

## **A PAROCHIAL FORM OF APOSTOLATE OF THE TEMPORAL ORDER<sup>1</sup>**

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Every time I pass by your Parish I cannot but notice two signs on two different doors. The first one reads: "Santisimo Rosario Parish Office;" the second: "Santisimo Rosario Parish Cooperative Credit Union, Inc. Office."

I am not inclined to eavesdropping; but if I stay around for a while I can hear the kind of conversation that goes on in these two offices.

In the parish office there is a priest at the table. He is talking with some Parishioners. The topic of their conversation is: arrangements for a Baptism, preparation for a wedding, someone's request for a mass, inquiries about Confession, an urgent sick call, etc.

The people in the next room are laymen; and they are talking about credit, interests, financial reports, loans, etc.

And I wonder: What is this; a parish or a bank? . . .

I think it over for a while. Once again I notice the sign on the door: "Santisimo Rosario Parish Cooperative Credit Union, Inc." This is the answer to my question. No matter what goes on in this office, this is a parochial activity. Actually, I can see that in reality this is only one office. Only that, for convenience's purposes, it has been divided into two rooms by a hollow block partition.

I am glad at the discovery. I am glad that things are like this, for the simple reason that they have to be like this.

The Church is a spiritual society; but it lives in a temporal world. It is composed of men and women, who are not only spirits (souls) but who also have a body and who therefore need temporal things.

Your parish is a Church in miniature. It has not only souls; but also bodies. It is not only spiritual society; it is a temporal one, too.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered at the Third Annual Assembly of the Santisimo Rosario Parish Cooperative Credit Union on March 9, 1969. The speech is now published upon the request of the members of the same Credit Union.

It is true that in man the most important part is the soul. But this does not mean that the body is not important.

It is true that the spiritual society is more important than the temporal society. But this does not mean that the temporal society is not important.

It is true that Grace is more important than bread. But this does not mean that bread is not important.

That the things of this world are important was made clear to us by Christ. He went around giving food to the hungry, health to the sick and life to the dead. And, of course, He was right; for, after all, not only the spiritual and immortal soul but also the physical and mortal body and the things that pertain to it are the result of God's creative power.

The very same man that was created by God was redeemed by Christ. I say "man"; not just "soul." And "man" includes also the body. And again Christ was right; for, don't we believe that the body shall one day rise in glory and join the glorious and resurrected Christ in heaven?...

The Church was entrusted by Christ with the mission of carrying on His redemptive work. And in the same way that Christ cared not only for things spiritual but also for those of a temporal nature, the Church has to engage not only in the apostolate of spiritual order but also in the apostolate of the temporal order.

As Vatican II says:

*Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of men, involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with spirit of the gospel.*

(Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 5).

The Apostolate of the Spiritual Order is very much needed in your parish. There are many people who do not know God, who do not care about Grace, about their souls. This apostolate is continuously being carried out in a very active manner. Parishioners are instructed in the Faith, Sacraments are administered, the Sacrifice of Calvary is reenacted in your daily masses, etc.

But the Apostolate of the Temporal Order is also urgently needed. In the parish there are people who are hungry, who are sick; families in financial distress; men without jobs; poor who cry out for justice, for opportunities to advance in life.

In the Church the Apostolate of the temporal order is a must.

Now, the Church is not the clergy; it is not the laity. It is both.

It is not only the Clergy that have to work for the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth. The laity have to contribute there efforts too.

Being Christians, laymen have to be apostles. Vatican II makes it very clear:

*For by its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate. (Laity, 2).*

You are apostles; and it is your duty to do apostolic work.

The apostolate of the Church -- of Christ -- has to be carried out by the priest and the layman, not independently of, but in close collaboration with each other.

In the same way that in man body and soul are united to make up one being, in the Church the apostolates of the spiritual and of the temporal order are intimately connected with each other. For this reason the clergy and the layman have to care for both.

*In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the laity, therefore, exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders. These realms, although distinct, are so connected in the one plan of God that He Himself intends in Christ to appropriate the whole universe into a new creation, initially here on earth, fully on the last day. In both orders, the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be constantly led by the same Christian conscience. (Laity,5).*

However, just as the body and the soul are two different things with different qualities and needs, so the spiritual and temporal are two different fields or spheres; and therefore the apostolate of the spiritual order is in many ways different from the apostolate of the temporal order.

The apostolate of the spiritual order is mainly the responsibility of the Priest. The apostolate of the temporal order is mainly the responsibility of the Laymen. Of course, it is understood that in both fields of action the priest and the layman help each other in whatever way they can.

Let us once more listen to Vatican II:

*The laity must take on the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. (Laity, 7)*

And again:

*The apostolate of the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which a person lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be properly performed by others. (Ib., 13)*

As individuals and as a group, you are apostles. And your main field of apostolic action is the temporal order.

In the temporal order there are many things that call for the zeal and the dedication of the layman. There are many ways in which a lay apostle can contribute to the Christian renewal of the world.

Look around and you will see many lay apostles engaged in a great variety of activities. Some are doing professional apostolate in classrooms, and hospitals, in offices; others do it through mass communications media; others channel their efforts towards the accomplishment of agricultural, industrial economic projects beneficial to the community, etc. . . .

You have chosen your own way of doing apostolic work in the temporal order. Your way is the Cooperative Credit Union.

That today's society is badly in need of cooperative credit unions is an indisputable fact. There are too many people who do not know the meaning of "saving;" people who are forced to borrow money at exorbitant interests; people who cannot acquire the things they and their families need because nobody is ready to extend to them a helping hand. . . .

These were the social conditions that gave rise to the Cooperative Credit Union Movement in the world. These are the reasons why cooperative credit unions are needed in the Philippines; why your credit union is needed in your parish.

Your objectives are worth striving for.

You encourage people to save; and thus imbue them with a sense of duty to care for their future and that of their families. In the process you help eradicate the social illness known as gambling.

You give loans at low interest rates; and thus go to the rescue of the poor who would otherwise fall pray to detestable usury.

Your readiness to help means hope to a family man when in a sudden emergency he has no one to turn to for financial assistance.

Your educational programs place education within the reach of poor but deserving students. . . .

There are just a few of the many in which you cooperate with the Government in the improvement of the social conditions and in the economic growth of the country. Society is grateful to you. Yours is a social action worthy of the highest praise.

But this is not all. To you cooperative credit union work should not just be social action; it should be Christian social action.

Yours is not just a credit union like any other credit union. Your credit union has officers; but it also has a spiritual director. Your Office is the Parish Rectory.

Why? — Because your work is not just humanitarian service to the people. Your work is Christian apostolate.

It is important that you keep this in mind at all times. Your intentions should always be in perfect accordance with the high ideals of the Christian Apostolate. Your actions should always be guided by a supernatural motivation.

When you grant a loan to a poor man, do not do it simply because he is a poor man. Look at him with the eyes of your Faith. See in Him a man created in the image of God, a son of God, a brother of Christ, your own brother in Christ, another Christ. . .

This is the difference between a non-Christian and a Christian Credit Union. Both do the same kind of work; but they are motivated by different considerations. The former helps people for humanitarian, philanthropic reasons. These are good reasons indeed. But they are not good enough for you, Christian apostles. Your motivation should be supernatural.

You are working not only for society, for the world. You are working for the Church, for Christ. You are not only helping members of the human race, but also members of God's Family.

To give food to the hungry because he is a man in need is an act of humanitarian, natural love. To give it to him because we see Christ in Him is an act of supernatural love.

This does not go against your motto: "Not for profit, not for charity, but for service." When you say "not for charity" you exclude the pseudo-charity that looks down on others and gives them hand-outs as favors. You do not exclude the genuine Christian virtue of Charity that makes us see in the needy God's children and our own brothers and sisters in Christ.

Such love for others is entitled to supernatural merit and reward.

Remember Christ's words:

*I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me*

(Mt., 25, 35-36).

One day He is going to tell you this. And you are going to ask Him: Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or sick? . . .

And He is to answer you: Remember your Credit Union? When you deposited your money there and thus made it available to others; when you helped poor students pay their tuition fees; when you went to the rescue of poor families suffering under the impact of unexpected misfortunes; when you dedicated your time and efforts to the organization of the Credit Union. . .

When you did all this for my brothers you did it for me; and because you did it for me I shall reward you accordingly...

The reward? — You know it:

*Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. (Mt. 25.34).*

It has been said that "the purpose of the Credit Union is to prove in a modest measure the practicability of the brotherhood of man." The purpose of your Credit Union should be to prove the practicability of the "Christian brotherhood of man."

Here is a guideline from Vatican II:

*Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, and motivated by Christian love, let them (the laity) act directly and definitely in the temporal sphere (Laity, 7).*

When you act this way you do not work for the temporal sphere as an end in itself; you work for the kingdom of God in this world. You try to christianize the temporal order, and thus bring it to God.

*...the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. (Constitution On The Church, 31)*

And there is no doubt that you will succeed in your efforts to propagate God's Kingdom:

*In this way, their (the laity's) temporal activity can openly bear witness to Christ and to promote the salvation of men (Laity, 2).*

When others see your faith, your dedication, your love, your unselfishness ... they will be impressed; and will feel attracted to the Faith for which you give such and eloquent testimony.

*By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples. (Jn., 13, 35)*

This is the kind of apostolate that the Church expects of you:

*In this way the lay person will throw himself wholly and energetically into the reality of the temporal order and effectively assume his role in conducting its affairs... At the same time, as a living member and witness of the Church, he will make the Church present and active in the midst of temporal affairs (Laity, 29)*

Throw yourselves "wholly and energetically" into the Cooperative Credit Union work. But do it as "living members and witnesses of the Church," as living members and witnesses of your parish. And you will make your parish the Church, Christ "present and active" in the midst of your community.