

After reading the excerpt from Paul Lakeland , Church:Living Communion (printed below), Phil Byrne of the Socail Justice work/study group, sent the following reflection:

The social justice needs of the world are not met at all by organized religion. What the established Christian churches do is by and large safely minor. The religions are focussed on their corporate selves, their rules, rituals, and -- mostly, their view of the rules of reproduction, sex and stem cell research. When those religions start sanctioning politicians and members of their religion for voting against and ignoring the dying little babies in Africa and elsewhere around the world because the politicians think it would mean either (1) voting for a tax increase, or (2) reducing their own life styles, then and only then the social justice actions of those religions will begin to balance the follies in other areas. When church leaders want to raise millions for roof repair, and hide gold rings and treasures in their closets, but do not sell what they have and raise the same millions first for the poor, then there is no wonder and love in their message. In truth, they give scandal in the classic theological sense. The message is there only for lip service, but the reality is missing in action. Maybe the partial quote does not do justice to his (Lakeland's) views, but the real situation in our church is far worse than that. Words are fine. But the need is to demand that people and clerics change, and whether it is to pay taxes, reduce their standard of living, or both, a radical change has to take place.

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> ----- Original Message -----

> From: Catholic Coalition for Church Reform

> To: Phil Byrne

> Sent: 12/6/2009 12:05:09 PM

> Subject: more on the Church's mission

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> Dear Work/Study group members: As you know, Paul Lakeland is the keynote speaker for the Synod of the Baptized on September 18, 2010. Here is an excerpt from his newest book. More grist for our mill on the subject of

the Church's mission. Paula

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> Paul Lakeland, Church: Living Communion, Collegeville 2009, in the Engaging Theology: Catholic Perspectives series, Tatha Wiley, Series Editor

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> The mission of the Christian community rests in large part in showing and telling the connection between our creation by a loving God, the saving sacrifice of Christ, and the necessity of living lives devoted to fuller and richer humanity. The first step is the showing, both revealing the Church as a community held together in love and fired by the determination to share God's love with the wider world. The moment for telling will return, but the weight of history has overcome much of the world's capacity to hear the story of the Church. The much-heard cry that "I'm spiritual but not religious" is provoked not by secular indifference but by the poor performance of the Church of God in recent centuries. For all the wonder and love that moves it and inspires its members, the Church is seen as riven within by foolish differences, out of touch with the modern world, and lately, corrupted by the sexual abuse of children and the efforts to cover it up. None of these charges is the whole story. The tale of the great social good that Christians of all communities currently work in the world more than balances the folly of these same churches, but the good news is drowned out. What we show the world is not consistent with the story we have to tell.

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> The mission of the Church to share and spread the love of God for the world requires at the present day that, locally and universally, the Church be in the forefront of the struggles against everything that threatens human flourishing in the world that is our home. The first priority is the defense of human dignity at every level because everything that threatens human dignity impedes our capacity to live as "made in the image and likeness of God." Love, wonder, creativity, reflection, and joy, these are the things that the human race must choose for all its members if it is to be what God intends in creation.. Page 56