

Francis warns against lay clericalism



Thursday, April 27th, 2023

Pope Francis is warning against the self-referential attitude of some lay ministers who become ‘puffed up’ by their ministry.

Francis stressed the significance of lay ministers serving others rather than inflating their egos.

“I get angry when I see lay ministers who — pardon the expression — are ‘puffed up’ by this ministry. This is ministry, but it is not Christian.”

Ministers must never become self-referential, said Francis.

Service is one-directional, it is not a round trip.

In the speech, he stated that regardless of whether they hold a formal ministry, all baptised individuals are called to participate in the Church’s mission.

He stated that the ministry of the faithful stems from the charisma that the Holy Spirit distributes within the People of God for its edification.

First, a charisma appears, inspired by the Spirit; then, the Church acknowledges this charisma as a useful service to the community; finally, in a third moment, it is introduced, and a specific ministry spreads.

The Pope made these remarks in an April 22 address to the second plenary assembly of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

“Those who command should make themselves the smallest”

Concluding his address, Pope Francis stated that ministry has two key features: mission and service.

He emphasised that at the root of the term ministry is the word minus, which means ‘minor’.

And Jesus said so: Those who command should make themselves the smallest. Otherwise, they do not know how to command. It is a small detail but of great importance. Those who follow Jesus are not afraid to make themselves ‘inferior,’ ‘minor,’ to place themselves at the service of others,” the Pope said.

“Here lies the true motivation that must inspire any of faithful who assume an ecclesial task, any commitment to Christian witness in the reality where he or she lives: the willingness to serve the brethren, and in them, to serve Christ.

“Only in this way may all the baptised be able to discover the meaning of their own life, joyfully experiencing being ‘a mission on this earth,’ that is, being called, in different ways and forms, to ‘bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing, and freeing’ ... and letting themselves be accompanied,” he said.

Pope Francis established the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in 2016. The Dicastery held its first plenary assembly in 2019, devoted to “the identity and mission of the lay faithful in the world.”