The Prophetic Office of the Laity as an Expression of the Sensus Fidelium

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THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF THE LAITY AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE *SENSUS FIDELIUM*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
LICENTIATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY (STL)

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December 2016

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ABSTRACT

A number of theologians claim that the church has not tapped into the fullness of Vatican II's teaching on the *sensus fidelium.* As an attempt to address that concern, this thesis examines the teaching authority of the laity as a key element of the *sensus fidelium* in the church. It argues for a fuller realization of Vatican II's emphasis on the laity's participation in Christ's prophetic office. It proposes a three-part lay hermeneutic (hermeneutic of everyday life, hermeneutic of desire, and hermeneutic of trust) as a relevant, authoritative framework for discerning the *sensus fidelium*.

This thesis employs a method that is primarily critical, hermeneutical and practical. It is structured in three chapters. Chapter One offers a comprehensive theology of the *sensus fidelium*. Chapter Two focuses on the laity, their sense of the faith and the process through which they receive the faith. Chapter Three presents a vision of church that is attentive to the teaching authority of the laity.

Through an analysis of the laity's *sensus fidei* as an integral dimension in the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*, this thesis emphasizes that authority in the church derives from all its members and that the interpretation of faith is a process that invites the participation of all the baptized as sharers in Christ's prophetic function. In such a church, the laity and ordained together equally belong to the guild of interpreters of God's revelation. Consequently, the laity possess a teaching authority that contributes significantly to the life of the church.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been complete without the help and encouragement of the following people to whom I owe my deepest gratitude:

To my thesis mentor and dissertation director, Richard Lennan – for his thoughtful guidance and mentorship which have shepherded me throughout the last six years of my graduate studies. My work owes much to his thoroughness, careful rigor and precision.

To my thesis co-mentor and dissertation reader, Roberto Goizueta – for his unconditional belief in my abilities and his willingness to help me every step of the way. His scholarship will always be a fount of inspiration.

To the STL program directors: Thomas Stegman, SJ; Randy Sachs, SJ, and André Brouillette, SJ – for their unrelenting support, generosity and understanding that allowed me to complete this degree with ease.

To my TH1023.07 2016 Fall class at BC: Teighlor, Kianna, Gianna, Nick, Alex, Maggie, Todd, Rocky, Lauren, Mary Claire, Camille, Hope, Paul, Caitlin G, Brian, Aubrey, Caroline H, Lindsey, Christina, Lucy, Caitlin K, Kevin, Cheuk-Lam, Maddie, Sawyer, Caroline M, Erick, Carter, Djita, Sofia, Kasey, Molly, Kelly, Caleb, Emma, Philip, and Joy – for their understanding and patience with my delay in grading and returning their papers this semester, for rejoicing with me through their unexpected and undeserved applause upon learning that I finally completed the STL.

To my Filipino community in Boston – for their prayers and gift of friendship throughout my graduate studies.

To my Filipino Jesuit triumvirate: Francis Alvarez, SJ, Peter Pojol, SJ and Arnel Aquino, SJ – for reminding me, ever consistently, that the church needs the voice of women lay theologians.

Finally, to my husband, Joel Obillo – for faithfully fetching me after my late summer night Latin classes and rewarding me with a good meal each time, for bringing me back to the ocean to work on the last requirements of the STL, and most of all, for his unwavering conviction that I have it within me to finish. He has been, and always will be, one of the strongest reasons for my hope.

INTRODUCTION

With particular force, the papacy of Pope Francis has emphasized the strong missionary potential and responsibility of the laity in the church and in the world. Echoing the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), Pope Francis sees the laity not as second-class members of the church at the beck and call of the hierarchy but "as disciples of Christ who, by virtue of their Baptism and of their natural insertion 'in the world,' are called to enliven every environment, every activity, every human relationship according to the spirit of the Gospel…"[1] The most recent (2016) post-Synodal exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, is a patent manifestation of the pope's assertion. Focusing closely on the well-being of families, the document indicates the deep concern the current pontificate has towards strengthening the voice and role of the laity within the church.

One of the key concepts in *Amoris Laetitia* is its insistence on concrete realities and concerns of daily life which characterize the lives of families.[2] In §31, Pope Francis writes, "We do well to focus on concrete realities, since 'the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history,' and through these the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family." A more profound understanding of the family translates to a deeper appreciation of the laity.

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[1] Pope Francis, *Message on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the decree "Apostolicam Actuositatem,"* Vatican website, October 22, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151022_messaggio-apostolicam-actuositatem.html (accessed April 19, 2016).

[2] Holy See Press Office, *Summary of the post-Synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) on love in the family*, Vatican website, April 8, 2016, http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/04/08/160408b.html (accessed April 15, 2016).

In October 2014, the Vatican sought to hear these concrete realities and real concerns of the lay faithful. Catholics all over the world were asked for their input regarding issues of the family, issues that significantly affect them. A staunch believer in the principle that "realities are more important than ideas," Pope Francis acknowledged that it was his desire to consult the people of God as a preparatory measure for the two-phased Synod on the Family (2014 and 2015), saying, "But how could we speak about the family without engaging families themselves, listening to their joys and their hopes, their sorrows and their anguish?"[3] This desire, the pope confessed, finds its basis in the doctrine of the *sensus fidei*.

The doctrine of the *sensus fidei* teaches that every Christian, regardless of position in the church or level of instruction in the faith, has a Spirit-endowed instinct for the faith and therefore is an active, living subject in the church.[4] Its correlate, the *sensus fidelium* refers to the Spirit-inspired and Spirit-directed sensitivity and role of the whole church in discerning the faith. This doctrine was one of the central affirmations of Vatican II.

In recognizing the baptismal dignity of all members in the church, the council stressed the vital role the entire church plays in witnessing to the faith.[5] Cardinal Léon-

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[3] Pope Francis, *Address at Commemorative Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican website, October 17, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html (accessed October 22, 2015). See also Edward Pentin, "Pope Francis Lays Out Vision for a More 'Listening' and 'Decentralized' Church," *National Catholic Register*, October 18, 2015, http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/pope-lays-out-vision-for-a-more-listening-decentralized-church/, accessed October 19, 2015. See also Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) §231-233, Vatican website, November 24, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed April 19, 2016).

[4] *Evangelii gaudium* §120.

[5] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964) §12, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. A. Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing, 1996).

Joseph Suenens of Belgium, an influential participant at the council, refers to this notion as coresponsibility: "The church, in asking the faithful to accept their full and prophetic coresponsibility in the world, knows well that the Holy Spirit is at work to accomplish in and through them his great designs."[6] Everyone in the church, lay and ordained, is called to live his or her baptismal identity towards a common vocation, a common witness, and a common holiness.

In light of this conviction, this thesis argues for a fuller realization of Vatican II's emphasis on the participation of the laity in Christ's prophetic office. This participation would strengthen their teaching authority as an expression of the *sensus fidelium*. A broader concern governs this study, a concern that is best articulated in the following question: "How can greater participation be encouraged throughout the whole church?"

The thesis develops a detailed response to this question in three chapters. The first chapter will examine the notion of the *sensus fidelium,* its relationship with the *sensus fidei*, and its function in the life of the church. Building on this foundation, the second chapter will center on the laity, as one of the voices of the *sensus fidelium*, and their reception process. It will propose a three-part lay hermeneutic, namely, the hermeneutic of everyday life, the hermeneutic of desire, and the hermeneutic of trust as the framework operative in the exercise of the *sensus fidei* by the laity, an exercise that contributes to the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*. The third and final chapter will establish that a church that takes seriously the laity's sense of the faith can enhance their teaching authority of by adopting an ethos of ecclesial listening and reciprocal learning. It will present key

[6] Léon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *Coresponsibility in the Church*, trans. F. Martin (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 206.

aspects of a prophetic Christology as a theological starting point for a renewed appreciation of the responsibility of the laity, who are prophets in the church.

CHAPTER ONE

THE *SENSUS FIDELIUM*

> If we believe in the centrality of the principle of *sensus fidelium*, as a charism of the Spirit, we affirm also the communality of the faith and the shared responsibility we bear for witnessing to, celebrating, and elaborating this faith as gift and task... *Sensus fidelium* is an affirmation of the points of divergence and convergence around the multiple dimensions and expression of the faith in the one communion of Christ.[1]

One of the central aspects of the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council was encouragement of greater participation by the entire faithful in the life of the church. The council taught that the people of God, "from the bishops to the last of the lay faithful,"[2] have a vital role to play not only in sacramental life, but more fundamentally, in receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ, translating it faithfully into their lives and transmitting it effectively to new contexts. The *sensus fidelium*, the sense of the faithful, is the theological term that expresses this concept.

In the spirit of Vatican II, Pope Francis has been calling the church and its theologians to a deeper appreciation of the sense of the faithful. In his address to the International Theological Commission on December 6, 2013, he emphasized that it is the church's "duty to be attentive to what the Spirit says to the Churches through the authentic manifestations of the *sensus fidelium*."[3] The purpose of this chapter is to

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[1] Anne Arabome, "How are Theologians Challenged and Informed by Their Engagement with the Sense of the Faithful in the Local/Global Church?" *CTSA Proceedings* 70 (2015): 66-71 at 67-68 and 70.

[2] *Lumen gentium* §8.

[3] Pope Francis, *Address to the Members of the International Theological Commission*, Vatican website, December 6, 2013,

explore the nature and purpose of the *sensus fidelium.* The chapter will particularly consider the relationship of the *sensus fidelium* to the *sensus fidei*, how it functions in the life of faith in general and in the life of the church.

I. THE *SENSUS FIDELIUM* DEFINED

In theological scholarship, studies on the *sensus fidelium* are often conducted in tandem with the *sensus fidei*. Both terms have been used to refer to the capacity and duty of all Christian faithful in discerning and articulating matters of faith. John Burkhard observes that generally, "[these] two theological terms have come to express this understanding of the participation of all believers in elaborating Christian truth."[4] However, it is also true that the usage of both terms (*sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*) has often resulted into the conflation of meanings between them.[5] Ormond Rush writes, "There is a certain terminological confusion in the literature regarding this issue. Some writers use the terms *sensus fidelium* and *sensus fidei* synonymously when referring to the communal sense of the faith (as in *Lumen gentium* no. 12). Others restrict *sensus fidei*

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http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/december/documents/papa-francesco_20131206_commissione-teologica.html (accessed May 9, 2014).

[4] John Burkhard, "*Sensus fidei*: Meaning, Role and Future of a Teaching of Vatican II," *Louvain Studies* 17 (1992): 18-34 at 19.

[5] For example, in "*Sensus fidei:* Meaning, Role and Future of a Teaching of Vatican II," p. 19, Burkhard writes: "*Sensus fidei* might be used to refer to the Christian's possession of the truths of his or her faith or even of the more fundamental, underlying truth of the Christian belief-system. It is the state of belief which predominates in this usage and the truths of faith as the objects of belief. *Sensus fidelium*, on the other hand, points in the direction of the activity of the subject's belief, i.e., believers or the faithful, in abiding in, or defending, or elaborating the truth of Christianity. Both understandings have their roles to play. Nevertheless, I will employ the term *sensus fidei* because that is the one used in LG, but without being tied exclusively to one denotation, namely, that nuance which points to an objective sense of the term." Orlando Espin says "This 'faithful' intuition is called the *sensus fidelium* (or *sensus fidei*). Later he writes, "These two expressions are practically equal in their use and meaning in the Church;" see *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 66 and 84, footnote 14.

to the sense that an individual believer has of the faith, and for the communal sense they employ the phrase *sensus fidelium*."[6] Following Rush's lead, this thesis will adhere to the latter treatment "for the sake of highlighting the interplay between individual and communal faith."[7] This thesis will argue that it is imperative to arrive at a clearer, more nuanced grasp of each concept so as to facilitate a better understanding of the vital dynamic that exists between the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium*. The present chapter aims to do this, as well as assert the priority of the *sensus fidei* as a fundamental concept that sheds light on the *sensus fidelium*.

A. *Fides Qua, Fides Quae* and the Spirit-enabled *Sensus*

Since the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* pertain to how individuals and communities arrive at faith, it is helpful to begin the discussion by understanding faith's basic dimensions: the *fides qua*, the *fides quae*, and the *sensus* that makes both the *fides qua* and *fides quae* possible. Recognizing the all-encompassing nature and effect of faith in a person's life, theologians identify these as the fundamental aspects that make up "complexity and intrinsic unity of the act of faith."[8] As such, Wolfgang Beinert believes that:

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[6] Ormond Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*: Faith 'Making Sense' of Revelation," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (2001): 231-61 at 232. Here, I understand Rush to mean that *Lumen gentium* §12 uses *sensus fidei* to refer to the communal sense of the faith. It is also important to note that in the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's *The Gift of Authority*, we read in paragraph 29: "In every Christian who is seeking to be faithful to Christ and is fully incorporated into the life of the Church, there is a *sensus fidei*. This *sensus fidei* may be described as an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an intuition that is formed by worshipping and living in communion as a faithful member of the church. When this capacity is exercised in concert by the body of the faithful, we may speak of the exercise of the *sensus fidelium*." See *Origins* 29, no. 2 (May 27, 1999), 24.

[7] Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*," 232.

[8] Juan Alfaro, "Faith," in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. K. Rahner (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 500-510 at 500. He says, "Theologians, recognizing the complexity and intrinsic unity of the act of faith, distinguish in it the following basic dimensions: faith as knowledge of

> Any theology of faith must start from its two-dimensional structure that since Augustine (De Trin. 13.2.5) has been characterized as *fides qua (creditur)*, or Thou-faith, and *fides quae (creditur)*, or That-faith. On the one hand, it is an attitude toward the self-revealing God; on the other hand, it is the acceptance of the profession of the contents of this revelation.[9]

Further, theologians such as Christopher O'Donnell, Patrick Granfield, Salvador Pié-Ninot, Karl Rahner, and Francis Sullivan have associated the *fides qua*, the subjective dimension of faith, with the *sensus fidei,* and the *fides quae*, faith's objective dimension, with the *sensus fidelium*.[10] They have understood the *fides qua* as the faith *by which* a Christian believes, and the *fides quae* as the *content* of that belief – the *faith which* a Christian believes. This seems to have been the common understanding for theologians in the scholastic tradition.[11]

Rush's treatment on the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* signals a significant departure from the strand of thought described above, which tended towards a dichotomized understanding between the subjective and objective dimensions of faith. Rush's approach recognizes that the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* each bear

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revealed truth (believing in God who reveals himself in Christ: *'fides quae creditur'*); faith as trusting obedience to God and as a personal encounter with him: *'fides qua creditur'* (believing God, the formal structure of faith."

[9] Wolfgang Beinert, "Faith," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. W. Beinert and F. S. Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), 249-253 at 250.

[10] Christopher O'Donnell, "Sense of the Faith—Sense of the Faithful," in *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 422-424 at 422; Patrick Granfield, *The Limits of the Papacy: Authority and Autonomy in the Churc*h (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 135-136; Salvador Pié-Ninot, "*Sensus Fidei*," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. R. Latourelle (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1994), 992-995 at 992-993; Karl Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 42-66; Francis Sullivan, "The Sense of Faith: The Sense/Consensus of the Faithful," in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and Practice*, ed. B. Hoose (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 85-93 at 86 and 88.

[11] Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 173.

subjective and objective qualities.[12] Therefore, for Rush, these two dimensions are both present and operative in each reality – the *sensus fidei* exhibits aspects of both *fides qua* and *fides quae* and the *sensus fidelium* equally has facets of *fides qua* and *fides quae*. He insists on the unity of these two dimensions of faith, distinguishable they may be.[13] This means that in every believer, one finds a union of the *fides qua* and the *fides quae* or a combination of both dimensions at play. Rush's position finds its basis in the notion of "the hermeneutical circle" that is characterized by the "circularity of understanding…between whole and part, past and present, the old and the new, tradition and present experience."[14] For him, a person's relationship with God (subjective dimension) is influenced by his faith convictions (objective dimension). Rush writes:

> …a Christian individual's believing in God is already informed by received symbols, metaphors, narratives, categories, concepts, rituals and experiences. These elements form the framework out of which an individual is able to recognize and interpret "the religious dimension of human experience." How one experiences faith as a personal relationship of trust and intimacy will be conditioned to a significant degree by particular beliefs already held about God. New experiences of God, shaped by already held beliefs, in turn will "correct" one's previous interpretation of those beliefs and thereby enrich future possible experiences. *Sensus fidei*, I will propose, arises out of this hermeneutical circle of understanding between *fides qua creditur* (faith seen as a response by the individual to God's self-communication) and *fides quae*

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[12] Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful & the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2009), 66-67.

[13] Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*," 235-236 and *The Eyes of Faith*, 83. He writes, "These two dimensions of faith may be distinguished but not separated."

[14] Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*," 236. Here, Rush draws from the philosophical hermeneutical tradition, "with its emphasis on the entwinement of the hermeneutical triad: understanding, interpretation, and application. *Understanding* within experience, it is claimed, is already an *interpretation* out of a familiar framework from the past that enables an *application* of meaning to one's present context. This insight is further captured in the notion of 'the hermeneutical circle. A dialectic exists between our understanding of 'the whole' of a subject matter and our understanding of 'a part.' Understanding is a movement back and forth between a sense of the whole and a sense of the part. What we are already familiar with (tradition, the past) gives us a framework for understanding the unfamiliar (the new, the present). In turn, one's understanding of the new in terms of the old leads to a different understanding of the old. Thus, the hermeneutical circle displays an ongoing dialectic between whole and part, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the old and the new, the past and the present." See p. 233 of the same article. See also Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 72-74.

> *creditur* (faith as an assent to the content of beliefs taught by the Church).[15]

Rush refers to an individual's sense of the faith as the *sensus fidei fidelis* (or simply, *sensus fidei*) and to the community's sense of the faith as the *sensus fidei fidelium* (or simply, *sensus fidelium*).[16] In both these terms, he clarifies the meaning he attributes to his usage of the cognate '*sensus fidei*' since he uses it in both concepts.

> There is a double meaning to the word *sensus* that I wish to retain. I use the above cognates of *sensus fidei*, at different times, to name two distinct aspects of the interpretative dynamic at the heart of not only *fides quae creditur*, but *fides qua creditur*. The *sensus fidei* is both (1) the ecclesial *sensus* for the understanding, interpretation, and application of revelation, and (2) the interpretation that results from the exercise of that interpretative *sensus*. In the first meaning, it is a *sensus for* the faith; in the second meaning, it is a *sensus of* the faith. In the first meaning, it is an ability to interpret the faith; in the second meaning, it is a particular interpretation of the faith. In the first meaning, it is more (but not exclusively) a dimension of faith as *fides qua creditur*; in the second meaning, it is more (but not exclusively) a dimension of faith as *fides quae creditur*. [17]

Richard Gaillardetz makes a similar claim:

> The sense or instinct for the faith (*sensus fidei*) given to each believer in baptism, may be understood in two ways. First, it can refer to a capacity of the individual believer to understand God's revelation addressed to them in love. In this regard we might think of the sense of faith as a kind of spiritual sense or sixth sense. It is this capacity that allows a believer, almost intuitively, to sense what is of God and what is not. But the sense

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[15] Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*," 236. Rush likewise notes Avery Dulles who attests that "Faith and understanding, therefore, enter into a dialectical unity. Understanding and believing are not identical, but it is when I believe that I best understand, and it is when I understand that I believe most fully as I should. The Christian is convinced that the beliefs of his own tradition are capable of leading to the fullest and highest understanding available to man." See Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma: Faith, Authority, and Dogma in a Changing World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 43.

[16] The International Theological Commission uses the same terminological distinctions in §3 of "*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church," Vatican website, June 2014, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html (accessed July 16, 2014 and September 22, 2015).

[17] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 66-67.

> of faith might also be thought of, not only as a capacity, but as an actual perception or imaginative grasp of divine revelation.[18]

Rush then understands the *sensus fidei fidelis*, the sense of the faith of an individual baptized Christian as (1) one's own capacity for understanding, interpreting and appropriating the faith and (2) as the subsequent interpretation that arises from it. The *sensus fidei* thus pertains to each member of the church. It is the theological term used to refer to the sense of the faith on the individual, personal level. On the communal level, the term *sensus fidelium*, the sense of the faithful, is used. Applying the same approach to the *sensus fidei fidelium*, Rush writes:

> The twofold definition of *sensus fidei fidelis* likewise applies when speaking of the *sensus fidei fidelium*. The term can refer both to (1) a *sensus* or organon for the understanding, interpretation, and application of revelation, but here referring to a *sensus* or organon that is possessed by the whole people and is thus a corporate or ecclesial capacity, and (2) the interpretations that are the result of the interpretative activity of that organon, but here referring to the totality of diverse interpretations by individuals that are the result of the exercise of that corporate interpretative *sensus*.[19]

The *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* shall each be elaborated in further detail. In the meantime, it is necessary to emphasize one key aspect that these two theological notions share – their being a *sensus*. As mentioned previously, Rush attributes a two-fold definition to this *sensus*, as possessing both subjective and objective elements. But it is likewise important to realize that both these dimensions exist in the *sensus* because it finds its origin in the Holy Spirit. At baptism, the Spirit endows the Christian with a capacity to make sense of the faith, enabling him or her to discern the truth of the faith. "The *sensus* – a kind of spiritual perception, sense of discernment (flair) – is the fruit of

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[18] Richard Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 109.

[19] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 241.

the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which baptized believers are enabled to recognize what is, or is not, an authentic echo of the voice of Christ in the teaching of the community; what is, or is not, in harmony with the truth of the Gospel."[20]

Therefore, the Spirit makes both "process" (sensing the faith) and "product" (what is sensed) possible. John 16:13 provides a scriptural warrant for this. From this verse, we hear of the promise Jesus made to his disciples that he will send the Spirit to be with them, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." Jean-Marie Tillard, OP expounds on this Johannine verse and finds the source of this *sensus* precisely in the mission of the Spirit:

> The fourth evangelist presents the Spirit of truth, promised by Jesus, as him who must guide (*hodēgēo*) the disciples, not to a new revelation but to a deeper perception of the mystery of Jesus (thus John 14:2-6; 16:12-15). *It seems clear that John is not thinking here merely of an intellectual understanding but of a more complete knowledge granted thanks to a life lived in conformity with what is manifest in the words and actions of Jesus.* Now this knowledge is in no way divorced from the time factor: 'when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come' (16:13). If one is to believe the best specialists in Johannine thought, this 'telling' (*anaggellō*) involves not so much an announcement of the future as 'an interpretation,' 'a reading in depth,' for each generation to come, of what Jesus and his work mean. *Thus the Spirit brings an understanding, from within, in the light of faith, of the words, signs and actions of Jesus. He manifests the rich content and implications of those words, signs and actions. In short, he leads believers to the very heart of the truth of Jesus.* And he affiliates them to this *truth*: 'It is thus by the secret action of the Paraclete that the message of Jesus ceases to remain outside us and foreign to us. *The Holy Spirit interiorizes it in us, and helps us to penetrate it spiritually, in order that we may find therein a word of life.* This word of Jesus, assimilated in faith through the action of the Spirit, is what John will call in his first letter "the anointing" that remains in us (1 John 2:27); the teaching of Jesus,

[20] World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 181 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), §99.

> present in the believer, gives him the intimate meaning of the truth (vv. 20-21), and instructs him in all things; the Christian is henceforth "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8)…'[21]

The Spirit, then, is the ongoing source of the *sensus*. As such, the Spirit is the source of the various dimensions of the faith, including, but not limited to, the *fides qua* and the *fides quae*. The Spirit, whom we receive in baptism, guarantees that the faith we receive, formulate and express as a community, as well as the mission we have to fulfill remain faithful to the gospel.[22] The Spirit exercises a life-long influence on each Christian and on the whole church. Because the Spirit's mission is completely akin to Jesus' mission, the Spirit enables the community of faith to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ in the gospels. As Tillard explains above, the Spirit functions as "the guarantor of the church's ongoing faithful reception of Christ."[23] The Spirit who has accompanied Jesus throughout his life, from his birth, to his ministry, to his death and resurrection, is the same Spirit whom Jesus promised to his disciples, and also the very Spirit who facilitates the gift of faith within us.[24] The Johannine text makes clear that the Spirit plays a critical role in cultivating our ability to understand Jesus, to receive his words in our hearts and apply them to life. Indeed, "Life in Christ *is* life lived in the power of the Spirit."[25]

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[21] Jean-Marie Tillard, "*Sensus Fidelium*," *One in Christ* 11, no. 1 (1975): 9-40 at 12-14. Emphasis mine.

[22] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 39.

[23] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 39.

[24] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,*17, 29 and 38.

[25] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 16.

The aforementioned passages in John's gospel also bring into relief the nexus between the Spirit's activity in the church and the salvific mission of Jesus Christ.[26] Congar argues that, along with the Word, the Spirit is "the co-instituting principle of the church."[27] Properly understood, the Spirit was not only present in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, not only present when the community of faith was born, but continues to be involved in making the church possible to this very day, and well into the future, assuring the indefectibility of the church against internal corruption and failure.[28] Jesus promised that the church will not yield to "the powers of death" (Mt 16:18), that he will always be with the disciples and the church "to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20), that the household of God – the church – "is the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), and that the Spirit will guide the disciples and the church "into all truth" (Jn 16:13).[29] In this sense, the Spirit ensures the continuing presence of the church, animating its members and inviting them to a deeper conversion so that as the church moves forward in time, as it contends with inevitable challenges, the church continues to be "strengthened by God's grace, promised to it by the Lord so that it may not waver, through the weakness of the flesh, from perfect fidelity, but remain the worthy bride of the Lord, ceaselessly renewing itself through the action of the holy Spirit until, through the cross, it may arrive at that light which knows no setting."[30]

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[26] Karl-Heinz Neufeld, "Holy Spirit," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. W. Beinert and F. S. Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), at 347-349 at 347.

[27] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. D. Smith (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 2:5-14 at 9.

[28] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 38. Gaillardetz notes however that some theologians reject the possibility of discontinuity within tradition because recognizing discontinuity would undermine the belief in the church's indefectibility. See *By What Authority*, 52.

[29] See also Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 38-39 and 41.

[30] *Lumen gentium* §9.

If the Spirit engenders the church's deepening understanding and continuing reception of Jesus Christ through history, this same Spirit thus guarantees that the faithful's belief is error-free when it manifests a consensus (*consensus fidelium*).[31] Because the *sensus* finds its ongoing provenance in the Spirit, the *sensus* makes it possible for the baptized to enjoy an infallibility in believing as *Lumen gentium* §12 teaches. The *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium*, both as primarily *sensus*, are therefore indispensable elements in the life of the church because they function as conduits to and from the Spirit who guides the church "into all the truth."[32] The *sensus* serves as the pipeline, shared by each member of the church, and the church as a whole, that provides a vital connection to the Spirit. The *sensus* is the channel through which the Spirit is able to lead all the faithful into the saving truth of Jesus Christ. As such, the *sensus* contributes to the church's continual reception of that truth at all times and places.

B. *Sensus Fidei*

Lumen gentium §12 defines the *sensus fidei* as a "supernatural sense of the faith," "aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth," that enables the baptized to recognize the truth of the faith. Here, the Council understands the *sensus fidei* as the *fides qua* – the faith through which the faithful "unfailingly adhere to this faith, penetrates it more deeply through right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life."[33] With the Spirit as its source, the *sensus fidei* enables the baptized to discern the faith and apply it to their own

[31] Wolfgang Beinert, "*Sensus Fidelium*," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. W. Beinert and F. S. Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), at 655-657 at 656. See also Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford, *The Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 42-43.

[32] John 16:13. All bible verses are taken from Wayne Meeks, ed. *The Harper Collins Study Bible* - NRSV (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

[33] *Lumen gentium* §12.

life. The *sensus fidei* is the believer's "individual consciousness, 'illuminated' by faith and hence by God himself."[34] The *sensus fidei* is the capacity that every faithful member receives at baptism to actively grasp the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Pope Francis reinforces this understanding of the *sensus fidei* in *Evangelii gaudium* §119:

> As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression.

In its most recent document published in June 2014, "*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church," the International Theological Commission delivers a substantial treatment on the theological concept of the *sensus fidei*. In §3, the authors refer to the *sensus fidei* as "the personal capacity of the believer, within the communion of the Church, to discern the truth of faith" and "to make an accurate discernment in matters of faith." At its core, the *sensus fidei* is "a knowledge of the heart."[35] It is understood as a "form of spontaneous and natural knowledge, a sort of perception (*aisthesis*)"[36] and not as "a reflective knowledge of the mysteries of faith which deploys concepts and uses rational procedures to reach its conclusions."[37] It is *sensus*, in the proper sense of the word, "akin rather to a natural, immediate and spontaneous reaction, and comparable to a vital instinct or a sort of 'flair' by which the believer clings spontaneously to what conforms to the

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[34] Herbert Vorgrimler, "From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*," in *The Teaching Authority of Believers* (*Concilium* 180/4), eds. J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 3-11 at 3.

[35] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §50.

[36] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §49.

[37] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §54.

truth of faith and shuns what is contrary to it."[38] A similar understanding is found in Tillard's work. He claims that the *sensus fidei* is an "*instinctus* which makes one living a life faithful to the Gospel grasp instinctively what is in harmony with the authentic meaning of the Word of God and what deviates from it."[39] As an instinct, the *sensus fidei* becomes second nature to the faithful. The International Theological Commission writes,

> The *sensus fidei* is the form that the instinct which accompanies every virtue takes in the case of the virtue of faith. 'Just as, by the habits of the other virtues, one sees what is becoming in respect of that habit, so, by the habit of faith, the human mind is directed to assent to such things as are becoming to a right faith, and not to assent to others.' Faith, as a theological virtue, enables the believer to participate in the knowledge that God has of himself and of all things. In the believer, it takes the form of a '**second nature**'. By means of grace and the theological virtues, believers become 'participants of the divine nature', and are in a way connaturalised to God. As a result, they react spontaneously on the basis of that participated divine nature, in the same way that living beings react instinctively to what does or does not suit their nature.[40]

Because the *sensus fidei* is the accompanying aptitude or predisposition for the virtue of faith, and therefore "a property of the theological virtue of faith," it "develops in proportion to the development of the virtue of faith."[41] Thus, the deeper and stronger one's faith becomes, the keener one's *sensus fidei* grows. The shape of one's *sensus fidei* does not remain the same – it is conditioned according to the contours of one's faith. "The more the virtue of faith takes root in the heart and spirit of believers and informs their daily life, the more the *sensus fidei fidelis* develops and strengthens in them."[42]

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[38] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §54.

[39] Jean-Marie R. Tillard, "Church and Apostolic Tradition," *Mid-Stream* 29 (1990): 247-56 at 248.

[40] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §53. Emphasis mine.

[41] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §57.

[42] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §57. In the same paragraph, the document also mentions the role of charity in animating one's faith to ensure it is a living and lived faith. "Thus, the intensifying of faith within the believer particularly depends on the growth within him or her of charity, and the *sensus fidei fidelis* is therefore proportional to the holiness of one's life."

This is exactly what Rush identifies as the primary context of the *sensus fidei*: the Christian's personal faith relationship with God, a relationship founded on one's unique experience of salvation in daily life, one's active participation in the sacraments, in the general life and mission of the church.[43] These are the primary characteristics that comprise a believer's life. When one's relationship with God is grounded on these aspects, it becomes the fertile ground for a life faithfully lived according to the gospel message, exemplified in Jesus Christ and made possible by the Spirit within the church – the community of like-minded members. Rush explains that the *sensus fidei*, "as an understanding, interpretation, and application of the faith, ultimately takes the form, not so much of verbal formulation of personal belief (though it includes that), but of an individual's whole life and his or her ongoing conversion to Christ through the power of the Spirit."[44] The *sensus fidei* functions in the arena of a Christian's life, encompassing its every aspect: the faith that a believer senses is articulated in thought, treasured in the heart, expressed in word and shown in deed.

The *sensus fidei* is characterized by a practical nature that includes knowledge of faith but is not limited to it. The fact that the operation of the *sensus fidei* covers a believer's entire life is made evident in its three "manifestations" in the personal lives of believers. The International Theological Commission understands the *sensus fidei* as the capacity that allows the faithful:

> (1) to discern whether or not a particular teaching or practice that they actually encounter in the Church is coherent with the true faith by which they live in the communion of the Church;
> (2) to distinguish in what is preached between the essential and the secondary; and

[43] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 219.

[44] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 234.

> (3) to determine and put into practice the witness to Jesus Christ that they should give in the particular historical and cultural context in which they live.[45]

An exploration of these three "operations" or "functions" shows that each involves the entire range of a person's faculties: "to discern" or discernment is the operation of the heart and mind together; "to distinguish" or differentiate is an operation of the mind and practical experience; and "to determine" and apply Christian witness to life requires the operation of the entire person's being (heart, mind, soul and body). The *sensus fidei* operates within the context of an individual's life, specifically in the development of one's faith: enabling discernment, distinction, and application. The New Testament offers helpful images that link such faculties of a person to the organ of faith. The Spirit's ongoing work in each Christian is made manifest when she puts on "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16), has "spiritual insight" (Col 1:9), and has "enlightened eyes of the heart" (Eph 1:18).[46] Augustine claims "faith has its eyes."[47] Aquinas speaks of "the light of faith" through which Christians see and believe revealed truths.[48]

Another way to understand the *sensus fidei* is that it is "an active sense forever on the lookout for God."[49] As the Spirit's gift to all the baptized, the *sensus fidei* allows one to actively "sniff out" and intuitively grasp the presence of God in everyday life.[50] Pope

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[45] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §60.

[46] Pié-Ninot, *Sensus Fidei*, 993.

[47] The original statement is, "*Habet namque fides oculos suos*." Augustine, *Epistula* 120.2.8 (PL 33:458). See also Pié-Ninot, *Sensus Fidei*, 993.

[48] The original statement is "*Per lumen fidei vident esse credenda*." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2-2, q. 1, a. 5, ad. I. See also Pié-Ninot, *Sensus Fidei*, 993.

[49] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 225.

[50] John Fuellenbach, "The Church in the Context of the Kingdom of God," in *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O'Collins SJ*, eds. D. Kendall and S. Davis (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2001), 221-239 at 236-237. He writes, "If the kingdom of God is operative anywhere in the world

Francis echoes this insight. In one of his addresses, he told the clergy, consecrated religious and pastoral workers at Assisi, that "people have a "nose"!" when it comes to sensing God in the world; "The people scent out, discover, new ways to walk, it has the "*sensus fidei*," as theologians call it. What could be more beautiful than this? … it will be very important to consider what the Holy Spirit is saying to the laity, to the People of God, to everyone."[51] Understood as such, the *sensus fidei* functions as a perceptive sense that allows the person to discover where God is or is not present. It enables one to "tune in" to and be attentive to symbols, places, people, or moments that convey anything that is of God. As an imaginative sense that also employs the use of all five senses, the *sensus fidei* conditions the believer to "taste and see the goodness of the Lord."[52]

Rush suggests that the *sensus fidei* employs the use of the believer's imagination. "The exercise of the capacity of *sensus fidei* is an exercise of the creative Christian imagination."[53] The role of imagination in sensing and making sense of the faith is a crucial one. Because the imagination "only 'invites,' 'beckons,' and 'entices'" us, it merely calls us and lures us forth.[54] It seeks to propose images and symbols rather than impose strict logic on us.[55] Richard Côté claims that "It is this very capacity to lure, entice, and seduce that gives it a special affinity with the way God deals with us, …and what makes imagination so congenial to transcendence. It respects our human freedom

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and not just in the church, then our mission is to witness to this presence and to 'sniff it out,' raise people's awareness of it, and celebrate it where it makes itself present."

[51] Pope Francis, *Address to the Clergy, Consecrated People and Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils in the Cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi,* Vatican website, October 4, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_clero-assisi.html (accessed September 15, 2014).

[52] Ps 34:8. Quoted in Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 225.

[53] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 223.

[54] Richard Côté, *Lazarus! Come Out! Why Faith Needs Imagination* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2003), 58.

[55] Côté, *Lazarus! Come Out!,* 58.

and never compels us through any power of logic or clear evidence."[56] Finally, he argues that the imagination "allows the believer to see beyond what meets the eye, beyond the established order of things in our world today and to begin imagining what the Kingdom of God is really like when it makes an appearance 'in our very midst.'"[57]

The *sensus fidei* thus engages in imaginative processes and activities, prompting the person to a constant heeding of God. The frequent exercise of the *sensus fidei* results in the strengthening of an individual's faith "muscles" or a sharpening of one's eyes of faith, and thus allows for that person's sustained and ever deepening engagement with God. It entails what Newman calls the "illative sense"[58] – that subtle operation in our minds that is "our most natural mode of reasoning."[59] The illative sense is understood as "the mind in its perfection, judging and correlating at the highest point of any given individual; it concerns itself with principles, doctrines, facts, memories, experiences, testimonies, in order to attain insights too delicate and subtle for logical analysis."[60] It "leads a person to conclude that a particular insight is the upshot of it all, that no further evidence is needed, and that now is the moment to decide."[61] As a means of "unscientific reasoning" that looks to a higher source beyond logic, the illative sense enables one to reach certitude in an evaluative and integrative fashion. The illative sense will be

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[56] Côté, *Lazarus! Come Out!, 58-59.*

[57] Côté, *Lazarus! Come Out!,* 28.

[58] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 260-299.

[59] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 260.

[60] Charles F. Harrold, *John Henry Newman: An Expository and Critical Study of His Mind, Thought and Art* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, Inc, 1945), 157.

[61] Edward J. Miller, *John Henry Newman on the Idea of Church* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos, 1987), 28, quoted in Connolly, 69, n114.

discussed in further detail once we come to Chapter Two, but for now this shall suffice. The important thing to keep in mind is that the *sensus fidei*

> is both an imaginative capacity to interpret revelation, and the particular interpretation of revelation constructed by the individual believer in the Christian community. On the level of *fides qua*, this imaginative capacity enables the believing self to discover and make sense of revelation within the narrative of one's life. On the level of *fides quae*, each individual necessarily constructs, consciously or unconsciously, their own concrete catechism according to the norm of the God of Jesus Christ as witnessed to in Scripture and tradition.[62]

C. *Sensus Fidelium*

If the *sensus fidei* refers to the individual capacity and faith interpretation of each baptized believer, the *sensus fidelium* is equivalent to the communal capacity and interpretation of the baptized members as a whole. If the *sensus fidei* is the believing subject's "individual faith-consciousness," the *sensus fidelium* is the collective "faith-consciousness of the church."[63] As the living and unified voice of the people of God, the *sensus fidelium* refers to "a communal and ecclesial reality: the instinct of the faith of the Church herself, by which she recognizes her Lord and proclaims his word… [it is] reflected in the convergence of the baptized in a lived adhesion to a doctrine of faith or to an element of Christian praxis."[64]

> According to Rush, the *sensus fidelium* refers to
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> (1) a *sensus* or organon for the understanding, interpretation, and application of revelation, but here referring to a *sensus* or organon that is possessed by the whole people and is thus a corporate or ecclesial capacity, and

[62] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 238.

[63] Vorgrimler, "From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*," 3.

[64] International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei*," §3 and §74.

> (2) the interpretations that are the result of the interpretative activity of that organon, but here referring to the totality of diverse interpretations by individuals that are the result of the exercise of that corporate interpretative *sensus*.[65]

As in the *sensus fidei*, the two-fold definition features the *fides qua* and *fides quae* qualities of the *sensus fidelium*. As an ecclesial sense of the faith, the *sensus fidelium* functions as the *fides qua*, the faith through which the Christian community, as a whole, believes and appropriates the faith. It also refers to the totality of the diverse interpretations of that faith, resulting from the exercise of the corporate *sensus* and in this instance it functions as the *fides quae*, the faith which the church believes.

Though commonly understood as the sense of the faith of the laity, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the *sensus fidelium* encompasses the theologians and the clergy as well. The laity, theologians and clergy make up what Rush identifies as the primary source of the *sensus fidelium* – they who are active and remain committed to living out the Catholic faith. The secondary group, Rush suggests, is composed of those who may be considered nominal Catholics but are lapsed and inactive. This group also includes the alienated and disenfranchised members of the church, as well as the 'deconverted' Catholics.[66] The third and final group is what Rush calls the ancillary source: the wider ecumenical circle that counts as a source for the Christian faith as well.[67]

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[65] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 241.

[66] Rush writes, "Oftentimes, inactive, lapsed, marginalized and disaffected Catholics raise questions that may be a genuine call to greater fidelity to the Christ life." See *The Eyes of Faith*, 248. See also Richard Gaillardetz, "The Reception of Doctrine: New Perspectives," in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and Practice,* ed. B. Hoose (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 95-114 at 101-102 and Terry Veling, *Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1996). "Deconversion" is the concept used to refer to "baptized Catholics who have left Catholicism or who have substantially rejected or reworked 'normative' Catholicism in the reworking of their Catholic identity." See Tom Beaudoin, "Deconversion and Non-Normative Catholicisms – Invited Session," *CTSA Proceedings* 68 (2013), 72-73; "Secular Catholicism and Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 15, no. 1 (2011): 22-37, "Deconversion and Disaffiliation in Contemporary US Roman Catholicism," *Horizons* 40, no. 2 (2013): 255-262.

[67] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 244-251.

Within the primary source of the *sensus fidelium*, Rush identifies three particular voices: the sense of the faith of the laity (*sensus laicorum*), of theologians (*sensus theologorum*), and of bishops (*sensus episcoporum*).[68] This thesis has the first group, the laity, as its focus and shall devote the second chapter to that topic. Here, the laity will be discussed briefly, along with the other two voices of the *sensus fidelium* in order to gain an initial understanding of the distinctions of these three groups and the dynamics and interplay among them. Doing so will help towards a better appreciation of the three themes that will follow: *sensus fidelium* understood as a lived content, as an inculturated witness, and as a process of ecclesial discernment. Both *fides quae* and *fides qua* are operative in each of these themes.

The Laity

The laity and their sense of the faith are a major component of the church's living witness to the faith. They form the majority of the church's members. Along with the bishops and other clergy, they are those active in furthering the church's mission in the world. They are not to be equated with the *fideles* who comprise the church's *sensus fidelium*, although they comprise its vast majority.[69] The *sensus laicorum* is primarily "sought for its expression of lived faith"[70] in everyday life. Lay believers, especially in their ordinary context of family, work and civic life, are immersed in daily circumstances and in the affairs of the world.[71] When it comes to living the faith, the laity's point of

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[68] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 251.

[69] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Vatican website, November 24, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed September 10 and 18, 2014), §102.

[70] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 256.

[71] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 255.

view is thus considered to be indispensable in gaining a fuller sense of what the faith of the church is. It is in the context of the world that their Christian faith is lived, and it is in the ordinariness of this context that they experience the profound fruits that arise from "the depths of personal salvific encounter with the Triune God."[72]

The Theologians

Rush identifies the sense of the faith of theologians, the *sensus theologorum*, as the second voice of the *sensus fidelium*. If the church appeals to the *sensus laicorum* for its expression of lived faith, then it seeks the expertise and contribution of theologians who bring this lived faith into scholarly articulation. Doing theology is rooted in the *sensus fidelium*, the church's faith, and in the theologian's own sense of the faith, his *sensus fidei*. A theologian's *sensus fidei* is the "engine" of his theological work and is the source of his unique theological agenda.[73] The theologian also taps into the laity's senses of the faith and offers a formal articulation of how her community, which includes herself, are among those to whom the Word is addressed – they who are making sense of their experiences of salvation in the present. "A theologian aims to express the Christian community's hopes, to name and prophetically challenge its sinfulness and its myopic vision, and to produce a new prophetic vision of the salvific and revelatory meaning of the Gospel for a particular time and place."[74] In this light, Pope Francis exhorts theologians to keep in mind that their mission is inextricably linked with the mission of the church:

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[72] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 257.

[73] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 262.

[74] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 262.

> The Church, in her commitment to evangelization, appreciates and encourages the charism of theologians and their scholarly efforts to advance dialogue with the world of cultures and sciences. I call on theologians to carry out this service as part of the Church's saving mission. In doing so, however, they must always remember that the Church and theology exist to evangelize, and not be content with a desk-bound theology.[75]

The Bishops

The third and final voice is the *sensus episcoporum*, the sense of the faith of the bishops. Each bishop, like any baptized believer, exercises his own *sensus fidei*, and through it, he understands, interprets and applies the truths of Christian faith to his life and his episcopal ministry. While his individual *sensus fidei* informs his official role as part of the magisterium, "a bishop's personal sense of the faith cannot be said to express the fullness of the faith; it has no independent 'authority' over against the faith of the whole church."[76] The bishop's *sensus fidei* is formed, deepened, challenged, and is transformed not only through his own growth in faith, but also in his engagement with his diocese and theologians.[77] *Lumen gentium* §27 designates pastoral oversight as the primary responsibility of the bishop, entrusting him with "the permanent and daily care of their sheep." The pastoral charge of bishops then includes the practice of "local listening" to the various senses of the faith operative within a community, including those of lay believers, theologians and of their own. Rush refers to this as "the dialogic reception process" that occurs within a local church.[78]

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[75] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* §133.

[76] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 270.

[77] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 271.

[78] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 271.

The bishop's membership within the episcopal college likewise calls for a similar way of listening, but on a wider level: "In his collegial exchange with his brother bishops, a bishop's own *sensus fidei* is challenged, enriched, and constantly renewed with exposure to the *sensus fidei* of other bishops."[79] What emerges from this is the *sensus episcoporum* – "the varying senses of the faith of the bishops" and "the collective reality of plural and diverse perspectives of all bishops."[80] When the bishops function as the magisterium, this *sensus episcoporum* becomes a particular exercise of the *sensus magisterii* (sense of the magisterium), "the official and single mind of the magisterium."[81] To be genuine and credible witnesses to the faith, the bishops must embrace commitment to an ongoing conversion of the mind and heart to remain effective in their leadership and relevant in giving a voice to the *sensus fidelium* of his community. This means being in active, constant engagement with the current issues theology seeks to address and being particularly prophetic in carrying out their episcopal ministry: by being "attentive to the signs of the times shaping their people's lives" and by being "prophets of the Word of God challenging all that impedes the reign of God."[82]

The unity of all these voices constitutes the *sensus fidelium*: the *sensus episcoporum* and the *sensus magisterii* should be one with the *sensus laicorum* and *sensus theologorum*.[83] An effective criterion in this regard is this: whether one is a

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[79] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 271.

[80] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 270.

[81] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 270.

[82] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 273.

[83] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 251. Recall on pp. 20-24 that Rush distinguishes three sources for accessing the *sensus fidelium*: the primary source (active and involved laity, theologians, bishops); the secondary source (inactive or marginalized Catholics) and the ancillary source (wider ecumenical circles). See Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 244-274.

layperson, a theologian, a priest or a bishop, his *sensus fidei* is always subject to the "approbative" or "evaluative" reception of the church.[84] Rush argues:

> Just as the individual lay person must consider their own *sensus fidei* to be subject to the approbative reception of the whole church, and just as the individual academic theologian must consider his or her own *sensus fidei* to be subject to the approbative reception of the wider community of scholars and ultimately the whole church, so too an individual bishop must consider his own *sensus fidei* to be subject to the approbative reception of other bishops and of the whole church.[85]

D. Relationship between the *Sensus Fidelium and the Sensus Fidei*

We have established that the *sensus fidelium* finds its source in the Spirit. Only through the grace of the Spirit is the life of faith made possible.[86] At baptism, each of the faithful is endowed by the Spirit with grace, of which the *sensus fidei* is an expression. Grace enables the response of faith as well as the growth in knowledge of and intimacy with Christ, and the transformation that results from patterning one's life after him. When exercised and nourished, this sense of the faith enables the baptized to grow in faith and to lead a life of faithful discipleship. The *sensus fidei* serves as a compass, pointing to Christ so that the believer not only matures in his or her faith, but also deepens his or her relationship with Christ and embraces the salvific message he offers. Through it, the baptized are able to know of Christ (*sensus fidei* as *fides quae*) and to know Christ (*sensus fidei* as *fides qua*). With all their physical and imaginative senses, they embrace an attentiveness that demands "a long loving look at the real."[87] As "an active sense

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[84] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 101.

[85] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 270.

[86] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 29.

[87] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 225. The quote is from Walter Burghardt, "Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real," *Church* 5 (Winter 1989): 14-18.

forever on the lookout for God,"[88] the *sensus fidei* enables one to recognize not only what God has revealed in the past, but what God continues to reveal in the present. Truly, "revelation is not only what God has revealed, but revelation is more fundamentally, 'God revealing,' the divine self-giving to humanity through Christ in the Spirit and the reception of that gift in the Spirit."[89] In this sense, the *sensus fidei* most clearly functions as one's "eyes of faith."[90]

The *sensus fidelium* is responsible for sharpening the vision of these eyes of faith. One's sense of seeing is enriched and helped by how others within the community of faith use and develop their own sense of sight. Rush argues that the *sensus fidei* "is nurtured out of the *sensus fidei fidelium* and in turn nurtures the community's faith."[91] A symbiotic relationship therefore exists between an individual's *sensus fidei* and the community's *sensus fidelium*. The sense of the faith of each baptized individual contributes to the community's *sensus fidelium*. In turn, the *sensus fidelium* of generations past and present that make up the church's tradition helps to cultivate the *sensus fidei* of each believer who lives his or her life committed to emulate Christ's example. Accordingly, Rush claims, "The individual's reception of faith from the community calls forth creedal assent to the community's beliefs and a willingness to be guided by the magisterium."[92]

When the various *sensus fidei* converge in a particular expression of faith, the sense of the faithful is born. The *sensus fidelium* is "the Holy Spirit's gift to the whole

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[88] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 225.

[89] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 196-197.

[90] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 70.

[91] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 218.

[92] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 218.

church of an imaginative organon for the understanding, interpretation, and application of revelation, i.e., the reception of revelation."[93] Since it is also a collection of diverse expressions of the one faith, of shared beliefs expressed or practiced in manifold ways, Rush claims that "the issue of 'determining the *sensus fidelium'* necessarily involves attention to this diversity of expression of the faith."[94] In addition, the *sensus fidelium* as a corporate organon "is not only at work in the diversity of interpretation through the world-church, but is an organon at work also in the work of theology and in the operation of the magisterium, as well as in the interaction of all three."[95]

E. Manifestations of the *Sensus Fidelium*

What assures the church that they recognize the Spirit's gift of the *sensus fidelium* within them? What indicators or criteria must they observe in order to know that they have developed the *sensus fidelium*? I propose three "signposts" here.

First, the exercise of a community's *sensus fidelium* is made manifest when the faithful, as a community, live out their baptismal commitment in everyday life, when they participate in sacraments and when they help further the mission of the church.[96] In professing through word, deed and worship that they believe in a God who wills nothing but life and salvation, they lead a life conforming to gospel values and to the example of Christ. They are able to witness to such a life and to grow in intimacy with Christ as a community of faith, especially when they come to a common realization that, "What is revealed is the compassionate heart of God, and ultimately the knowledge that is

[93] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 242-243.

[94] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 243.

[95] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 243.

[96] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 245.

communicated is of the mystical kind, a knowing which comes through living within God."[97]

Second, the faithful know they bear the *sensus fidelium* when they are enabled and empowered to exercise their ecclesial imagination.[98] If the organon of the *sensus fidei* is a person's imagination, as noted earlier, the primary mode of the *sensus fidelium,* as a corporate sense, is the ecclesial imagination.[99] Recall that the *sensus fidei* facilitates the reimagining of oneself as a new creation in Christ. Here it might be added that to reimagine such is not simply to reimagine myself to be the same person "as before, but differently and better than before,"[100] but also to reimagine the community I find myself in, the church in particular, to be the same "as before, but differently and better than before." It is the ecclesial imagination that allows the church to reimagine and reinvent itself so that it still remains to "preserve continuity with the self's past and it functions to disrupt that continuity by opening up new possibilities in the future."[101] Employing the ecclesial imagination means openness to ecclesial conversion, the willingness to be changed, challenged and inspired by the gospel. It means growing in faith as a community as it strives to promote the reign of God in the world. This can only be possible when the poietic imagination of each individual is harnessed to the best possible level.[102] A developed and attentive *sensus fidei* thus contributes to the development and

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[97] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 27.

[98] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 241.

[99] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 241.

[100] Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope,* trans. E. Craufurd (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978), 67.

[101] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 238.

[102] "Poietic" is from the Greek word "poiesis" – a concept that refers to the human activity of production. My usage here follows Rush. On page 223 of *The Eyes of Faith*, Rush writes, "I prefer to use the transliteration 'poietic' rather than 'poetic' in order to highlight the primary sense of the Greek word

maturing of the *sensus fidelium*. A developed and attentive personal poietic imagination thus contributes to the development and improvement of the ecclesial imagination.

Third, there is assurance that one shares in the *sensus fidelium* when, as a result of the first two indicators – lives lived as a testimony to the Christian commitment and lives engaged in an exercise of the ecclesial imagination – a community's expression of faith converges with those of other local churches. This is all in an effort to understand, interpret and apply the one faith in their respective locales. As a "contemporary recipient of salvation," each Christian endeavors to recognize the ways in which that salvation is made manifest in his life – a process that his *sensus fidei* makes possible.[103] The coming together of the various *sensus fidei* enrich the community's life, adding to its shared set of beliefs and practices. Through this, the community's *sensus fidelium* is born. The *sensus fidelium* is a shared ecclesial sense that helps the church make sense of its communal experience of salvation.

The sense of the faithful of a local community then, is the theologian's "starting point of inquiry."[104] Theologians recognize their community's *sensus fidelium*, articulate their hopes and concerns, and offer these to the rest of the universal church.[105] As mentioned earlier, theologians play an important function in tapping into the sense of the

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poiesis as 'creating,' 'making,' or 'doing.'" See also Roberto Goizueta, "Poiesis," in *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, ed. O. Espín and J. Nickoloff (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 1053-1054 and *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 82-86.

[103] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 264.

[104] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 263.

[105] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 264.

faithful. "In this way, the discipline of theology becomes one of the essential ecclesial 'instruments' for the determination of the *sensus fidelium* worldwide."[106]

However, there are instances when even theologians and bishops fail to attune themselves to the *sensus fidelium*. When the *sensus fidelium* persists despite the blindness of theologians and of the bishops, it is the lay faithful's task to challenge them. In this sense, the laity's sense of the faith can confront the church with what Dolores Leckey describes as "prophetic questions" – those "energetic questions…which press the institutional church to be engaged in these issues to seek deeper understanding, and to be open to new levels of consciousness."[107] Inspired by *Lumen gentium* §37, Canon 212 §3 declares that the faithful "have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ's faithful, but in doing so they must always respect the integrity of faith and morals, show due reverence to the Pastors and take into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals." It is in this manner that the laity participate in the co-responsibility of all the faithful in the church.[108]

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[106] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 265.

[107] Dolores Leckey, *Laity Stirring the Church: Prophetic Questions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 15. Also in Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 260.

[108] See Léon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *Coresponsibility in the Church*, trans. F. Martin (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 187-213.

II. THE *SENSUS FIDELIUM* IN THE LIFE OF FAITH AND OF THE CHURCH

A. The *Sensus Fidelium* in the Revelation-Faith Dynamic

The Second Vatican Council presented revelation within a "personal-relational" understanding of divine revelation grounded on the Trinity.[109] From the onset, *Dei verbum* conveyed such a personal-relational tone. In *Dei verbum* §2, we read:

> It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will, which was that people can draw near to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature. By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company.

The interpersonal aspect of God's self-disclosure resonates with Filipino theologian José de Mesa's construal of revelation. For him, revelation is God revealing God's own *loob* – "the core of one's personhood and the most authentic inner self of the Filipino which is essentially related to other selves."[110] De Mesa's understanding of revelation in a Filipino key serves as an appropriation of what *Dei verbum* teaches above and offers a living example of the intimate, personal, and unifying relationship that God offers humanity.

Centering on Jesus Christ, who makes this union possible between the Father and humanity through the power of the Spirit, the Council promoted a personal and Trinitarian approach to revelation. As the "original mystery" that "communicates every

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[109] Thomas Stegman, "*Dei Verbum*: Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," *The Pastoral Review* 9, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2013): 10-16 at 10.

[110] José de Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far From Home* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2003), xiv. Also in Stephen Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

other mystery,"[111] revelation is thus "the radical and total self-communication of God as the absolute mystery, a self-communication that occurs in history through words, deeds, and events and that reaches its climax in Jesus Christ. This divine self-communication is mediated through the Holy Spirit and unfolds its efficacy for salvation when it is accepted in faith by human beings."[112]

Revelation is also what prompts us to respond in faith.[113] René Latourelle understands revelation as "the decisive and first event of Christianity, the event which conditions our decision to believe…"[114] He adds that, "following the lead of Scripture, the patristic traditions and theological reflection have always emphasized that revelation reaches into the human subjectivity, elevates it, and transforms it so that it may apprehend the gospel message as a living word addressed to it personally." [115] Faith is the human response signaling the acceptance of God's self-gift, God's plan of salvation and God's offer of love and friendship. Faith is a response that encompasses the entirety of a person's being: "It is thus that faith is frequently described by Saint Paul and Saint John: a total attitude of the whole man responding to God's advances, as an indivisible totality, where knowledge and love are only one in the spiritual impulse of the whole person. The faith which works through charity (Gal 5:6) is knowledge and commitment of the whole person: it accepts the whole truth of God and gives God the whole human heart."[116]

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[111] René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Alba House, 1966), 13.

[112] Wolfgang Beinert, "Revelation," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, eds. W. Beinert and F. Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 598-604 at 598.

[113] Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 13.

[114] Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 13.

[115] Latourelle, "Revelation," 945.

[116] Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 325-6.

Faith is also a form of reception – "the human reception of divine revelation."[117] The goal of God's revelation is not accomplished until its content or its message is received, interpreted and applied by the intended recipients. As such, revelation and faith cannot exist without each other. Revelation relies on faith for its realization and faith depends on revelation for its fulfillment. Faith signals the human reception of God's revelation. "God's revealing word and man's responding faith were taken to be absolutely coordinate: there is no revelation outside faith and no faith without revelation."[118] Faith is sustained by the interweaving of divine revelation and human experiences, concerns, and hopes. "Faith invites people to rethink their aims and values, so that they can discern religious truths and, in particular the truth about Jesus…Faith promises to validate itself in practice by leading believers into a deeply satisfying union with God and one another."[119] In this sense, revelation and faith are correlatives in the divine-human encounter. It is important to recognize that "The divine and human poles of this personal communication are so intertwined that, as Paul Tillich asserted, 'revelation' should always be taken to mean *Offenbarungsglaube* [revelation-faith]."[120]

In the same manner, Ghislain Lafont argues that the Council understood and taught revelation as something to be listened to and taken to heart, not as a set of truths one simply has to assent to. Vatican II "privileged love over knowledge" or in Lafont's

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[117] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 28.

[118] Gerard O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1971), 33.

[119] Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

[120] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 28.

own words, "hearing" over "seeing."[121] Lafont claims, "Revelation is carried out in a more interpersonal and dynamic manner: the Word is addressed to someone who listens and who makes it his own by responding to the one who speaks about what he said."[122] He identifies this way of knowing as the "paradigm of communion" – of being in an interpersonal relationship, one akin to the kind of relationship between two intimate friends, recalling what *Dei verbum* §2 teaches.

Moreover, Joseph Komonchak, resonating with Lafont, explicates why the process of hearing is such an important dimension of the human (and ecclesial) reception of revelation.

> …the 'hearing' is itself something more than sound waves impinging upon eardrums. It is a human act of reception and appropriation, the word encountering and satisfying the demands of a questioning mind and a needy heart. Revelation is not an act which ends with the speaking of the word but with its reception and appropriation in human lives.[123]

Applied to revelation, God's message for humanity will not really amount to anything if it is not received and applied to one's life. After all, "God's revelation is only heard if his self-communication is experienced and accepted, and not as a theory, but, far more radically, in the existential mode of human life."[124]

How does the *sensus fidelium* figure into all this? As mentioned earlier, the sense of the faithful is the corporate capacity, given and guided by the Spirit, for understanding,

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[121] John Burkhard, "Ghislain Lafont and the Continuing Quest for an Adequate Ecclesiology (A Review Article in Commemoration of Vatican II's 50th Anniversary)," review of *L'Église en travail de réforme*, by Ghislain Lafont, *Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2013): 191-194 at 192.

[122] Ghislain Lafont, "*Progression et Croissance dans la Tradition Saincte,*" in *L'Église en travail de réforme: Imaginer l'Église Catholique, tome II* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2011), 54.

[123] Joseph Komonchak, "Defending Our Hope: On the Fundamental Tasks of Theology," in *Faithful Witness: Foundations of Theology for Today's Church*, eds. L. O'Donovan and T. Howland Sanks (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989) 14-26 at 20.

[124] Vorgrimler, "From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*," 7.

interpreting and applying the faith of the church – the message of God's revelation – to life. Because revelation "is not only what God has revealed, but revelation more fundamentally is 'God revealing,'"[125] it is necessary that its content be continually interpreted and re-interpreted in every age. It has to be done in a manner that would be relevant to and make sense to the members of the church who live in particular cultures in particular historical locations. Through the sense of the faithful, the faith (and thus revelation) is neither static nor "just some past event for contemporary Christians, but is a present, daily salvific reality which Christians are appropriating through the grace of the Holy Spirit and interpreting through the Spirit's organon of the *sensus fidelium*."[126]

B. The *Sensus Fidelium* in the Tradition Process

As the intergenerational vehicle of the church's faith, the *sensus fidelium* plays a particularly significant role in the interpretation of church tradition. Through the *sensus fidelium*, the faith is effectively handed on from one generation of believers to the next. This is done through various modes of action that can all fall under the terms "Christian witness" or "Christian spirituality," such as participation in sacramental life, in acts of charity/social justice, in spiritual practices (devotions, for example), in formal/informal catechesis, in the study of Scripture, and in real life accounts of Christian conversion. All the aforementioned possess one thing in common: they communicate various elements of Christian doctrine – through word (oral and written), and deed.

Christian doctrine refers to the set of truths or convictions held by the church founded upon a shared faith in and a genuine commitment to Jesus Christ. It is a set of

[125] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 196-197.

[126] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 180.

"normative beliefs that are expressive of the Christian community's central insights regarding the mystery of Christ."[127] Doctrine defines the identity of Christians, expresses their faith, and provides them with the essential language to communicate their beliefs as followers of Christ.[128] Doctrine is therefore a characteristic aspect of what it means to be part of a community of faith – of what it means to be ecclesial. Rahner believed that "in the Christian understanding religion is necessarily ecclesial religion"[129] and that "a Christian has to be an ecclesial Christian."[130] The nature and purpose of doctrine makes that ecclesial aspect very explicit. Doctrine highlights the communal identity of the church.

Moreover, doctrine ensures the continuity of the Christian faith. Our central beliefs tell us where we as a community of believers in Christ came from and where we are headed – what the future holds for us. "A primary purpose of doctrine, therefore, is to assist in the maintenance of the Church's enduring identity by specifying the content of its faith, especially in matters that are central to its identity, so that the faith of the church in the present remains connected to the faith of the church in the past."[131] Doctrine, while open to changes that are inevitable in the life of the church as it journeys in time, thus plays a confirmatory and a safeguarding function – doctrine guarantees that "…the

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[127] Colleen Griffith, "What is Spirituality?" in *Spirituality for the 21st Century: Experiencing God in the Catholic Tradition*, ed. R. Miller (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 2006), 1-12 at 8.

[128] Richard Lennan, "Making Sense of Doctrine," in *The Possibility of Belief: The Challenges and Prospects of Catholic Faith*, ed. R. Lennan (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2004), 158-173 at 162.

[129] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. W. Dych (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 323.

[130] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 345.

[131] Lennan, "Making Sense of Doctrine," 166.

church cannot change into something or other at will, arbitrarily, but only into a new presence of its old reality, into the present and future of its past…"[132]

Finally, doctrine and Christian spirituality are "inextricably bound"[133] together. Doctrine and Christian spirituality mutually inform and affect each other, and when taken seriously, both give rise to a genuine Christian commitment that inspires action aligned with the gospel values. In other words, "…the content of the Church's faith has implications for Christian existence in the world, … There is, then, a direct link between what we believe about Christ and how we are to live, between doctrine and the life of faith."[134] Because doctrine conveys what is essential to the faith of the church, it serves as the content and inspiration for each Christian's life of witness. Therefore, doctrine must not be separated from spirituality, and all modes of Christian witness that are defined as aspects of spirituality (e.g. liturgical worship, reception of sacraments, devotional practices, acts of charity and social justice, etc.). There is a mutual relationship that exists between doctrine and spirituality. In the lives of the faithful, doctrine conveys spirituality and spirituality conveys doctrine. Colleen Griffith claims:

> There must be more honest recognition, particularly by the magisterium, that formulations of Christian facts have value insofar as persons and communities appropriate them and imbue them with value. *A genuine understanding and holding of doctrine involves more than an ability to recite its claims, more than a grasp of its intellectual content. Real understanding implies conscious appropriation that is enlivening for and transformative of the individuals themselves. Lived faith cannot be reduced to a set of cognitive beliefs and the memorization of those beliefs.* Knowledge alone will not suffice, and it should not. *A genuine grasp of doctrine entails a willingness and ability to embody the wisdom inherent in that doctrine*. This calls for levels of appropriation that will influence

[132] Karl Rahner, "The Changing Church," in *The Christian of the Future*, trans. W.J. O'Hara (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 36.

[133] Griffith, "What is Spirituality?" 9.

[134] Lennan, "Making Sense of Doctrine,"162.

> dispositions and invite practices, all the while proving a deeper life of faith for individuals themselves and for communities of faith.[135]

A believer's spirituality thus encompasses his or her life of faith. As a total response to God's offer of Godself, the response of faith "involves a person's entire being, one's whole self," which means that the intellectual dimension of faith is incomplete without the behavioral, affective, social and internal dimensions of a person's being.[136] All these aspects come into play, as if musical instruments performing together in an orchestra to produce a beautiful symphony, when a Christian wholeheartedly responds to God's offer of revelation.

Therefore, if doctrine and faith are intimately connected, the *sensus fidelium* plays two essential roles in the life of the church. The *sensus fidelium* is integral to the transmission of doctrine and in its development –in other words, the *sensus fidelium* is key player in the process of tradition in the church.

> From its beginnings, appeal to the *sensus fidelium* involved the insights of the faithful as a vital part of a living tradition. It served both to identify doctrines and to establish hermeneutical practices in the development of the tradition. It has functioned in contexts where a plurality of views on Church teaching have eventually borne fruit in agreement on new doctrinal expressions, though resolution has required new insights into interpretation. The content of tradition and the process of tradition have been forged in the same fires.[137]

The elements of Christian doctrine, which are essentially the content of revelation and tradition, form the very substance of faith that is passed from one generation of believers to the next. Usually cited in this discussion is the first rule of Vincent of Lérins: "in the Catholic church, all care must be taken so we hold that which has been believed

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[135] Griffith, "What is Spirituality?" 9. Italics mine.

[136] Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 30.

[137] Daniel Finucane, *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept in the Post-Vatican II Era* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996), 6.

everywhere, always, and by everyone" (*ubique, semper, et ab omnibus*). Recent scholarship on Vincent, specifically by Thomas Guarino, suggests that this canon "is not just about the remote past" as is commonly understood.[138] Guarino cautions that the first rule was meant to overcome heresy and distinguish the truth of faith from heresy. The first canon was not meant to signify a "utopian dream, some asymptotic ideal, drawn from a nebulous and remote age of the church."[139] More importantly, the first canon ought to be understood, at all times, along with the second canon: "over time, growth undoubtedly occurs in the Christian doctrine…such growth is always protective of the meaning found in earlier formulations of the faith" and should, at all times, be "according to the same doctrine, the same meaning, and the same judgment [*in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*]."[140] Therefore, for Vincent of Lérins, faith "must be guarded yet also nurtured, husbanded, and properly developed."[141] The oft-cited canon must be understood in this light. Echoing this point, it must be appreciated that "Doctrine, then, no less than any other feature of the Church's life is not meant to freeze the Church at a particular moment in history, but to open it to further development, to further growth in understanding…"[142]

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[138] Thomas Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 5. On page 4 of the same text, Guarino describes the common opinion this way: "And indeed, Vincent's memorable words (*ubique, semper et ab omnibus*) have been endlessly invoked, though usually just as quickly dismissed. Contemporary historians and theologians generally hold that Vincent's catchy maxim represents a good attempt at fashioning a criterion for distinguishing truth from heresy, but that the slogan is rather naïve, setting forth criteria that almost no Christian doctrine actually meets. Some have argued that the canon raises more questions than it answers since the rule is so general as to be virtually useless."

[139] Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins*, 5.

[140] Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins,* 6.

[141] Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins,* 9.

[142] Lennan, "Making Sense of Doctrine," 167.

Accordingly, the faith that has been held everywhere, always and by everyone was not handed on in a uniform or fixed manner. For Vincent of Lérins, "there must be a performative appropriation and a creative reception of the church's faith in every epoch, an appropriation that uses its own language, culture, and concepts even while always maintaining the *idem sensus* [same meaning] of Christian belief."[143] The faith is thus transmitted to each generation in varying circumstances. Each community of believers in a specific era then receives this faith, appropriates it, given the particularities of their context. The transmission of doctrine thus entails the reception of doctrine. Again emphasizing the communal nature of doctrine, its reception "appears as a social process, or better, an ecclesial process. The local church realizes itself as a *communio fidelium* in reception, taking into consideration the *sensus fidei* of its members."[144] When the *sensus fidelium* is incorporated in the church's reception of doctrine, doctrine becomes "an expression of the lived faith of the community and the product of a long history of refinement by that community, a refinement stimulated by the need to respond to new questions."[145] Reception, thus, is not mere repetition, but is a process of interpreting and appropriating the core of Christian faith to changing historical situations of the receivers – the faithful.[146] This is why the faith transmitted in every generation results in varying

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[143] Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins,* 89.

[144] Herman Pottmeyer, "Reception and Submission," in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, eds. G. Mannion, R. Gaillardetz, J. Kerkhofs, K. Wilson (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003), 327-339 at 338.

[145] Richard Lennan, *Risking the Church: The Challenges of Catholic Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 209.

[146] Lennan, *Risking the Church*, 210. See also Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*, 45-53; John Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Jean-Marie Tillard, "Faith, the Believer and the Church," *One in Christ* 30, no. 3 (1994): 216-228 at 217. Tillard writes, "Tradition is thus the setting forth (not necessarily the mere *repetitio*) of the authentic meaning which is necessary if the *euaggelion tou Theou* is to be received in accordance with what God has really willed to offer humanity. Tradition certain implies transmission (*paradosis*). Nevertheless,

emphases and interpretations, depending on the pressing issues or challenges that may be confronting a particular generation at a particular time.

The sense of the faith of each individual believer, and its interaction with the community's sense of the faithful (and vice-versa) signify an important part of the reception process. The *sensus fidei*, the *sensus fidelium* and the healthy interaction between them form the basis of a balanced process of reception whose essence is primarily "a process of *diligent study*, *increasing insight*, and *maturing judgment*" which then, leads to a possible assent "by the Church and its communities and members in the light of faith and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."[147] This again highlights the nature of faith as a total human response to God's offer of revelation, engaging the intellectual, affective, and behavioral dimensions – the *sensus fidei* of an individual and the *sensus fidelium* of the entire community.

Every generation, in effect, is responsible for ensuring that the faith upon which the church was founded continues to be compelling, so that it continues to make a difference in people's lives in their time, given their specific needs or challenges. The church of every age is called to listen to the guidance of the Spirit in fostering an attentive stance when it comes to teachings that no longer hold "continuing validity as expressions of Catholic faith."[148] Further,

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this transmission is not only from generation to generation, in a continuum. It has also to be achieved in each generation for the sake of the members of that generation. For the gospel itself has to be communicated in each period of human history and *received* in its wholeness and in its real content (and signification) by the people of that period. Tradition is not only a *passing through* generation to generation, but it is also the *passing into* the societies and the members of each generation." Italics original.

[147] Pottmeyer, "Reception and Submission," 339. Italics mine.

[148] Francis Nichols, foreword to *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept in the Post-Vatican II Era,* by Daniel Finucane (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996), xiii-xvii at xv.

> … as the centuries, and now the millennia, unfold, the Church must not only be attentive to the letter of the message handed down to us by our Fathers and Mothers in the faith, but *the Church must also must be listening to the voice of the Spirit who continues to instruct the Church about the contemporary implications of that revelation given once and for all in Jesus*. It was not just to Church leaders but to the *whole Church* that Jesus addressed these words on the eve of his passion: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:12-13).[149]

As the body of the church's teachings, Christian doctrine is passed on and received by each generation's community of faith. *Dei verbum* §8 speaks about the apostolic faith as received and traditioned forth in the history of the church – so that "in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes." Specifically, the constitution says:

> This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.[150]

Through the passage above, the Second Vatican Council reminds the faithful that the church, as it goes through its pilgrim journey in history, possesses a stance of openness towards new ways in which its teachings might respond to contemporary issues and challenges. It is in this sense that doctrine develops – it adapts given the changing contexts of society. The *sensus fidelium* therefore, is an indispensable agent in the development of doctrine. Because doctrine is meant "to be evocative, to nurture the

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[149] Nichols, foreword, xvi-xvii. Italics mine.

[150] *Dei Verbum* §8.

Christian community's relationship to Christ,"[151] the church must pay attention to the signs of the times and determine which contemporary challenges confront its members, thereby requiring relevant insight and serious reflection on how the faith might speak to or illumine those challenges.

Growth and change are not alien then to the church. A proponent of this conviction is John Henry Newman, who expressed this truth in these famous words, "to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."[152] The entire people of God play a role in the church's efforts to maintain not just the relevance, but the vitality of its faith. The believing community as a whole shares in the duty of ensuring that the faith never fails to be a source of healing, inspiration and hope given the struggles of any given time. Here, one's knowledge of the church's doctrine and one's spirituality come to a point of convergence:

> If we place a stronger accent on the linkage between spirituality and doctrine, people will be more inclined to learn the doctrines of their tradition, since knowing them will have less to do with orthodoxy checklists, and more to do with the chance to learn their wisdom for life. A change becomes apparent here, a shift from having a general grasp of one's tradition to *being grasped by it*.
>
> In *doctrines that are radically spiritual* and *spiritualities that are richly doctrinal*, we are renewed, less likely to carry our faith in the mind alone, and more likely to engage it in lively fashion. [153]

As the church journeys in time, it must be recognized that the "Development of doctrine is a never-ending process. And this development is nourished by the research of

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[151] Griffith, "What is Spirituality?" 8.

[152] John Henry Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 40.

[153] Griffith, "What is Spirituality?" 11. Italics mine.

theologians, by the living faith of the believers and by the decisions of the hierarchy."[154] The living faith of the believers is where the *sensus fidelium* becomes the driving force as it contributes to the transmission, re-appropriation, and development of the Christian doctrinal tradition. Just as revelation is meant to be understood not simply as "God has revealed" but that "God is revealing," doctrine and tradition as a whole, are "in fact just the opposite of a burden of the past; it is vital energy, a propulsive as much as a protective force, acting within an entire community as at the heart of each of the faithful because it is none other than the very Word of God both perpetuating and renewing itself under the action of the Spirit of God."[155] In a certain sense, one may argue that an inculturated expression of faith, once it has "passed" ecclesial approbation, could be considered a concrete manifestation of how Christian doctrine developed in a particular local church. The development of doctrine is another way of understanding the process of ongoing reception in ecclesial communities through time.

Doctrine is essentially the church's "time-capsule" containing its tradition – a cache of faith convictions that have been, and continue to be, interpreted by the contemporary recipients of salvation – the faithful. To ensure the continuity of tradition, and therefore of the church's body of teachings and its faith, it is necessary to understand the special role the magisterium plays. To this, we now turn.

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[154] Jan Kerkhofs, "The *Sensus Fidelium* and Reception of Teaching," in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, eds. G. Mannion, R. Gaillardetz, J. Kerkhofs, K. Wilson (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003), 291-292 at 292.

[155] Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, trans. S. Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 91.

C. The *Sensus Fidelium* and the Magisterium: A Relationship of Osmosis and Mutuality

From the Latin term meaning "teacher," the magisterium refers to the teaching office of the church. In its "deepest and truest sense, the magisterium is the duty or charism of the entire church,"[156] because all the faithful have been imbued with the Spirit with the prophetic office at baptism that enables them to discern and express the faith without error. However, there is a body in the church with a specific responsibility to teach and preserve the faith that has been traditioned "in a particularly authoritative way."[157] Composed of the popes and bishops, this body is known as the magisterium whom Rush names as the "formal teaching authority" or "the hierarchical teaching authority" and not simply "the teaching office."[158] Rush cautions against equating the magisterium with the teaching office of the church, since the one teaching office consists of three different authorities in the church (*sensus fidelium*, magisterium, and theology).[159] The magisterium, in dialogue with the *sensus fidelium* and the theologians, is the body within the church whose work is to determine the *consensus fidelium*, the official formulation of faith of the church.[160] The magisterium alone can speak for the church.[161]

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[156] Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 110.

[157] Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 111.

[158] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 195.

[159] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 195.

[160] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 283.

[161] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 283. *Lumen gentium* §25 teaches, "Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent."

Described by John Henry Newman as the "*conspiratio fidelium et pastorum*,"[162] the "breathing together of the faithful and the pastors,"[163] the magisterium and the *sensus fidelium* proceed in a shared subtle rhythm led and inspired by the Spirit – the source of this very breath.[164] Such "breathing together" implies a relationship of mutuality and not of a stark dichotomy prevalent in the nineteenth century between the *ecclesia docens* and *ecclesia discens*, where the former was a role exclusively enjoyed by the magisterium and the latter, a role entirely attributed to the laity. [165]

Departing from this dichotomy, Rush suggests that "such rhythm needs to be understood in terms of a *communio/receptio* ecclesiology."[166] With the Trinitarian *communio* as its foundation, the church is called to embrace the "necessity for communication and exchange," as Yves Congar argues.[167] "In practice, this means that the hierarchy is not enclosed within itself, that the movement of the Spirit is not like that of a one-way street. The Spirit is not monopolized by the 'hierarchy' as though this were a kind of reservoir dispensing gifts from above. The Spirit dwells within the faithful, and ordained pastors must themselves be, in the first place, faithful."[168] Richard Gaillardetz reinforces this point as well. In order to avoid the common notion that the bishops and the laity are often found in disagreement with one another, he recommends that an aspect of the *conspiratio* metaphor must be emphasized – "that the pastors are also part of the

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[162] John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 104. Also in Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?,* 111.

[163] Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?,* 111.

[164] Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 111 and Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 201.

[165] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 104.

[166] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 201.

[167] Yves Congar, "Pneumatology Today," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 167, no. 7 (1973): 435-449 at 446.

[168] Congar, "Pneumatology Today," 446.

faithful." He continues, "a common mistake in popular ecclesiology identifies the faithful with the laity. But as Vatican II taught, the faithful, the *fideles*, are the whole people of God, lay and clergy, so there can be no opposition. The bishop's role of leadership is situated within his common Christian identity as *Christifidelis*, a 'Christian faithful.'"[169]

Since the Spirit enables and empowers all of the faithful who profess the one faith, the church strives to work towards unity. Neither can the faith be transmitted in a single top-down direction, the 'one-way street' Congar was referring to. In a *communio* model of church, mutual sharing of gifts takes place among all the members of the faithful – laity, theologians, bishops alike. This includes "reciprocal listening,"[170] mutual learning and mutual teaching between the *sensus fidelium* and the magisterium, a theme that will be further developed in Chapter Three.[171] Tillard uses an apt metaphor in describing such interaction. He identifies it as the magisterium "acting 'in *osmosis'* with the *sensus fidelium*."[172] When the pope and bishops exercise their authority as the magisterium, they "should draw from the very life of the People of God the reality to be discerned, judged, and promulgated or 'defined.' For it has to exercise all its activity upon the Word as received and lived in the Church."[173] The result is a "permeable boundary" between the teaching and learning activities of the church, activities which no specific group in the church can exclusively claim for themselves at all times. This point finds resonance in Rahner's thoughts on the church. According to Vorgrimler,

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[169] Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?,* 111.

[170] Paul Valadier, "Has the Concept of *Sensus Fidelium* Fallen into Desuetude?" in *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church*, ed. J. Keenan (New York: Continuum, 2007), 187-192 at 191.

[171] See Bradford Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments* (New York: Continuum Press, 2006).

[172] Tillard, "*Sensus Fidelium*," 28.

[173] Tillard, "*Sensus Fidelium*," 28.

> Rahner has emphasised very strongly that the power which creates unity, bringing the faithful together into a community and making their faith one, is not the official institution, but the Spirit of God. In obedience to this Spirit, both 'entities' must respond positively to each other and learn from one another. The 'faith proclaimed officially by the Church' and the 'actual belief of Church people' are normative each to the other.[174]

Therefore, the laity can no longer be viewed as merely the passive recipients of the church's teachings nor can the college of bishops be seen as the only source of such teachings. Tillard claims, "Indeed, even at the level of the understanding of the content of Revelation and of the rendering explicit of its elements, those faithful who have no hierarchical responsibility cannot be seen as simply receiving what is determined by the heads of the Church enlightened by the researches of theologians or other specialists in 'educated faith'; the faithful have a specific part to play in this knowledge by the whole Church of the truth given in Jesus Christ."[175] Moreover, the opposite scenario is also not an optimal solution as well, where the magisterium is placed on the receiving end, with the laity as the sole teaching body. Rush finds the ideal picture in what Wolfgang Beinert writes:

> To the extent that the magisterium does not establish the faith but preserves and communicates it as handed down by the community, it is subordinate to the *sensus fidelium*; to the extent, on the other hand, that the magisterium possesses its own apostolic commission to provide authentic interpretation and issue final decisions in matters of faith, it takes precedence over the *sensus fidelium* and ranks higher.[176]

Adding to this optimal scenario is the element of mutual discernment that must occur between the faithful and the magisterium. The osmosis metaphor comes alive in this

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[174] Vorgrimler, "From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*," 7.

[175] Tillard, "*Sensus Fidelium*," 11-12.

[176] Beinert, "*Sensus Fidelium*," 656-657.

mutual discernment and mutual dialogue that takes place between the bishops and their communities.

III. CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a comprehensive theology of the *sensus fidelium* and its relationship with the *sensus fidei*. Though the full realization of the *sensus fidelium* in the life of the church remains to be seen, Pope Francis' repeated emphasis on it in his homilies and speeches, and the proliferation of post-conciliar studies on the topic are signs that the notion is gaining more prominence in the theological discipline and hopefully, in the wider church. Because Vatican II envisioned a greater participation among the faithful, particularly the laity, in the life and mission of the church, nurturing the *sensus fidelium* proves to be an essential task the church must fulfill. A robust *sensus fidelium* would mean more and more people involved in the life of the church, faithfully and constantly discerning what the Spirit is saying to the church for the sake of its mission. Thus, a renewed appreciation of the *sensus fidelium* is a charge that furthers not only the continuing reception of Vatican II, but also the mission of the church, ensuring that the gospel continues to be understood, interpreted, and applied in the lives of the faithful in the world today.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the laity's sense of the faith plays a significant role in determining the *sensus fidelium* of the church. Yet, among all the aspects of the *sensus fidelium*, the *sensus laicorum* and its concomitant aspect, the laity's reception of the faith, remain an area of study that has not been substantially explored. As Rush observes, "since the individual *sensus fidei* of theologians and bishops is already

adequately accessed and determined in the processes of their formal functions, the determination of the *sensus fidelium* will need to give much more attention to the *sensus laicorum* than is currently the case."[177] The following chapter will attempt to address this need.

[177] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 251.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LAITY'S PRACTICE OF RECEPTION AND THEIR SENSE OF THE FAITH

> Attention to how best discern this *sensus laicorum* as a vital element in the discernment of the *sensus fidelium* in a world church is one of the urgent tasks of the Council's reception forty years on.[1]

As mentioned in the introduction, the papacy of Pope Francis has repeatedly drawn attention to the laity's vital role in the church, referring to them as 'protagonists' in furthering the church's mission.[2] In *Evangelii gaudium* §154, the pontiff urges the church "to keep [its] ear to the people" and "to [contemplate] its people." For Pope Francis, the laity's witness to the faith is founded on the doctrine of the *sensus fidei*.[3] In emphasizing this teaching, he recognizes the laity's instinct in forging new paths for evangelization and thus encourages their participation in the mission of the church.[4]

In *Evangelii gaudium* §31, the pope writes that the bishop must learn to walk after the laity, "helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths." However, the Spanish translation of this text captures the pope's thoughts more vividly. He writes, "*el obispo...en ocasiones deberá caminar detrás del pueblo para*

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[1] Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004), 83.

[2] Pope Francis, "The Lay Christian's Mission in the City" *(Message to Participants in a Conference Sponsored by the Vicariate of Rome) Pontifical Lateran University*, March 7-8, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140307_messaggio-convegno-laici.html (accessed July 2, 2015).

[3] Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, trans. W. Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 41.

[4] Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love*, 41.

ayudar a los rezagados y, sobre todo, porque el rebaño mismo tiene su olfato para encontrar nuevos caminos."[5] "The bishop ... on occasion, has to walk behind the people to help the stragglers and, mainly, because the herd itself has a nose (or instinct) to find new ways."[6] The laity, who constitute the majority of the church, are on the forefront of these new ways of encountering God in the world. Through their *olfato*, their "nose," they are engaged in daily discernment and appropriation of the Christian faith to life through the exercise of their *sensus fidei* and through their contribution to the *sensus fidelium*.

In the previous chapter, the notion of the *sensus fidelium* was discussed at length. The current chapter focuses on one of its three primary sources that Ormond Rush names as the *sensus laicorum*, the sense of the faith of the laity. The exercise of the *sensus fidelium* is fundamental to the reception of revelation, and understanding the particular manner through which the laity receive revelation is thus a key element in the study of their sense of the faith. This chapter therefore has a twofold aim. First, it will discuss reception as a hermeneutical process that the people of God engage in when they, under the guidance of the Spirit, recognize and accept "new insights, new witnesses of truth and

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[5] For the Spanish translation of *Evangelii gaudium*, see http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed July 2, 2015). Similarly, in his pastoral visit to Assisi in 2013, Pope Francis addressed the clergy, consecrated people and pastoral council members with these words: "I repeat it often: walking with our people, sometimes in front, sometimes behind and sometimes in the middle, and sometimes behind: in front in order to guide the community, in the middle in order to encourage and support; and at the back in order to keep it united and so that no one lags too, too far behind, to keep them united. There is another reason too: because the people have a "nose"! The people scent out, discover, new ways to walk, it has the "*sensus fidei*," as theologians call it. What could be more beautiful than this?" See *Address to the Clergy, Consecrated People and Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils in the Cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi*, Vatican website, October 4, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_clero-assisi.html (accessed July 2, 2015).

[6] Translation mine. Consistent with the Spanish tone, the French translation reads, *"L'évêque…et en certaines circonstances il devra marcher derrière le peuple, pour aider ceux qui sont restés en arrière et – surtout – parce que le troupeau lui-même possède un odorat pour trouver de nouveaux chemins."*

their forms of expression because they are deemed to be in the line of the apostolic tradition and in harmony with the *sensus fidelium* of the Church as a whole."[7] Second, the chapter will inquire into the laity's sense of the faith by identifying three particular hermeneutics operative within their faith lives and will then consider challenges to the laity's practice of reception.

The use of the term "laity" in this chapter covers a vast array of the faithful – they who live in the world in a particular way. As Christians, this "particular way" means living out of one's baptismal commitment in a way that does not require ordination or religious profession.[8] In most cases, this "particular way" pertains to a person's state of life (e.g. singlehood, marriage, family) and "world of work" (e.g. career, participation in civics, politics and cultures).[9] Therefore, to define the laity as those who alone are engaged in the secular affairs of the world is misleading because involvement in the world is not exclusive to them. In other words, the world is the context where all the members of the church, ordained, religious, and the laity, live and carry out their responsibilities.

Kasper nuances that it is all the baptized who engage with the secular nature of the world. He writes, "the permeation of the world pertains as a task to the whole Church. The ordained person does not lose through ordination what he has received through baptism and confirmation. Thus, one cannot construct a dualism between the salvific service of the clergy and the secular service that is reserved for laypeople. On the

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[7] Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, "The Ecumenical Dialogue and its Reception," *One in Christ* 21, no.3 (1985): 217-225 at 221-222.

[8] An exception to this would be permanent deacons since marriage does not prevent them from being ordained.

[9] Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 208.

contrary, it is important to maintain in the 'diversity of ministry the oneness of mission.'"[10] Similarly, Paul Lakeland contends that the world is a context shared among the lay and ordained. He writes, "It is probably not helpful, in the end, to suggest that the ordained minister does not find the things of this world real and interesting in themselves, any more than it is correct to think of the layperson as living outside the Christian story, within the world. Rather, the Christian story must be seen as one that lets the world be the world. The clergy may perhaps be the keepers of the story in a way that laypersons are not, but all – lay and ordained alike – live within the story, as they live within the world."[11]

Since there is no term that strictly and exclusively refers to members of the church without official ecclesial function or ministry, I will use the term "laity" to refer to them. The laity's sense of the faith is an important dimension of the *sensus fidelium*, as we learned in Chapter One. Discerning their sense of the faith means attending to the particular ways through which they receive God's Word and recognize God's presence, a process that involves the entire people of God. That process is called reception, and will be the focus of the next section.

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[10] Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 208. In a similar vein, Bruno Forte finesses this point by reflecting on the "laicity" of the whole church. He writes, "the relationship with temporal realities is proper to all the baptized, though in a variety of forms, joined more to personal charisms than to static contrasts between laity, hierarchy and religious state….No one is neutral toward the historical circumstances in which he or she is living, and an alleged neutrality can easily become a voluntary or involuntary mask for ideologies and special interests….It is the entire community that has to confront the secular world, being marked by that world in its being and in its action. The entire People of God must be characterized by a positive relationship with the secular dimension." See *The Church: Icon of the Trinity* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1991), 54-5.

[11] Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 150.

I. RECEPTION AS AN ECCLESIAL HERMENEUTICAL PROCESS

Reception is a living process functioning at every level of ecclesial life. It is understood as "an essential process in and for the church, insofar as it describes the way in which Christ's message of revelation is mediated to the living faith of Christians and is adopted by it."[12] Integral to the identity and purpose of the church, reception is therefore "constitutive of the church," as Joseph Komonchak writes.[13] But what does the church receive? Ormond Rush identifies five ways through which the church functions as a receiving community. According to him, the church:

> (1) receives the Holy Spirit, the principle of reception of God's self-communication;
> (2) receives God's self-gift in Jesus Christ because of that principle (the Holy Spirit);
> (3) receives in trust as normative for its life the witness to that divine self-giving in Scripture and tradition;
> (4) receives a mission, to proclaim and inaugurate God's reign in the world, by offering the possibility of salvation through Christ in the power of the Spirit; and
> (5) receives and initiates into its community individuals who freely accept in faith this divine offer of salvation.[14]

In each of these five ways, it is clear that what is being received in and by the church is fundamentally the revelatory message of salvation, which could also be

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[12] Wolfgang Beinert, "Reception," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. W. Beinert and F. S. Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), at 569-571 at 570. Stephen Bevans offers another helpful definition: reception is "the living process whereby some teaching, ritual or discipline is assimilated into the life of the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;" see *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 129.

[13] Joseph Komonchak, "The Epistemology of Reception," in *Reception and Communion Among Churches*, eds. H. Legrand, J. Mananzares and A. Garcia (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 180-203 at 193.

[14] Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2009), 42-46. These pages present a more detailed discussion on these five ways through which the church serves as a community of reception.

understood as the salvific message of revelation.[15] This message is communicated by the Spirit and is personified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is this message that the church receives.[16] Rush attests that "both Word and Spirit bring the church of the Triune God into being," and as such, both Word and Spirit continue to co-institute the church in the present.[17] The reception of Christ and the Spirit then continually brings about the church as a community of reception in every age. Reception is therefore not simply an act or process that we do as church – reception defines who we are as church. It constitutes our mission as church. As Rush attests, "the mission of the church is to receive and to tradition God's offer of salvific revelation."[18] The content of this salvific revelation, namely, scripture and tradition, witness to God's saving word, and form "a sacred treasure" entrusted to the church.[19] The church also promotes and seeks to live out this message of salvation as it serves God's reign in the world. In Wolfgang Beinert's words:

> Seen from the human perspective, salvation history is a process of reception through which the Word of God is accepted in faith. It is realized in history through the mediation of the Church in such a way that the Church's members, according to their official or unofficial charism, and as contemporary transmitters and receivers of the gifts of salvation, become means through whom the creative and salvific faith is witnessed

[15] Rush observes that in *Dei Verbum*, the terms salvation and revelation function as synonyms. Revelation "signifies salvific revelation," while salvation "signifies revelatory salvation." See Rush, *The Eyes of Faith,* 27.

[16] However, Rush claims that the living gospel is "a power at work in people's lives… [it] is not just a message. The living gospel is written onto the hearts of the faithful, all the faithful; it is they who know the faith and are able to recognize its truthful and deviant interpretations and applications. It is this knowledge and ability to discern and apply the gospel that has been traditionally called the *sensus fidei*, given to all the baptized, regardless of office and ministry in the church;" see "The Prophetic Office in the Church: Pneumatological Perspectives on the *Sensus Fidelium*-Theology-Magisterium Relationship," in *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium and Theologians in Today's Church*, ed. R. Gaillardetz (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 89-112 at 102.

[17] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 38.

[18] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 40.

[19] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 44.

> to and thus made credible as content of reception able to be appropriated by them. The members of the faith community are thus authorities for witnessing and subjects of reception.[20]

Beinert's insight affirms and echoes Vatican II's teaching that God's Word is addressed to the entire people of God, the church. In *Dei verbum* §10, one reads, "Tradition and scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the church. By adhering to it the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the communion of life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Moreover, the council teaches that it is through the *sensus fidelium* that the church's reception of divine revelation is brought about. *Lumen gentium* §12 claims that through the Spirit and the Spirit's gift of the *sensus fidelium*, the church "receives not the word of human beings, but truly the word of God."

Reception is therefore a dimension of the *sensus fidelium*.[21] In the process of recognizing and accepting new insights and expressions of faith, hermeneutics, "the art of interpretation and application of texts, symbols and practices in the present and from the past,"[22] plays a crucial role in the operation of the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*, and consequently, in reception. More specifically, Rush refers to this aspect as "hermeneutical reception," the living, "active process, generated by the organon of the *sensus fidei*, of faith's understanding, interpretation, and application of any authoritative

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[20] Wolfgang Beinert, "The Subjects of Ecclesial Reception," in *Reception and Communion Among Churches*, eds. H. Legrand, J. Mananzares and A. Garcia, trans. R. Jenkins (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 321-346 at 326.

[21] Jan Kerkhofs, "The *Sensus Fidelium* and Reception of Teaching," in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, eds. G. Mannion, R. Gaillardetz, J. Kerkhofs, and K. Wilson (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 291-292 at 292.

[22] World Council of Churches, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Faith and Order Paper No. 182, §1, https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/iv-interpretation-the-meaning-of-our-words-and-symbols/a-treasure-in-earthen-vessels (accessed June 19, 2015).

text, practice, person, or event in the light of a specific context in the present."[23] The reception of faith occurs within the larger process involved in the operation of the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*.[24] In other words, the exercise of the *sensus fidei* in the *fides qua* sense, meaning faith as a response to God's offer of revelation, engenders the process of individual reception, just as the exercise of the *sensus fidelium* generates the process of ecclesial reception. The *sensus fidei*, as the individual's capacity to sense *for* the faith, and the *sensus fidelium*, the church's corporate capacity to sense *for* the faith, have a generative purpose: to bring about reception.

What is involved here is a "reception hermeneutical theology," a particular theological method informed by philosophical hermeneutics, reception aesthetics and reception hermeneutics.[25] According to Rush, such a theology "critically appropriates insights from such background theories, and explores their relevance, within a particular context, for the questing and questioning dynamic of 'faith seeking understanding' (Anselm), or, ... 'faith seeking understanding, interpretation and application."[26] Rush further notes, "There is perhaps no more succinct definition of the quest of the organon of *sensus fidei* than this: *sensus fidei* is faith seeking understanding, interpretation, and application of salvific revelation."[27] These three moments – understanding, interpretation, and application – constitute the hermeneutical circle (sometimes referred to as the

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[23] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 74. Recall that in Chapter One, footnote 14, the hermeneutical triad (or circle) was discussed to explain the unity of the *fides qua* and *fides quae* that Rush sees present in both the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*.

[24] For an extended treatment of the *sensus fidelium* as process, see Daniel Finucane, "Reading the *Sensus Fidelium* as Process" (paper presented at the Seventieth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 12, 2015) and *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept in the Post-Vatican II Era* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996).

[25] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 71-85.

[26] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 73.

[27] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 73-74.

hermeneutical triad), which signifies the manner in which all human understanding operates, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics.[28] "To come to *understanding* means that I have made sense of an experience or text by means of the *interpretative* framework provided by the categories of my previous experience and knowledge; that I understand and have made sense of something, furthermore, means that I have already found meaningful *application* to my present context, its categories of thinking and its ethical demands."[29]

Hermeneutical reflection facilitates the recognition of the one faith as it is experienced, received and expressed by the faithful living in various contexts, with varying degrees of theological education. Understanding, interpretation and application form fundamental aspects of human knowing and living, and the "questing and questioning in the discipline of theology is a process no less at work in the individual's life of believing, no matter how unsophisticated his or her theological framework of interpretation," a point that will be developed as the chapter progresses.[30] Each member of the church then, as a recipient of God's salvific message, is enabled to reason theologically. Each member can participate in the understanding, interpretation and application of revelation. In this sense, the church is a "community of reception," as Beinert writes.[31] Since all Christians receive God's message, then all are able to be involved in interpreting that message. Properly understood, the entire church is a community of hermeneuts – a community of interpreters, "from the bishops to the last of

[28] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 75.

[29] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 72-73. Italics original.

[30] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 73.

[31] Beinert, "The Subjects of Ecclesial Reception," 324.

the faithful."[32] The church, from its very beginnings, "has always been a hermeneutical community – it is embedded in our DNA."[33] Through the Spirit, all the baptized thus possess an individual and ecclesial capacity for receiving revelation. According to the World Council of Churches, "This capacity is nothing less than the gift of the Holy Spirit, received by the apostles at Pentecost and given to every Christian community and to every member of the community in the process of Christian initiation. This capacity is the gift of the Holy Spirit who 'will guide you into all the truth' (Jn 16:13), who is the Spirit of truth; that truth is Jesus Christ himself (Jn 14:6), the perfect image of the Father from whom the Spirit proceeds."[34] Each generation is called to receive the faith, given the historical particularities of their age, and to transmit the faith they have received. Reception and tradition, therefore, go hand in hand in furthering the mission of the church.

> The church's mission is to always 'hand on' *(tradere)* to the world that which it has received: God's offer of salvific revelation through being drawn into the very inner life of the Triune God. Thus, in this sense, the mission of the church is to receive and to tradition God's offer of salvific revelation. The Spirit and the Word continuously co-institute the church in that mission…Reception and tradition are two correlative aspects of the one continuous mission of the church: what is received must be handed on, and what is handed on must then be received anew if it is to be effectively traditioned to new generations in new cultures and contexts.[35]

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[32] *Lumen gentium* §12. The quote is specifically from St. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 14, 27: *Patrologiae cursus completus*: 44, 980.

[33] Ormond Rush, "The Church as a Hermeneutical Community and the Eschatological Function of the *Sensus Fidelium*," (paper delivered at the 70th Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Milwaukee, WI, June 11-14, 2015).

[34] World Council of Churches, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, §37. This recalls what Jean-Marie Tillard explains as the scriptural origin of the *sensus fidelium*, as mentioned and cited at length in Chapter One. See his "*Sensus Fidelium*," *One in Christ* 11, no. 1 (1975): 9-40 at 12-14.

[35] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 40.

Therefore, as they live and seek to bring the *eu-aggelion* to the world, the faithful in the church carry a responsibility to ensure that the divine revelation received in faith retains its salvific intent as it is enfleshed in different contexts. There are different roles within the community of the faithful as they go about receiving and interpreting tradition. The theologians, the bishops and the laity each have a specific contribution. Each of these roles bears "a hermeneutical responsibility."[36]

The service of theologians is to engage in scholarship and advance insights that enhance the academic discipline and the life of the church. These insights however, are gathered through the theologians' critical ability to inquire into local, contextualized experiences of salvation, to be attentive to the laity's sense of the faith found there, and bring them to scholarly and synthetic expression by interpreting them in light of Scripture and tradition.[37] As Gemma Tulud Cruz claims,

> Theology, therefore, needs to be done squarely in the midst of inescapable human contexts and time's transience. Indeed, while it must safeguard God's self-revelation in Jesus, theology must at the same time, help ensure that the language used by the Church to proclaim such revelation remains intelligible in different cultures and new historical contexts…Theology is also about *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, insofar as it is about discovering a sense of the collective faith knowledge applied in the

[36] Carlo Molari, "The Hermeneutical Role of the Christian Community on the Basis of Judaeo-Christian Experience," in *Revelation and Experience* (*Concilium* 113), eds. E. Schillebeeckx and B. van Iersel (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 93-105 at 102.

[37] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 264-265. In a similar way, Pope Francis emphasized the theologian's function: "But the theologian must also humbly listen to 'what the Spirit says to the churches' (Rev 2:7), through the various manifestations of the faith lived by the People of God… Indeed, together with the Christian people as a whole, the theologian opens his/her eyes and ears to the 'signs of the times'. He/she is called to 'to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word' — it is the Word of God that judges — 'so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage' (Second Vatican Council Apostolic Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 44)." See his *Address to Members of the International Theological Commission*, Vatican website, December 5, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141205_commissione-teologica-internazionale.html (accessed October 18, 2015).

> concrete realities of everyday life, bridging theory and praxis, doctrine and life.[38]

In addition, Anne Arabome argues that theologians are primarily learners who have a particular responsibility to those in the margins and frontiers of society and of the church. For her, theologians are "practitioners of communion in a manner that is symbiotic, mutually respectful, and compassionately in solidarity with those voices relegated to the margins of social, political, ecclesial and economic insignificance."[39] Theologians must therefore employ a hermeneutic of suspicion towards their reflection on situations that contradict the Christian narrative, and a hermeneutic of hope towards their reflection on conditions that further values consistent with the gospel.[40]

Meanwhile, bishops are called to preserve the integrity of the faith and promote the church's mission. As *Lumen gentium* §25 teaches, by preaching the gospel, the bishops: "are heralds of the faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people assigned to them the faith which is to be believed and applied in practice; and under the light of the holy Spirit they cause that faith to radiate,...they make it bear fruit and they vigilantly ward off whatever errors threaten their flock." In particular, the magisterium

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[38] Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Theology as Conversation: *Sensus Fidelium* and Doing Theology On/From the Margins," *CTSA Proceedings* 70 (2015): 60-65 at 62.

[39] Here, Arabome borrows Jean-Marie Roger Tillard's terms. See Anne Arabome, "How are Theologians Challenged and Informed by Their Engagement with the Sense of the Faithful in the Local/Global Church?" *CTSA Proceedings* 70 (2015): 66-71 at 70. She also writes, "I strive to listen to voices from the margins, orient myself toward the unappealing frontiers of the human condition, and prioritize deeds of justice, mercy, and compassion mandated by the Risen Christ – and these over-and-above desiccated notions of truth and tradition that are oftentimes the prized possession of a self-centered ecclesiastical hierarchy. This theological option to listen to the senses of the faithful has convinced me that the binary position of reception and rejection of church teaching – that developed over a long period in theology – does not exhaust the deepest meaning of the *sensus fidelium*."

[40] Cruz, "Theology as Conversation," 64 and Robert Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 32.

serves to "authenticate the interpretations made in the living community."[41] Unique to the magisterium is the task of safeguarding the teachings of the church, which means ensuring that the faith of the church is taught in a way that is consistent with apostolic tradition. In other words, the magisterium interprets the faith through the lens of faithful continuity with the gospel.

The hermeneutical responsibility of the laity resides in "questions of daily living."[42] I suggest that this "hermeneutic of daily life" is one among three types of hermeneutics that constitute the hermeneutical task of the laity, as the next section will show. Their interpretative activity attends to the application of the gospel to contemporary life – particularly to marriage and family life, the workplace, and civic life – which Dolores Leckey names as "the three principal arenas of lay life."[43] Rush argues that the hermeneutical responsibility of the laity is receiving the faith in very specific contexts which means that "the traditioning of the faith by lay people in diverse contexts is not a passive transmission, but presupposes an active, positive hermeneutical contribution."[44] In this sense then, lay believers are legitimate interpreters of the tradition, alongside the bishops and theologians. According to Julie Trinidad, lay people possess a form of "ecclesial intelligence" – their perspectives "provide an important hermeneutical stance for the church from which it can reflect on and live more fully in fidelity to its nature and mission as paradigm of the Trinitarian God."[45] Trinidad likewise observes that

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[41] Molari, "The Hermeneutical Role of the Christian Community," 102.

[42] Molari, "The Hermeneutical Role of the Christian Community," 102.

[43] Dolores Leckey, *Laity Stirring the Church: Prophetic Questions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 69. Also in Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 255.

[44] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 256.

[45] Julie Trinidad, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Walter Kasper: Engaging the Faith Experience of the Laity," *INTAMS Review* 20, no. 2 (2014): 191-197 at 191.

these lay perspectives are influenced "by questions of identity, life purpose and meaning-making around life experience, relationships, and faith."[46] Because the laity are immersed in the realities and challenges of the world, they encounter divine revelation in the contexts of relationships within the family, the workplace, and greater society, as well as the general experience of the everyday. Lay perspectives arising from such specific contexts and lived experience thus prove indispensable to the church, if the church continues to seek the fulfillment of its mission in the world. In the following section, the reception process particular to the laity will further illustrate the crucial role lay hermeneutics play in the life of the church.

II. HOW THE LAITY "TRACE THE SACRED"[47]

Although reception is often regarded as a task exclusive to academic theologians, this chapter argues that reception is a process that involves everyone in the church, including the laity. Through their *sensus fidei*, the laity are enabled to understand, interpret and apply the truths of Christian faith in their daily life. Even if equipped with little or no formal theological training, lay people are at the forefront of the reception process, already interpreting the saving and revelatory presence of God in their daily life, as believers formed within the community of faith.[48] This reception is crucial to the life and mission of the church since, as Walter Kasper argues, "ecclesiology proceeds from

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[46] Trinidad, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Walter Kasper," 192.

[47] "Tracing the sacred" is a phrase I borrow from R. Ruard Ganzevoort, "Forks in the Road When Tracing the Sacred: Practical Theology as Hermeneutics of Lived Religion" (presidential address delivered at the International Academy of Practical Theology Conference, Chicago, IL, July 30-August 3, 2009), http://www.ia-pt.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/presidentialaddress2009.pdf (accessed November 14, 2014).

[48] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 206.

the lived, confessed and, often enough, suffered faith of the Church. It begins directly in the life of the Church and aims to reflect [the] faith and life of the Church."[49]

As such, the laity can be considered as the receivers on the church's front lines.[50] Lay people engage in ways of speaking about, thinking of, and making sense of God in the routine and rhythm of the everyday. Jeff Astley calls this rudimentary form of theologizing "ordinary theology," which he explains as the "term for the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education."[51] Here, Astley uses "ordinary" non-pejoratively, referring to what is "customary, usual, regular, and therefore common."[52] Ordinary theology arises from reflecting about one's faith in God in the context of everyday life, using everyday language – "a warts and all theology, open to the alley."[53] Unreliant on lofty concepts and academic jargon, ordinary theologizing is the most basic form of theological reflection practiced by Christians without academic or ecclesial credentials.[54] This type of theology results from "the most pervasive and basic

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[49] Kasper, *The Catholic Church,* 46. Also quoted and cited in Trinidad's article, see footnote 27.

[50] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), 162. In 1946, Pope Pius XII also said, "Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church;" see *Discourse*, February 20, 1946:AAS 38 (1946) 149. John Paul II cites this in *Christifideles laici* §9.

[51] Astley, *Ordinary Theology,* 1.

[52] Jeff Astley, "Ordinary Theology as Lay Theology: Listening to and Learning from Lay Perspectives," *INTAMS Review* 20, no. 2 (2014): 182-190 at 182.

[53] Astley, *Ordinary Theology,* 161.

[54] Tom Beaudoin's explanation of Astley's study is helpful here. According to Beaudoin, Astley "argues that there are grounds for finding substantial theology not only among the credentialed in academic and ecclesial life, but also among the overwhelming majority who are the uncredentialed in pastoral life, those 'ordinary Christians' who have a way of expressing themselves that so often seems to provoke evaluation and correction by the cultured theological educator (whether pastoral worker or academic). Astley argues that this ordinary theology can be found in how people talk and act regarding matters both ordinary and extraordinary, insofar as that talk or action goes to what he calls 'living theologically in response to our learning of Christ." See Tom Beaudoin, "Everyday Faith In and Beyond Scandalized

form of all attempts to understand the Christian faith" and is therefore "the most common kind of theological inquiry."[55] Steeped in narrative that attests to a person's deepest commitments and harrowing struggles,

> People's ordinary theology is significant, partly because it is inevitably important to the ordinary Christians themselves. Their beliefs and values matter to them, often very much indeed. And they "work" for them, in the sense of providing the resources of meaning and spiritual strength that they employ to lean into the force fields of their lives (in James Fowler's memorable phrase), enabling them to cope and even flourish, day to day, as they face and live their lives, and then eventually face and live their deaths. Be it ever so inchoate, unsystematic and even confused, ordinary theology is a theology to live by.[56]

Ordinary theology is operative in the lives of lay people. Astley observes that academic Christian theology should take ordinary theology more seriously because, "If theology is what goes on in people's lives, we know amazingly little about Christian theology."[57] The laity's convictions about God flourish in ordinary life, "the primary locus of [their] spiritual health."[58] Moreover, because being and living as church in the world means being open to the world's changes, and "ordinary theology is the species of Christian theology most likely to reflect them and best placed to respond to them."[59]Attentiveness

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Religion," in *Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader*, eds. G. Lynch, J. Mitchell, A. Strhan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 236-243 at 241.

[55] Nicholas Healy, "What is Systematic Theology?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (January 2009): 25-39 at 28 and 30. In a similar vein, Kathryn Tanner contends that "everyone is likely to do some theology if they are a believer and if they think about their faith at all." Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), introduction, as discussed in Healy, "What is Systematic Theology?" 28.

[56] Astley, "Ordinary Theology as Lay Theology," 182.

[57] Astley, *Ordinary Theology,*1. These are the words of John Hull, conveyed in a symposium hosted by the North of England Institute for Christian Education in July 1996.

[58] Astley,"Ordinary Theology as Lay Theology," 182. In *Ordinary Theology*, 161, Astley writes, "This 'openness to the street', and the broader human existence that others have called 'the church outside the church' (Dorothy Sölle) [sic] or 'anonymous Christianity' (Karl Rahner), allows the possibility of an open ecclesiology that can acknowledge, honour and take seriously its own thresholds, and some of the very ordinary beliefs that visit, rest and flourish there."

[59] Astley, "Ordinary Theology as Lay Theology," 187.

to the way ordinary believers theologize, to the way they make sense of their faith in the world.

Furthermore, ordinary theology uncovers the fact that faith matters to ordinary Christians, as mentioned above. Faith is a total, all-encompassing response to God's offer of self in revelation. In analyzing *Lumen gentium* §5, Walter Abbott writes, "Christian faith is not merely an assent to a set of statements; it is a personal engagement, a continuing act of loyalty and self-commitment offered by men and women to God."[60] If faith involves believing, surrendering and aligning one's values to God, then faith permeates every dimension of life. In this sense, faith serves as a specific vision, a particular way of seeing reality in light of the Christian narrative. Faith thus functions as a hermeneutic. Through the Spirit, faith "provides believers with a framework of understanding in terms of which they can look on things with the eyes of faith."[61] Questions of identity, vocation, relationships and meaning-making are achieved in the light of faith. As Clodovis Boff articulates, "Faith is not a landscape to be seen, but eyes for seeing. It is not a world, but a gaze upon the world. It is not a book to read, but a grammar for reading – for reading all books."[62] As Christians, our life and everything in it, becomes a "text" which we read and reflect on through the lens of faith.

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[60] Walter Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 113 n.7. *Lumen gentium* §5 says, "By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God, making 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,' and willingly assenting to the revelation given by God. For this faith to be accorded we need the grace of God, anticipating it and assisting it, as well as the interior helps of the holy Spirit, who moves the heart and convers it to God, and opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.' The same holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more deeply understood."

[61] Vincent Brümmer, "Spirituality and the Hermeneutics of Faith," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2010): Article #891, 1-5 at 1, accessed June 30, 2015, DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.891.

[62] Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 123.

In the New Testament, one finds various metaphors signifying "the organ of faith" and witness to the Spirit's ongoing work in each Christian who possesses "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16), who has "spiritual insight" (Col 1:9) and has "enlightened eyes of the heart" (Eph 1:18).[63] It is with these understandings that the early church fathers liken the *sensus fidei* to the "eyes of the spirit" and the "eyes of faith."[64] Augustine expressed it as, "After all, faith has its eyes," while Aquinas refers to it as "the light of faith" and "a faith endowed with eyes."[65] As the "sense for" understanding, interpreting and applying the faith, the *sensus fidei* could be understood as a "hermeneutical skill," the ability to receive the Spirit's gift of faith that accompanies that gift of faith.[66]

A. The Lay Hermeneutic

Bernard Lee suggests that there is a way of thinking, understanding and seeing that is specific to lay people giving rise to a particular lay interpretation. He refers to this as the "lay hermeneutic," which is the implicit framework operative among the laity in the church "whose interpretation is primarily from the position of family and so-called secular life."[67] The lay hermeneutic is a way of interpreting from the particular context of the laity. According to Lee,

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[63] Salvador Pié-Ninot, "*Sensus Fidei,*" in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. R. Latourelle (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 992-995 at 993.

[64] Pié-Ninot, *Sensus Fidei*, 993.

[65] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 2-3. Original citations: Augustine – "*Habet namque fides oculos suos*." Epist. 120.2.8 [PL 33:458]. Aquinas – "Through the light of faith, they see that these things are to be believed." ST, 2-2, q. I, a.5, ad I. ST, 3, q. 55, a.2, ad I.

[66] Rush, "The Church as a Hermeneutical Community." He writes, "With the gift comes the ability to receive the gift."

[67] Bernard Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE: A Hidden Revolution* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), 137 and 141. Julie Trinidad, whom I referenced earlier, presents a similar concept which

> the pattern of interpretive authority in the Catholic church in the United States (elsewhere, as well, to be sure) is undergoing critical transformation with the introduction of an educated, articulate Catholic laity into public discourse – a lay hermeneutic, if you will – especially as this occurs in the mix of ministry and leadership in ecclesial community. This is not a mere development but, potentially and needfully, a profound development of a People-of-God ecclesiology, one consistent with Christian origins.[68]

In this section, I will use Lee's term, "lay hermeneutic," but will suggest a broader understanding of the term "lay" to include all Catholic laity in general, with or without academic and theological education, and without specific ministries. I would like to suggest three specific forms (or "sub-hermeneutics") of the lay hermeneutic operative in the lives of the laity as they engage in the process of reception: the hermeneutic of everyday life, the hermeneutic of desire, and the hermeneutic of trust. These three hermeneutics, I submit, are present in the process of reception of lay people from all walks of life, regardless of nationality, age, gender, race, educational level, profession, marital and socio-economic status. The lives of the laity are conditioned by the concerns and challenges of daily life, motivated by a deep desire to live according to the Gospel, and founded on trust in God.

Rush explains that the *sensus fidei* could be understood as "the whole mind of the Christian working in *certain ways*."[69] Based on this insight, I attempt to name the "certain ways" the *sensus fidei* works within each hermeneutic I present. I also present correlates (or their corresponding equivalents) for the *sensus fidelium*. For example, within the hermeneutic of everyday life, I suggest that the *sensus fidei* could be understood as a Christian's sacramental vision, a person's recognition of God's presence in daily living.

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she calls the "lay perspectives." She refers to this in a general sense. See her essay, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Walter Kasper," 191.

[68] Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE,* 137-138.

[69] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 223. Italics mine.

Correlatively, I propose that the *sensus fidelium* could be thought of as the church's spirituality, a community's shared recognition of God's presence. It is important to qualify here that I am not equating the personal organon of the *sensus fidei* and the ecclesial organon of the *sensus fidelium* with these modes or functions. I am merely proposing these modes as helpful ways to think about the more subtle and more specific expressions of the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* within the practice and lens of faith. In my discussion, I apply the hermeneutic of everyday life, of desire and of trust to the lay faithful living under the ordinary circumstances of their state of life (family, marriage, singlehood, etc.) and world of work (in business, politics, education, etc.). However, the hermeneutics could also apply to priests and to religious if adapted to their particular state and circumstances. They, however, are not the focus of the thesis.

1. The Hermeneutic of Everyday Life

Lay people are immersed in the manifold realities of daily life. The lives of lay believers are governed daily by the demands of making ends meet, raising families, maintaining households, pursuing careers, among many other tasks and duties. Lay people are in this sense, right at the center of the ordinary – where life is lived, where the concerns and realities of the world are made known, conditioned by factors such as culture, age, gender, race, language, level of education, socio-economic status, profession, geographical location, religious upbringing and affiliation.

> The unique profile of lay spirituality is defined by a number of structural elements: specific relational patterns (marriage partners, parents – children, family, neighbors, guests); a specific sense of time (generational consciousness, course of life, birth, death); a specific sense of space (the home), which mediates connections with the immediate and more remote

> environment (world, church, labor, possessions); the personal life journey of the concrete individual is central.[70]

Such a lay hermeneutic is operative in every baptized person. US Hispanic theologians María Pilar Aquino and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz refer to this as *lo cotidiano*, the horizon of everyday lived experience.[71] For Aquino and Isasi-Díaz, God is encountered in the streets, in kitchens, dining tables, home altars, in laundromats, on the internet – all of which are extensions of daily life. *Lo cotidiano* influences an individual's personality, intellect, emotions, needs and concerns, and thus also shapes a person's faith. Thus, the context of ordinary, daily life then constitutes the particular manner through which the laity sense the faith. It is not surprising therefore, to realize that the most "retweeted" and most "favorited" (or if I may argue, the most "received") messages of Pope Francis are those that pertain to aspects that connect with daily life: marriage, money, gossip, family, parenthood, the environment, even the World Cup.[72] This is a clear example of how the laity seem to be positively responding to and therefore receiving, his insights on faith that apply to everyday concerns.

The hermeneutic of daily life accentuates the significance of the world as the milieu where ordinary living takes place. The marked shift in perspective the church

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[70] Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven: Peters, 2002), 21.

[71] María Pilar Aquino, "Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium," in *From the Heart of Our People*, eds. O. Espin and M. Diaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 6-48 at 38-39 and Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "*Lo Cotidiano*: A Key Element in Mujerista Theology," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 10, no. 1 (2002): 5-17 at 6. See also Natalia Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium," in *A Church With Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, eds. R. Gaillardetz and E. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 45-63 at 47, 53, 55-60.

[72] The pope's Twitter feed is found on https://twitter.com/pontifex (accessed October 6, 2015). In identifying these most retweeted messages, I scanned through the feed with "retweets" and "favorites" exceeding 10,000 hits. The words "retweet" and "favorite" are terms used as verbs in the online social networking site called Twitter. To "retweet" means to repost or forward a message or a "tweet." To "favorite" a person's tweet is to like it.

began to have towards the world in Vatican II reinforces the church's deeper recognition of the life and context of the people of God.[73] The world, its preoccupations, affairs and material concerns, were no longer seen as inferior to the spiritual priorities of the church. Rather, Vatican II, departed from the defensive stance the church espoused in the centuries prior, viewing the world with suspicion and hostility.[74] At the council, the church opened its doors to the world, no longer deeming the world as its enemy but as a viable dialogue partner, ready and willing to learn from the world. Post-conciliar reception on the church-world relationship however, has not entirely been affirmative.[75] Nevertheless, the church fully engaging with the world in this manner is an expression of *communio*. Such involvement is also a call to *aggiornamento* in the sense of the church becoming more in touch with the local and the ordinary realities of the world, as Yves Congar suggests:

> One's sense of the church, depends, in a decisive way, upon one's sense of the world and of the relationship one sees between church and world…At issue now is the question of how to grasp the world and its history in their

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[73] Kristin Heyer and Bryan Massingale, "*Gaudium et spes* and the Call to Justice: The U.S. Experience," in *From Vatican II to Pope Francis: Charting a Catholic Future*, ed. P. Crowley (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 81-100.

[74] Joseph Komonchak, "The Significance of Vatican Council II for Ecclesiology," in *The Gift of the Church: Essays in Honor of Patrick B. Granfield*, ed. P. Phan, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 69-92 at 89. He says, "Following Pope John's lead, the council largely refrained from the suspicious, negative, and defensive posture that had marked the Catholic subculture before; instead, it adopted a method of dialogue reflecting its judgment that the Spirit of God is not absent from modern developments (see GS 26) and enabling it to describe in paragraph 44 what the Church can learn from the world."

[75] See James McEvoy, *Leaving Christendom for Good: Church-World Dialogue in a Secular Age* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 163-176. See also McEvoy's essay, "Proclamation as Dialogue: Transition in the Church-World Relationship," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 4 (2009): 875-903 at 888, where he writes, "From the perspective of several contemporary theologians, however, the very popularity of the notion of dialogue makes it problematic as a means of accounting for the church-world relationship. Although not denying that the concept of dialogue is of some use in this context, these theologians argue that its common usage has severely curtailed its capacity to express the rich relationship that the Church wants with the world. In their view, the understanding with which *Gaudium et spes* concludes—dialogue 'undertaken solely out of love for the truth' (GS no. 92)—differs greatly from the notion of dialogue widely assumed in the West today." McEvoy then examines the views of Avery Dulles and David Schindler on the issue.

> full dimensions, their full significance, with all their dynamism and all their problems. Temporality has to do with the determination of Christians to exercise their responsibilities in building up the world with a view toward the kingdom of God… the council's *aggiornamento* [should] not stop with adaptations inside the church but go further to insist on the church's complete return to the Gospel, and to its *finding a new way of being, of speaking, and of commitment which correspond to the Gospel's wholehearted service to the world.* The *pastoral* aspect of *aggiornamento* has to go that far. Today that is what must be done to reach people, because they are no longer waiting in some neutral, empty space where the clerical church can find them. Rather, they are involved full time and energetically in the activities of this world. We have to meet them there in the name of Jesus Christ.[76]

Further, Congar argues for the necessity and inevitability of such a dialogue between the church and the world not only because the church "lives in the world" but also because "the church will have something to give and it will have something to receive" from the world, as *Gaudium et spes* §44 advocates.[77] Congar further notes that while the world poses questions to the church, the world also presents to the church partial answers and evolving values as well as perspectives that may be beneficial to the people of God.[78]

Thanks to the positive outlook the church espoused in its relationship with the world, the church recognized not just the dignity of the laity, but also the value of the world as their context. It is precisely in the midst of the daily realities of the world that God's revelation is encountered. Thus, the context of ordinary life constitutes the first

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[76] Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. P. Philibert (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 4-5.

[77] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 130-131. *Gaudium et spes* §44 says, "Nowadays when things change so rapidly and thought patterns differ so widely, the church needs to step up this exchange by calling upon the help of people who are living in the world, who are expert in its organizations and its forms of training, and who understand its mentality, in the case of believers and non-believers alike…The church has a visible social structure, which is a sign of its unity in Christ: as such it can be enriched and it is being enriched, by the evolution of social life, not as if something were missing in the constitution which Christ gave the church, but in order to understand this constitution more deeply, express it better, and adapt it more successfully to our times."

[78] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 132.

major component of the lay hermeneutic. Made possible through the *sensus fidei*, the hermeneutic of everyday life enables the believer to see the world as graced. The Christian faith of lay people is significantly marked by the world in which it is lived, the world that shapes it, and the world it seeks to build. What is it then that facilitates such perspective – to see the world as graced? To that we now turn.

Sensus Fidei as Sacramental Vision

To see the world as graced is to train one's eyes of faith by cultivating the sacramental vision. A sacrament functions as "a genuine human symbol [that] permeates and grips and stirs the whole human person."[79] Such a symbol draws "us out of the world of our everyday and into a world of meaning which is associated with the symbol," and "Some symbols never affect us ... But others do, and these are the sacramental symbols. They are the occasion for a hierophany, a manifestation of something which is holy and mysterious. They are doors to sacred meaning."[80] Sacraments allow us to encounter God's presence and as such, sacraments impart grace, which is nothing but "theological shorthand for the self-communication of God outside the Trinity."[81] At the heart of Catholic faith is a fundamental sacramental principle: that God's loving presence can be discovered in and through the midst of ordinary events, relationships, encounters, and objects in life. Also referred to as sacramentality, "A sacramental perspective is one in which the secular can reveal the sacred, the immanent can reveal the transcendent, the

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[79] Michael Lawler, *Sacrament and Symbol: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1995), 18.

[80] Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph Publications, 2001), 20.

[81] Michael Himes, *Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations About God, Relationships and Service* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 103.

particular and partial can reveal the unity of the whole," as Bevans argues.[82] Therefore, grace is all around us, if only we train our faith's eyes to recognize it through the aid of our *sensus fidei* – our active sense that is "forever on the lookout for God"[83] as mentioned in Chapter One. In other words, an individual's sense of the faith leads him or her to find God, to "sniff" God's presence out using our *olfato* – the nose – the metaphor Pope Francis uses – in the most unremarkable, uneventful moments in life. In the hermeneutic of daily life, the *sensus fidei* functions as a person's sacramental vision, an ability that lets him or her see the same things differently, because of faith. The more developed a person's ability to behold or detect traces of God in the midst of ordinariness, the more he or she can be attuned to God's presence in all things, places, people and experiences; "The more developed our sacramental vision, the more sacraments crowd in upon us."[84] According to Michael and Kenneth Himes, Jonathan Edwards described the saints in such a manner – their perspective is different from the "unconverted."[85] Edwards maintains that the saints "do not see things that others do not see; rather they see what everyone else sees but in a different way. They see everything in its relation to God…"[86] It is in this sense that "The whole of Catholic praxis is training in sacramental vision."[87] Ordinary life is suffused with experiences that are sacramental: to see every and any object, place, thing or encounter in the mundane as a possible vehicle of God's grace. This is why sacramentality is another way of understanding the hermeneutic of everyday life. Our

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[82] Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology,* 191.

[83] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 225.

[84] Michael Himes and Kenneth Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 112.

[85] Himes and Himes, *Fullness of Faith*, 112.

[86] Himes and Himes, *Fullness of Faith*, 112.

[87] Himes and Himes, *Fullness of Faith*, 113.

capacity to recognize God grows within a community of faith – they whose own way of seeing God helps develop and reinforce our own.

Sensus Fidelium as Ecclesial Spirituality

If the *sensus fidei* functions as a lay person's sacramental vision, a way of seeing the world as graced from an individual's perspective, the *sensus fidelium* on the other hand, is a way of seeing grace from a shared perspective. The *sensus fidelium* is a way of seeing together, with others in the church, those with whom we share a common vision, constituted by commonly held beliefs, practices and expressions of faith. In this sense, the *sensus fidelium* can be understood as a spirituality – a corporate way of living as a Christian in the world, a shared capacity to seek and discern God's presence in the everyday. Here, I am particularly referring to spirituality as a collective reality that is the faith life of a community, a publicly confessed way of living as opposed to spirituality that could be taken to mean the practice of faith held within a person's private interiority because faith, as Karl Rahner holds,

> does not only mean accepting what "I" as an individual believe that I have heard. It also means accepting what the Church has heard, giving my assent to the "confession" of the Church, the Church which is not only the bearer of the message of Christ which it delivers to individuals (and which then disappears again like a postman), but is the enduring and abiding medium of faith.[88]

[88] For this quote, I rely on the particular translation of Richard Lennan. See "Ecclesiology and Ecumenism," *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, eds. D. Marmion and M. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128-143 at 136 and his footnote 16 on p. 142. The original quote is in Karl Rahner, "I Believe in the Church," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 7 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), 100-18 at 109-10. See also Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. W. Dych (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985), 330.

As such, the *sensus fidei*, as Congar argues, "cannot be individualist [since] it is conditioned by the authenticity of a life in community."[89] The believer's *sensus fidei* is shaped by the *sensus fidelium* of the church. A Christian's sacramental vision is fashioned by the church's way of believing and professing. Christian spirituality then is a communal reality that represents a unified manner of seeing, believing, thinking, doing and living that is shaped by emphasis on particular aspects of faith in Christ. Janet Ruffing suggests that "the spirituality common to all persons in the church...is characterized by a personal experience of 'the love of the Father in Christ, through his Spirit.'"[90] This personal experience of the Trinity is rooted in the sacrament of baptism – an experience that all the laity participate in.

Baptism then, is the foundation of lay Christian identity and spirituality. Lay spirituality is fundamentally a baptismal spirituality – a way of life that begins with the gifts of the Spirit conferred at baptism, a way of life that is enriched and sustained by faithfulness to scripture, sacramental participation and belonging to a community of discipleship.[91] As Walter Kasper notes, "Baptism is linked to the sending of the church into the whole world (Matt 28:19); it makes the baptized a witness to Christ in the world, and is the foundation for the priesthood of all believers who are sent to proclaim the mighty acts of God (1 Pet. 2:5,9). Baptism is at once a sacrament of initiation and of

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[89] Yves Congar, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis," in *Who has the Say in the Church* (*Concilium* 148/8), eds. J. Moltmann and H. Kung (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 68-80 at 74.

[90] Janet Ruffing, "Formation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers: Rooted in a Genuinely Lay and Ecclesial Spirituality," in *Reflections on Renewal: Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*, eds. D. Eschenauer and H. Horell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 139-150 at 143.

[91] Michael Downey, "Lay People and Spirituality," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. P. Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 400-402 at 400.

mission."[92] Therefore, baptism immerses us not only into the waters of new life, but also into a lifelong journey of growth in Christian discipleship and holiness, and into a lifelong calling to live the gospel in the world.

Maxwell Johnson invites us to a serious consideration towards the "recovery of a baptismal spirituality and its implications," specifically "for a renewed sense of a foundational 'baptismal consciousness…'[93] – a way of proceeding that involves orienting our lives according to that of Christ's and being formed within the community of faith, guided by the Spirit. Baptismal consciousness can shape Christian growth in an ongoing way, because baptism is "a living reality, not merely an unrepeatable event in the past."[94] Indeed, everything important or central for a Christian's life, can be traced back to the mission and identity received in baptism. Who we are and what we are charged to do for building up God's reign – in thought, word, and deed – originate in our baptismal call. Taking our Christian identity seriously means we are "never completely 'dry off' from [our] baptism."[95] Though there are various forms of spiritualities in the church (e.g.

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[92] Walter Kasper, "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of Baptism," *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 4 (2000): 526-541 at 530. See also Paul Fleming, "Baptism: An Equal Share in the Life and Ministry of the Church," in *A Church with a Future: Challenges to Irish Catholicism Today*, eds. N. Coll and P. Scallon (Dublin: Columba Press, 2005), 30-43.

[93] Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, Revised and Expanded edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 452. See also Virgil Michel, "Baptismal Consciousness," *Orate Fratres* 1, no. 10 (1927): 309-313.

[94] Paul Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful: Key to a Living Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 22.

[95] Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful,* 22. Original quote: Gerard Baumbach, *Experiencing Mystagogy: The Sacred Pause of Easter* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 1. In a similar vein, Kasper writes, "Many New Testament statements therefore have the function of reminding us of our baptism, showing clearly that *baptism*, carried out once for all, must be *repeatedly realized afresh in the Christian's life*." (Italics mine.) See "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of Baptism," 530.

Benedictine, Ignatian, Franciscan, among many others), it is important to recognize that these are "derivative of and dependent upon a baptismal spirituality."[96]

2. The Hermeneutic of Desire

Desires are central to each human being and as such, desires play an important role in any person's life of faith. Thomas McGrath says that desire, at its most fundamental level,

> is that force at the heart of the subject, which is the source of one's striving. That which I most fundamentally desire is that which guides all my other derived choices, that in relation to which I judge other decisions made or directions taken. It is as though there is a kind of desire which precedes other desires, which lies at the heart of them and directs them. Desire is more appropriately understood in terms of the absence to which it points, or the lack which specifies it… It is therefore the motor of all growth, development and change and that within the human subject which leads to movement in a basic way.[97]

Various Christian spiritualities have understood personal desires, yearnings, or longings "as central metaphors for our search for God and, indeed, for God's reaching out toward humanity."[98] Desires are thus key in developing a personal relationship with God, and are influenced by what a person receives in faith. The hermeneutic of desire, then, is an interpretation that informs the small and big decisions a believer makes in faith. As Philip Sheldrake claims, "being people of desire implies a process of continually choosing."[99]

As such, desire has been considered an important "ingredient" used in discernment. In the Catholic tradition, Ignatius of Loyola has been heralded as the great

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[96] Downey, "Lay People and Spirituality," 400.

[97] Thomas McGrath, "The Place of Desires in the Ignatian Exercises," *The Way Supplement* 76 (1993): 25-31 at 27.

[98] Philip Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1994), 7.

[99] Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 25.

teacher of discernment. A pillar of Ignatian Spirituality, discernment "may be thought of as a journey through desires – a process whereby we move from a multitude of desires, or from surface desires, to our deepest desire which, as it were, contains all that is true and vital about ourselves."[100] The 18th and 19th Annotations of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, which are often referred to as "Retreat in Daily Life," are helpful guides in understanding the subtle dynamics of a lay person's faith because the prayer experience they offer is conducive to adaptation for the age, level of education and ability of the retreatant.[101]

Through prayer, a person can recognize the depths of oneself with greater clarity and gain a firmer grasp of interior movements that undergird one's way of living. Prayer and discernment therefore go hand in hand in cultivating one's life of faith. Specifically, prayer and and discernment are avenues that help sharpen one's *sensus fidei*. It is in these activities where we learn not only God's presence, but God's movements in our lives, and where these movements lead us, in the hopes that our desires will align with what God desires for us.

In nurturing a relationship with God, desires function in two ways. First, one's inner desires are windows through which "we may encounter our deepest self, the image of God, within."[102] Desires disclose the depths of a believer's character and are indicative of his or her joys, griefs, struggles and dreams. Second, desires function like a roadmap in a person's journey of life lived and inspired by Christian faith: "Our desires imply a

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[100] Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 25.

[101] "The Spiritual Exercises must be adapted to the condition of the one who is to engage in them, that is, to his age, education, and talent. Thus exercises that he could not easily bear, or from which he would derive no profit, should not be given to one with little natural ability or of little physical strength. Similarly, each one should be given those exercises that would be more helpful and profitable according to his willingness to dispose himself for them." Sp. Ex. 18. Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A New Translation Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), 7.

[102] Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 23.

condition of incompleteness because they speak to us of what we are not or what we do not have. Desire is also, therefore, a condition of openness to possibility and to the future."[103] An individual's desires serve a revelatory purpose for they indicate what is deeply hoped for. The hermeneutic of desire, then, is a way of seeing through the eyes of faith that gives a person a particular orientation or a goal. In this sense, desires propel a person's life. In W. Dow Edgerton's words, desire "informs everything which follows…What is the hope, the vision, the commitment, the dream? What is the future that one's interpretation seeks?"[104]

The hermeneutic of desire serves as a guidepost, leading Christians towards God, for they are "people whose identity and future [are] derived from the futurity of the faithful, promising God."[105] The question then is not so much about, "What have you been?" or "What are you being?" but "What are you being toward? What future shapes your present and liberates you from your past?"[106] Desires invite believers into a future whose shape is derived from what the Christian faith teaches and values – a future where love, justice, compassion, joy, forgiveness, communion, mission abound. Such a future is nothing else but a life that is completely transformed through union with God – the concept known as eternal life. According to Dan Harrington, the Gospel of John understands such a future not as some far-off reality that has yet to be attained. For the

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[103] Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 25.

[104] W. Dow Edgerton, *The Passion of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 41.

[105] James W. Fowler, "Future Christians and Church Education," in *Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 93-111 at 95.

[106] Fowler, "Future Christians," 95. Fowler's questions clearly have ecclesial implications. They are questions that could be asked not only as individual members of the church but collectively, as church. "What are we, as a community of faith, being toward? What future shapes our present and liberates us from our collective past?" As the laity whose voice has been largely marginalized in the church, this proves to be a burning question (or the question of the hour), with real, practical implications that invite a deeper reflection on who we are called to be as church and what we would look like in such a church.

evangelist, eternal life – which is "the ultimate goal of Christian hope" – can be enjoyed in the here and now, because "the future is now."[107] With particular force, Johannine theology emphasizes salvation, as that which leads to eternal life, as a present and ongoing reality.[108] Christians can participate in eternal life that has already begun "through faith in Jesus and love toward others."[109] Through the Holy Spirit, the generator of hope, believers are empowered to claim that future and embody it in the present.[110] "It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables the Christian to be a person of hope in everyday life."[111] Christian hope then has a part in shaping the new ways revelation is received in history. With the Spirit's guidance, the many receptions of the one Word, Jesus Christ, is made possible through the *sensus fidei*.

One helpful way to grasp the hermeneutic of desire is to think about it as a hermeneutic of hope because it operates as a framework that helps us see what we want to come about in our lives as followers of Christ. The hermeneutic of hope attends to the eschatological dimension of faith. Faith and hope are intimately connected, as Hebrews 11:1 asserts, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." In Matthew Easter's study of Hebrews, he understands faith as, "by its very nature ... directed toward the eschatological hope and in some sense guarantees the realization of this hope."[112] As the organon of faith, the *sensus fidei* helps illumine our desires by

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[107] Daniel Harrington, "The Future is Now: Eternal Life and Hope in John's Gospel," in *Hope: Promise, Possibility, and Fulfillment*, eds. R. Lennan and N. Pineda-Madrid (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 185-197 at 196.

[108] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 196.

[109] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 185.

[110] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 195.

[111] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 195.

[112] Matthew Easter, *Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 195.

calibrating them according to Christ, whom the author of Hebrews calls the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2) and in whom we find an example of "hopeful faith," "for the joy that was set before him [by enduring] the cross" (Heb 12:2).[113]

Sensus Fidei as Imagination

Within the hermeneutic of desire, the *sensus fidei* operates as an imaginative sense.[114] A person's imagination serves as the bridge that will connect and lead one's deepest desires into the future where those desires are realized. Imagination, however, has not been given a central place in theology.[115] Richard Côté attributes this to the fact that reason, not imagination, has been the theological priority of scholars in Western philosophy and theology.[116] Thanks to studies on faith in general and on *sensus fidei* in particular, the necessary role of imagination in faith is being recovered in academic theology.[117]

Imagination is a human faculty accessible to all the laity. The *sensus fidei* is certainly awakened in the use of a person's imagination. Exercising one's imagination is thus involved in the subtle processes of understanding, interpreting and applying the

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[113] Easter, *Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus,* 195.

[114] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 223.

[115] Richard Côté, *Lazarus, Come Out! Why Faith Needs Imagination* (Toronto: Novalis, 2003), 58. Côté writes, "Theologians have been somewhat slow to recognize imagination as a vital component in the structure of Christian belief, and until quite recently, they have virtually ignored the play of imagination in their own theological constructions. They seem to have forgotten St. Thomas Aquinas' wise advice that, 'theology ought to be expressed in a manner that is metaphorical, that is, symbolic or parabolic;'" see I *Sent. Prol*., q.I, a.v.

[116] Côté, *Lazarus, Come Out!*, 58. He further notes, "Imagination was considered low in their hierarchy of human capacities, deeming it as "fanciful" or whimsical, confining its relevance to the artistic and literary genres and barely useful in the pursuit of truth. However, he argues that "despite this Western bias,…imagination could not be so easily ignored or dismissed; it plays too pervasive a role in so many areas of human life – including the life of faith – that sooner or later its presence had to be reckoned with."

[117] Aside from Côté's work cited above, see also Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 68-69 and 223-234. Rush provides an exhaustive list of recent scholarship on imagination's role in faith on p. 227, footnote 39.

faith. Coming to faith is thus more akin to an intuitive, personal process than the result of logical arguments or philosophical concepts. This is why Côté calls attention to the invitational character of imagination, as mentioned in Chapter One. Imagination, for Côté, is similar to how God deals with us. This is so because imagination

> neither forces nor demands that we follow it to where it would ultimately lead us. Compared to imaginative thinking, which only invites and entices, rational thinking is very aggressive. Rational thinking seeks to "seize" and "get a hold" on reality. In fact, both "apprehension" and "comprehension" derive from the Latin *praehendo*, which means to "grasp," "seize" or "arrest." Imagination, on the other hand, only "invites," "beckons" and "entices." It merely sends out an invitation, as it were, which we can either accept or turn down.[118]

C.S. Lewis, the great Oxford novelist, literary critic and apologist, exemplified the role of imagination in faith through his work. Michael Ward, who has examined Lewis' thought, claims that for Lewis: "the life of faith is best communicated in its own terms, namely 'life:' the lived language of real human beings in real times in real places. Actions speak louder than words. If faith has to be turned into apologetic words, it is best to use a story, as in the synoptic Gospels, or words that are richly resonant and connotative, like the mighty nouns of John's gospel *(Word, Light, Life, Way, Water, Glory, Vine, Bread)*. These words convey the meaningfulness of faith much better than do abstract arguments."[119]

When God deals with us, God does not deal only with our intellect, but with our whole being as *Dei verbum* §5 teaches, "By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God, making 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,' and willingly

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[118] Côté, *Lazarus, Come Out!*, 58.

[119] Michael Ward, "How Lewis Lit the Way: Why the Path to Reasonable Faith Begins with Story and Imagination," *Christianity Today*, November 2013, 36-41 at 41 (Italics original). A fuller version of the essay is entitled, "The Good Serves the Better and Both the Best: C.S. Lewis on Imagination and Reason in Apologetics," in *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition,* ed. A. Davison (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2011), 59-78. The quote is found on p. 70.

assenting to the revelation given by God." As mentioned earlier, faith encompasses the entirety of our being. Faith, at its core, is therefore not an isolated experience, but the way we experience.[120] Faith, for Jesuit William Lynch, is "a form of imagining and experiencing the world; or it is a world within which we experience or imagine. It composes it or, if your will, it recomposes the world according to its terms" – faith, in other words, imagines the world.[121] An individual's exercise of imagination thus denotes that faith functions as a hermeneutic, a hermeneutic that could aid in re-envisioning transformative possibilities aligned with gospel values. Such re-envisioning cannot occur without the company of fellow believers within the church – they whose vision contributes to and enriches one's own, recalling the vital relationship that exists between the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* that was discussed in Chapter One. The community of faith plays a key role in the cultivation and sustenance of a Christian's eyes of faith, and therefore, of funding one's imagination.

Lynch understands imagination as having a comprehensive scope within the human person. For him, imagination is:

> the total resources in us which go into the making of our images of the world. It is, therefore, all the faculties of man, all his resources, not only his seeing and hearing and touching but also his history, his education, his feelings, his wishes, his love, hate, faith and unfaith, insofar as they all go into the making of his images of the world. The simplest of our images, therefore, are quite complicated, and nothing comes nearer to defining

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[120] Gerald Bednar, *Faith as Imagination: The Contribution of William F. Lynch, SJ* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed &Ward, 1996), 136.

[121] William Lynch, *Images of Faith: An Exploration of the Ironic Imagination* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 17. Bednar similarly states, "As Lynch proposed, faith is a way of producing images and a way of assembling the facts so they become intelligible as evidence that the world is more like the one portrayed by images of faith than not." Bednar refers to this as "productive faith," though the term is not found in Lynch's work. See Bednar, *Faith as Imagination*, 79 and 136.

> human beings than their images of the world – than, shall we not then say, their imaginations.[122]

Moreover, for Lynch, faith is itself a form of imagination, and so faith possesses qualities similar to imagination. Applying the definition of imagination to that of faith, Gerald Bednar writes:

> Faith makes images that put us in touch with reality. Borrowing from Lynch's definition of imagination, it might be said that faith constitutes "all the resources of man, all his faculties, his whole history, his whole life, and his whole heritage, all brought to bear upon the concrete world inside and outside of himself, to form images of the world, and thus to find it, cope with it, shape it, even to make it." Thus, faith does not only deal only with the "next world," or only part of this world. Just as there is a transcendental aspect to imagination, there is a transcendental aspect to faith, since it touches on all aspects of experience and reality…The imagination never simply reproduces the reality it encounters. It also produces. The same may be said of faith.[123]

John Henry Newman supports this claim. For Newman, imagination provides access to truth and generates action.[124] He argues that it is our religious imagination that discerns and appropriates dogmas of faith – what we believe to be real (real assent) and what we hold as true (notional assent).[125] Newman further notes that "imagination has the means, which pure intellect has not, of stimulating those powers of the mind from which action proceeds. Real Assent then, or Belief, as it may be called, is viewed in itself, that is, simply as Assent, does not lead to action; but the images in which it lives, representing as they do the concrete, have the power of the concrete upon the affections and passions and

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[122] Lynch, *Images of Faith*, 18-19.

[123] Bednar, *Faith as Imagination,* 79. The direct quote he mentions is from William Lynch, *Christ and Prometheus* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 23.

[124] Aidan Nichols, "John Henry Newman and the Illative Sense: A Re-consideration," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38, no. 3 (1985): 347-368 at 356.

[125] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 93. Newman says, "We are now able to determine what a dogma of faith is, and what it is to believe it…To give a real assent to it is an act of religion; to give a notional, is a theological act. It is discerned, rested in, and appropriated as a reality, by the religious imagination; it is held as truth, by the theological intellect."

by means of these directly become operative."[126] Newman likewise attests that imagination is a human faculty that is not on equal standing compared to others such as perception, the will, and conscience.[127] "On the contrary, imagination is a special faculty which undergirds the others. It is a ground or base which guides us through the organic whole of life and enables us to grasp and know what is real." [128] One can argue therefore that the imagination enriches or enhances its sister faculties of reason, memory, will, conscience, and emotion. The imagination operates closely with these faculties and without it, these faculties are impoverished.[129] The imagination also supports the operation of the illative sense:

> While Newman did not draw an explicit connection between imagination and the illative sense, hindsight makes the link evident. Newman's illative sense is the power of judging and concluding which results from natural and spontaneous reasoning about the real. *The illative sense is, in reality, nothing less than the effect which the imagination has on our choices and evaluations once reality has been really and personally grasped.* If imagination allows us to know reality, it also demands that we pursue and choose reality and truth.[130]

In the Christian tradition, stories found in scriptures, in the lives of the saints, in literature and visual art prove to be sources capable of fully engaging the imagination. These narratives pique a person's interest and stimulate his or her senses. More importantly, these successfully mediate salvific truths; "Narrative evokes images –

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[126] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 86-87. See also his "Papers in Preparation for A Grammar of Assent, 1865-1869," in *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman*, vol. 1, ed. H. de Achaval and J. D. Holmes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 120-139 at 126. Here, Newman writes that certitude "does not come under the reasoning faculty, but under the imagination."

[127] George Worgul, "The Imagination, Epistemology and Values: A Perspective from Religious Thinkers," *in Moral Imagination and Character Development Volume I*, eds. G. Mclean and J. Kromkowski (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003), 125-142 at 131.

[128] Worgul, "The Imagination, Epistemology and Values," 132.

[129] Côté*, Lazarus, Come Out!*, 59.

[130] Worgul, *The Imagination*, 131-132. Italics mine.

images which represent and carry both sentiment and information, images which fuse emotion and orientation."[131] The narratives in the gospels, in particular, provide a favorable setting for appealing to the imaginative capacities of a person. They become a place of encounter between an individual and God. Fowler writes, "The gospel is a gift to the imagination because in its telling of the story of the Jesus-event, in its telling the narratives of his teachings and actions, of his death and resurrection, it awakens our capacity to imagine the coming kingdom of God. It awakens our ability to taste and feel the powerful truth of God's futurity for us and all people. It gives us images and heart to compose a transcendent reality, an alternate future; it gives us a radically new present and past."[132] Imagination makes the stories and images come to life. In so doing, imagination hones the *sensus fidei,* the eyes of faith, into a keener sense that becomes more and more capable of recognizing the holy. Imagination facilitates the human reception of revelation.

It is not a coincidence then, that Ignatius encourages those who undergo the Spiritual Exercises to pray imaginatively with the gospel stories. Ignatian contemplation is a prayer method through which the individual visualizes a real encounter and honest dialogue with God, in a fully present way. This particular prayer style trains one's eyes of faith. Prayer, in this sense, becomes a "school of seeing."[133] Discernment in prayer, as Ignatius teaches, benefits from such "colloquys" – imaginative conversations with God.

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[131] Fowler, "Future Christians,"101. As M. Katherine Tillman writes, "the lives of ancient peoples, of saints, of great leaders, and of great artists, ...seem to give abundant testimony that truth can indeed be mediated through imagination." See her article, "Cardinal Newman on Imagination as the Medium of Intellectual Education," *Religious Education* 83, no. 4 (1988): 601-610 at 601-602.

[132] Fowler, "Future Christians," 101.

[133] John Drury, *Angels and Dirt: An Enquiry into Theology and Prayer* (London: Darton, Longman & Tod, 1972), 15-38.

Through such colloquys, therefore, a person grows in knowledge of God and of self. They provide a foundation for the relationship between a believer and God to flourish, through the aid of the *sensus fidei* here functioning as the person's imagination.

Sensus Fidelium as Ecclesial Imagination

In Chapter One and in the previous section, the imagination was named as the primary mode of the *sensus fidei* of an individual Christian. Ecclesial imagination, as this section will explain, is the primary mode of the *sensus fidelium* of the community of faith.[134] The Spirit conferred on individuals at baptism is an aspect of the Spirit's action in the church, animating and empowering it in its entirety. Both the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* find their origin in the Spirit. It follows then that an individual's imagination and the ecclesial imagination are faculties that the Spirit enables. Scott MacDougall offers an exhaustive definition of ecclesial imagination. He writes:

> there is what we might call an ecclesial imagination that runs deeper and broader than scholarly theologies of church. It is this imagination of [the] Christian community – conceptual, but not entirely so, embodied, "known" in the phenomenological sense in a pre-reflective way according to the deeper sense we have made of God, the world, and our place in it, supported by a common (scriptural) narrative and undergirded by common practices, both traditional and new, a manner of corporate life that endows our individual lives with profound significance.[135]

Hence, ecclesial imagination is founded on our common baptismal identity as Christians.

This resonates with one of Karl Rahner's central theological assertions; that being a Christian necessarily implies being an ecclesial Christian.[136] To reiterate Rahner's point

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[134] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 241.

[135] Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 2.

[136] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* 345-346.

previously argued, Christian faith can never be practiced independently from the church because the church is "the historical continuation of Christ in and through the community of those who believe in him, and who recognize him explicitly as the mediator of salvation in a profession of faith."[137] Therefore, believing as a Christian is an act simultaneous with believing as a church. If imagination plays a primary role in personal faith, then the same is true for ecclesial faith. As Richard Lennan writes, "If, then, life in the church is impossible without faith, it is equally impossible without the exercise of imagination…"[138] Ecclesial imagination is the mechanism through which the church, as a community of faith, appropriates the salvific message of revelation so that it continues to make a difference in the lives of people in the present. Ecclesial imagination allows the church to heed the Spirit's leadings as the church employs creative means that will help orient its members towards greater fidelity to the gospel in the ever-changing contexts of life. In other words, ecclesial imagination prompts the church towards the changes necessary in its life, so that it does not remain stuck in the past and so that it continues to go on its pilgrim way towards the future, living up to its nature and calling as a people "on the way."[139] Hence, Lennan claims that "a church without imagination, without openness to the possibility of movement, would be one without an appreciation of its own identity."[140] Isabelle Graesslé asserts:

> It would be wrong to think of the church in passage as a concession to the post-modern age, a sacrifice on the altar of generalized relativity and of the evolution of Western culture. For the threat of social change on a planetary scale is not the reason that the church, too, has to change, ... The

[137] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* 322.

[138] Richard Lennan, *Risking the Church: The Challenges of Catholic Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 210.

[139] *Lumen gentium* §48.

[140] Lennan, *Risking the Church,* 210.

> church needs to change simply because it is *itself* movement, taking to the road, journey. Founded in the midst of the Passover, a time of movement, the church "is a place of passage."[141]

As Graesslé observes, the church has gone through many such moments of passage in the course of its history, moments "which have caused it to evolve, to grow, and to pass on to new ways of being."[142] Change and forward movement are then fruits of ecclesial imagination, and channels of ecclesial creativity, ensuring that the church never fails, as much as possible, to be a source of life, hope and direction for its members. However, this must be done without compromising fidelity to the church's tradition, which in some instances, could mean that not all proposals for change can be embraced.

Therefore, an impoverished, narrow and stunted ecclesial imagination impairs our way of being church. MacDougall cautions: "If theological imagination is a lived vision of human flourishing in light of a pre-thematized understanding of God, the world, and our place in it, what is imagined to constitute flourishing will have everything to do with how we imagine church. This means our ecclesial imagination is inhibited if we do not have a robust imagination of that which gives rise to what is of ultimate value."[143] The peak of such flourishing that MacDougall describes, and that which is of ultimate value, together refer to the fullness of time in the eschaton. He writes, "Eschatological imagination, the lived vision of what suffuses with divine meaning the entire drama of the cosmos from creation to ultimate fulfillment, provides the imaginative background for

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[141] Isabelle Graesslé, "From Impasse to Passage: Reflections on the Church," *The Ecumenical Review* 53, no. 1 (2001): 25-35 at 26. Italics original. Also cited in Lennan, *Risking the Church,* 210.

[142] Graesslé, "From Impasse to Passage," 25.

[143] MacDougall, *More Than Communion,* 3.

how we embody Christian community. The eschatological imagination and the ecclesial imagination are inextricably linked."[144]

Ecclesial imagination is therefore the shared capacity among members of the church to "see in depth" and "perceive the 'more' in what is already before us."[145] Filtered by Christian hope, ecclesial imagination is the communal organon through which the church attends to the "not yet" and "begins to create it."[146] The church's imagination is the capacity which enables our eyes of faith to recognize the ways that God continues to surprise us, to animate us into new ways of being – a living reminder that "the story is never finished, until the eschaton."[147] If, as Newman claims, imagination is a means to access truth and a prompt to action, the same can be said of the church: the images that ecclesial imagination conjures provide access to the truth of what we believe and prompt the church to act accordingly. In the words of M. Katherine Tillman,

> Newman's insight...is that imagination not only reproduces and produces images in us, but that it also translates us into these images, as it were, by communicating the image of the whole as an ideal of our desire and practice. If truth is indeed the daughter of time, as Newman loved to quote from the *Crabbes Tales*, then imagination must be the midwife presiding at the delivery.[148]

This means that besides the church itself, ecclesial imagination is also called to undergo ongoing conversion, so that as it envisions its future course and contours, it will do so in a creatively faithful and faithfully creative manner, one that more effectively realizes the church's mission. Rush contends that "the imaginative organon of *sensus*

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[144] MacDougall, *More Than Communion,* 3.

[145] Craig Dykstra, "Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, eds. D. Bass and C. Dykstra (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 41-61 at 48.

[146] Dykstra, "Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination," 59.

[147] Rush, "The Church as a Hermeneutical Community."

[148] Tillman, "Cardinal Newman on Imagination," 610.

fidelium is itself constantly being 'attuned' and 'calibrated' by the Holy Spirit, so that the church may more acutely recognize in the signs of the times the new things that God is doing."[149] The Second Vatican Council was one such example of the entire church engaged in the act of imagining together, as evidenced by the rich metaphors in *Lumen gentium* §6 and the possibilities of engagement with the world as articulated in *Gaudium et spes*.[150] Robert Kinast notes that it was a conversion of one vision of church to another that prompted such imagining, and that such conversion resulted from an exercise of the ecclesial imagination.[151] It was a privileged time when the church underwent conversion and dared to imagine its future, a time when bishops' individual *sensus fidei* were "challenged and refashioned" that paved the way for "a conversion of the ecclesial imagination of the Catholic Church."[152]

3. The Hermeneutic of Trust

For all Christians, faith in God occurs within the context of an intimate, personal relationship with God. Faith is primarily an exercise of trusting in God – in God's abiding love and all its expressions: providence, fidelity, reliability, ease of suffering, healing, peace of heart, strength, hope, and solidarity. For the laity, these could mean, more specifically: providence in relation to employment, to afford housing and other basic needs; healing relationships within the family or with oneself; strength in the midst of

[149] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 294.

[150] Robert Kinast, *Process Catholicism: An Exercise in Ecclesial Imagination* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1999), vii.

[151] Kinast, *Process Catholicism*, 65. Rush likewise makes a similar claim in *The Eyes of Faith*, 273.

[152] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 273.

daily life struggles; hope for a better future, etc. Just as trust forms the foundation of any human relationship, trust is the cornerstone of a believer's relationship with God.

Rudolf von Sinner suggests that "in the first place, our hermeneutics of trust is formed by the notion of trust in the Bible."[153] In the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh is known as the faithful God, the *`el `emeth*, "one who can be utterly relied on."[154] Meaning "firmness, certainty, reliability, and trustworthiness," *'mn* is the commonly used Hebrew root to signify Israel's faith in Yahweh.[155] The faithful God is the one who creates, who keeps his promises in the form of Yahweh's covenant which is a combination of *`emeth and khesedh*, faithfulness and "steadfast love."[156] Abraham is considered as the prime example of what it means to trust in Yahweh's promises and what it means to respond properly and commensurately to Yahweh's faithfulness.[157] In the Hebrew Bible:

> …to believe in God means to recognize and acknowledge the relationship that God has entered into with Israel. This reciprocal relationship that comes from Israel's encounter with God is of the essence of Israelite faith. God is the originator of the covenant relationship, and the stipulations of the covenant are His commandments (Dt 5:1-4). Faith, then, means the acknowledgment of God's commands and implies obedience on the part of man. Faith, too, expresses the acknowledgment of God's promises and His power to fulfill them [Ex 4:1, 5, 8-9. 30; Ps 105 (106):12, 24].
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> In the OT, therefore, faith in God includes the whole relationship that exists between God and man…Faith thus sums up all the ways by which men express in their lives their relationship to God.[158]

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[153] Rudolf von Sinner, "Trust and *Convivência*: Contributions to a Hermeneutics of Trust in Communal Interaction," *The Ecumenical Review* 57, no. 3 (2005): 322-341 at 333.

[154] James D. G. Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* vol. 2 (Nashsville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 407-423 at 408.

[155] C.H. Pickar, "Faith: In the Bible," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* vol. 5, second edition (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2003), 589-593 at 589.

[156] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 408.

[157] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 409.

[158] Pickar, "Faith: In the Bible," 590.

Likewise, in Isaiah, faith is the "combination of attitude and act: a trust (in God), in God's reliability and faithfulness, and a living out of that trust in a (feeble human) attempt to mirror that faithfulness."[159] Like all Christians, lay people live in the midst of the messiness of human life, and faith as trust is what sustains them as they strive to find meaning and hope in the ordinary struggles of the everyday.

The theme of trust, faith and faithfulness is also emphasized in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline corpus. Paul uses the Greek verb *pisteuō*, which means to "trust, put faith in, rely on a person, thing or statement"[160] fifty-four times, while its noun form *pistis*, occurs one hundred forty-two times, and the adjective *pistos*, thirty-three times.[161] The Pauline understanding of faith as trust draws upon and is therefore in continuity with the themes from the Hebrew Bible previously mentioned. Aside from Paul's reiteration of Israel's covenant with Yahweh the faithful one (e.g. 1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess 5:24), as seen in God's care for the first believers, it is also clear that "the faithfulness of God to Israel becomes the main thrust of the climax of the letter's theological exposition in Rom 9-11, even though *pistis* language is not explicit."[162] More importantly, Paul underscores the significance and strength of Abraham's faith, which exists as

> sheer and total reliance and trust, unable to perform anything (what hundred-year-old man could make his aged, barren wife pregnant?). The trust is in the creator God, not simply in the one "who gives life to the dead"…but in the God "who calls things which have no existence into existence," the very creation of a son. This is what it means to "believe": Abraham's trusting hope in the existence-creating, life-giving God when

[159] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 410.

[160] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 408.

[161] J. Lyle Story, "Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012):101-115 at 102.

[162] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 410.

> there was nothing in himself or in his circumstances to give grounds for that hope.[163]

For Paul then, faith understood as trust takes center stage. Right relationship with God is grounded on firm trust.[164] "Faith as trust is based on the promise of God. The promise is first and the human answer is faith-trust."[165] Leander Keck argues that for Paul, the proper response to God's revelation made fully manifest in Jesus Christ "was a personal entrustment of the self to the person and event, which the gospel announced. To trust is to commit oneself, to rely on one, to allow oneself to be shaped by God at a deep level. This occurs because the object of trust shapes the truster."[166] God, as the One in whom we put our trust, shapes us, fashions us, conditions us in such a way that the relationship with God pervades all aspects of our being. To God's self-communication, we respond in faith, which then leads to and "creates an entirely new perspective, a new relationship and new set of values. The extreme energy of a powerful gospel (Rom 1:16) is actualized by an open hand of the person who trusts in the good news of God's grace."[167] Such open hand thus extends outward, into community and has ethical implications. Though cultivated within the context of an individual's personal relationship with God, trust in God is meant to bear fruit in that person's lived praxis of faith, which are concrete actions that reflect his or her commitment to God. J. Lyle Story suggests that, "While faith means trust or reliance upon God, it is also directly related to an individual's conduct in the community. While genuine trust is an individual affair

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[163] Dunn, "Faith, Faithfulness," 412.

[164] Story, "Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought," 107.

[165] von Sinner, "Trust and *Convivência*," 334.

[166] Leander Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 52. Also in Story, "Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought," 107.

[167] Story, "Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought," 105.

(Rom 14:22), it is also fully conscious of the other members of the community, be they 'weak in faith' or 'strong in faith'…Genuine faith implies a response to social needs, expressed through love."[168] For the lay person, this means having the kind of faith that has an impact on how that person's relationships at home, at work, in society and in the community of faith; the kind of faith that does justice, that expresses love and embodies Christian hope in whatever shape or form that takes.

Like desire, cultivating trust in God is a *habitus* formed in the context of prayer.[169] When understood as a personal relationship with God, prayer "makes possible knowledge of God and humans, in traditional terms: *cognitio Dei et hominis*."[170] In prayer, one grows in an understanding of the self and of God. Spending time in prayer allows for a genuine interchange between a person and God, the object of worship and trust. For the lay believer, an active prayer life is part of what it means to live one's baptismal identity. It is a major aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Christ in the most ordinary circumstances. Prayer could be considered not only as the school for training one's eyes of faith, but also for strengthening one's trust in God, because it is often in and within this context that revelation is recognized as such. Rush claims,

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[168] Story, "Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought," 112.

[169] I use "habitus" in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the term, "the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations," "a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks;" see *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72, 95. I also find T. Howland Sanks' interpretation of Bourdieu to be helpful, "His concept of habitus includes dispositions (the most operative word) that are internalized…from past experiences, and that enable agents to generate actions suitable to new situations. The concept of habitus includes the past, shared experiences that give rise to new actions in the present. It emphasizes the activity of free agents passing on (tradition as a process) what they have learned and incorporated into their lives together from previous experiences and previous generations;" see "A Church that Can and Cannot Change: The Dynamics of Tradition," *Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (2015): 298-310 at 307.

[170] Doris Hiller, "Faith, experience and the concept of prayer: Some reflections on theological epistemology," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 42, no. 3 (2000): 316-329 at 317.

"Revelation requires the eyes of faith for divine manifestation to occur. It requires the eyes of faith to disclose what remains unrecognized by eyes that do not see, by ears that do not hear. It requires a sense for perceiving the Invisible."[171] Prayer provides the means for the discovery of God's presence in one's life: "Discovery requires attentiveness and attentiveness demands what Walter J. Burghardt calls 'a long loving look at the real.'"[172] Prayer thus nurtures faith firmly rooted in a trusting relationship with God.[173]

In this scenario, the *sensus fidei* proves its usefulness once more, as the Spirit-infused capacity that enables a deeper discovery of oneself and of God, as well as an increasing attentiveness to the self and to God. In this sense, the *sensus fidei*'s function is akin to the illative sense – that subtle ability within us that hones and sharpens our instinct to trust that it is indeed God's presence we are noticing in the ordinary events of our lives.

Sensus Fidei as Illative Sense

In the previous chapter, the illative sense was referred to as that which enables the believer to be more attuned to the ways and workings of God. In the exercise of the illative sense, certitude is reached once the person becomes seasoned in judging and concluding what is of God and what is not.

In the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman introduced the concept of the illative sense, calling it "the living mind,"[174] that which does an "unwritten summing-up,"[175] "right

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[171] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 224-225.

[172] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 225 and Walter Burghardt, "Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real," *Church* (Winter 1989): 14-18.

[173] Hiller, "Faith, experience and the concept of prayer," 321.

[174] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 223 and 282.

judgment in ratiocination,"[176] "unscientific reasoning,"[177] a "living *organon* [that] is a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus,"[178] an "architectonic faculty,"[179] and the "criterion of the accuracy of an inference."[180] As a form of unscientific reasoning, the illative sense proves to be a faculty that is possessed and can be cultivated by the lay faithful, especially those who are non-experts in theology. The illative sense, then, is an inner capacity that is suitable or relevant to the lay hermeneutic. Rahner's insight buttresses this claim since he locates the exercise of the illative sense within the primary level of reflection, or to recall Astley's notion of ordinary theology – the basic, "unofficial" form of theologizing. Rahner seems to have picked up the appositeness of the illative sense and begins his *Foundations of the Christian Faith* by identifying it with such first level of reflection:

> There is an "illative sense," as Cardinal Newman puts it, precisely in those areas which imply a decision affecting the whole person. There is a convergence of probabilities, a certainty, an honest and responsible decision which is knowledge and a free act together. It makes possible, to put it paradoxically, the scientific nature of being legitimately unscientific in such vital questions. There is a first level of reflection which has to be distinguished from the level of reflection of science in the contemporary sense because life and existence require such a level. It is this first level of reflection that is intended in a foundational course that is the first step in theological studies.[181]

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[175] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 232.

[176] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 269.

[177] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 261.

[178] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 250.

[179] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 269.

[180] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 271.

[181] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* 10. See also Heinrich Fries, "Theological Method According to John Henry Newman and Karl Rahner," *Philosophy & Theology* 16, no. 1 (2004): 163-193.

Everyday faith takes place at this first level of reflection and as discussed earlier in the chapter, this form of rudimentary reflection should not be overlooked since most of the lay faithful operate in this mode. This is why it is helpful to understand the operation and dynamic of the illative sense since it sheds light on how the *sensus fidei* operates. Faith first occurs on a level where philosophical or logical argumentation cannot. It operates in a mode that cannot be analyzed or perused neatly because as Newman says, the illative sense reasons "from wholes to wholes" and not from separate, distinct parts of reality. On the other hand, secondary reflection, also known as theology, which Rahner refers to above as the "reflection of science," is a field of expertise unique to theologians, who may be lay or ordained. Therefore, it can be said that while most of the faithful are capable of ordinary theologizing, and while most remain non-specialists in theology; their understanding of the truths of faith still constitute an important locus of the faith for the church to consider and consult. It is through the illative sense that a believer can possess a sustained perspective of reality, fashioned and interpreted according to the truths received in Christian faith.

The illative sense embodies Newman's description of how we become certain when it comes to concrete, real things, situations and experiences. He offers an illuminating example of how the illative sense operates:

> A peasant who is weather-wise may yet be simply unable to assign intelligible reasons why he thinks it will be fine tomorrow; and if he attempts to do so, he may give reasons wide of the mark; but that will not weaken his own confidence in his prediction. His mind does not proceed step by step, but he feels all at once and together the force of various combined phenomena, though he is not conscious of them. Again, there are physicians who excel in the diagnosis of complaints; though it does not follow from this, that they could defend their decision in a particular case against a brother physician who disputed it. They are guided by natural acuteness and varied experience; they have their own idiosyncratic modes

> of observing, generalizing, and concluding; when questioned, they can but rest on their own authority, or appeal to the future event…These are instances of a natural capacity, or of nature improved by practice and habit, enabling the mind to pass promptly from one set of facts to another, not only, I say, without conscious media, but without conscious antecedents. Sometimes, I say, this illative faculty is nothing short of genius.[182]

The above example illustrates the trustworthiness of the illative sense and Newman advises that we strengthen it and cultivate it.[183] Newman also understands the illative sense as an organon that is "attached to definite subject-matters, so that a given individual may possess it in one department of thought, for instance, history, and not in another, for instance, philosophy."[184] Therefore, if the illative sense operates as the *sensus fidei* within the hermeneutic of trust, it particularly operates within the "province" of faith, as Newman describes.[185] The *sensus fidei* is particularly attached to the virtue of faith, as we have seen in the International Theological Commission's document on the *sensus fidei*.

Sensus Fidelium as Communal Illative Sense

Within the hermeneutic of trust, the *sensus fidei* operates in the mode of an individual's illative sense, and the *sensus fidelium* may be seen as the mode of the faith community's collective illative sense. In Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful in*

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[182] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 261-262.

[183] In *Grammar of Assent*, 281: "…is there any ultimate test of truth and error in our inferences besides the trustworthiness of the Illative Sense that gives them its sanction; just as there is no sufficient test of poetical excellence, heroic action, or gentleman-like conduct, other than the particular mental sense, be it genius, taste, sense of propriety, or the moral sense, to which those subject-matters are severally committed. Our duty in each of these is to strengthen and perfect the special faculty which is its living rule, and in every case as it comes to do our bet. And such also is our duty and our necessity, as regards the Illative Sense."

[184] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 281.

[185] Newman says, "This faculty, as it is actually found in us, proceeding from concrete to concrete, is attached to a definite subject-matter, according to the individual. The ratiocinative faculty, then, as found in individuals, is not a general instrument of knowledge, but has its province, or is what may be called departmental," in *Grammar of Assent*, 266-267.

Matters of Doctrine, he demonstrates how the illative sense is exercised within a community. Louis Caruana observes, "Here [Newman] explains that within a community of inquirers the illative sense functions not simply as a mere summation of the various individual illative senses but as a truly communal illative sense."[186] Newman locates this communal illative sense within the *consensus fidelium* which he describes "as a sort of instinct, or phronema, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ."[187] Newman further explains by quoting Johann Adam Möhler's *Symbolique*:

> The Spirit of God, who governs and vivifies the Church, brings forth in man, by uniting with him, *an instinct*, an eminently Christian tact, which leads all into the truth…This general sense, this consciousness of the church is the tradition in the subjective sense of the word. What is then considered as tradition from this perspective? This is the Christian sense existing in the Church, and handed on by the Church; however, this sense cannot be separated from the truth which it contains, since it is formed in these truths and by these truths.[188]

Therefore, Newman recognizes a shared consciousness, inspired by the Spirit, within the *consensus fidelium*. It is this ecclesial consciousness that the church transmits to its

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[186] Louis Caruana, "Disagreement and Authority: Comparing Ecclesial and Scientific Practices," in *Towards a Kenotic Vision of Authority in the Catholic Church*, eds. A. Carroll, M. Kerkwijk, M. Kirwan, and J. Sweeney (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015), 91-102 at 95. Thomas Carr likewise observes, "…the illative sense is also a communal sense, for one only has one's personal 'being' by relation to other 'beings' with whom we live in community. For it would appear that if the illative sense, as Newman says, is a subsidiary function of the whole person as a thinking, feeling, willing unity, and if the whole person is always already embedded in history and community, then it follows that it is a capacity possessed by all people, not just Christians, even if only the latter put it to its proper use;" see *Newman and Gadamer: Toward a Hermeneutics of Religious Knowledge* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 139.

[187] John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. J. Coulson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1961), 73.

[188] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 73-74. The original quote reads, "L'esprit de Dieu, qui gouverne et vivifie L'Eglise, enfante dans l'homme, en s'unissant à lui, *un instinct*, un tact éminemment chrétien, qui le conduit â toute vraie doctrine… Ce sentiment commun, cette conscience de l'Eglise est la tradition dans le sens subjectif du mot. Qu'est-ce donc que la tradition considérée sous ce point de vue? C'est le sens chrétien existant dans l'Eglise, et transmis par l'Eglise; sens, toutefois, qu'on ne peut séparer des vérités qu'il contient, puisqu'il est formé de ces vérités et par ces vérités." Italics is Newman's (in the text, he quotes in Möhler in full). English translation is mine. The original quote is found in Johann Adam Möhler, *La Symbolique Ou Exposition Des Contrariétés Dogmatiques Entre les Catholiques et les Protestans, D'Apres Leurs Confessions de Foi Publiques, Tome Second* (Besançon : Outhenin-Chalandre Fils, 1836), 36, 38-39.

members in every age. This ecclesial consciousness is at work for example, in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), where catechumens are not simply introduced to the beliefs and practices of the church, but are integrated into the relationships within the church, and are thus given a sense of belonging to the community of faith. The laity constitute a vast sector of the *consensus fidelium*, which makes their corporate exercise of the illative sense an important one. According to Newman, the laity are "consulted" in the sense that bishops do some "inquiring into a matter of fact, as well as asking a judgment" from them.[189] He likens it to the manner in which we consult the barometer to determine the weather, or how we consult clocks to tell us what time of day it is, or how a doctor checks on the pulse of his patient to get an idea of his current state of health.[190] It is the laity's "matter of fact, viz. their belief, [that] is sought for, as a testimony to that apostolical tradition, on which alone any doctrine whatsoever can be defined."[191] Even the laity's "strong feelings" and "impatience" are to be taken into account as indicators of where their faith is leading them, because their "common accord ... has weight as much as an argument even with the most learned divines."[192] The laity's "common accord" is born through their collective illative sense. The communal illative sense, as the mode of the *sensus fidelium*, is the means through which the faithful are led towards the direction in which the Spirit blows.[193] Newman continues, "The religious life of a people is of a certain quality and direction, and these are tested by the mode in which it encounters the various opinions, customs and institutions which are submitted to it. Drive a stake into a

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[189] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 54.

[190] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 54.

[191] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 55.

[192] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 70 and 72.

[193] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 74.

river's bed, and you will once ascertain which way it is running, and at what speed; throw up even a straw upon the air, and you will see which way the wind blows; submit your herertical and Catholic principle to the action of the multitude, and you will be able to pronounce at once whether it is imbued with Catholic truth or with heretical falsehood."[194] In so claiming, Newman implies that the laity's sense of believing serves as a reliable measure of fidelity to what properly belongs to the apostolic tradition. In effect, the laity, to a certain degree, serve in safeguarding orthodoxy.

In the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman highlights the personal dimension of the illative sense but "acknowledges that [its] refinement ... requires the company of informed people, that is, people who, by means of practice and experience, have acquired proficiency in a field of knowledge."[195] The community therefore has a role to play in cultivating the illative sense. He writes:

> So it is with Ratiocination; and as we should betake ourselves to Newton for physical, not for theological conclusions, and to Wellington for his military experience, not for statesmanship, so the maxim holds good generally, "Cuique in arte suâ credendum est:" or, to use the grand words of Aristotle, to use the grand words of Aristotle, "We are bound to give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and aged, not less than to demonstrations; because, from their having the eye of experience, they behold the principles of things." Instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge. And if we wish ourselves to share in their convictions and the grounds of them, we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned. We must take up their particular subject as they took it up, beginning at the beginning, give ourselves to it, depend on practice and experience more than on reasoning, and thus gain that mental insight into truth, whatever its subject matter may be, which our masters have gained before us. By following this course, we may make ourselves of their number, and then we rightly lean

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[194] Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, 74-75.

[195] Frederick Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment: Newman's Illative Sense and Accounts of Rationality* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 7-8.

> upon ourselves, directing ourselves by our own moral or intellectual judgment, not by our skill in argumentation.[196]

Newman thus suggests that the illative sense is something that grows and develops over time, with the necessary practice that furthers one's expertise and with appropriate companions along the journey. In the life of faith, the same could be said about strengthening the *sensus fidelium* of the church. Aside from participation in the sacraments, reflecting on Scripture and persevering in prayer, believers can look to the communion of saints as those who have "gained proficiency" when it comes to witnessing to the faith. In this light, the saints' own illative senses are regarded as exemplary for all in the church to behold, for they are models of holiness. The saints, through their *sensus fidelium*, have enriched the church, making, literally, a great and distinguished 'deposit of faith' to the communal faith of the church – a deposit that continues to nourish and inspire the future generations of Christians. It is no wonder then that popular religious practices revolve around the lives and images of saints – asking for their intercession; going on pilgrimage to trace their footsteps; looking and clasping their relics in times of trials; whispering their prayers or whispering our own through them; visiting places sacred to them in the hopes of finding our own meaning, strength and inspiration from where they found theirs; seeing their faces in replicas and seeing the faces of those they have touched and inspired; embracing 'details' of their stories especially when those details mirror our own so that we, too, may respond in faith as they have. These practices are rife with the imagery, symbolism, materiality of these saints' lives, as if recreating the world they lived in. Such practices allow us to make sense of our own, knowing wholeheartedly that whatever it is the saints' *sensus fidei* allowed them

[196] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 268-269.

to see more clearly and trust more deeply would also bring about the same in us, in our present context. This is why they have made a lasting contribution to the tradition of the church, imbuing it not just with the examples of their faith and holiness but with the very lives that served as the context, as the fertile ground for that particular saintly brand of faith and holiness on which we could hopefully pattern our own.

Newman's counsel on the necessity of surrounding oneself with people whose illative sense have made them experts in their own disciplines also applies to the lay faithful who desire to grow in faith. In the church, the communion of saints is considered as role models of holiness – they whom we can trust, they who by long acquaintance with the faith and the gospel message have reached a level of proficiency when it comes to gospel witness. Jesus, Mary and the saints, are a source of inspiration to many lay faithful. However, this highlights the need to add lay people who are married and/or are parents to the long roster of saints in the church. Aside from realizing Vatican II's universal call to holiness, recognizing lay saints as models of sanctity would fulfill the longing many lay people have "for more saints who lived lives of extraordinary holiness in ordinary situations."[197]

B. Challenges to Reception

As the previous section has shown, the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* are indispensable in the laity's practice of reception. In the life of the church however, not all

[197] James Martin, "Why We Need to Canonize More Lay Saints," *America Magazine*, July 7, 2011, http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/why-we-need-canonize-more-lay-saints (accessed May 4, 2015) and "Do We Still Need Saints?" *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/do-we-still-need-saints/2014/04/22/ac83e0a0-c99a-11e3-93eb-6c0037dde2ad_story.html (accessed May 4, 2015). See also "We Need to Name More Married Saints," St. Anthony Messenger Editorial, http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Nov2009/Editorial.asp (accessed May 2, 2015).

aspects of the Christian tradition are received by the faithful. There are instances, past and present, when certain teachings of the church are not positively received by the faithful. The 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, is one prime example of an instance of non-reception among the laity, theologians and some bishops.[198] When this happens, it does not necessarily mean that the church's teachings are false; rather, it means that the teachings are not relevant, representative of a patent disconnect between the hierarchical magisterium's teaching and the life of the faithful or that the teaching "does not call forth any living power and therefore does not contribute to edification" as Yves Congar argues.[199] It has "no transformative power within the community."[200] If people's lives are no longer being transformed by faith, what the church transmits in its tradition, in whatever form, fails to take root in the particular contexts of its members because of its inability to speak to their experience. As Michael Himes argues, "the standard for reception of a doctrine as orthodox is its effectiveness in the furtherance of orthopraxis. Doctrine is in service of life."[201] Church teaching is meant to connect with the everyday life of faith. It is in the real lived experience that salvation occurs.[202]

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[198] See Peter Steinfels, "Contraception & Honesty: A Proposal for the Next Synod," *Commonweal*, June 1, 2015, 12-19; Kevin Kelly, *50 Years Receiving Vatican II: A Personal Odyssey* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2012) 22-23 and 116-117; John Kippley, "Cardinal Walter Kasper on 'Artificial' Birth Control," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, September 25, 2014, http://www.hprweb.com/2014/09/cardinal-walter-kasper-on-artificial-birth-control/ (accessed July 14, 2015) and Joseph Komonchak, "*Humanae Vitae* and Its Reception: Ecclesiological Reflections," *Theological Studies* 39, no. 2 (1978): 221-257.

[199] Yves Congar, "Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality," in *Election and Consensus in the Church* (*Concilium* 77), eds. G. Alberigo and A. Weiler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 43-68 at 66.

[200] Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching With Authority: A Theology of Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 235.

[201] Michael Himes, "The Ecclesiological Significance of the Reception of Doctrine," *Heythrop Journal* 33, no.2 (1992): 146-160 at 156.

[202] John O'Brien writes, "'Pastoral' in the deeper sense is more fundamental than 'doctrinal,' for it is in the pastoral rather than the doctrinal, that salvation occurs. 'Pastoral' is not simply derived from a doctrinal system presumed to be antecedent and entirely self-contained. On the contrary, the doctrinal is an attempt to state the meaning of the pastoral;" see "Ecclesiology as Narrative," *Ecclesiology* 4, no. 2 (2008): 148-165 at 152.

When this standard is not met, the faithful begin to lose interest in the church, becoming less present and less engaged with ecclesial life. They end up feeling marginalized and gradually become disenfranchised or disillusioned in the church. At present, there are various groups who find remaining in the church difficult. According to Tom Beaudoin, there is the "deconverted" group, made up of a substantial number of baptized Catholics who either "have left Catholicism or who have substantially rejected or reworked 'normative' Catholicism in the reworking of their Catholic identity."[203] Moreover, William Dinges, in response to Beaudoin, argues that "the most pressing theological and pastoral challenge,... is indifference toward the Church by Catholics. For many baptized Catholics, there is no single compelling grievance underlying their deconversion; the Church is simply irrelevant to their real lives. This is a profound challenge for theology and the Church."[204]

In addition, there have emerged the "nones" and the "dones." The deconverted ones are "those who have changed their faith-mind about their spiritual or religious identities, beliefs or practices, away from what is taken to be normative Catholicism."[205] The nones, those who select or respond with "none" when asked about their religious affiliation, are those who have no religious preference.[206] The dones are committed members of the church who are "done" – as in "fed up" or "finished" – with the church,

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[203] Tom Beaudoin, "Deconversion and Non-normative Catholicisms – Invited Session," in *CTSA Proceedings* 68 (2013): 72-73 at 72.

[204] Beaudoin, "Deconversion and Non-normative Catholicisms," 72.

[205] Tom Beaudoin and J. Patrick Hornbeck II, "Deconversion and Ordinary Theology: A Catholic Study," in *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church*, eds. J. Astley and L. Francis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 33-44 at 38.

[206] Jeff Cook, "A New Exodus Out of the American Church," *JesusCreed*, June 8, 2015, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2015/06/08/a-new-exodus-out-of-the-american-church-by-jeff-cook/ (accessed June 24, 2015).

"leaving the church to save their faith."[207] The massive youth exile from Catholic pews point to the phenomenon of deconversion or the rising of the nones – all experiencing a profound spiritual hunger that remains unaddressed by the church.[208] Their hunger is evinced through sentiments and questions that often go unnoticed.

Rush insists that the *sensus fidei* of these lapsed and disaffected Catholics, young and old, whether they identify as deconverted, as nones or as dones, constitute the secondary source of the *sensus fidelium*, as mentioned in Chapter One. Though their relationship with God may be far from ideal, Rush still believes that their weakened, disillusioned faith still has "its legitimate 'sense of the faith.'"[209] He suggests that they raise issues that can challenge the church towards greater faithfulness to the core of the Christian message. They also present new questions that are important even if they may have been unheard of in the church. Moreover, Rush believes that "their sense of the faith may indeed aid the church in finding new language to express new answers to old questions in a culture where the old answers, while still true answers, no longer meaningfully animate the faith life of Christians in the way they have been expressed in the past."[210] In other words, instances of partial reception and non-reception are valuable to the church as it continues to interpret the gospel message in ever-shifting contexts. These instances present opportunities for imagining ways to appropriate revelation that otherwise would not have been thought of. As Chapter Three will show, these instances

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[207] Cook, "A New Exodus." Cook writes about the results of a recent work by sociologists on the "dones." See Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists reveal why people are done with church but not their faith* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015).

[208] Jennifer Mertens, "An unspoken truth about teens who flee the Catholic church," *National Catholic Reporter*, September 4, 2014, http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/unspoken-truth-about-teens-who-flee-catholic-church (accessed June 4, 2015).

[209] Rush, "The Church as a Hermeneutical Community."

[210] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 249.

widen the circle of reception in the church. Though the laity's baptismal commitment and participation in the life and mission of the church are exercised in varying degrees, all the faithful – committed, inactive, and even the disenfrancished and deconverted – have a part in determining the *sensus fidelium.* The wide range of perspectives the faithful have are manifestations of their *sensus fidei* and thus have something to offer to the wider church.

III. CONCLUSION

Chapter Two examined the sense of the faith of the laity and their practice of reception. In the lecture Cardinal Kasper delivered at the Extraordinary Consistory of Bishops in February 2014 as a preparation for the Synod on the Family, he urged his brother bishops to heed the faithful's *sensus fidei*. He said

> It is necessary to take seriously believers' sense of faith, precisely with regard to our current topic. We here in the Consistory are all celibates; most of the faithful, however, live out their belief in the gospel of the family in concrete families and sometimes in difficult situations. Therefore, we should listen to their witness and also listen to what pastoral coworkers and counselors in pastoral care to families have to say to us. And they do have something to say to us.[211]

With these words, Kasper echoed Pope Francis' invitation for bishops to walk behind their flock. To a certain degree, Kasper and the pope are implying that the laity can lead the way for the church. If the universal church will take this message to heart, it would require that bishops, clergy and theologians "keep an ear to the people" and "contemplate

[211] Kasper, *Gospel of the Family*, 47.

the people,"[212] to use the pope's words, and this includes tapping into the laity's sense of faith, as well as attending to the their practice of reception as presented in this chapter.

Listening to the people and contemplating them requires mindful heeding of the laity's particular way of recognizing, accepting and living the Christian faith in their ordinary contexts. It also means considering the gravitas with which they witness to the faith. Doing so will "at least open the door a crack for people's hope and expectations and at least give a sign that [the church] takes seriously the hopes as well as the questions, anguish and tears of so many serious Christians."[213] The third and final chapter will propose an ecclesiological vision that imagines a church where the *sensus fidei* of lay individuals and its contribution to the *sensus fidelium* are taken seriously, where the entire lay faithful play a significant role in furthering the church's mission. The chapter will envision a church where the laity no longer form an "elusive reality"[214] and where their intuitive expressions of faith are considered as viable "texts" of the human experience of the divine. Because exploring and imagining such a church also means exploring and imagining who we would be as its members, this chapter will particularly envision how the lay faithful would look in such a church.[215]

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[212] *Evangelii gaudium* §154.

[213] Kasper, *Gospel of the Family*, 47. The original quote says "that we, for our part, take seriously…" I have taken the liberty to expand Kasper's reference to himself and the college of bishops to include the entire church.

[214] Rush, "*Sensus Fidei*," 231.

[215] Richard Lennan, "Looking Forward: Considering the Future of the Church" (lecture, ST224: The Church, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge, MA, December 18, 2007).

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A CHURCH OF PROPHETS

> The people [of God] are by definition a great and potent reserve of collective vitality. Their spontaneity, freedom of movement, and adaptability to the unexpected; their inventiveness and prophetic initiative, need to be fostered and respected as something sacred, even when all of that exists merely in a potential and undetermined state…[399]

The thrust of recent ecclesiologies has been towards the particular experience and local narratives of the church on the ground.[400] These scholarly reflections on the church move away from what Nicholas Healy calls "blueprint ecclesiologies," those ecclesiologies "from above" that tend to overlook the inevitable complexities, genuine struggles, and messy realities of the pilgrim church.[401] He writes, "Ecclesiology is not about the business of finding the single right way to think about the church, of developing a blueprint suitable for all times and places. Rather, I propose that its function is to aid

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[399] Jacques Maritain, *Carnet de Notes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), 241-242. Translation is Paul Philibert's, see *The Priesthood of the Faithful: Key to a Living Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 77.

[400] Natalia Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium," in *A Church With Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, eds. R. Gaillardetz and E. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 45-63 at 46. The following publications also reflect this preference for the experience and narrative of local churches: Richard Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Pete Ward, ed., *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012); Christopher Scharen, ed., *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012); Dennis Doyle, Timothy Furry, and Pascal Bazzell, eds., *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012); Francisco Claver, *The Making of a Local Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); and Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge, eds., *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church* (London: Routledge, 2008), specifically Parts III and IV.

[401] Nicholas Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3 and 37.

the concrete church in performing its tasks of witness and pastoral care within what I will call its 'ecclesiological context.'"[402] This "ecclesiological context" simply refers to the local milieu in which the church lives and which consists of all the factors that contribute to the church's current form.[403] For Healy, the point is not to renounce the more traditional methods and emphases of ecclesiology, but to "broaden their scope and change their orientation so that they include *explicit* analysis of the ecclesiological context as an integral part of properly *theological* reflection upon the church."[404] In this light, Richard Gaillardetz proposes that contemporary theologies of the church must seriously consider these historical realities affecting the church in order "to provide a compelling theological framework for understanding something of the church's nature and mission today."[405] Natalia Imperatori-Lee similarly suggests that attentiveness to these specific ecclesial contexts accounts "for the genuine diversity and legitimate variety within global Catholicism."[406]

Chapter Two presented one such study of the church on the ground, from the perspective of the laity who make up its majority. It addressed the hermeneutical

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[402] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 38.

[403] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 39. Healy offers a substantive list of such factors (not meant to be exhaustive): "the church's history, both local and worldwide; the background beliefs and the economic and social status of its members; recent developments among its leaderships; styles of argumentation in theology…; styles of worship, and the like. The context also includes the whole range of things, including the past and present shape of the church and its theology, that can be described and analyzed by such disciplines as philosophy, history, the social sciences, even the hard sciences. The ecclesiological context, then, is highly complex, so much so that consensus as to its best description is unlikely, not only among theological and non-theological forms of inquiry, but also within a single discipline."

[404] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 39. Italics original. He writes, "The concrete church, living in and for the world, performs its tasks of witness and discipleship within particular, ever-shifting contexts, and its performance is shaped by them. Critical theological analysis of those contexts, and the present shape and activity of the church within them, should therefore be one of the central tasks of ecclesiology."

[405] Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church*, xv.

[406] Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts," 46.

underpinnings of the laity's sense of the faith and their practice of reception. This final chapter will argue that a church attentive to the laity's sense of the faith and the accompanying hermeneutics of everyday life, desire and trust, is a church that is called to take seriously the *sensus fidelium.* More specifically, such a church calls for a fuller realization of Vatican II's emphasis on the laity's participation in Christ's prophetic office. The chapter thus has a twofold task: to argue that the teaching authority of the laity is a continuation of the prophetic work of Jesus and to reflect on what this means for the life of the church. The chapter seeks to broaden the notion of authority in the church to include the laity's specific contributions to the wider church and to expand the purview of the magisterium to accommodate these contributions as a necessary dimension of ecclesial life. The first task serves to strengthen our understanding of the lay faithful's role in the prophetic mission of the church, while the second task invites a theological and pastoral re-envisioning of the church where local listening and mutual dialogue are the norms and not the exceptions.

I. THE TEACHING AUTHORITY OF THE LAITY

As noted in Chapter One, one of the central affirmations of the Second Vatican Council is that God's revelation is addressed to the entire people of God. Chapter One likewise established that the people of God participate in the one prophetic office of the church in different ways and with different kinds of teaching authority (*sensus fidelium*, theology, and magisterium), depending on their particular role in the church.[407] The laity

[407] Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful & the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2009), 57, 186, 194 and 197. According to Rush, the prophetic office (*munus propheticum*) is the office of teaching (*munus docendi*), and is the result of a dialogic interaction between the teaching authority of the *sensus fidelium*, of theologians, and of the hierarchical

constitute a major component of the *sensus fidelium*, as we learned in Chapter Two. Their *sensus fidei* makes an important contribution to the *sensus fidelium* of the church,. Therefore, they ought to no longer be seen as passive recipients of church teaching and mere objects of pastoral concern.[408] The core of this thesis' argument is the conviction that the lay faithful have a real teaching authority in the church. The laity are living subjects in the church and as such are full, legitimate participants in the church's prophetic office, actively contributing to the discernment and articulation of its faith through their everyday witness. This section will introduce the foundational principles of the laity's teaching authority in the prophetic work of Jesus. It will highlight three aspects that form the basis for the laity's teaching authority: the apocalyptic Jewish worldview that Jesus espoused, the primary characteristic of Jesus as led by God's Spirit, and the ancient prophetic tradition of Israel which he inherited.

A. Prophetic Christology

Lumen gentium §12 teaches that the people of God share in Christ's prophetic office. As an integral dimension of the *sensus fidelium*, the teaching authority of the laity is a charism derived from the sacrament of baptism, as mentioned in Chapter One. That charism is fundamentally rooted in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. According to Ormond Rush, the prophetic office finds its deepest meaning when understood in the context of prophetic Christology. His claim is that the teaching office must find its basis in the identity, self-understanding and work of Jesus as a prophet. He suggests that:

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magisterium. By virtue of baptism, the whole body of the faithful (*universitas fidelium*) takes part in the teaching function of the church.

[408] Johann Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Legacy of the Council," in *The Teaching Authority of Believers* (*Concilium* 180), eds. J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), ix-xi at ix.

> a prophetic Christology must then be the starting point for constructing a theology of the prophetic office of the *universitas fidelium*, whose mission it is to continue Jesus's prophetic ministry. This Christological grounding would demonstrate … that the notion of prophecy remains a valid *heuristic category* for exploring the function of the *sensus fidelium* in the church's mission to proclaim and witness to the reign of God. Coupled with Vatican II's retrieval of the notion of "the signs of the times," the notion of the prophetic office of the church (within which the laity and the magisterium have distinctive roles) remains a valid category worth further exploration.[409]

Before proceeding, it is imperative to clarify why the prophetic office is also referred to as the teaching office. The answer lies in the way first century Judaism understood the roles of prophet and teacher. Biblical scholars locate John the Baptist and Jesus within this tradition, where porous boundaries existed between the two roles.[410] M. Eugene Boring writes,

> In the first-century Jewish context from which early Christianity originated, 'prophet' and 'teacher' (or 'scribe') were not mutually exclusive or even incompatible categories. They existed side by side in the same setting or in the same person. This corresponds to Israel's prophets, who gathered disciples about them, taught them their oracles which were then handed on in the prophetic circle, and modified and expanded by the disciples, who were prophets themselves. This view continued into first-century Judaism… [where] the offices of prophet and teacher had already merged … all first-century Jewish groups considered prophecy and teaching to be related, complementary categories.[411]

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[409] Ormond Rush, "The Offices of Christ, *Lumen Gentium* and the People's Sense of the Faith," *Pacifica* 16, no.2 (2003): 137-152 at 151-152. Italics original.

[410] See Pheme Perkins, *Jesus as Teacher* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), especially 23-37 (Chapter 2); Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 190-202 (Chapter 11); William Herzog, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); and Daniel Harrington, *Jesus: A Historical Portrait* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), 31-32. Though these studies tend to treat both roles simultaneously, emphasis could be different for some thinkers. For instance, Stanton notes that some Jesus Seminar scholars, led by R.W. Funk, claim that Jesus ought to be understood as a wisdom teacher (p. 230). On the other hand, N.T. Wright, following Albert Schweitzer's lead, and James D. G. Dunn, argue that Jesus must be seen as an eschatological prophet arising out of apocalyptic Judaism, as will be discussed shortly.

[411] M. Eugene Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 117-118.

1. The Apocalyptic Jewish Context of Jesus

According to N.T. Wright, E.P. Sanders and James D.G. Dunn, Jesus saw himself as a prophet (Mk 6:4 and Lk 13:33).[412] A proper understanding of the prophet Jesus, and therefore of the laity's participation in his prophetic mission, calls for an inquiry into the historical context within which he lived. Wright, for example, asserts that Jesus is an eschatological prophet who emerges out of the apocalyptic Jewish tradition. Apocalyptic, in Wright's understanding, does not refer to the "end of the world" but is a symbolic, richly charged language of protest and revolution, affirming two convictions: first, "that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven – not in some imagined heavenly realm, to be created after the present world has been destroyed" and second, that "YHWH... will act dramatically within [the world], to bring Israel's long night of suffering to an end, to usher in a new day in which peace and justice will reign."[413] Jesus arises out of such a particular worldview – a "context for a truly subversive wisdom," a context where apocalypse and wisdom mutually enhanced each other. The parables and stories Jesus told belong to the apocalyptic genre, and it is because of this that one of the ways scholars have described Jesus is that of a teacher in the wisdom tradition.[414] Jesus' stories challenged prevailing assumptions and presented paradoxical images, calling the poor "blessed" (Lk 6:20), saying that the last shall be first, and the first shall be last (Mt 20:16), and telling his disciples "whoever would be great among you must be your

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[412] N.T. Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," *Bible Review* 12, no. 3 (1996): 22-29 at 27-29; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 170-173 and *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 259-262; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 82-84.

[413] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 23.

[414] Daniel Harrington, "Jesus and Wisdom: Convergences and Challenges," *CTSA Proceedings* 49 (1994): 100-104 at 100.

servant and and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk 10:43-44). He invited his hearers to become part of the story, "the story of what God's renewed Israel would look like" and he urged his fellow men and women "to follow him in the subversive way of peace."[415]

It was within the apocaplyptic Jewish context, too, that Jesus grew in his own self-understanding and conviction that the God of Israel was fulfilling, through him, the promises of the early prophets: the redemption of Israel, the defeat of evil and Yahweh's return to Zion.[416] All of these – the apocalyptic stories, the fulfilment of promises – constitute Jesus' fundamental prophetic message, at the heart of which is the *basileia tou theou*, the kingdom of God.[417] The explicit goal of Jesus' prophetic mission can be summed up in the words he uttered after his baptism:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
> and recovering of sight to the blind,
> to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
> to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Lk 4:18-19, derived from Isa 61:1-2)

If Jesus were to have a vision/mission statement for his life's work, it would be this prophetic utterance in Lk 4:18-19, which encapsulates God's vision for the whole of

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[415] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 24.

[416] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 24.

[417] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 73. "The proper retrieval of the Kingdom of God" is described by Jon Sobrino as the foremost duty an accurate Christology must fulfill. Certainly, this applies to prophetic Christology as mentioned here and to Liberation Christology, which is inherently prophetic. See Jon Sobrino, "The Kingdom of God and the Theologal Dimension of the Poor: The Jesuanic Principle," in *Who Do You Say That I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ*, eds. J. Cavadini and L. Holt (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2004) 109-38. For more on the kingdom of God as a central theme in Liberation Christology, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation*, trans. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 170-171; Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth,* trans. P. Burns and F. McDonagh (Maryknoll. NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 67-134 and *Christ the Liberator: A View of the Victims*, trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 334-335.

humanity.[418] Douglas John Hall writes, "Clearly [Jesus'] bias (and this is in strict continuity with the whole prophetic tradition) is in favor of the powerless, the oppressed, and the poor; he is especially – and for his age unusually – sensitive to the oppression of children and women: those, in short, who do not have power but are the victims of power."[419] Jesus fulfilled his prophetic work through his ministry of healing as restoration of the people (liberating the captives and curing the sick) and embrace of those in the margins (bringing good news to the poor).[420] Furthermore, Jesus performed key symbolic actions that radically opposed the social norms of his day: he ate with and befriended tax collectors (Mk 2:15-17 and Lk 19:1-10), healed the sick on Sabbath (Jn 5:1-18), touched lepers (Mk 1:40-45), expelled the moneychangers in the temple (Mt 21:12-17).

Jesus' prophetic actions brought his missionary program (Lk 4:18-19) to life. All of the aforementioned point towards Wright's thesis: Jesus of Nazareth, the eschatological prophet, "was conscious of a vocation: a vocation, given him by the one he knew as 'Father,' to enact in himself what, in Israel's scriptures, God had promised to accomplish. He would be the pillar of cloud for the people of the new Exodus. He would embody in himself the returning, and redeeming, action of the covenant God."[421]

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[418] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 130.

[419] Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis, MI: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993), 409.

[420] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church,* 133-146.

[421] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 29. On p. 27, Wright writes, "Without in any way psychologizing Jesus, we can as historians attempt to understand the network of motivation, and even of vocation, that seems to have been present in him. We can move, in other words, from world-view to aims and beliefs."

Moreover, Jesus' "radical and counter-cultural agenda" was focused on the awareness and the enactment of this vocation.[422]

2. The Spirit-led Prophet

It could be argued that Jesus' vocation and his fidelity to it were fruits of the prominent role of the Spirit in his life. Like the prophets of Israel (Micah 3:8, Isa 11:2, Ezek 2:2 and 3:4), Jesus was led by the Spirit of God (Lk 4:1).[423] Aside from his ministry, explained in the paragraphs above, the Spirit's activity in Jesus can also be seen in his own lineage and in his interior life. Johnson writes, "The prophet Jesus grew up in the context of prophecy; he was shaped by a family that was itself led by the spirit and that by speech and act declared 'let it be done to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38)."[424] Luke the evangelist depicts the characters in the infancy narrative to be directed by the Spirit: Zechariah, filled with the Spirit, prophesied (Lk 1:67); Elizabeth, after hearing Mary's greeting, was filled wih the Spirit, (Lk 1:41); the Spirit came upon Mary and overshadowed her (1:35); John the Baptist, even from his mother's womb, was filled with the Spirit and will be like Elijah who prepares the people for the Lord (Lk 1:15). From the beginning of his narrative, Luke establishes the prophetic identity of Jesus.[425]

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[422] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 27. Wright suggests that Jesus' vocation originates from Isaiah 40-55, "at the heart of [which] stands a job description." This pericope from Second Isaiah is constantly invoked by Jesus in the gospel.

[423] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church,* 42-44. Prophetic spirit is the first of five dimensions of the prophetic character that Johnson claims are present in the Old Testament prophets and in Jesus himself. The other dimensions are as follows: the prophet speaks God's Word to humans (prophetic word), the prophet embodies God's Word (prophetic embodiment), the prophet enacts God's vision (prophetic enactment), and the prophet bears witness in the face of opposition (prophetic witness). See pp. 44-51. While all these are significant aspects of the prophetic office of the laity, this chapter will focus only on prophetic spirit and prophetic enactment. It will not treat them separately, but will include the discussion on prophetic enactment as one of the ways the Spirit works in Jesus the prophet.

[424] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 56.

[425] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church,* 55.

The Spirit's influential role in the life of Jesus can also be seen in his interior life, where he engaged in prayer and discernment. Johnson observes that "every significant moment in Jesus' ministry is marked by prayer."[426] After his baptism, Jesus prayed and "the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove" (Lk 3:21). Before calling his twelve disciples, Jesus "spent the night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). He prayed to his Father before raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11: 41-44). In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed prior to his betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion (Mt 26:36-46). Jesus also taught his disciples to pray, emphasizing the coming of the kingdom of God and the forgiveness of sins, themes contained in the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 11:2-4 and Mt 6:9-13). In the Temptation of Jesus (Mk 1:12-13, Lk 4:1-12 and Mt 4:1-11), Jesus' manner of discernment can be gleaned from his own struggles with the devil. Jesuit William Barry writes,

> The discernment of the spirits rest on the belief that the human heart is a battleground where God and the evil one struggle for mastery. Jesus of Nazareth himself believed this. In the desert he had been tempted by the evil one masquerading as an angel of light. If these were real temptations, then he, like us, had to discern the movements inspired by God from those inspired by the evil one. He, too, had to make an act of faith in who God really is, based on his experiences and his knowledge of the Scriptures of his people.[427]

To be led by the Spirit is to be consistently discerning between the absence and presence of God in one's life, and in Jesus, we find the epitome of what that kind of discernment looked like. The capacity of Jesus to discern is reinforced by the intimate relationship he shared with Abba. Theirs was a relationship cultivated in the context of prayer.

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[426] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 102.

[427] William Barry, "Discernment of Spirits as an Act of Faith," in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader,* ed. G. Traub (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 159-170 at 166.

In addition, that relationship was not only expressed in words, but more so in action. It was the Father's will that fueled Jesus' prophetic vocation: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work" (John 4:34).[428] Prayer and discernment enabled Jesus to stay true to his mission, which was to fulfill God's vision for humanity through his actions.[429] Wright suggests that "we think historically about a young Jew, possessed of a desperately risky, indeed apparently crazy, vocation, riding into Jerusalem, denouncing the Temple, dining once more with his friends, and dying on a Roman cross – and that we somehow allow our meaning of the word 'God' to be re-centered on that point."[430] In claiming such, Wright proposes an understanding of God based on the prophetic acts of Jesus. Properly understood, the Jesus story is a generative story: it generates a set of tasks, not a set of theological statements. The story of Jesus translates into prophetic action, not abstraction, as we saw in Lk 4:16-18. This is what Johnson calls prophetic enactment.[431] Like the prophets of Israel, Jesus had a "preferential option for the poor" and disenfranchised, but he also challenged those in power. Jesus questioned every pretentious authority, denounced every hypocrisy, brought light to every hidden motive, broke down the false security of the mighty and the self-satisfied.[432] Hall writes, "The task of the prophet, with Jesus as with John the Baptist and Amos and all the prophets, is to open the eyes of the blind, arrogant, and unknowing who 'think more highly of themselves than they ought'; to unveil their pretensions and their

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[428] Just as Jesus had better water than the Samarian woman thought, he also has better food than the disciples know. See David Rensberger's commentary on John 4:1-34 in *The Harper Collins Study Bible* – NRSV, ed. W. Meeks (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 2022.

[429] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 24.

[430] Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," 29.

[431] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 48-49 and 130-165.

[432] Hall, *Professing the Faith*, 410.

pomp, their naïve self-indulgence, their myopic innocence; to prepare them, through an unwelcome exposure to their real unacceptability, for the unwarranted acceptance called grace."[433]

3. The Prophetic Tradition of Israel

As the previous section illustrates, the prophetic task of Jesus is in continuity with the tradition of Israel's prophets. The Hebrew prophets, whom Jesus studied and read in the Torah, significantly influenced his life.[434] From the Hebrew Bible, we know that the prophet was a divinely anointed person specifically chosen to teach God's wisdom, and to explain or interpret it to the community of faith.[435] Prophecy in the Torah was not only understood as prediction, with Yahweh speaking to humans through the prophet's spoken words; prophecy was more importantly, a way of living in the world.[436] Exemplified in the account of Moses, the prophet "speaks for" God and represents God. Representing God entails the prophet's deep, intimate knowledge of the God he serves. Abraham Heschel describes this notion as the "divine pathos." For him, it is key to understanding Israel's prophets:

> the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a *sympathy with the divine pathos*, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos…He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God's voice and feels His heart.

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[433] Hall, *Professing the Faith,* 411.

[434] Hall writes, "Jesus has been seen in this tradition, not as an independent figure or innovator, but as being himself the inheritor of a rich and wise tradition. His work is not a work whose outlines are already determined prior to his appearance. It is a work therefore whose necessity is already known to the prophets and lawgivers and wisdom-writers of Israel. Part of the destiny ('cup') of which Jesus in the newer Testamental record is clearly conscious is his calling to accept and fulfill this preconceived work." See *Professing the Faith,* 407.

[435] Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful,* 74.

[436] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church,* 39-51.

> [The prophet] tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos.[437]

Heschel's words are evocative of the unmistakable intimacy between Jesus and the Father, as we see in John 10:38, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father."[438] Jesus is in absolute unity with the Father, not only hearing his voice but speaking it; not only feeling his heart but acting out of it. Jesus embodies the divine pathos. Indeed, "There could be no more fitting way of summarizing the prophetic work of Jesus than through Heschel's 'divine pathos.' Not in his teaching alone, his parables, his acts of healing, his denunciations and blessings, but *in his person* Jesus must be seen as the inheritor of this prophetic tradition."[439]

Like the Jesus-Abba relationship, the prophet-God relationship in the Hebrew Bible is marked by profound familiarity. The prophet did not grasp God as an intellectual concept. "To the prophets," Heschel writes, "God was overwhelmingly real and shatteringly present. They never spoke of Him from a distance. They lived as witnesses, struck by the words of God, rather than as explorers engaged in an effort to ascertain the nature of God…"[440] The prophets thus continuously sensed God's nearness and lived accordingly. Theirs was an acute awareness and a deep consciousness about God's words and ways that were palpable in the everyday. In other words, the prophets were engaged

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[437] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 26. Italics original. For Heschel, pathos stands for God's "living care... a dynamic relation between God and man; not mere feeling or passive affection, but an act or attitude...a passionate summons." (p. 224)

[438] Urban von Wahlde, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me" (John 4:34): Jesus as Model of Vocation in the Gospel of John," in *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation: Theological Explorations*, ed. J. Haughey (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 53-76 at 71. I prefer the translation von Wahlde uses: "The totality of this intimacy between Jesus and the Father is stated clearly and succinctly in [John] 10:38: 'The Father and I are one!' In [John] 15:32 we read, 'but I am not alone because the Father is with me.'"

[439] Hall, *Professing the Faith,* 413. Italics original.

[440] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 221.

in a continuous process of discerning God's presence. Furthermore, Heschel observes that, "together with receptivity to the word of God [the prophets] were endowed with a receptivity to the presence of God. The presence and anxiety of God spoke to them out of manifestations of history. They had an intuitive grasp of hidden meanings, of an unspoken message."[441] This "intuitive grasp," I argue, is the prophet's *sensus fidei* – his "active sense forever on the lookout for God."[442]

The *sensus fidei* of the Hebrew prophets has a parallel in the *sensus fidei* of Jesus. We recognize in Jesus, "faith in an analogous sense."[443] As we saw earlier, Jesus persevered in prayer, which is a clear manifestation of his utter dependence and trust in the one whom he called Father. Jesus, "in other words, [had] a strong relationship of faith in God" and Gerald O'Collins argues this to be Jesus' *fides qua*.[444] Though Jesus' faith is not like our faith in all its aspects, his faith, as in ours, "had its deepest roots in the most ordinary experience of everyday life."[445] Like the ancient prophets, Jesus confessed the creeds of Israel, which O'Collins describes as his *fides quae*. The prophets' actions are engendered by their exercise of the *sensus fidei* and thus contributed to the long tradition of prophetic praxis in the Torah, which in turn Jesus learned. Through prayer and

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[441] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 222.

[442] This definition of the *sensus fidei* is Rush's, also mentioned in Chapter One. See *The Eyes of Faith*, 225.

[443] Gerald O'Collins, "The Faith of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 53, no. 3 (1992): 403-423 at 418.

[444] O'Collins, "The Faith of Jesus," 417. In this article, O'Collins explores Jesus' *fides qua* and *fides quae*, supporting my claim that Jesus had his own sense of the faith. However, O'Collins makes it clear that "certain very important convictions did not and could not enter Jesus' confession of faith," namely, his divine identity ("his primordial awareness of being the unique Son of God whom he addressed as 'Abba'") and his saving mission (though "he could not confess his redemptive death and resurrection in the way Christians began to do so"). These, O'Collins says, "were matters of knowledge and not of faith for Jesus." See "The Faith of Jesus," pp. 418-419. See also Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans. J. Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 79-178.

[445] James Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 171. Also in O'Collins, "The Faith of Jesus," 417 and 419.

discernment, which were key aspects of Jesus' vocation, he was able to cultivate the Spirit's gift of the *sensus fidei* in his life and mission as prophet. The *sensus fidei* also facilitates the prophet's keen receptivity to the Word and the presence of God. This receptivity serves as the framework that shapes his or her relationship with God and with others, one that may be considered "the prophetic hermeneutic." Such a framework aids the prophet in his or her constant striving to bring God's vision for humanity into history.[446] Jesus lived his vocation precisely out of this prophetic hermeneutic.

A prophet is introduced to and grows in the divine pathos through the *sensus fidei*. Embracing the divine pathos, God's absolute concern for humanity, means that the prophet also promotes the kind of future that God wills for all. For the prophet, the work remains unfinished until suffering, loss, grief, and judgment is transformed into the new hope-filled possibilities that God envisions for the world, because "hope is characteristically intrinsic to the prophetic message."[447] In this particular task, the prophet exercises his *sensus fidei* with the help of his imagination. Walter Brueggemann argues, "It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one."[448] Jesus' prophetic utterance that "the kingdom of God is at hand" was his way of presenting the possibility of a future different from the one his contemporaries were imagining. Jesus embodied that kingdom, and thus embodied the future that God envisioned for all.

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[446] Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 44, 72 and 130. For a discussion of the role of the prophet as hermeneut, see Chapter 8 in Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus*, 138-154.

[447] Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipatory Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 111.

[448] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 40.

So far, we have seen three elements of a prophetic Christology: the apocalyptic Jewish worldview that Jesus grew out of, the eminent role of the Spirit in his life and prophetic vocation, and the influence of the prophetic tradition of Israel upon him. Prophetic Christology serves as the foundation for understanding the prophetic responsibility of the laity. This will be the focus of the next section.

B. The Laity are Prophets Likewise

In *Lumen gentium* §35, we find the Council's teaching on how Christ's prophetic office extends to the laity:

> Christ is the great prophet who proclaimed the kingdom of the Father both by the testimony of his life and by the power of his word. Until the full manifestation of his glory, he fulfills this prophetic office, not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name and by his power, but also through the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with an appreciation of the faith *(sensus fidei)* and the grace of the word so that the power of the Gospel may shine out in daily family and social life…the laity become powerful heralds of the faith in things to be hoped for…This evangelization – that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the witness of their lives – acquires a special character and a particular effectiveness because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.

The prophetic office of the church aspires to carry on the prophetic work of Jesus. We learned from the previous section that Jesus was a teller of apocalyptic stories, and that he invited his hearers to become part of that story. The laity along with the entire faithful, as recipients of God's Word spoken in and through Jesus, share in his prophetic office by becoming part of those stories, and the story of Jesus. The prophetic mission of Jesus is

> a work into which we ourselves, as members of the covenant people, are called. If we discuss any aspect of the work of the 'head' of the 'body' as though it were exclusively Christ's work, we shall miss the point. In every aspect of it, it is a work that describes also the vocation of those who are

> being incorporated into the Christ. Nowhere is this more provocative than in connection with the prophetic work. Only the church that is prepared to take such a work upon itself has the right to discuss Christ's prophetic work.[449]

That said, the elements of a prophetic Christology presented in the previous section apply to the whole church. My interest, however, is to specify what these elements mean for the laity.

In Chapter Two, we touched upon the emphasis of John's gospel on "the present dimension of salvation," the fact that eternal life has already begun.[450] For the hearers of John's gospel, eternal life can be enjoyed through faith in Jesus and love towards others. The future as a present reality is a Johannine perspective rooted in apocalyptic thinking, much like the worldview that Jesus adopted in his lifetime and in his prophetic ministry. The dualism between good and evil, between wisdom and folly that early Jews and early Christians experienced was interpreted by the evangelist in light of the Christ event.[451] In many ways, the presence of such dualism can still be seen in the current state of our world where struggles between pursuing the good, the right, and the just are impeded by actions motivated by greed, selfishness and self-entitlement. For Christ's followers, the difference however, lies in the fact that salvation – eternal life – can be enjoyed in the here and now. Harrington writes, "While the schema of modified apocalyptic dualism remains the framework for Christian life, the focus of attention for Christian life is the present. Since eternal life begins with believing in Jesus, in a sense hope is swallowed up by faith and love. For John, faith is a verb (*pisteuo*). It comes down to believing in Jesus

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[449] Hall, *Professing the Faith,* 408.

[450] Daniel Harrington, "The Future is Now: Eternal Life and Hope in John's Gospel," in *Hope: Promise, Possibility, and Fulfillment*, eds. R. Lennan and N. Pineda-Madrid (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 185-197 at 185 and 196.

[451] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 187-189.

and the one who sent him...Love (*agape*) is the proper response to, the consequence of, and the proof of believing in Jesus."[452] Like Christ, the lay faithful can fulfill their prophetic responsibility through the responding in love to their faith in Jesus.

Faith in Jesus requires following his example, and thus carrying on his mission, the most vital means of which is Jesus' promise of the Spirit who will lead his followers forth.[453] Referred to in John as the Paraclete, the Spirit is understood as helper, consoler, or advocate – the one who will carry on Jesus' work in and through the church, the believing community (Jn 14:15-17, 14:26, 16:7-15). This recalls Jn 16:13, one of the verses we encountered in Chapter Two, which discussed the Spirit as the source of the *sensus fidei*: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

The laity are a people led by the Spirit, just as Jesus the prophet himself was led by the Spirit. The Spirit who enabled and directed Jesus' prophetic vocation likewise enables and directs our own – because ours is a vocation received in baptism. As mentioned in Chapter Two, baptism is not only a sacrament of initiation, but of mission. Clare Watkins writes:

> As prophets we proclaim the good news about Jesus, and engage with our world of politics and human concern, always alive to the Word of God for which we are spokespeople, and sensitive to the things of faith…[Baptism] is no comfortable rite of passage, or simple celebration of human life. Indeed, this goes far beyond even seeing in baptism God's love and salvation for all human beings. Here, that love of God is entered into so as to transform the one loved – the baptized – into a living, vibrant

[452] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 192.

[453] Harrington, "The Future is Now," 195.

> part of Christ's own life and mission. Baptism carries with it *office*. It is a gift and a call and a task (*munus*).[454]

Baptism gives us the eyes of faith to see the vision God has for humanity, the vision Jesus prophetically enacted. Baptism also gives us the Spirit-assisted ability to realize that vision in our own context. "To live baptism," Clare Watkins adds, "is to participate in the Holy Spirit's transformation of the world – ourselves, our own ways of living, and the societies in which we live."[455] To live baptism is therefore to exercise our *sensus fidei*. The Spirit which shaped Jesus' *sensus fidei* continues to shape the laity's *sensus fidei* in the present.

One of the abiding examples of Jesus' full exercise of his *sensus fidei* was the intimate relationship he shared with Abba. As previously mentioned, their relationship exemplified the divine pathos. Jesus modeled a level of receptivity that fully engaged with the Father and that directed the course of his life in an absolute way, evidenced by faithfulness to his vocation. It recalls what Heschel describes as the prophet's intuitive grasp of the hidden meanings of God, which is the prophet's receptivity to the Word and presence of God. This receptivity, a key aspect of embracing the divine pathos, goes to the heart of *Dei verbum*'s personalist notion of revelation. Such level of receptivity points to the kind of trusting, loving relationship that faith fundamentally is (*faith as fides qua*), a relationship that results in a profound knowledge of the beloved, a relationship epitomized in the prophet-God connection.[456] Rush believes that this kind of deeper knowing is the one *Lumen gentium* §12 alludes to when it refers to the "infallibility in

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[454] Clare Watkins, *Living Baptism: Called Out of the Ordinary* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 35.

[455] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 35.

[456] Rush, "The Prophetic Office in the Church," 100.

believing" that the *sensus fidei* engenders: "It is this kind of knowing that is captured in the *sensus fidelium*, making it a particularly authoritative mediator of God's saving revelation." In the laity's reception of the faith, a process that the *sensus fidei* enables, they adopt this kind of receptivity which I have referred to earlier as the prophetic hermeneutic. The laity, therefore, are prophets likewise, when their exercise of the *sensus fidei* allows them to fully know God and be fully known by God, and when as a result, they live their baptismal vocation patterned after the prophetic work of Jesus and empowered by the Spirit. As prophets, they "claim to feel and see as God feels and sees regarding a particular situation" and some of them even have the "ability to read faithfully the signs of the times when others in the church are blind,...[which] can be an expression of prophetic critique."[457]

The call to live baptism as mentioned above, is a call for Christians to make a difference in the world, "a difference oriented to God," as Watkins argues.[458] In other words, the kind of difference the laity are urged to make must be in the direction of the future that God wills for humanity – a future of hope, a key dimension of the prophetic message previously noted.[459] Brueggemann writes, "The task of prophetic imagination and ministry is to bring to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there."[460] In his announcement that the kingdom of God had arrived, Jesus embodied that hope. The

[457] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 260.

[458] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 35.

[459] Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, 111.

[460] Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 65.

prophetic hermeneutic thus infuses the lay hermeneutic with a specific flavor: the prophetic hope of Jesus.

For this reason, the hermeneutic of desire, which I have also referred to as the hermeneutic of hope or hermeneutic of the future in Chapter Two, has a special affinity to the laity's participation in the prophetic office. Hope is the defining quality of the prophet. It follows then, that the laity are called to employ a prophetic imagination, just as the prophets did, just as Jesus did. The prophetic imagination operates within the hermeneutic of hope/desire, and this hermeneutic, however, cannot function without the help of the other two: the hermeneutic of everyday life and the hermeneutic of trust. Jesus' prophetic hope must also inform these hermeneutics.

First, the hermeneutic of everyday life allows the prophet to be cognizant of the present challenges which faith seeks to penetrate. Contrary to the common notion that prophets foresee the future, Heschel asserts that their particular gift is not forecasting the future, "but insight into the present pathos of God."[461] The ability to read the signs of the times as they happen in the here and now, is thus one defining aspect of the prophet. The laity, through the Spirit, are enabled to do the same. Like the prophet, lay people see the present with the future of hope in mind. This ability requires a keen sense of seeing contemporary challenges with the eyes of faith, trusting that the power of the living gospel will continue to transform those challenges. It is baptism that generates this hope, pointing us to the future, and "orientates us to God's own future, his *eschaton*."[462] Watkins notes:

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[461] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 231.

[462] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 36.

> By making us participate *in Jesus*, as risen and crucified, our baptism draws us, here and now, into that future which is God's own, into his own ends and purposes 'which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time. [Eph 1:9-10]...Through the waters of baptism our past and future are transformed, as that radical forgiveness of God is known and embraced, and we move into a living by his promises, rather than by our own designs. It is in this way that our present – our ordinary, busy, mundane being to ourselves and the world – is continually transformed into a moment open to God's future."[463]

Like the prophet Jesus, lay people live the everyday in eschatological hope.

In this light, the second hermeneutic, that of of trust, aids in sustaining the prophet's ongoing relationship with God, because the prophet knows that God is someone who can be utterly relied on. The laity, for whom faith is expressed as trust in God and in God's future, mirror the prophet-God relationship. Once more, Watkins eloquently writes, "And so the past event of our baptism returns presently to us – in Scripture, in philosophical thinkings, in rememberings, in holy water stoops, and in liturgies – and always as our *future*, our call ahead into God. This is a living characterized by *trust*, strengthened by a power not our own and purposes we cannot plan for. We are a people led."[464]

The prophet's ministry of imagination thus applies to the laity. It proves indispensable as they envision the alternative, hope-filled future that God intends for the world. It is in this sense that the lay faithful carry on the subversive work of Jesus because, as Brueggemann writes, "hope is the refusal to accept the reading of reality which is the majority opinion; and one does that only at great political and existential risk. On the other hand, hope is subversive, for it limits the grandiose pretension of the

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[463] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 37. Italics original. She adds, "The baptismal life is a life lived out of the hidden power of God's future, rather than out of the careful or strenuous planning of our own energies."

[464] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 37-38. Italics original.

present, daring to announce that the present to which we have all made commitments is now called into question."[465]

As Jesus lived his prophetic vocation out of a deep interior life cultivated by prayer and discernment, the laity carry that vocation on in the same manner: through persistent prayer and discernment. As a people led by the Spirit, the laity are able to recognize the presence of the living God in the everyday through their *sensus fidei*, and what we have named specifically in Chapter Two as the sacramental vision. Prayer and discernment have an important function in enhancing one's *sensus fidei* and therefore, one's sacramental vision. Through prayer and discernment, lay people develop the capacity to sense where God is present and where God is not.

Moreover, Jesus the prophet came from a family of prophets, equally led by the Spirit, and from that, it could be surmised that his *sensus fidei* was shaped by the faith of those constantly around him, particularly his father and mother, as mentioned earlier. In a very similar manner, Christian faith is first introduced in the home and consequently, the eyes of faith, the sacramental vision, is first awakened at home. The hermeneutic of daily life begins to form in the home, the domestic church. As Watkins argues, "It is the daily sacramentality of its life as a Christian household 'in ordinary' that enables it to be the most effective place of catechesis, a place of proper integration of life and speech, where the day-to-day living of baptism and prayer can provide an authentic (and so, in a particular way, authoritative) context for the vocabulary of Christian speech to be learned and understood."[466] Just as the prophetic identity of Jesus emerged from being raised in a

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[465] Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 65.

[466] Clare Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things: Reflections *de doctrina christiana* from an Ecclesiology Ordered to Baptism," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1008 (2006): 166-183 at 180.

family of prophets, the laity's participation in the prophetic office of Christ therefore begins at home, where they first learn about God and grow in their sense of faith.

The prophetic vocation of Jesus, which extends to us in the form of our baptismal mission, is also realized in praxis that enacts God's vision for humanity. Watkins argues, "Baptism is not a private, devotional affair, but carries with it a *demand* for the transformation of life, and an empowerment to live in such a changed way...To be baptized is to be called into the world to take up Christ's own mission. If we are baptized, we are ordained to this mission, commissioned to these ministries."[467] To reiterate the "baptismal ethic," Watkins cites the words of Methodist theologian James White, "It is a contradiction of our baptism that we should have so many homeless and poor in our society, many of whom are baptized into us…The deprivation of our neighbor is a sign of our failure to take our baptism seriously. On the other hand, deeds of love and charity are a form of living out our baptism."[468] The agenda Jesus announced in Lk 4:16-18 serves as a clear mandate for what the prophetic-baptismal praxis amounts to in practice. The symbolic and subversive actions Jesus did offer a basis for what prophetic work entails. According to Brueggemann, the prophetic ministry's task is:

> *to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us*...The alternative consciousness to be nurtured, on the one hand, serves to *criticize* in dismantling the dominant consciousness … To that extent, it attempts to… engage in a rejection and delegitimizing of the present ordering of things. On the other hand, that alternative consciousness to be nurtured serves to *energize* persons and communities by its promise of another time and situation toward which the community of faith may

[467] Watkins, *Living Baptism*, 35-36. Italics original.

[468] James White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 71.

> move. To that extent, it attempts to … live in fervent anticipation of the newness that God has promised and will surely give.[469]

Jamie Gates suggests that these prophetic tasks of criticizing and energizing rely on what Brueggemann calls "deep memory," which entails "remembering rightly who we are (creatures, created in the image of God) and what we are to do (to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself)."[470] Gates further contends that engaging in radical prophetic action brings us back to the "deepest roots of love, justice and reconciliation that has been flowing since the beginning of time – the story of God and God's people...and should drive us to *exuberant hope* if God found incarnate in Christ and poured out on God's people through the Holy Spirit."[471] In other words, a full realization of the prophetic office must wield a clear influence over a Christian's entire life. The prophetic tasks of criticizing and energizing become fruits of a life lived according to the radical demands of the gospel. Following the example of Jesus, this means "comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable." To criticize the dominant consciousness means breaking down barriers erected by the false security of the strong and powerful, to challenge cultures of false prosperity and injustice. To energize persons and communities means building bridges in the spirit of hope that the future God intends can be realized in the present, just as Jesus had done in his lifetime.

At this point, we come full circle. We have seen how the prophetic hope that Jesus offered informs the hermeneutic and praxis of the laity through the lens of their baptismal vocation. Through baptism, which demands our accountability to the prophetic

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[469] Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 3. Italics original.

[470] Jamie Gates, introduction to *Nurturing the Prophetic Imagination*, eds. J. Gates and M. Mann (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), xvi.

[471] Gates, introduction, xvi. Italics original.

work of Jesus and which enables us to fulfill that responsibility, our *sensus fidei* can be patterned after the *sensus fidei* of Jesus – he who lived his life constantly discerning the will of his Father; he who lived his life embracing and enacting his vocation, so that we in turn, with the help of the Spirit, could live ours. The teaching authority of the laity derives precisely from carrying on the prophetic mission of Christ. It is a continuation of Christ's work in the here and now.

Now that we have considered the Christological foundations for the lay faithful's participation in the prophetic office of Christ, we can begin to reflect on what this means for the life of the believing community, the church.

II. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Prophetic Christology, the basis for the prophetic responsibility of all the faithful in the church, has significant implications for ecclesial life. As we saw in the previous section, the baptismal vocation of the laity is an extension of the prophetic mission of Jesus. The following section will focus on the implications of the laity's prophetic-baptismal vocation on reimagining a church of prophets. It will proceed in three parts. First, it will suggest that in a church of prophets, there is the need to broaden the concept of authority to include the laity's contributions to the wider church. Second, there is also the need to expand the purview of the hierarchical magisterium to listen to, dialogue with and accommodate these contributions into the life of the church. The section will conclude with some concrete pastoral proposals called forth from the life of the church.

A. To Broaden the Notion of Authority in the Church

To become a church of prophets, the laity's share in Christ's prophetic office, expressed in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, must not only be recognized but esteemed. Such a church does not relegate them to the periphery, but includes them in ecclesial discernment and decision-making. This requires an openness to what expressions of everyday holiness can teach the church. Therefore, in such a church, the laity's involvement is encouraged, not shunned; their wisdom is prized, not ignored. Such a church will reimagine possibilities that allow the laity to engage more fully in its mission.

As prophets, the laity are considered to be legitimate interpreters of God's Word, particularly through the hermeneutics that help them understand the faith. Lay people have a crucial role to play in the church's discernment of faith and its teaching throughout the ages. Infused with prophetic hope, the three-part lay hermeneutic of everyday life, of desire and of trust introduced in Chapter Two, all serve as a relevant, authoritative framework that can help the church appreciate the laity's inherent wisdom, what we have referred to as "ordinary theology." These hermeneutics also attest to the Spirit's ongoing activity in directing Christian lives. The entire people of God must attend to these "lay perspectives."[472] A church of prophets needs to expand the community of interpreters and thus, of discerners in the church to include the laity's active and ongoing witness of faith. In the words of W. Dow Edgerton:

> The broader the community of interpretation, the more complex and difficult it will be to define its identity. But its identity will also be more fully formed. It will be more fully formed because it will more nearly

[472] Julie Trinidad, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Walter Kasper: Engaging the Faith Experience of the Laity," *INTAMS Review* 20, no. 2 (2014): 191-197 at 191. See footnote no. 67 in Chapter Two.

> reflect the actual breadth of the community's life. A process that is more open, plural, social and dialogical, changes a community. To open the process of interpretation, therefore, beyond the guild of interpreters who have accepted (or taken) the authority to say what meaning is, is revolutionary.[473]

As a community of interpreters who continue Christ's prophetic work of receiving and enacting God's Word, the church's identity will be made more whole if it includes the perspectives of the laity. This kind of church will see the laity not as passive recipients but as authentic prophets with a credible teaching authority. They fulfill their prophetic responsibility alongside that of theologians and bishops, and as such, realizing more fully a broader understanding of what authority means in the church. Authority is not the exclusive possession of a single group in the church, but is shared among all its members. In the church, there is no singular way of living the Christian life and no uniform method of thinking as Christians. The faithful's living witness will always be conditioned by their historical and social context. Pluralism thus characterizes the church, especially among its lay members. Nicholas Healy writes:

> We should not abandon the doctrine of teaching authority, but – to state the obvious – it needs massive reconsideration. It may be that the doctrine is at present distorted by an assumption that the Holy Spirit works to bring conformity rather than rich complexity and experimentation. It may be that the hierarchy of truths is at present disordered, failing to privilege the work of the Spirit sufficiently. Greater trust in the movement of grace throughout all levels of the Church may encourage the introduction of new practices of theological discussion among the laity and with their leaders that will help everyone engage in more fruitful ordinary theology.[474]

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[473] W. Dow Edgerton, *The Passion of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 62-63.

[474] Nicholas Healy, "Ecclesiology and Practical Theology," in *Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology*, eds. J. Sweeney, G. Simmonds and D. Lonsdale (London: SCM Press, 2010), 117-130 at 127. He claims that pluralism is "an unavoidable aspect of living the Christian life (a consequence of engaging in ordinary theology and enabled by grace)."

Through their *sensus fidei*, the laity possess the capacity to live as prophets in the church. The *sensus fidei* facilitates their understanding, interpretation and application of the faith to their everyday experience and this experience, in all its ordinariness and diversity, "possesses authority whenever it is responsible to the Spirit,"[475] as John Thiel argues. The Spirit who led and empowered the prophetic work of Jesus is the same Spirit at work in the laity. Therefore, lay people's responsibility to the Spirit is inseparable from their responsibility to Christ – an accountability expressed in the living of baptismal commitment and carrying on of his prophetic mission.[476]

The authority of the laity also points to catholicity, that mark of the church which "involves unity without abolishing differences: the differences remain, are not divisive, but, paradoxically, contribute to unity and to richness."[477] Richard Lennan writes, "Diversity is no less evident in the church than it is in the world. If the diversity of peoples and cultures in the world can be understood as expressing the breadth of God's creative love, so diversity in the church is other than a regrettable consequence of our social existence. Indeed, diversity is necessary if the community of faith is to embody the trinitarian God and, more specifically, to manifest the activity of the Holy Spirit 'who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (1Cor 12:11)."[478] Such breadth

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[475] John Thiel, "Responsibility to the Spirit: Authority in the Catholic Tradition," *New Theology Review* 8 (Aug 1995): 53-68 at 63.

[476] Richard Gaillardetz, "Power and Authority in the Church: Emerging Issues," in *A Church With Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, eds. R. Gaillardetz and E. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 87-111 at 110. He writes, "Accountability to Christ and his Spirit require both a fidelity to the apostolic tradition and openness to the witness of the Spirit in the church today, including the Spirit-breathed witness of all God's people reflected in the exercise of the *sensus fidei*. Faithful obedience to Christ will be manifested in practices of communal discernment that listen for the voice of the Spirit speaking through a faith-filled people."

[477] Richard Lennan, "Catholicity: Its Challenge for the Church," *New Theology Review* 24, no. 4 (2011): 36-48 at 37.

[478] Lennan, "Catholicity: Its Challenge for the Church," 44-45.

illustrates that in the church authority is not always neat, structured and clearly defined. There is also present in the church, authority that is the ambiguous and temporal, much like the ambiguous, temporal, plural and particular nature of lay experience. One can see in their lives, how the most ordinary and most diverse conditions of their prophetic responsibility are lived out. Therefore, the church has to be open to the authority of particular experiences so that as church, we can get our ecclesial imagination to "grasp that the Spirit … is no less efficacious in the most obscure corners of our lives than in the widest expanses of the eschatological Church."[479] In addition, Thiel says, "Authority that finally matters in the Church flourishes in a circle of faith in which believers aspire to faithfulness to the Spirit of God, in Rahner's phrase the 'holy mystery,' whose workings remain to us mysterious – or might we say ambiguous? – wherever we find them, whether in extraordinary life of the saint, or in ecclesial offices, or in the experience of the laity."[480] The church of prophets is a church attentive to the workings of the Spirit in all of the baptized, not least to the everyday, messy realities of life.

Our consideration of the teaching authority of the laity then invites the church to attend to the perspectives of faith and ecclesial life arising from their particular context, because as Chapter Two noted, this has generally suffered from neglect within academic theology and within the church. As such, Lee describes the lay hermeneutic as a marginal hermeneutic, because "Laymen and laywomen have not belonged to the guild of authorized intepreters in the church."[481] Lee argues that the clerical hermeneutic has been a dominant perspective in the church: "Clearly, ordained Christians have long had a

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[479] Thiel, "Responsibility to the Spirit," 66.

[480] Thiel, "Responsibility to the Spirit," 64.

[481] Bernard Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE: A Hidden Revolution* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), 144-145.

towering interpretive edge, and from their social location they have been the principal architects of Catholic Christian identity…This is not an indictment of their interpretation, but an acknowledgment of its incompleteness and one-sidedness."[482] The hierarchy, for most part, have been the "authorized speakers [who] control the meanings out of which a community lives" making it "patently clear that the structure of authorized interpretation, the guild, is fundamentally clerical."[483] The church, thus, has privileged the contribution of the ordained to Christ's prophetic office over and above, and at times, at the cost of the laity's equally legitimate share in the same office.

For Lee, the metaphor of the margin functions as a useful tool in appealing for "the emergence of a lay hermeneutic into a real voice."[484] The margin can be thought of as "the limited space separating the written page from the page that always remains to be written."[485] Remarkably influenced by Lee's thought, Terry Veling applies the metaphor of the book to the dynamic between the Christian tradition and intentional Christian communities. He writes:

> My contention is that marginal space is the gap in which hermeneutics begins, and ends – forms, and re-forms. It begins in the recognition that there is a gap between our tradition and our lives. What is a gap, except

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[482] Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE,* 138.

[483] Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE,* 139-140. Lee makes the point however, that there also has been a marginal clerical hermeneutic (p. 144). He says, "In our own century we can name Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, and Hans Küng. From another century there is Thomas Aquinas. Many of these were marginal because they brought the 'text' into dialogue with new learning that challenged the received tradition and reshaped it."

[484] Lee, *The Future Church of 140 BCE,* 144. On p. 142, Lee makes the case for the significance of the margins within a given religious tradition. He says, "what is important about the metaphor of margin is that while the margin is not the text, it is still on the page; and what is written there influences how the text is read."

[485] Mark Taylor, Foreword to *Margins*, by Edmond Jabes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), xiii. For Lee, the margins have served an important role throughout the church's history. He says, margins "are constitutive of the tradition. They are a constant reminder of the book that remains to be written. And then, when that book is written, it too will be beset by margins;" see *The Future Church of 140 BCE,* 143.

> perhaps a space – a blank space, a space like that of the margin? A blank space represents a lack or an absence, yet it also represents a hunger or a search. It is as much about what is missing and excluded as it is about the hope or vision for what could be, for new possibility.[486]

Veling's insight applies to the experience of lay people as a marginal sector in the church, even if most of them do not actively belong to an intentional community. The lay hermeneutic is instructive for envisioning possibilities for greater participation in the church. The lay hermeneutic proves to be "funding source" for reimagining how the gospel can continue to be a living reality in the life of the church where nobody's *sensus fidei* is excluded or ignored.[487] In other words, the margins of the church have prophetic potential – particularly where the laity, in their ways of thinking and knowing, are involved.

In this regard, Veling advocates for a kind of epistemology that privileges "appreciative consciousness" and "truthful knowing,"[488] processes that are more akin to the laity's experience and articulation of the faith. These approaches give us an insight into how the laity exercise their *sensus fidei* and therefore, how they express their baptismal vocation that continues the prophetic work of Jesus. Bernard Meland and Parker Palmer propose these ways of knowing as alternatives to autonomous, rational and scientific methods that have been dominant since the Enlightenment. Such rationality,

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[486] Terry Veling, *Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 18.

[487] I use the term "funding source" in reference to Walter Brueggemann's idea regarding what it entails for intentional Christian communities to "fund the postmodern imagination." For Brueggemann, this means providing "the pieces, materials, and resources out of which a new world can be imagined." See *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 19-20. Also in Veling, *Living in the Margins*, 103.

[488] Veling, *Living in the Margins*, 51. This insight is based on the work of Bernard Meland, "The Appreciative Consciousness," *Higher Education and the Human Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 48-78. Parker Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), 20-32.

according to Meland, has tended to neglect the depths and intuitive qualities of lived experience, the kind of "consciousness that is attuned to humanity's way of apprehending the world through a sense of value, a sense of beauty, of feeling, affection, intuition – through moral, religious and aesthetic experience."[489]

In a similar vein, Palmer believes that educational pedagogies have been preoccupied with "knowing truth" (attending to facts and theories, seeking control), and offers "truthful knowing" as a contrasting approach (attending to life experience, relationships, hermeneutics, seeking engagement).[490] For Palmer, "to know in truth is to enter into a life of that which we know and to allow it to enter into ours. Truthful knowing weds the knower and the known...truth involves entering a relationship with someone or something genuinely other than us, but with whom we are intimately bound."[491]

Because appreciative consciousness and truthful knowing have been eclipsed since the Englightenment, they could also be considered as forms of marginal hermeneutics. However, one of the central affirmations of the Second Vatican Council has been the personalist approach to revelation – revelation not so much as knowing truth, but as truthful knowing. One can hear unmistakable echoes of *Dei verbum* §2 in Palmer's approach to truth as relationship that involves receptive, participative, relational knowing, a knowing that belongs (versus factual, theoretical, objective knowing and a knowing that controls). Truthful knowing resonates with the kind of relationship Jesus

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[489] Meland, "The Appreciative Consciousness," 64.

[490] Veling, *Living in the Margins*, 52. Here, Veling offers a helpful chart that summarizes the difference between knowing truth and truthful knowing.

[491] Palmer, *To Know as We are Known,* 31.

had with Abba, the one whom he called Father, and is the kind of knowledge that the faithful are called to share with God through Christ and the Spirit.

Appreciative consciousness and truthful knowing constitute what we could call a lay epistemology, a manner of religious knowing operative in the hermeneutical framework that filters the laity's reception of faith and their exercise of the *sensus fidei* in daily life. Appreciative consciousness and truthful knowing are epistemological processes that bring to light the ordinary, lived faith of the people – a faith mostly expressed in daily living, in personal prayer, communal worship, and other ecclesial practices. It is a faith not so much articulated in words or theological texts. Lay epistemology is not usually characterized by clarity, precision and unifomity but has a propensity towards non-textual and non-verbal expressions of faith. Lay epistemology results in the kind of faith that fosters an intimate knowledge of God in daily life. The sense of beauty, emotion, affection, intuition evoked in appreciative consciousness and the import of experience, relationships, hermeneutics and engagement in the process of truthful knowing suggest the essential role the believing community's *sensus fidelium* plays in nurturing an individual's *sensus fidei*.

Therefore, the kind of ecclesial faith that emerges from the lay hermeneutic enriches their *sensus fidei* and their teaching authority. This kind of ecclesial faith has a legitimate contribution to make to the community of interpreters in the church. In the words of Natalia Imperatori-Lee, "The devotions and prayers, the symbols and processions that make up the piety of the majority of the church cannot be relegated to insignificance if we take seriously the doctrine of the *sensus fidei/sensus fidelium*."[492]

[492] Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts," 58.

The ordinary expressions of faith form one particular way through which the laity share in the prophetic office of Christ, especially if these expressions are aligned with the gospel message and promote the values of God's reign (e.g. social justice, mercy, reconciliation), as the previous chapter has shown.

B. To Promote an Ethos of Listening and Dialogue in the Church

The recognition of the laity as necessarily belonging to the guild of interpreters in the church requires a culture of listening and dialogue. To foster such a culture, the church needs to emulate two qualities Jesus exemplified: the ability to listen closely to God and to God's workings within the faithful; and to communicate God's message effectively in word and deed. These are defining qualities of a prophet and all in the church are called to emulate these, especially when engaging in intra-ecclesial dialogue. At the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization in October 2012, Luis Antonio Cardial Tagle emphasized the need for a church that is humble, respectful and for a church that recognizes the power of silence. He said, "The Church must discover the power of silence. Confronted with the sorrows, doubts and uncertainties of people she cannot pretend to give easy solutions. In Jesus, silence becomes the way of attentive listening, compassion and prayer. It is the way to truth."[493]

The church's capacity for engagement with the laity must be expressed through moments of listening and moments of silence as Tagle suggested. This capacity also

[493] Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Intervention at *Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin (XXIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith)*, Vatican website, October 7-28, 2012, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b07_02.html#-_H._Exc._Rev._Mons._Luis_Antonio_G._TAGLE,_Archbishop_of_Manila_(PHILIPPINES), (accessed October 12, 2015).

comes into play more specifically in what John O'Brien describes as the "triangular-shaped conversation of narratives" that constitute ecclesiology, referring to the interdependence and interplay of the laity, the bishops, and the theologians. He believes that each group is not self-contained but is "in strict need of conversation with each other."[494] Similarly, Rush refers to the prophetic office as the result of the dialogic interaction of the three teaching authorities of the laity, the theologians and the bishops.[495] A broadened notion of authority allows for imagining a church of prophets, a church where what I could call "mutual kenosis of authority" is the norm. By "mutual kenosis," I mean reciprocal listening and intra-ecclesial dialogue, where the laity, theologians and bishops alternate in their roles as teachers and learners of the faith.[496] In such a church, there is mutual kenosis of authority that exists among the *sensus laicorum*, *sensus theologorum* and *sensus episcoporum*. Gemma Simmonds envisions this as an important aspect of authority in a kenotic church. She writes, "Teaching authority is kenotic when the teachers also show themselves also willing to be learners and the *sensus fidelium* of the pastors enters into conversation with the experience of ordinary believers and they are transformed by the encounter."[497]

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[494] John O'Brien, "Ecclesiology as Narrative," *Ecclesiology* 4, no. 2 (2008): 148-165, at 159-160.

[495] Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 186.

[496] Gemma Simmonds, "Imagining Authority in a Kenotic Church: Magisterium in the Contemporary Church," in *Towards a Kenotic Vision of Authority in the Catholic Church*, eds. A. Carroll, M. Kerkwijk, M. Kirwan, and J. Sweeney (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015), 147-163 at 150.

[497] Simmonds, "Imagining Authority in a Kenotic Church," 155. Similarly, Brad Hinze writes, "In dialogical discernment, participants freely and creatively enter into the conversation, but each person can be taken over by the subject matter transfixed in the movement of the dialogue. In the process deeper dimensions of the topic can be revealed and new courses of action and mission opened, and the very transfiguration of self, community, and God can occur." See his *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 254.

Mutual kenosis of authority advocates for an expansion of the hierarchical magisterium's purview to recognize the authority of lay people and therefore, their contributions to the life of the church. This is important because, as the previous section has demonstrated, "the insight and wisdom of ordinary believers often eludes propositional form, embedded as it is in the concrete narratives and daily practices of Christian discipleship."[498] To "stretch their ears" so as to listen to what ordinary people are saying about the joys, challenges, and hopes of living a Christian life in the world is one way the clergy and the bishops can fulfill their prophetic responsibility. Lay perspectives are "hope-filled" and "future-oriented."[499] When pastors journey through life with the laity, they, too, share in that hope. Openness to the laity's lived experience would allow them to be more fully engaged in this kenotic vision of church, so much so that there remains little to no disconnect between their lives and the teachings of the church. The church in this sense recognizes holiness in ordinary life, which lends credibility to the laity's witness and acknowledges the particular authority that comes with it. In this church, the wisdom of ordinary lay believers is a source that theologians and bishops draw from in the determination of the *sensus fidelium*.

Even within the marginal lay hermeneutic, there are yet the more particular voices that remain on the peripheries – the voices of women, the youth and the poor – and they would be what I would call "the margins within the margins." Their experience has its own authority, too, to recall Thiel's point above. The church as a whole, must seriously attend to them because they are prophets likewise and therefore have something to teach the church. In what follows, I offer a brief consideration of each group.

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[498] Gaillardetz, "Power and Authority in the Church," 95.

[499] Trinidad, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Walter Kasper,"194.

First, the guild of interpreters in the church will benefit much from including the perspective of women. The consideration of the everyday life of faith taken up in Chapter Two will necessarily demand attention to the role of women in the life of the church, especially in the domestic church. Imperatori-Lee suggests, "Inevitably, studying daily life brings women's work to the fore, since it is primarily women who take part in the daily routines of housework, childrearing, and the 'stuff' of everyday life."[500] Despite being deeply embedded in a patriarchal society, women thus play an indispensable role in cultivating the life of faith, and passing on the faith.[501] As Nancy Pineda-Madrid claims, women "'name' sacred space and time" particularly in the home.[502] By creating *altarcitos*, small home shrines which designate the space where the family gathers for prayer, women, oftentimes unbeknownst to them, assert their role as bearers of faith and in so doing, fulfill their prophetic responsibility. Though often portrayed as a part of the emerging church, women for centuries have played such roles yet remain in the peripheries of church life and leadership. For example, popular Catholic traditions are often led by lay women, in contrast to the male clerics who lead the church's liturgical and institutional life.[503] Further, most responsibilities in the parish and in religious education, formal or informal, fall on the shoulders of women, therefore theirs is a

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[500] Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts," 60. On p. 55, she writes, "If Latino/a theology can be said to have an essential achievement, a singular decisive contribution to ecclesiology, it would be its relentless emphasis on popular religious expressions, the study of the faith as it is lived in local communities. Through their attentiveness to popular piety, popular Catholicism, religious devotion, and public and private expressions of faith, Latino/a theologians have lifted up the sacredness of everyday life (termed *lo cotidiano*) as a locus of theology."

[501] Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts," 61. On p. 60 she writes, "Latino/a religiosity is characterized by matriarchal core." See also Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, "The Matriarchal Core of Latino Catholicism," *Latino Studies Journal* 4, no. 3 (1993): 60-78.

[502] Pineda-Madrid, "Through the Leaven of Popular Catholic Practices," 191.

[503] Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 60.

prophetic voice that would make a valuable contribution to the church as it continues to reflect on how to communicate the gospel more effectively.

Second, the youth also enrich the community of interpreters in the church. The church, urges John Sullivan, needs to refrain from perceiving young people's discomfort as signs of weak faith, as benchmarks of poor instruction in Catholic schools or as proof of their parents' failure to lead by example. Rather, Sullivan upholds the "need to respect the gap discerned by young people between ideals and reality, and 'to stand willingly, if vulnerably, in the heat of their interrogation,'" which he understands as a kenotic exercise of magisterial authority.[504] The young members of the church raise prophetic questions that challenge how the church continues to make God real and relevant to the present. Also speaking about young people's potential contribution to the church, Edward Foley notes that "passing the torch of full, prophetic and ecclesial participation to future generations means inviting them to offer their worldly gifts, their tech savvy skills, their digital instincts and wireless thinking to a Church that needs their energy, insight and engagement...It means a willingness to let them teach us, an openness to hearing their *sensus fidelium*, an even allowing them to lead us into new ways of being Church."[505] As Foley reiterates, even the youth participate in Christ's prophetic office by witnessing to

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[504] John Sullivan, "Critical Fidelity and Catholic School Leadership," in *International Handbook of Learning, Teaching and Leading in Faith-Based Schools*, eds. J. Chapman, S. McNamara, M. Reiss, and Y. Waghid (Dodrecht: Springer, 2014), 553-566 at 558-559. Also in Simmonds, "Imagining Authority in a Kenotic Church," 158-159.

[505] Edward Foley, "Passing the Torch: Full, Prophetic and Ecclesial Participation," *Worship* 86, no. 5 (2012): 386-402 at 399. Foley adds, "It sounds risky, they are so young; yet, maybe it helps to remember that the Rabbi from Nazareth began his public ministry at an age that today would disqualify him for running for the senate in our country, or being elected bishop in our Church." Léon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens makes a similar point. He said that the youth serve as "a radar set helping us to see what is coming. It is most important that the church truly dialogue with the young, and understand their new awareness…The more that the Holy Spirit lives in each one of us the more he will be able to reveal to the men of tomorrow the youth, the freshness and the power of the gospel;" see *Coresponsibility in the Church*, trans. F. Martin (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 213.

the faith usually expressed through innovative means. Pope Francis himself stressed this at the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, saying, "The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you."[506] In addition, the pope adumbrated that the young can realize their prophetic agency specifically by capitalizing on the their propensity for making loud noises. He encouraged them to make themselves heard in their dioceses, exhorting them: "I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves."[507]

Third, the church is urged to attend to the authority of the poor because they have an authority which is possessed neither by the church's hierarchy nor the educated laity.[508] According to John O'Brien, their authority "is rooted in their being the first addressees of the gospel and ... therefore no adequate notion of Church, or appropriate structures of governance and authority in the Church, can be elaborated that does not give a privileged consideration of their experience."[509] God has a predilection for the poor, as Jon Sobrino argues, and God himself is calling the church to "turn to the poor to find truth and light."[510] In addition, Sobrino avers that "the poor have no problems with God.

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[506] Pope Francis, *Homily delivered at the Waterfront of Copacabana (XXVIII World Youth Day)*, Vatican website, July 28, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_celebrazione-xxviii-gmg.html, accessed October 27, 2015.

[507] Pope Francis, *Address to the Young People from Argentina, Vatican website*, July 25, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-argentini-rio.html, accessed October 27, 2015.

[508] John O'Brien, "The Authority of the Poor," in *Authority in the Roman Church: Theory and Practice,* ed. B. Hoose (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 217-230 at 224.

[509] O'Brien, "The Authority of the Poor," 217.

[510] Jon Sobrino, "The 'Doctrinal Authority' of the People of God in Latin America," in *The Teaching Authority of Believers* (*Concilium* 180), eds. J. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 54-62 at 60.

The classic question of theodicy – the 'problem of God,' the atheism of protest – so reasonably posed by the nonpoor, is not problem at all for the poor (who in good logic ought of course to be the ones to pose it)."[511] The poor, as Goizueta claims, "are onto something,"[512] and this is why they, too, function as prophets in the church. Their hermeneutical stance teaches the rest of the church that "life is worth living...no matter what."[513] Because of their constant encounter with death, material poverty, injustice and utter powerlessness, the poor prophetically challenge the church to fully value life. This is the same basis for Anne Arabome's argument that the poor she ministers to in Kibera, a slum area in Nairobi, Kenya, "do not possess the benefit of a supernatural theological insight or spiritual instinct capable of receiving or rejecting, contesting or querying exalted magisterial teachings, as we usually like to define *sensus fidelium*. What they have are *senses* native to their context: *senses* that allow them to smell, taste, hear, feel, and see the action of the Spirit at work in their broken milieu."[514] She directs the church's focus not just on the poor, but on women who are poor, women whose

> experience to which their *senses* bear witness is one of pain and exclusion, manifested in multiple forms of injustice and abuse, including domestic rape, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, limited access to education, and poor sanitation, maternal and child health. Through the lives of these women, [Arabome has] made a fundamental discovery that *sensus fidelium* is not a concept to be understood in the singular. *Sensus* is not mere insight or instinct affirming or rejecting a truth minted in abstract and extraneous context; *sensus fidelium* represents a *plurality of senses* of the people of God by which they perceive and live the reality of their faith,

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[511] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 166-167. Also in Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 8.

[512] Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 9.

[513] Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 9.

[514] Anne Arabome, "How are Theologians Challenged and Informed by Their Engagement with the Sense of the Faithful in the Local/Global Church?" *CTSA Proceedings* 70 (2015): 66-71 at 66-67. Italics original.

> vocation, and ministry…*sensus fidelium* calls for an application and discernment of the senses.[515]

In claiming so, Arabome lifts up the prophetic potential of women in poverty, which also poses a significant challenge to the prevailing understanding of the *sensus fidelium.* She argues that the poor's senses of the faith are filtered through their context and condition and that theologians ought to be transformed by those senses. This they can do by deep involvement in the struggles of the poor and recognizing Christ's suffering that is so alive in theirs. The poor are not only marginalized in greater society but also in the church, and they can participate in ecclesial life only when the church becomes a fully participative community of believers.[516] Through word and example, Pope Francis has led the church to be awakened to the plight of the poor by turning the church's gaze to those on the peripheries, declaring from the onset, how he "would like a church that is poor and for the poor."[517]

In this light, insights from Asian ecclesiology may be helpful in imagining a church of prophets, one that takes the plight of its members seriously. For the church in Asia, Peter Phan observes that "there is a conscious shying away from "churchy" themes such as papal primacy and infallibility, apostolic succession, magisterium, episcopal power, the hierarchical structure, canon law, the Roman Curia, and the like."[518] He continues:

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[515] Arabome, "How are Theologians Challenged and Informed," 67.

[516] O'Brien, "The Authority of the Poor," 224.

[517] Pope Francis, *Address to Representatives of the Communication Media*, Vatican website, March 16, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130316_rappresentanti-media.html (accessed October 18, 2015).

[518] Peter Phan, "A church in the service of the reign of God: Prophetic dimensions of an Asian ecclesiology," in *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität: Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Bestehen des Internationalen Instituts für missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen 1911-2011* (St. Ottilien : EOS Verlag, 2011), 104-115 at 105.

> Not that these realities are of no importance for the Asian churches. Of course, they are, but they do not occupy the central position on the theological radar of the Asian churches, as they do in Western theological circles. Rather, instead of developing an ecclesiocentric or church-centered ecclesiology, Asian bishops and theologians have fostered what may be called a regnocentric or kingdom-of-God centered way of being church. Their main concern is not so much to elaborate a theoretical ecclesiology as to implement ways of being church appropriate to the socio-political, cultural, and religious contexts of Asia. Their ecclesiology, when it comes to be formulated, is born out of an attempt to practice an authentic way of being church.[519]

Phan suggests that the Asian theology of church, in its insistence for a dialogue with the poor, points towards a prophetic community dedicated to following Jesus' missionary agenda taken up earlier in the chapter. This community's priorities lie in serving the reign of God as an agent of transformation in the world, recalling the prophetic-Christological emphasis on the *basileia tou theou*.[520] While not denying the importance of catering to the institutional needs of the church (e.g. finances, reputation, leadership, organizational survival), this kind of ecclesia prioritizes and promotes "kingdom values" that speak to the needs and aspiration of its members, especially the marginalized. This is why one of the priorities of the Asian church is dialogue with the poor. For the Asian bishops, dialogue is understood as a process where all the participants have something to teach, and something to learn from one another: no one has an absolute claim to the truth in its fullness.[521] The church can benefit much from such a construal of dialogue because it promotes an ethos of mutual listening and learning in the spirit of *communio,* to recall a central theme of Vatican II. Thus, as Phan articulates, "The

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[519] Phan, "A church in the service of the reign of God," 105.

[520] The dialogue with the poor is only one aspect of the triple dialogue that the FABC calls for. The other two aspects are: dialogue with Asian cultures and with Asian religions.

[521] Thomas Fox, "A Lead from Asia," in *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years After Vatican II*, ed. A. Ivereigh (London: Continuum, 2003), 227-239 at 235.

point of regnocentric ecclesiology is not to devalue the role of the church but to determine its nature and purpose correctly."[522] Phan also reminds us of Pope John Paul II's exhortation that the reign of God and the church are intrinsically connected.[523]

As the seed of the kingdom, the church has to remember that it exists for mission: to be a sacrament of communion with God and with humanity. The church then serves a purpose that is greater than itself, to serve Christ by continuing his salvific work in the world. In the homily he delivered to the new cardinals on February 15, 2015, Pope Francis spelled out the prophetic mission of the church, which very much entails how to realize God's reign in the world. He said, "The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the "outskirts" of life. It is to adopt fully God's own approach, to follow the Master who said: 'Those who are well have no need of the physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call, not the righteous but sinners' (*Lk* 5:31-32)."[524] A kingdom-centered ecclesiology brings into sharp relief the prophetic character of the church, and therefore has the potential of tapping into the prophetic initiatives of the laity as a source of the church's *sensus fidelium*.

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[522] Phan, "A church in the service of the reign of God," 107.

[523] In *Ecclesia in Asia* §17, we read, "Empowered by the Spirit to accomplish Christ's salvation on earth, the Church is the seed of the Kingdom of God and she looks eagerly for its final coming. Her identity and mission are inseparable from the Kingdom of God which Jesus announced and inaugurated in all that he said and did, above all in his death and resurrection. The Spirit reminds the Church that she is not an end unto herself: in all that she is and all that she does, she exists to serve Christ and the salvation of the world." See John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), Vatican website, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html (accessed October 17, 2015).

[524] Pope Francis, *Homily delivered at the Mass for New Cardinals at the Vatican Basilica*, Vatican website, February 15, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150215_omelia-nuovi-cardinali.html (accessed July 29, 2015).

Aside from a kingdom-centered ecclesiology, which echoes themes from prophetic Christology, there are two other suggestions for a reenvisioning the church as a community of prophets that need to be mentioned here. First, Nicholas Healy proposes an approach he identifies as "practical ecclesiology," which he defines as follows: "a form of ecclesiological enquiry in which empirical accounts of the Church's concrete life contribute vitally to the development and the formulation of a systematic-theological account of the Church. Unlike practical theology, then, practical ecclesiology's direct objective is not a practical proposal, but a proposal about the nature and function of the Church that will have practical, perhaps even 'prophetic' consequences."[525]

The second proposal comes from Clare Watkins and what she identifies as "authentic ecclesiology," which arises out of the same concerns as Healy's. She writes, "The academy, likewise, is increasingly aware of the conceptual, linguistic, and interdisciplinary challenges that face the ecclesiologist, as she struggles to find ways of speaking *both* of the church as described in the Christian tradition *and* of the real, lived experience of Christian communal life and work. In all this the need presents itself for an 'authentic ecclesiology' – one that is able to speak truthfully about concrete realities, and faithfully about the historical and present promise of the work of the Spirit, enlivening what we understand to be 'the body of Christ,' the church."[526] Healy's practical ecclesiology and Watkins' authentic ecclesiology are recommendations that cohere nicely with the aims of this thesis, particularly in discerning the *sensus laicorum* as a crucial

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[525] Healy, "Ecclesiology and Practical Theology," 120.

[526] Clare Watkins (with Deborah Bhatti, Helen Cameron, Catherine Duce, and James Sweeney), "Practical Ecclesiology: What Counts as Theology in Studying the Church?" in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. P. Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 167-181 at 168. Italics original.

element of the church's *sensus fidelium.* Moreover, Phan's appeal towards a kingdom-centered ecclesiology gives a more specific shape to what this practical or authentic ecclesiology looks like. It is the kind of church that adheres most closely to the lived reality of the laity.

C. Pastoral Proposals

To reimagine the church as a church of prophets necessitates the two main points discussed above: broadening our understanding of ecclesial authority to include what the laity have to offer the church and expanding the purview of the hierarchical magisterium to embrace the gifts the laity bring to the church. If the church is to seriously consider these points, it cannot do so only at the level of theology. More importantly, the church has to translate these theological ideas into concrete changes in the church's pastoral life as the subsequent section will show.

The following pastoral proposals are grounded in a single theological aim: a reorientation of ecclesiology "away from organizational and managerial emphases of the institution towards the ordinary living of baptism" and therefore, towards the fundamental equal share of all in the church's life and mission.[527] The whole people of God are active, living, prophetic agents of this mission. This mission is not only to be fulfilled by the ordained members of the church; the laity, too, "share in the mission of the church in their own right by virtue of their baptism – not by dint of performing tasks

[527] Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things," 181 and *Living Baptism*, 14 and 24; and Paul Fleming, "Baptism: An Equal Share in the Life and Ministry of the Church," in *A Church with a Future: Challenges to Irish Catholicism Today*, eds. N. Coll and P. Scallon (Dublin: Columba Press, 2005), 30-43. See also Mark Gibbs, "Spiritual Maturity is for the Laity Too," *Ecumenical Review* 38, no. 1 (1986): 57-63.

delegated to them by bishops or anyone else."[528] Because baptism is permanent mark of Christian life, a baptismally-oriented church will reinforce the prophetic dimension as a key element of furthering the church's mission.

Concretely speaking, a life-long commitment to this mission warrants the need for ongoing mystagogical formation in the pastoral life of the church. Paul Philibert writes, "As we focus on the prophetic element…we must, on the one hand, reaffirm the missionary vocation of the faithful, and on the other hand, create a thorough adult faith formation or mystagogy. Happily, experience shows us that the missionary instinct flows quite naturally from the heart of those who have learned the mystery of Christ."[529] First and foremost, mystagogical formation must stress the significance of baptism not as a "once in a lifetime" event but as an enduring call to a life of Christian discipleship. Mystagogy is understood to be a series of "heightened reflection on the mysteries [of the sacraments of initiation] entered into and shared."[530] It is a process that facilitates the enrichment and fashioning of a person's faith (*sensus fidei*), as experienced and nurtured within the church (*sensus fidelium*).

Mystagogical formation was very much alive in the fourth century, a time when four great church fathers (Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Theodor of Mopsuestia) presented baptismal homilies which brought biblical text and liturgical symbols to life.[531] The fathers incorporated word and symbol in exhortations that related to the neophytes' own experience of the liturgical events. In other words, the

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[528] Fleming, "Baptism: An Equal Share," 41.

[529] Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful*, 83.

[530] Gerard Baumbach, *Experiencing Mystagogy: The Sacred Pause of Easter* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 6.

[531] Baumbach, *Experiencing Mystagogy,* 7. See also Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA,* 2nd edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).

homilies spoke to the reality of the baptized in ways that inspired their nascent faith. The church of today will benefit much from mystagogical interpretation such as these because these keep the faith alive and relevant to people's lives. At present, faith formation programs can be found in Catholic parishes and institutions of learning. In the Philippines for example, schools of theology offer programs in adult catechesis that focus on different themes such as scripture, Christology and ethics. While these topics are important, they can be offered in a carefully designed curriculum that has as its primary goal, the promotion of a deeper appreciation of our life-long baptismal call. I am suggesting that our baptismal vocation ought to be the overarching category that gives shape to catechetical programs.

Because mystagogical instruction can be a venue for fruitful dialogue and mutual enrichment between the lay and ordained members of the church, one particular suggestion for local churches would be to implement a regular process of shared reflection. In this reflection, the goal is to explore for example, a particular theme (e.g. what Easter means in my journey with God) and to "teach" one another by testimonials of faith. Lay and ordained take turns in witnessing to the power and meaning of resurrection. Such a process is not meant as a corrective measure but as a common deepening of faith. A process like this will create an atmosphere of reciprocal trust between the laity and the clergy in the church. Such an atmosphere will help the laity realize their agency as sources of wisdom for the church, no matter how unsophisticated their theological articulation may be. This will help the laity feel supported and encouraged to trust in their own capacities, empowering them in the process, to continue

the prophetic work of Christ in the midst of everyday challenges.[532] Such an atmosphere will also allow the ordained to discern how the laity use their *olfato*, to recall a favorite metaphor of Pope Francis, as "an instinctive ability to discern the new ways that the Lord is revealing to the Church."[533] In this manner, the clergy can function as "the ears on the ground" and put into practice the kind of local listening that has been referred to in earlier chapters, as well as embrace an openness to learning from the laity's faith experience in the everyday. In so doing, a synodal way of being church is pursued, a church "which 'journeys together' with men and women, sharing the travails of history."[534]

Brendan Leahy explains that "the Greek word 'synodos' has a dynamic and process meaning. In a general sense it means journeying along the same road, going together, being a group of people on a journey."[535] Drawing from Leahy's understanding, one principal task the church is called to carry out is its journey with the poor – they who have equal share in the life and mission of the church and yet are frequently excluded due to a general lack of resources (e.g. prohibitive costs of faith enrichment programs, time better spent on earning to put food on the table). The poor are prophets likewise "who are no less Catholic and no less called to a life of holiness" as John O'Brien argues.[536] He

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[532] Annemie Dillen, "Power Balances and Bridges Between Church Discourses, Academic Theological Views, and Daily Experiences and Reflections on Family Life," *INTAMS Review* 20, no. 2 (2014): 226-235 at 231.

[533] Pope Francis, *Address at Commemorative Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican website, October 17, 2015, Pope Francis, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html (accessed October 22, 2015).

[534] Pope Francis, *Address at Commemorative Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops*.

[535] Brendan Leahy, "People, Synod and Upper Room – Vatican II's Ecclesiology of Communion for the Twenty-First Century," in *Vatican II – Facing the 21st Century Historical and Theological Perspectives*, eds. D. Lane and B. Leahy (Dublin: Veritas, 2006), 49-80 at 80.

[536] O'Brien, "The Authority of the Poor," 229.

provokingly asks dioceses to examine their resource allocation, which commonly does not reflect priorities for the poor. He writes, "Consider the area of spirituality. How many retreat houses are neither geographically or financially accessible to poor people? What does that say about our understanding of spiritual experience and our assumptions about who in the Church is called to holiness and who is not?"[537] As prophets, the poor have much to teach the church, to recall Arabome's point about their "senses" of faith shaped by pain, violence and injustice. The *sensus fidelium* will remain impoverished if it does not include the wisdom of the faith of the poor.[538]

In a similar vein, the church must also work towards making its journey with women a more inclusive one. For decades, theologians have called for placing women in positions of genuine authority in the church. Synodality in the church is expressed not in mounting walls, but in building bridges that reach out to those in the peripheries of church life and leadership. Like the poor, women are also prophets in the church and the church must foster an openness towards the gifts they bring – gifts which come from the very same Spirit that sustains the church. In the words of M. Shawn Copeland, who appeals for initiatives towards inclusion in the church: "The Spirit calls us to openness to the other, to conversion of heart and mind – to transformation and change….we must repudiate all exclusionary symbols, values, criteria, and practices. At the same time, we must support creative initiatives in the development of new symbols and practices, in the

[537] O'Brien, "The Authority of the Poor," 229.

[538] As Luis Cardinal Tagle claims, "The poor have a wisdom unique to them." See Matt Hadro, "How Cardinal Tagle thinks the Church can better reach Asian cultures," *Catholic News Agency*, March 3, 2015, http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/how-cardinal-tagle-thinks-the-church-can-better-reach-asian-cultures-82864/ (accessed October 28, 2015).

articulation of new values and criteria for a life of human flourishing."[539] As baptized, women, too, have an equal share in the life and ministry of the church.

Another opportunity for the church to enhance baptismal living is to emphasize the crucial role of the *ecclesia domestica*, the church of the Christian home. This brings into relief the hermeneutic of everyday life, and the context of the everyday as the locus for fully realizing one's baptismal commitment. Clare Watkins argues:

> above all, it is the day to day experience and living of that [Christian] tradition which determines the hermeneutical effectiveness of my faith in relation to the hearing and speaking of God's Word...baptismal living is – for the most part – done 'in ordinary.' The nurturing of and equipping for this baptismal vocation in ordinary is, perhaps, *the* way of understanding the church's life and purpose, and the end to which all teaching in the Christian community is directed.[540]

The symbols and language of faith are first learned at home. According to James Fowler, a child anywhere between 2-6 years old is most responsive to the images, symbols and language of religion.[541] The Christian household is thus a "pedagogically effective" context for teaching the faith, and "no amount of even the most excellent catechesis can entirely overcome or take the place of this primary formation."[542]

In the church, a shift in emphasis entails a shift in priorities. Thus, even our notion of renewal in the church must also undergo conversion. Ecclesial renewal must not only be limited to improving the church's structures and organizational strategies, concerns

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[539] M. Shawn Copeland, "Knit Together by the Spirit as Church," in *Prophetic Witness: Catholic Women's Strategies for Reform*, ed. C. Griffith (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), 16-24 at 22.

[540] Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things," 166 and 169.

[541] James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 41-43 and *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 122-134. Also in Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation,* 460.

[542] Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things," 172 and footnote no. 17.

which mostly highlight the hierarchical nature of the church.[543] If the church deeply values the laity, then renewal in the church, more fundamentally speaking, means that its focus must be on the most ordinary way the faithful live as a community of faith: in the context of family. The home is where faith is primarily inculturated, learned, lived and "celebrated in the ordinariness of life."[544] The Christian home fulfills its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing God's Word in daily life. It is within families that Christians learn about gospel values such as love, justice, mercy, compassion, and humility. It is within families that the faithful "learn—or fail to learn—what it means to be responsible for one another. No wonder [Pope] Francis thinks that in order to repair the world you must begin at home."[545] This resonates with the construal of the family as the "kin-dom of God" as Ada María Isasi-Díaz suggests.[546] Inspired by mujerista emphasis on the family as "the central and most important institution in life,"[547] on relationality and mutuality, and on seeing persons as more important than ideas, Isasi-Díaz proposes an understanding of the family as a potent ground for living important values that reflect those that Jesus exemplified in his vision of a new world order, summed up in his vision of the kingdom of God.[548]

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[543] Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things," 173.

[544] Watkins, "*Traditio* – The Ordinary Handling of Holy Things," 179. See also Aldegone Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn, "Marriage and Family as a Seedbed for Fostering *Sensus Fidei* and *Sensus Fidelium," INTAMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2015): 69-77.

[545] "Family Ties: Francis's Traditional, Disarming Message" (Editorial), *Commonweal*, October 6, 2015, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/family-ties, accessed October 19, 2015.

[546] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-dom of God: A Mujerista Proposal," in *Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, edited by B. Valentín (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 171-189. The term "Kin-dom" is not original to Isasi-Díaz. She credits Georgenne Wilson, a Franciscan nun from Wheaton, IL, for its coinage in the second half of the 1970s. See footnote no. 32 on p. 188 of her essay.

[547] Roberto Alvarez, Jr., "The Family," in *The Hispanic American Almanac*, ed. N. Kanellos (Washington, DC: Gale Research, 1993), 155. Also in Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-dom of God," 181.

[548] Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-dom of God," 180-182.

Thus understood, families are centers of humanity and schools of humanity, "a school which teaches us to open our hearts to others' needs, to be attentive to their lives."[549] In other words, the family serves as the seed of humanity and as such, the church must redirect its energies towards this end. The Synod on the Family, which concluded on October 25, 2015, was one such example of the hierarchical magisterium listening to the voices of struggling families. Though the processes still lacked in some aspects (e.g. no voting rights for women participants), the synod seemed to be a step in the direction of what this thesis is arguing.

III. CONCLUSION

Simmonds contends that, "If the church is a sacrament of the unity of all humanity, then the experience that all sectors of humanity within the faith community bring to bear in their reflection on the life of faith, lived in concrete reality, must have a voice in the articulation of the church's decision-making processes and in the way it speaks in the name of God."[550] There is an increasingly urgent call for the church to be attentive to the particular narratives and voices of those within its purview and most especially, to those on the peripheries. The voice of the laity is one such voice that has long been eclipsed in the church and needs to be resourced for a fuller articulation of the church's faith. This includes the "voice" of everyday lived faith.

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[549] Pope Francis, *Address at the Meeting of Families at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Santiago, Cuba* (Apostolic Journey to Cuba), Vatican website, September 22, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150922_cuba-famiglie.html, accessed October 27, 2015.

[550] Simmonds, "Imagining Authority in a Kenotic Church," 149.

The teaching authority of the laity, which derives from the work of Jesus the prophet, continues to be animated and challenged by the Spirit into new and diverse contexts requiring the understanding, interpretation and application of the gospel in daily life. Though the lay hermeneutic has been neglected in the formulation of church teachings, Vatican II's emphasis on the baptismal dignity of the laity and their participation in Christ's prophetic office reinstated their indispensable role in the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*. The council reestablished the laity's teaching authority as a vital dimension of the prophetic office of the church. This chapter has showed that the contribution the laity make to the *sensus fidelium* of the church, particularly their expression of lived faith, is crucial to the life of the church. Their perspective ensures that fresh responses to the call of the gospel, lived in baptismal commitment, are faithfully enacted in the world.

CONCLUSION

With Pope Francis' insistence on "pastoral attention to reality," and more specifically on the church's mission to promote the joy of the gospel throughout the world, the *sensus fidelium*, especially the contribution of the laity's *sensus fidei* to it, can no longer be ignored.[551] As the church imagines its future, it is called to be ever more attentive to the wisdom and holiness that are found in the everyday circumstances of the laity's lived faith. The church is bound by the duty to help lay people foster a deeper appreciation of their baptismal vocation so that they may fully realize their participation in Christ's prophetic office. Just as the prophetic element defined not only the words and deeds of Jesus, but his entire life, so must it define the life of all members of the church. To embrace a prophetic stance is to be engaged, for life, in the church's mission to proclaim and promote the reign of God.

As the final chapter suggested, crucial to this lifelong orientation is the task of deepening among the laity a renewed understanding of baptism. That understanding can help to instill in all the baptized a sense of personal responsibility for the church's mission, a responsibility that the exercise of faithful's *sensus fidelium* allows them to fulfill. In the words of Pope Francis, "One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world. This will require creativity in adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our

[551] Holy See Press Office, *Summary of the post-Synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) on love in the family, April 8, 2016, Vatican website, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/04/08/160408b.html (accessed April 24, 2016).

structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life."[552] Such an understanding will embolden the laity to fully take ownership of their teaching authority and lead the way towards new vistas for how to become church. The plural and diverse perspectives of the laity present fresh approaches to ways in which the baptismal-prophetic vocation can be lived in the midst of the world's challenges. As Gerard Mannion suggests, the laity "can play a significant role in building a future for the church that is vibrant, participation-oriented, and liberative."[553] An ecclesial emphasis on baptism enhances the critical voice of the laity in the church's expression of the *sensus fidelium*.

Such an emphasis also invites theologians, priests and bishops towards recognizing the gifts ordinary people bring to the church, and as *Amoris Laetitia* §60 encourages, to accompany them "with love and tenderness."[554] Doing so will also help towards developing a church that is "non-linear" in form, a form that has the potential for renewal.[555] Leonardo Boff asserts:

> The true difficulty involves the theological implications present in the basic statement: the Church is the People of God. There is a fundamental equality in the Church. All are People of God. All share in Christ, directly and without mediation. Therefore, all share in the services of teaching, sanctifying, and organizing the community. All are sent out on a mission;

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[552] Pope Francis, *Homily delivered to the Bishops, Clergy and Religious at the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, Pennsylvania*, Vatican website, September 26, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150926_usa-omelia-philadelphia.html (accessed October 20, 2015).

[553] Gerard Mannion, "New Wine *and* New Wineskins: Laity and a Liberative Future for the Church." *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 193-211 at 199.

[554] Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, Vatican website, April 8, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf (accessed April 24, 2016).

[555] Mannion, "New Wine *and* New Wineskins," 201.

> all are responsible for the unity of the community; all must be sanctified. If all are equal, then it is not necessary for everyone to do every task…Anyone who opts for the Church as People of God must take it to its logical conclusion: to be a living Church, with flexible and appropriate ministries, without theological privileges.[556]

For the church, a possible way forward would be a serious consideration of the ideas proposed in this thesis. First, there must be a proper grasp of the *sensus fidelium* and the *sensus fidei* as indispensable dimensions of the life of the church. As the Spirit's gifts for interpreting and applying the faith, the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* enable the faithful to do their share in the fulfillment of the church's mission. Second, the church should attend to the lay hermeneutic, operative in the practice of reception by the laity, because it is a relevant and authoritative framework for discerning the *sensus fidelium.* Inherent within the laity is a perspective informed by the conditions of daily life, their deepest desires and their trust in the God who reaches out to them in transforming love. Finally, the foundations of the teaching authority of the laity in prophetic Christology ought to be valued as a significant aspect of their continuation of Christ's work. A church heedful of the prophetic agency of the laity is a church that appreciates authority as something derived from the whole community where active listening, a shared willingness to learn from each other and authentic dialogue are commonplace. It is a church that strives to live more authentically as people of God, people who are continually formed in the faith through mystagogical instruction, who welcome women into positions of leadership, who value the unique wisdom and agency of the poor and who invest energies in the family as the seed of the church and of humanity. It is a church willing to immerse itself in the messy realities of daily life and one that welcomes

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[556] Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church, trans.* J. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 185.

perspectival differences, trusting that the Spirit will lead the way towards new, integrated solutions.

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