

(English translation)

A LAY PERSON LIKE US

Today a lot is said about the role of the laity. And perhaps we would see more clearly who the lay person is and how the lay person is also 'Church', if a better and fuller explanation were given of certain aspects of the life of Mary. It seems to us that she is the model of the lay person, even though she is exceptional and unique.

We Catholics do not make a God of Mary, as we are often accused of doing, but, since love and faith have led us to the discovery of all that makes her *special*, we often place her to one side, far away from us. We place her in a sphere which is hers, but it is not the only sphere in which she belongs.

In her we praise the Mother of God, the Immaculate, the Assumed, the Queen, but not the *perfect Christian*, the fiancée, the bride, the mother, the widow, the virgin, the model of every Christian. She, like us lay people, cannot offer Christ sacramentally to the world for, again like us, she is not part of the hierarchy. Yet she is always very active in the Church, sharing in its maternity through the charity which burns in her heart, which is the source of her sacrifice with which she shares in the sacrifice of her son.

Mary, a lay person like us, reminds us that the essence of Christianity is love and that each priest and each bishop too before being a priest or bishop must first of all be a true Christian, living the crucifixion as Jesus did who founded his Church on the Cross.

Furthermore, by highlighting in the Church the fundamental aspect of love that makes it 'One' – in the way that the Trinity is 'one' – Mary presents the Bride of Christ to the world in the way Jesus wanted her to be and in the way that all men today are waiting for: ordered charity, organized charity. And only by emphasizing this, its fundamental aspect, can the Church worthily fulfil today its function of contact and dialogue with the world, which, although often less interested in the hierarchy, is responsive to the witness of love in the Church, the soul of the world.

(Taken from: Chiara Lubich, *Knowing How to Lose*, New City London 1981, pp.5-6.)