our lay men and women in the apostolate of the Hierarchy — is a God-given duty. And it is the answer to the pressing problem of the church in our land.

WHERE AND HOW OF CATHOLIC ACTION

The apostolate of the Hierarchy in which the Laity should participate can be expressed in one word — CONVERSION. The conversion of non-Catholics to Catholicism. The conversion of nominal Catholics to real Catholicism. Here, the question arises: Where and How can the laity exercise this apostolate?

To the first question, the answer is: Right where you are. You need not go to foreign lands to teach the doctrine of Christ. Your home, your Parish, the particular group in which you find yourself by reason of your job or profession — these are the ideal places where you can operate as Catholic Actionist. In the words of Bishop Fulton Sheen, Catholic Action means "that different groups and classes will be Catholicized by and through the Catholics in that group — that is, that the stage will be cleansed by and through Catholics on the stage, that the medical profession will be made moral by and through Catholic Doctors, that law will be made honest by and through Catholic lawyers, that the working classes will be saved from Communism by and through Catholic workers themselves" and we may add, that families will be made replicas of the Holy Family of Nazareth by and through their Catholic members.

The Parish as a field of one's Catholic Action activities deserves a special mention for it is the basic unit in the Church organization. Some make the mistake of snubbing their own parish to work for another. If their reason is because their Parish Priest is not what he ought to be, they should remember that they are Catholics and should do their duties as such not

because of their Priest but because of God, that the poor condition of their own parish is the very challenge for them to work for its improvement.

How can a Catholic Actionist go about his or her apostolate? The answer to this question is almost inexhaustible. If you make an intelligent observation of your environment, if you consult your Bishop or Parish Priest, if you study the situation with the religious organization of which you may be a member, you will discover many ways of making others know, love and serve God.

All Catholic Action activities may be classified under three headings: a) spoken and written word, b) good works and c) good example. With these in mind, here are some suggestions for Catholic Action:

1. The teaching of Catechism to the members of the household, to students in schools.

2. The conducting of Study Clubs for adults.

3. The formation of a Catholic Speakers Team made up of select members, each specialized in one religious subject. This team, under the direction and guidance of the Parish Priest, can hold regular public meetings and rallies. The aim of the Team is to expound the Catholic Faith and not to hold debates with non-catholics.

4. When invited as Guest Speaker always say something impressive and edifying about the Catholic Faith.

5. School authorities and Heads of Business Firms should encourage monthly reunions which begin with Holy Mass, if possible, and featured with a talk on a religious topic.

6. Write about the Catholic religion and propagate Catholic Books, Pamphlets and Periodicals. It would be good if in every home, in every hospital, in every waiting room of our Catholic Professionals there be some Catholic Pamphlet or Literature. When asked to donate a prize for a Contest give a Catholic Book. There should be a Pamphlet Stand near the entrance of the Church or Rectory.

7. Have a specific prospect in mind and make it a point to concentrate your Catholic Action apostolate on the same. Be friendly with your prospect invite him to your study club, to Mass, to a Spiritual Retreat etc. When he is converted, look for another one.

8. Not to be overlooked, of course, is good example. "Words are thin whispers compared to the clamorous eloquence of good example." We should be Catholics not only in the Church but also in our homes and offices; not only on Sundays but also on every day of the week and every hour of the day. Many are drawn to the Church through the good behaviour of Catholics.

ROLE OF PRIESTS IN CATHOLIC ACTION

Catholic Action is Christ's army in which the Priests, by virtue of Holy Orders, are the officers while the Laity, by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, are the soldiers. As in any army, the efficiency and strength of Catholic Action goes hand in hand with the zeal and enthusiasm of its components.

Hence, the need of an intense spiritual life in the Priests and Catholic Actionists. In the Priests because, being the leaders, they are looked up to for inspiration. It is to them principally that Christ said: "You are the Salt of the Earth", "You are the Light of the World". The work of converting non-Catholics to Catholicism and lax Catholics to fervent Catholicism belongs, first and foremost, to them. And they can accomplish their mission effectively when they are what they want others to be.

Intense spiritual life is equally necessary in the Catholic Actionist because the "apostolate is the result of zeal, and action must follow contemplation, and we can make others burn only on condition that we ourselves are already on fire with the love of God." "Catholic Action is the external action of giving others to drink of the fountains of everlasting Truth, after we ourselves have drunk deeply of the refreshing draughts."

What can the Priests do to boost the morale, zeal and enthusiasm of their soldiers? Among others, the following may be mentioned.

1. They should expound at every occasion the laymen's duty to help save souls. From the pulpit, in the classroom, during their visitations, the Priests must strive to arouse in the faithful "a burning zeal for souls, a clear realization that they are called by God to extend His Kingdom on earth... For until that consuming zeal for souls takes possession of our laity and kindles them to action, the discussion of plans, techniques and types of organization is utterly futile. If zeal for souls be lacking the best laid plans will crumble; if it be present, even poor techniques will yield a copious draft of souls."

2. The Priests should have special care in the instruction of Catholic Actionists because zeal for souls is not enough. A good knowledge of the Catholic Doctrine is imperative. The Priests can furnish such instruction:

First, by well prepared and systematically arranged sermons every Sunday, as prescribed by Canon Law and the Plenary Council.

Second, by conducting a special course wherein Catholic Actionists are taught how to explain and defend the Faith. If, from such a course, the Priest can form Teams of Catechists, Lecturers, Speakers and future leaders of other Study Clubs, there is no telling how much will be accomplished in the parish.

Third, by encouraging the use of Catholic Pamphlets. In fact, our Filipino Priests should start now to write Pamphlets on the Faith specially in the vernacular. For while their words may be heard only once, their writings can be repeatedly pondered upon.

3. Lastly, the Priests should have genuine interest in the Parish organizations specially those for men.

About two thousand years ago, by the Lake of Genezareth, Christ uttered an unforgettable parable — the Parable of the Sower. "The sower went out to sow his seed" Christ narrated. "And as He sowed some fell by the wayside and it was trodden down and the birds of the air ate it up. And other some fell upon rock and as soon as it sprang up it withered away because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And other some fell upon

good ground and it sprang up and yielded fruit a hundred fold.”
(Luke 8:5-8)

The Priests are the sowers. The seed is the word of God — the doctrines of Christ. The work of the Priests is hard. Part of the result may be disappointment. But of the Catholic Actionists whom the Priests will teach with special care there will always be some who are “good ground” and these Catholic Actionists will yield fruit a hundred fold.

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

A certain rich man, before traveling into a far country, called his three servants and delivered to them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to the third one. During their master's absence, the first two servants traded with their talents and doubled them. But the third servant buried his talent in the ground. After some time, the master returned and called his servants for a reckoning. The first servant handed him ten talents and the second four. To each the master exclaimed: “Well done, good and faithful servant because thou hast been faithful over a little, I will place thee over much. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” — The third servant, on the other hand, who buried his talent was severely punished. The master call him a “wicked and slothful servant.” (St. Matthew 25:14-40)

Catholic men and women, we have received a precious talent from Christ — our Faith. Let us not bury it. It is Christ's will that we share this Faith with others. Let us heed the Master's command. Catholics, rally to the Pope, the Bishops, the Priests in this noble crusade. Awake!

A PLEDGE TO WIN SOULS TO CHRIST

Dear Jesus, my Crucified Lord and Saviour, I promise that I shall heed your invitation to seek and win for You the precious souls for whom You died on Calvary's Cross. I shall try earnestly and zealously to win souls for You through a life of virtue and holiness, by setting an example of charity toward all men, and by bringing lax Catholics and non-Catholics to Holy Mass, by loaning them Catholic literature, by explaining to them points of doctrine and by bringing them to a priest for further instruction. I shall do my utmost to win at least one convert for You every year of my life. So help me, God.”