

Participation in the Identity and Mission of Christ

Jesus Christ is Priest, Prophet and King in a unique, ultimate and definitive way. Our Catholic notion is that we can share in this identity because we are part of the Mystical Body (of which He is the head and we are members).

How does this differ from what (1) a Protestant, or (2) a humanist would say?
Do you find that the Catholic understanding successfully holds together the centrality of Jesus and the importance of our own efforts?
If we have this Catholic understanding, what kinds of things does it tell us about our efforts to do good works (goals, motivations, methods, success, failure)?

The Mission of the Lay Faithful

Lumen Gentium #36 speaks of the mission that the lay faithful have to direct the life of this world toward the Kingdom of God.

[T]he Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. . .

A few paragraphs later, *Lumen Gentium* speaks about holiness in a similar vein:

[A]ll the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. . . [The faithful] must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history. (LG 40)

On both the foregoing points –

- (1) the emphasis on striving for holiness instead of fear of hell
- (2) the identification of holiness with charity instead of piety

Lumen Gentium offered a very helpful enrichment of pre-conciliar attitudes.

BUT those who interpreted and implemented the Council sometimes “threw the baby out with the bath water”:

eliminating a sense of sin and expectation of judgment,
reducing the Christian life to “social action.”

What has been your experience of some of the positive and negative effects in the life of the Church in this country?