

## RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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### Introduction

A few decades prior to the Vatican Council II, The Catholic Truth Society, in its pamphlet, published an article titled 'The Layman in the Pre-reformation Parish.' There Cardinal Aidan Gasquet narrated "the anecdote of an inquirer who asked a priest what was the position of the layman in the Catholic Church. 'The layman has two positions', answered the priest. 'He kneels before the altar; that is one. And he sits below the pulpit; that is the other.' The cardinal adds that there is a third that the priest had forgotten: the layman also puts his hand in his purse." The Cardinal continued: "In a sense that is still so, and always will be so: there will never be a time when lay men and women are not on their knees before the altar and sitting before the pulpit, and for a long time yet they will have to put hand into purse. Nevertheless, now and for the future they do these things in a different way; or at least, doing these things, they feel differently about their position as a body in the Church."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Yves Congar, O.P., *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1965) p. xi.

In the post-Vatican period theology and ecclesiology give much importance to people of God understanding and as a result of this renewed understanding, the lay Christian Faithful have been assigned a considerable role in the mission of the Church. As far as the Syro Malabar Church is concerned the laity commission has been establishing Laity Centres and units everywhere in order to strengthen their role and cooperation in the mission and ministry of the Church. In this context, I make an attempt, in this paper, to highlight some of the important rights and corresponding obligations of the lay Christian faithful in the code(s).

### 1. Missionary Mandate of Jesus

We learn in the catechism class that 'the Church is missionary by nature.' The very mission of Jesus was to save all. Through his incarnation, life, death and resurrection He fulfilled this mission objectively. Before His departure from the world Christ entrusted the disciples with the task of saving all people and everywhere. Jesus' missionary mandate to those who experienced His redeeming presence is, "Go, then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: .... And teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt. 28: 19-20). "As the Father has sent me, I also send you..." (Jn. 20:21). As thou (Father) hast sent me into the world, so I also have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18). All who partake in the death and resurrection of Jesus through baptism are called to be part of this mission. The mission of the Church, today, is the continuation of the mission of Jesus. "As a people, Israel was held together in the bond of covenant relationship. The whole people were/was called for a mission. Mission was the purpose of the entire community. It was not limited either to the priest or to the prophet. Similarly the New Israel is called in and through Christ to be a people with a mission. The images of the church affirm the unity in diversity. The entire Christian community is called to witness to the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Basically every activity in the Church is known by the name apostolate. As the Vatican Council II and the Codes of Canon Law reaffirm, in the fulfilment of the mission Jesus entrusted to the Church, all share, each according to his or her own status and condition in life (cf. LG 9-17; AA 2; CCEO c. 7 & CIC c. 204). By

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<sup>2</sup>Doraisamy Pothirajulu, *Laity Formation An Educational Model* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1993) p. 47.

virtue of Baptism, all, irrespective of being cleric, religious or laity, share in the priestly, kingly and prophetic mission of the Church.

As the last canon, that is, c. 1752 of the CIC states, "Salvation of the souls is the supreme law in the Church." Jesus Christ's incarnation, life and mission was to accomplish this ultimate aim. The apostolate of the church is to continue the same mission today here and now. However, the mission of Jesus was not confined to the spiritual realm alone. "I came so that they may have life and life in abundance" [Jn. 10.10]. Jesus, therefore, cared for both these aspects during his earthly ministry. Hence, though salvation of men is the main concern of the Church's mission and apostolate, it takes in also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Therefore, the objective is not only to give men the message and grace of Christ but also to improve and permeate the whole range of temporal order with the spirit of the gospel based on charity (See, AA.5).

## **2. Terminological Clarification.**

### **a. Meaning of the Word "laity"**

Webster's Dictionary offers the following two meanings for the term laity: "The body of religious worshippers, as distinguished from the clergy; the people outside of a particular profession, as distinguished from those belonging to it; those lacking professional knowledge of a specific subject."<sup>3</sup> Yves Congar says that, the "word 'lay'... is connected with a word that for Jews, and then for Christians, properly meant the sacred people in opposition to the peoples who were not consecrated, a nuance of meaning that was familiar, at any rate to those who spoke Greek, for the first four centuries and more."<sup>4</sup>

The etymology and semantics of the term will give us a better understanding of the meaning of the terms 'lay' / 'laity,' The English term 'laity' / 'lay' originates from the Greek substantive, *laos* meaning 'people' and its adjective *laikos* signifying "popular," or "common," or "not sacred," or "secular." "As an adjectival substantive, *laikós* refers to a person who does not belong to the specific category of those who govern but is a member of the

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<sup>3</sup>Webster's *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, New York, Gramercy, 1996, s.v. "laity."

<sup>4</sup>Yves Congar, O.P, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 3.

common people.”<sup>5</sup> An analysis of the term discloses that the term has an inclusive and an exclusive meaning. Evidences could be cited from the Old Testament and Roman usages for these meanings. According to the inclusive sense it comprises all the people of a nation or a community etc. like for example, “the Israelites”/ “people of Israel,” “the Roman People,” “the people of India.”<sup>6</sup>

Though the term ‘laity’ is derived from *laikos*, the adjective form of *laos* meaning the people of God philologically, later research by Ignace de La Potterie shows, that its semantic significance connects it more “with the usage which distinguishes the *laikos* from the priest and levites, as one who is not qualified from one who is.”<sup>7</sup>

The distinction between *laikos* and *clerikos* results from this exclusive sense. From the very beginning there were leaders or elders in the Christian community who somehow guided it. ‘This distinction is primitive according to Semantics and not a late emergence.’ Even Clement of Rome (ca. 95 A.D) used it in this sense in his letter to the Church in Corinth.<sup>8</sup> ‘The symbolism of the shepherd and the flock preserves the distinction between the governed and those having the office to govern. The former are the *laikoi*, or the *laici* or the laity.’ Nedungatt says that ‘particular nuance of ‘subordination’ present in the Greek *laikos* is, however, lost in the translation into other

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<sup>5</sup>George Nedungatt, *Laity and the Church Temporalities Appraisal of a Tradition, Dharmaram Canonical Series-1* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000) p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>George Nedungatt, *Laity and the Church Temporalities ...*, pp. 70-71: {Biblical expressions like “Pharaoh did not let the people of Israel go out of his land” [Ex.11:10]; “It (the Sabbath) is a sign between me and the people of Israel” [Ex. 31:17]; “I will be their God and they shall be my people” [Jer. 31:33; 2Cor. 6:16] tell of the inclusive expression and expressions like “The people cried to Pharaoh for bread (Gen. 41:55); Moses heard the people weeping [for hunger in the desert [Nb.11:10] and IKgs. 16:2; Is.24:2; Jr.26:11; Pr.29:2 show the exclusive usage of the term people.”

Similarly, “The Latin classical phrase *Senatus populusque romanus* [The Senate and the Roman People] is a well-known example, which maintains the above distinction. This phrase in its abbreviated form SPQR has been retained and may be seen even today on the streets of Rome. The members of the Senate surely belonged to the Roman nation and were part of the Roman people (*populus romanus*), but in the above phrase *populus* (people) is exclusive of the *senatus* (senate). ‘The exclusive usage is different from the inclusive usage, in which the nation as a whole is envisaged, as for example “the Roman people” or “the people of Israel” or “the people of India.”

<sup>7</sup>La Potterie, ‘L’Origine et le sens primitif du mot “laic,” in *Novelle Revue Theologique*, 80 (1958) 84-853. See, Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>George Nedungatt, *Laity and the Church Temporalities ...*, p. 71

languages like Latin (“*laicus*”) and Syriac (*almaya*, “*secular*,” “of the world”).

This etymological and semantic background shows “that the original Greek “laypeople” designates a category which is distinct from those in authority, whether political or religious, whether kings or priests.”<sup>9</sup> ‘Layman’ “designates the simple, not specially qualified, members among God’s people, the whole of whom are consecrated. ... When we reach the Christian use of the word by Clement of Rome, *Laikos* clearly refers to ‘that part of the people which is neither priestly nor levitical, it is a matter of the non-priestly, non-levitical element among the holy people.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, from the middle of the third century, we see a third category called monks besides clerics and laity. “From the middle of the third century three states could be distinguished in the Church, which were obviously there in fact before they were subjected to formula and code, but which did not have to wait long for formulation and, in the most exact sense, canonical existence.”<sup>11</sup>

**b. ‘Offices’ and ‘Function’ = ‘Ministries’**

The Vatican II and thereafter various recent General Ordinary Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops reinstated the need and importance of recognizing and respecting the separate identities of the clerics, laity and the religious so that each, in his own way and in collaboration with one another, works towards the building up of the Church. The Instruction *Ecclesiae de Magisterio* says, “The necessity and importance of apostolic action on the part of the lay faithful in present and future evangelization must be borne in mind. The Church cannot put aside this task because it is part of her nature, as the “People of God,” and also because she has need of it in order to realize her own mission of evangelization.”<sup>12</sup>

“There is an urgent need for all church members to recover the true meaning of certain words; to learn that the laity is really the *Laos*,

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<sup>9</sup>George Nedungatt, *Laity and the Church Temporalities*, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup>M. Jourjon, ‘Les premiers emplois du mot “laic” dans la littérature patristique’, in *Lumière et Vie*, no. 65. Nov. – Dec. 1963, 62-63; See, Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 4

<sup>11</sup>Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 6

<sup>12</sup>*Ecclesiae de Magisterio*, Instruction On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest, (foreword) p. 9-10.

that is, the whole People of God in the world, including, of course, those who have been ordained; to learn that ministry means any kind of service by which a Christian, exercising his particular skill and gift, however humble, helps his fellow-Christians or his fellowmen in the name of Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

Pope John Paul II wanted to have clarification regarding the use and application of the term ministries and its nuances. There should be further distinction in the meanings attached to the terms functions (*munera*) and offices (*officia*) because the term ministries are very often employed to denote the meanings of ‘*munera*’ and ‘*officia*.’ Hence John Paul II, addressing the participants in the Symposium, “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry,” in 1994, expressed his apprehension of confusing the meanings thus: “For some time now, it has been customary to use the word *ministries* not only for the *officia* (offices) and non-ordained *munera* (functions) exercised by pastors in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, but also for those exercised by the lay faithful in virtue of their baptismal priesthood. The terminological question becomes even more complex and delicate when all the faithful are recognized as having the possibility of supplying – by official deputation given by the pastors – certain functions more proper to clerics, which, nevertheless, do not require the character of Orders. It must be admitted that the language becomes doubtful, confused, and hence not helpful for expressing the doctrine of the faith whenever the difference ‘of essence and not merely of degree’ between the baptismal priesthood and the ordained priesthood is in any way obscured.”<sup>14</sup>

The points, here, are:

1. The clergy exercises some offices on account of the sacrament of Order.
2. There are other functions which are more closely related to the clerics but do not necessarily require the sacrament of Order.

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<sup>13</sup>Visser, T Hooft W. A ed., *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962) p. 203. See, Doraisamy Pothirajulul, *Laity Formation* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1993) p. 55.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. John Paul II, Discourse at the Symposium “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry” (April 22, 1994), 3, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, May 11, 1994; (See Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art.1#1 ( p. 27-28; see Instruction, art. 1 #2.

3. The lay people participate and collaborate with the missionary activities of the Church by exercising certain functions based on their baptismal priesthood.

4. Besides the above, sometimes the clergy supply official deputation to the laity to exercise certain services.

The issue here is that for all these functions/services very often the term ministry is employed. This results in a kind of confusion regarding the distinction existing among them. "In some cases, the extension of the term 'ministry' to the *munera* belonging to the lay faithful has been permitted by the fact that the latter, to their own degree, are a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The *officia* temporarily entrusted to them, however, are exclusively the result of a deputation by the Church. Only with constant reference to the one source, the 'ministry of Christ' ... may the term ministry be applied to a certain extent and without ambiguity to the lay faithful: that is, without it being perceived and lived as an undue aspiration to the ordained ministry or as a progressive erosion of its specific nature."<sup>15</sup>

In general, ministry means any kind of service that the Christian faithful exercise for the building up of the church. "However, when the term is distinguished from and compared with the various *munera* and *officia*, then it should be clearly noted that only in virtue of sacred ordination does the work obtain that full, univocal meaning that tradition has attributed to it."<sup>16</sup>

With regard to some functions assigned to lay people, the instruction says: "The non-ordained faithful may be generically designated "extraordinary ministers" when deputed by competent authority to discharge, solely by way of supply, those offices mentioned in CIC c. 230 § 3<sup>17</sup> (CCEO c. 403§2: '... certain cases functions of the sacred minister may be committed to lay persons, in accord with the norm of law,' cf. also CCEO c. 614 §4) and in canons CIC cc, 943 (CCEO c. 709) and 1112. Naturally, the concrete term may be applied to those

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. John Paul II, Discourse at the Symposium "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry" (April 22, 1994) 3, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, May 11, 1994; (See Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art. 1 #1 (p. 27-28).)

<sup>16</sup>Cf. John Paul II, Discourse at the Symposium "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry" (April 22, 1994), 3, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, May 11, 1994; (See Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art.1#1 (p. 27-28).)

<sup>17</sup>Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, *Response* (June 1, 1988): AAS 80 (1988) p. 1373.

to whom functions are canonically entrusted, eg., catechesis, acolytes, lectors, etc.”<sup>18</sup> The instruction also warns that “temporary deputation of liturgical purposes - mentioned in canon 230 §2- does not confer any special or permanent title on the non-ordained faithful.”<sup>19</sup>

### c. ‘Christian Faithful’

The point of departure for us to speak about the functions, offices or ministries of the people of God is Baptism. All the baptized even non-Catholics may be included by the general designation ‘People of God.’ This concept and usage is the result of the Vatican II’s new vision of theology and ecclesiology. ‘Christian Faithful’ is an expression which is frequently used in the documents of the Vatican Council II (LG 9-17; 31, 34-36; AA 2, 7, 9-10), referring to the ‘people of God’ in the Catholic Church. The term ‘Christian Faithful’ as used in the code, (CCEO cc. 7, 38, 31, 14, 574, 19, 875, 22, 15361542, 600, 651,699 etc.,) refers to all the people of God, within the Catholic Church and it denotes all those who are incorporated into the Body of Christ and the Mystical Body of Christ without distinction into laity, clergy or religious. “It brings out the equality and dignity of all the baptized and the responsibility flowing from baptism.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3. The Source of the Lay Apostolate/Ministry

**Baptism:** Hans Ruedi tells, “Baptism is the ordination of the laity which authorizes them to participate in Christ’s ministry in and for the world. Baptism introduces each church member into a basic apostolic succession. Just as each apostle is called, so each member of the apostolic church is called to discipleship and mission. ... In baptism each member of the church is introduced into the dying and uprising with Christ, who, as the eternal High Priest, offered himself to become the victim for the salvation of the world. From their

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<sup>18</sup>*Ecclesiae de Magisterio*, Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest, art. 1 # 3.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Pontifical council of the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, *Response*, (July 11, 1992: AAS 86 (1994), pp. 541-542. See *Ecclesiae de Magisterio*, art. 1#3. ‘Any ceremony associated with the deputation of the non-ordained as collaborators in the ministry of clerics must not have any semblance to the ceremony of sacred ordination, nor may such a ceremony have a form analogous to that of conferral of lector or acolyte.’

<sup>20</sup>Antony Anandarayanr, “The Role of the Laity in the New Millenium,” in *Canonical Studies* (2000) p. 14.



baptism onwards, all Christians are therefore called to share in Christ's priestly work by offering themselves in love and obedience to God and in the love and service of men."<sup>21</sup>

The Vatican II document, *On the Call and Mission of the Lay Christian Faithful*, states: "From the fact of their union with Christ, the head, flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate" (AA. 3; see also LG 33). John Huels says: "It is a person's baptism that provides the sacramental basis for the exercise of any ministry, a basis far more substantial than that of the mere legal principle of jurisdiction."<sup>22</sup> Baptism establishes a basic and fundamental equality among all Christ's Faithful. "All men and women in the church have a baptismal equality. Neither gender nor race nor culture makes certain Christians superior or inferior. Discipleship is a common matrix for all baptized, for all are the People of God, the covenantal people, and baptism is the sign of this holy covenant."<sup>23</sup>

Based on CIC c. 204 which corresponds to CCEO c. 7, John P Beal commends that "The personal effect of baptism is the incorporation into the person of Christ. This personal relationship with Jesus Christ is presupposed in other consequences of baptism as elaborated by canon 204 §1. But baptism also has a social effect: a person enters into the people of God; more particularly, the person enters into a specific community of faith."<sup>24</sup> He continues to say that, "from this personal relationship - with Christ and with the rest of the people of God - flow two consequences: first, the person, in virtue of baptism, participates in the threefold functions (*munera*) of Christ as priest, prophet and ruler; second, the person receives a call (vocation) to exercise the mission of the Church in the world, a mission derived from God and from the person's active response to God's initiative. Both consequences require specific determination: individuals participate in the triple functions (*munera*) each "in their own way,"

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<sup>21</sup>Hans-Ruedi, "The Ministry of the Laity-Reconsidered from an Old Testament Perspective," in *Laity* 25 (July 1968) 21-22. See Doraisamy Pothirajulu, *Laity Formation*, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup>John Huels, "Another Look at Lay Jurisdiction," in *The Jurist* 41 (1981) p. 71.

<sup>23</sup>Resources for Ecumenical Dialogue, *Laity in the Church and in the World*, P. 11.

<sup>24</sup>John P. Beal, James A. Coriden et al., *A New Commentary to the Code of Canon Law* (Bangalore: Theological Publications of India. 2003) p. 245

and they exercise this mission in distinct manners, determined in reference to each person's "condition."<sup>25</sup>

#### **4. Rights and Obligations of the Lay Christian Faithful**

Here I am trying to highlight some of the important rights and obligations of the lay Christian faithful in relation to the mission of the Church. Before we see the rights and obligations in detail it is better to understand who the lay people are in legal terms. The Oriental Code, in its opening canon dealing with persons, offers, for the first time, a positive definition of the laity. Highlighting the special characteristic feature of the laity, CCEO c. 399 says, "the designation of 'lay persons' is applied in this Code to the Christian faithful whose proper and specific quality is secularity and who, living in the world, participate in the mission of the Church." The canon also contains a description of them which is, apparently, negative: the lay persons "are not in sacred orders nor ascribed in the religious state." Thus, the Eastern code, taking into consideration secularity as the special feature, rightly and positively distinguishes the lay faithful from the clerics and religious, not merely groups them into those who do not belong to clerics and religious. In the Vatican documents as well as CIC there were only two categories, clerics and Laity.

##### **4.1. Right To Receive Sacraments and Word of God**

Every Christian Faithful nourishes himself from the spiritual wealth of the Church, that is, from the Word of God and the Sacraments (CCEO c. 16; CIC c. 213). From this right of the faithful springs, therefore, the obligation of the pastors to feed or nurture them through the preaching of the Word of God, catechetical instruction, and other manifold ways. The homilies during the liturgical celebration, is an occasion to enlighten the faithful on "the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living ... from Sacred Scripture" (CCEO c. 614). Homily during liturgies even on weekdays is highly recommended (Cf. CIC c. 767 §3). It is the grave duty of the proper pastor and, therefore, he cannot entrust some others to preach the homily habitually (CCEO c. 614 §3).

The faithful are sanctified by the sacramental grace as well. "Through the sacraments, which the Church is bound to dispense in order to communicate the mysteries of Christ under visible signs,

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<sup>25</sup>John P. Beal, James A. Coriden et al., *A New Commentary to the Code of Canon Law* (Bangalore: Theological Publications of India. 2003) pp. 245-46. Cf. CCEO c. 7

our Lord Jesus Christ sanctifies people by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they may become in a unique way true worshipers of God, the Father and be inserted into Christian faithful, by especially the sacred ministers..." (CCEO c. 667). Since it is their right and the means for their sanctification, pastors cannot deny it to those who ask for it at the proper time, are disposed for it and have no impediment. The CCEO even allows for the general absolution, in case of necessity and real spiritual need, so that the faithful are not devoid of sacramental grace for no fault of theirs (CCEO c. 720§2,2; CIC c. 961).

**4.1.1. Obligation To Witness Life** (CCEO 401, 407; CIC 225 §2, LG 41, 5, 35.3.)

Parallel to the rights of the faithful to be nurtured from spiritual wealth of the Church, they also have the grave obligation to sanctify themselves and in turn to work towards the sanctification of others and the whole world. Following their vocation and remaining in the midst of the temporal affairs they have to do this. This is their special vocation and task, to combine the temporal as well as the spiritual realms without compromising the latter. First of all, they have to witness to Christ and His message and show Him to others both through their private and public life, in family circle, and socio-politico circumstances and fields of action and work. Secondly, they 'have to defend just legislation' in society.' Finally, they have to work towards the sanctification of world functioning like leaven in the world radiating the Christian values of faith, hope and charity (CCEO. c. 401; CIC c. 225§ 2). This canon, thus, obliges the faithful to seek and work for their own sanctification first and then to work for the sanctification of the world. *Lumen Gentium* expresses the fact that 'secularity is the special peculiarity and characteristic feature of the laity' does not mean that they cannot and should not have any share in what the priest normally does. They are first of all i) to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in the temporal affairs & directing them according to God's will and secondly, ii) to contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. The Vatican Council fathers state that,

"By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and

family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer" (LG 31).

In short, the lay faithful have the "obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the gospel" (CIC c. 225 §2).

#### **4.2. The Right to Worship God in his own Rite**

In line with the Vatican Council's new vision of theology, ecclesiology and respect for the rich traditions and patrimony of each Church *sui iuris*, CCEO c. 17 (cf. CIC c. 214) stipulates that "the Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescriptions of their own Church *sui iuris* and to follow their own form of spiritual life in accord with the teaching of the Church." This is one of the fundamental things that the Vatican II wanted to reinstate and promote. The Vatican documents repeatedly confirm that every faithful should have the opportunity to grow in his or her own tradition. Therefore, one belonging to a particular church *sui iuris* should be familiar with and grow in the rich patrimony, that is, the spiritual, theological, liturgical and disciplinary heritage (CCEO c. 28) of his own Church *sui iuris*. It is the canonical right that every individual faithful has. CCEO c. 403 § 1 states that although the faithful are obliged to observe everywhere their own rite, "lay persons have the right to participate actively in the liturgical celebrations of any church *sui iuris* whatsoever, according to the prescripts of the liturgical books" (see CCEO c. 670).

##### **4.2.1 Obligations of the Faithful in this Regard**

Along with this right to have worship in one's own right, there is also the obligation to "study zealously their liturgical, spiritual, theological and disciplinary patrimony, so that mutual goodwill, esteem and unity of action between the lay members of different Churches *sui iuris* is fostered, and so that the variety of rites does not harm the common good of the society in which they live, but rather

may daily contribute to that same good” (CCEO c. 405). In addition to being able to worship God in a better way, it also helps to create better harmony among the various members of different churches and respect for and appreciation of one another could be enhanced. CCEO c. 409 also says that those who are appointed in some ecclesiastical offices should undergo proper training so that they can better fulfil their duties and thus can be of great help. It is relevant here also because if some lay faithful are to care for members of another Church *sui iuris*, proper knowledge will be of greater help. CCEO c. 40 §3 expresses in clear juridical words the duty to know and observe one’s own rite: “The other Christian faithful are to foster the knowledge and appreciation of their own rite and are bound to observe it everywhere unless an exception is provided by the law.” Similarly the last canon, treating the Churches *sui iuris*, binds the faithful of any Church *sui iuris*, including Latin, having constant dealing with the faithful of another Church *sui iuris* by virtue of some function, ministry or office, to have thorough formation in the knowledge and practice of that Church *sui iuris*.

#### **5. Evangelization and Sanctification.**

The codes ensure the right of every baptized member of the Catholic Church to engage in and continue the evangelization mission of Jesus Christ. CCEO c. 14 and CIC c. 211 lay down that “all Christian faithful have the right to work so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and of all the world.” Similarly CIC c. 225 spells out the right and obligation of the Christian faithful to undertake and discharge this mission: “since lay people, like all Christ’s faithful, are deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or in association, to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. The obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ” (see CCEO c. 401, 406).

Although preaching the word of God, as per the general understanding, is the main function of the clerics, lay people do participate in this mission in various ways. Preaching the Word of God is only one way of fulfilling the evangelization mission. The lay people can and should by their very life testimony and exemplary life become witnesses of Jesus’ life and mission. It is more than the

preached Word of God, the lived word of God that is effective. So the Council states that by helping on the cause of truth and by being witnesses they can be real evangelizers along with the preachers who through the ministry of the Word of God and Sacraments do this. "Your light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:6). "So we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers in the truth" (3 Jn. 8). So, true witness of Christian life and good works done with a supernatural spirit and motive are two ways of engaging in the evangelization and sanctification of the people.

Besides that, the Council exhorts the laity to read the signs of the times and when Church faces ideological or moral or any other challenges and problems to side with her and "to take a more active part, each according to his talents and knowledge and in fidelity to the mind of the Church, in the explanation and defence of Christian principles and in the correct application of them to the problems of our times" (AA. 6).

**5.1. Obligation to sanctify Oneself and The World:** Corresponding to the right of engaging in the mission of evangelization, each faithful has the obligation to grow in holiness and reach the perfection that is expected of a Christian. There is the Old Testament invitation to 'be holy as I, Yahweh, am holy.' In the New Testament Jesus demands all to strive after the perfection of the heavenly Father. The Code also, therefore, expresses it clearly: "All the Christian faithful must strive, each according to his or her own condition, to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification" (CCEO c. 13; CIC 210). Church has provided us with sacraments in order to sanctify us (see CCEO c. 667). One of the precepts of the Church says that the faithful should receive the sacraments of confession and holy Eucharist at least once a year, at the paschal time. The Code says that if genuine spiritual advantage suggests it, Catholics can receive sacraments even from non-Catholics (CCEO c. 671§2).

CIC c. 230§2 specifies that "lay faithful can receive temporary assignment to the role of lector in liturgical actions" when it is necessary and advantageous according to the judgement of the

Episcopal Conference.<sup>26</sup> CCEO c. 610§4 also provides for such extraordinary circumstances. The eparchial bishop may give permission to lay faithful to preach in churches, but not homily during the liturgy which is reserved to the clerics. CCEO c. 624 §3 (CIC c. 776) says that for the catechesis pastors can avail the help of competent lay faithful. (See also the content under 'the rights and obligations of the married couples' below.)

## **6. The Right to Engage in the Temporal Affairs**

CCEO c. 399 while defining and describing who the lay faithful are, expresses the salient feature of lay people as secularity. While speaking about the obligation of the faithful to seek, first of all, the Kingdom of God, CCEO c. 402 hints at their right to have the fundamental freedom to engage in temporal affairs as other citizens do. CIC c. 225 §2 states that the lay people engage in the mission of the Church by "conducting secular business and exercising secular functions..." The Vatican Document on Church in the modern world, GS 76 says, "there are close links between the things of earth and those things in man's condition which transcend the world and the Church utilizes temporal realities as often as its mission requires it." The faithful engaging in the temporal affairs of the world, seek the Kingdom of God by "dealing with and regulating temporal goods in conformity with God" (CCEO c. 401).

### **6.1. Obligation of the Renewal of the Temporal World**

Renewal of the temporal order is one of the areas towards which lay people can contribute. What is it that constitutes the temporal order? Personal and family values, culture, economic interests, national and international relations, trades and professions and so on constitute the temporal order. God has a perfect design and value for them and has created them for man's use. "Far from depriving the temporal order of its autonomy, of its specific end, of its own laws and resources, or its importance for human well-being, this design, on the contrary, increases its energy and excellence, raising it at the same time to the level of man's integral vocation here below." Now, in the course of time, very often people are influenced by consumerist and selfish interests and as a consequence people fail to

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<sup>26</sup>In the Latin Church in India CBCI has allowed competent lay members to preach during the liturgy of the Word of God, but not during the divine liturgy. See, Antony Anandarayar, "The Role of the Laity in the New Millennium," p. 29.

view and use these things with the proper values inherent in them or there is no proper hierarchy of values. In such circumstances the laity “in their private, family, and politico-social life it is for them to be witnesses to Christ and manifest him to others, to defend just legislation in society, and radiating faith, hope and charity, to act like leaven for the sanctification of the world.” (CCEO c. 401; cf. LG 31). While engaging in the affairs of the earth, the faithful are to take care of three things: First of all see to it that, “their actions are imbued with the spirit of the Gospel,” secondly, “to take into account the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church,” and finally “to avoid proposing their own judgment as the doctrine of the Church in questions which are open to various opinions” (CCEO c. 402; see GS 76.).

The fallen man fails to grasp and accept realities as they are and become prey to various kinds of errors and pleasures that the world offers. The Council says that there is even error regarding the true God and sometimes many ‘heroes,’ films, sports stars or even other things turn out to occupy the place of God. There are erroneous understandings about the human nature and many principles of morality, for example, lesbianism, homosexuality etc. Many nations and cultures legalize such concepts and practices. The culture of life at times seems to be substituted by culture of death. Similarly man becomes prey to science and technology. This, the Council qualifies as “a kind of idolatry of the temporal; they become the slaves of it rather than the masters” against the Creator’s wish for men to subdue the earth and have dominion over every living and non-living creatures in it (Gen.1: 28).

About the responsibility of the laity and the need to combine the secular and spiritual realms, the Document on Lay Apostolate says: “Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order. *Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the church, prompted by Christian love,* they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner. As citizens among citizens they must bring to their cooperation with others their own special competence, and act on their own responsibility; everywhere and always they have to seek the justice of the kingdom of God. The temporal order is to be renewed in such a way that, while its own principles are fully respected, it is harmonized with the principles of the Christian life and adapted to the various conditions of times, places and peoples. Among the tasks of this



apostolate Christian social action is preeminent. The council desires to see it extended today to every sector of life, not forgetting the cultural sphere" (AA 7).

The Vatican document on Church says: "Therefore, even when occupied by temporal affairs, the laity can, and must, do valuable work for the evangelization of the world. But if, when there are no sacred ministers or when these are impeded under persecution, some lay people supply sacred functions to the best of their ability, or if, indeed, many of them expend all their energies in apostolic work, nevertheless the whole laity must cooperate in spreading and in building up the kingdom of Christ. Let the laity, therefore, diligently apply themselves to a more profound knowledge of revealed truth and earnestly beg of God the gift of wisdom" (LG. 35). Practically Christians should not involve in corrupt actions and secondly they should have the courage to hold on to the values and dissuade people from behaving in such manner. CIC c. 225 §2 states that while "conducting secular business and exercising secular functions," the lay faithful have "the special obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the Gospel."

#### **7. Right to Education and Expression**

Along with and in proportion to the growth in chronological age, every person should get enough and sufficient help from the society for his intellectual and spiritual growth. Therefore, the legislator of the Code has stipulated that every Christian faithful has the right to education. CCEO c. 20 (CIC c. 217) expresses that, "since the Christian faithful are called by baptism to lead a life in harmony with the gospel teaching, they have the right to a Christian education by which they are properly instructed on how to achieve the maturity of the human personality and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation."

On those who are engaged in research and teaching ministry, CCEO c. 21 (CIC 218) says: "Those who are engaged in the sacred sciences have a just freedom of inquiry and of expressing their opinion prudently on matters in which they possess expertise, while observing the submission due to the magisterium of the Church." CCEO c. 404 says that the lay people who have the natural capacity to do so, have the right to acquire a further understanding, in addition to the catechetical instruction, of theology and the doctrines taught by the magisterium. It might help them to live in accordance

with the doctrine, to make it further known to others, and if need be to defend the Church in times of need. The Vatican Document *Actuositatem apostolicam* nr. 6 and *Lumen Gentium* 35,4 inspired this canon. Besides this, the laity have the right to have a fuller understanding of the sacred sciences taught in the ecclesiastical universities or faculties and acquire academic degrees (CCEO c. 404 §2). This might, in turn, enable him to receive a mandate from ecclesiastical authorities to teach sacred sciences in ecclesiastical universities and faculties, provided he is found suitable and worthy, according to the legal norms, to be entrusted with such task (CCEO c. 404 §3; 596; 606 §3).

### **7.1. Education and Obligations of the Laity.**

The introductory canons of the Eastern Code, Title XV Chapter III, are on Catholic Education. It delineates the aim of education. The canon dealing with the right to education emphasizes the Christian education. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the parents or who take their place to see to it that their children are sent to such place conducive for Christian upbringing. CCEO c.627: First of all they should educate their children in the “context of a Christian family.” If it is to be a Christian family, it should be “illuminated by faith and animated by mutual love, especially in piety toward God and love of neighbour.” Education should aim at the integral growth, that is, the harmonious development of the physical, intellectual, and moral talents of the person, and being well versed in the Christian virtues, they should be able to know and love God more perfectly, to evaluate human and moral values with a right conscience and embrace them freely (CCEO, c. 629; CIC c. 795). (See other sections also, especially, on the rights and obligations of the married couples below.) The Christian Faithful also have the grave responsibility, according to CCEO c. 630 “to support the initiatives of the Church in promoting education, especially in erecting, directing and supporting schools.”

### **8. The Right to Express Views and Opinions.**

One of the principles given to the members of the Codification Committee of the Eastern Code was to consider the fundamental equality of all the faithful and to call them to cooperate in the apostolate. It also urged the members that ‘sufficient freedom in the area of expression of opinion and initiative of action must be guaranteed.’ Now in both the new codes we can see the result of this

new thinking. CCEO c. 15§3: Code gives the right to the competent lay people, who are educated and having positions in the society, to express their views and opinions to pastors regarding matters that concern the Church and for her benefit. CCEO c. 21: "Those who are engaged in the sacred sciences have a just freedom of inquiry and of expressing their opinion prudently on matters in which they possess expertise." Vat. II, LG 37 says that to the pastors "laity should disclose their needs and desires with that liberty and confidence which befits children of God and brothers of Christ. By reason of the knowledge, competence or pre-eminence which they have the laity are empowered - indeed sometimes obliged - to manifest their opinion on those things which pertain to the good of the Church."<sup>27</sup>

### **8.1. Obligation to be Submissive to the Magisterium.**

CCEO c. 15§3: In the exercise of this right the lay person is bound to respect the pastors and to have consideration for the common benefit and the dignity of persons. Similarly he should uphold the faith and morals of the Church. "Deeply attached to the word of God and adhering to the living authentic magisterium of the Church, the Christian faithful are bound to maintain integrally the faith, ... and to profess it openly as well as to acquire a deeper practical understanding of it and to make it fruitful in works of charity" (CCEO c. 10). While granting to those who are well versed in sacred sciences just freedom of enquiry and of expressing their opinion, c. 21 of CCEO (CIC c. 218) cautions them that they have to observe "the submission due to the magisterium of the Church" (cf. also CCEO cc. 595-606). People with the qualities of knowledge, experience and integrity have the possibility of being requested to be consultors or experts in various areas and fields: "Lay persons who excel in the necessary knowledge, experience and integrity, are qualified to be heard as experts or consultors by ecclesiastical authorities, whether individually or as members of various councils and assemblies, whether parochial, eparchial or patriarchal" (CCEO c. 408 §1; cf. LG 37, 3, 7; CCEO, c. 10 also; c. CCEO c. 404 §3: eligibility to be appointed as teachers of sacred sciences). Except those functions which are prohibited by the particular law of each church *sui iuris* and those which do not require the sacrament of orders could be given to competent lay people. (CCEO c. 408 §2). The "lay persons

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<sup>27</sup> LG. 3 (See, Pius XII, alloc. *De quelle Consolation*, 14 Oct. 1951: AAS 43 (1951) p. 789.

are fully subject to ecclesiastical authority with respect to the exercise of ecclesiastical functions" (c.408 §3). Those who are given mandate to engage in teaching or such kind of missions or ministries are to avoid those things which are not in accord with the magisterium of the Church (CCEO c. 598, 599).

## **9. Rights of the Married Couples**

According to CCEO c. 22 and CIC c. 219 stipulate that all Christ's faithful have the right to freely choose a state in life. The codes reaffirm that through marriage covenant, which is a divine institution, 'a man and woman ... establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life.' Three canonical ends of marriage are: a) good of the spouses, b) procreation and c) education of children (CCEO, c. 776 §1; CIC c. 1055). The council affirms that "the mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God himself." Thus, being "the beginning and the foundation of human society," "vital cell," and "the domestic sanctuary," according to the council, "the apostolate of married persons and of families has a special importance for both Church and civil society" (AA. 11). As far as the spouses themselves, their children and their close relatives are concerned, the Christian couples are "co-operators of grace and witnesses of the faith." Some of the rights of the married couples are dealt as part of their obligations below.

### **9.1. Obligation of the Married Couples**

In the modern world where divorces or annulments of marriages and separations of married couples abound, to bear witness with their own lives to one of the properties of marriage, namely, 'indissolubility and holiness of marriage bond' is a significant apostolate of Christian families. In imparting faith to their children, in helping them to choose suitable vocation, encouraging them to persevere it and in defending the dignity and legitimate autonomy of the family, the basic unit of the Church, family has a major share. The Vatican Council II proposes or exposes the following as some of the chief family apostolates: welcome to strangers, helping with the running of schools, supporting adolescents with advice and help, assisting engaged couples to better prepare for marriage, catechism teaching and caring for the aged, especially there where 'first seeds of Gospel are sown'.

Family is the 'domestic church' (CCC 2204) and the basic and original cell (CCC, 2207) of social life which nourishes one with the basic moral and religious values, teaches one about the good use of our freedom etc. As far as the children are concerned family is the first school and the parents are their first teachers. Therefore, the responsibility of the parents is great in being the first agents of evangelization to the children. "The family is not simply the object of Church's pastoral care; it is also to be of the Church's effective agents of evangelization."<sup>28</sup> CCEO c. 407 (CIC c. 226§1) states that, "lay persons, who live in the married state, in accord with their own vocation, are bound by a special obligation to work for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and their family."

The Vatican Document on Church regarding marriage and family life says, "Christian married couples and parents, following their own way, should support one another in grace all through life with faithful love, and should train their children ... in Christian doctrine and evangelical virtues. Because in this way they present to all an example of unfailing and generous love, they build up the brotherhood of charity, and they stand as witnesses and co-operators of the fruitfulness of mother Church, as a sign of and a share in that love with which Christ love his bride and gave himself for her [Pius XII]" (LG 41). On the role of the widows and single people the same document says that, "In a different way, a similar example is given by widows and single people, who can also greatly contribute to the holiness and activity of the Church. ... All Christians, in the conditions, duties and circumstances of their life and through all these, will sanctify themselves more and more if they receive all things with faith..."

The document continues to say that family is a school where practice and teaching of apostolate take place: "The state of life that is sanctified by a special sacrament, namely, married and family life, has a special importance in this prophetic office. Where the Christian religion pervades the whole structure of life with continuous and ever more profound transformation, there is both the practice and an outstanding school of the lay apostolate. In it the married partners have their own proper vocation: they must be witness of faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Christian family proclaims aloud both the present power of the kingdom of

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<sup>28</sup>Antony Anandarayar, "The Role of the Laity in the New Millennium," 31.

God and the hope of the blessed life. Hence, by example and by their testimony, they convict the world of sin and give light to those who seek the truth" (LG 35).

While dealing with education, CCEO c. 627 emphasizes the Christian family atmosphere. It should be illumined by faith and animated by mutual love, especially piety toward God and love of neighbour. On the obligation of the parents in relation to children codes stipulate that, "Before all others, it is parents who have the obligation to form their children, by word and example, in faith and Christian living; those who take the place of parents and sponsors are bound by an equal obligation" (CCEO c. 618 (CIC 774 §2; CIC c. 793).

"Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the first heralds' for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life."<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the importance of the apostolate of family, Doraisamy says, "The role of the family is as crucial in the formation of the laity as the role of the church. ... The family, as a social unit, has its own role to play in the up building of the 'body.' As such the family and the church have a reciprocal role to play."<sup>30</sup>

"Christian husbands and wives are cooperators in grace and witness of faith on behalf of each other, their children and all others in their household. They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them; by word and example they train their offspring for the Christian apostolic life. They prudently help them in the choice of their vocation and carefully promote any religious calling which they discern in them."<sup>31</sup> In the Israelite families "it was the mother who gave her children the first rudiments of education,

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<sup>29</sup>Antony Anandarayar, "The Role of the Laity in the New Millennium," 33.

<sup>30</sup>Doraisamy Pothirajulul, *Laity Formation* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1993) p. 61.

<sup>31</sup>Walter M. Abbot, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Joseph Gallagher, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) p. 502. See Doraisamy Pothirajulul, *Laity Formation*, p. 63.

especially of their moral formation (Pr.1:8; 6:20). She might continue to advise her children even in adolescence (cf. Pr. 31:1), but as the boys grew up to manhood, they were usually entrusted to their father. 'One of his most sacred duties was to teach his son the truths of religion (Ex. 10:2; 12:26; 13:8; Dt. 4:9; 6:7, 20f.; 32: 7-46). 'The strong emphasis on family as the milieu of educational growth is reflected in the expression of the words, 'father' and 'son' used for the relationship between teacher and pupil. ... St. Paul shows in Colossians (3:12-25) how values such as compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, etc., which should be found in the church have to be practiced in the family between husbands and wives, fathers and children, and even between masters and slaves."<sup>32</sup>

## **10. Right To Remuneration**

God wished that man eat out of the sweat of his forehead. The worker is worthy of reward for the work he does. The Codes assure those who are somehow employed in some special service of the Church the right to have a just remuneration. It should be at least sufficient enough for him to lead a decent life and cater to the needs of him as well as his dependents. Similarly he or she should be able to provide for the required insurance, social security and health care for him as well as his family members (CCEO c. 409 §2, cf. CCEO c. 1021§3; CIC c. 231).

### **10.1. Duty to Undergo Training and to Contribute towards the Needs of the Church.**

The same canon also obliges the faithful thus employed to undergo proper training for the service and discharge the duties attached to the offices "consciously and diligently with dedication" (CIC c. 409 §1). Similarly they also have the grave obligation to "assist with the needs of the Church." From their earnings they are obliged to contribute, according to their ability, for the divine worship of the Church, for the apostolate, for charitable deeds of the church and for the support of the ministers of the Church (see CCEO c. 25 §1; CIC c. 222). Paragraph two of the canon obliges the faithful "to help the poor from their own resources. Thus, we see that the right remuneration has its corresponding obligation to be of assistance to the Church in its various missions.

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<sup>32</sup>See Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2 Vols., (New York: Mcgraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 49. See Doraisamy Pothirajulul, *Laity Formation*, p. 63.

## 11. Right to Defend and Vindicate

One of the functions of law in any society is “to protect personal rights, provide avenue of recourse, and redress of grievances, and means for the resolution of conflicts. What the Church has in common with all other visible, human societies is relationships involving rights and obligations, that is, a juridic order. Its juridic life must be conducted with justice and fairness for all its members. This is another task of its canons of discipline: to articulate the rights and duties of the faithful, and to provide means for their protection.”<sup>33</sup> Law sees to it that justice is meted out to all persons according to norms and regulations. CCEO c. 24§1 and CIC c. 221 provide the faithful the right to vindicate and defend their rights in the competent forum of the Church. CCEO 24 §§2, 3 say that once a faithful has to undergo trial, then it should be according to the precepts of law considering also the principle of equity and that canonical punishments may be imposed only following the norms of law. In accordance with one of the principles or guidelines given to the committee members of the codification process, the Eastern code has not included any automatic punishments (*latae sententiae*) in the code, but only *ferendae sententiae*).

### 11.1. The Obligation to Respect the Rights of Others.

When the code provides for the right to defence and vindication, it implies automatically that one should not harm others or deny the rights of others. Therefore, on the ground of the same rights to defend and vindicate we can hold that everyone is obliged to respect the rights of the others. A society or community can be said to have a a jural or juridical life only if there exist respect for and recognition of mutual rights and obligations.

## 12. The Right to Found Association

CCEO c. 18 provides that every Christian has the canonical right to found associations for charitable purpose and other pious activities. The rights to direct associations and to hold meetings for the planning and execution of things etc. form part of the right to found an association. CCEO sets apart one Title itself to deal with Association. These associations may engage in the apostolate of i) teaching the Christian Doctrine, ii) promoting public worship and iii) may serve other noble ends. (CCEO c. 573-583).

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<sup>33</sup>James A. Coriden, *An Introduction to Canon Law* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990) p. 6.



### **12.1. Obligation to Uphold the Discipline, Faith and Morals of the Church.**

Although the lay faithful have the right to found associations, this right is not absolute as the associations have to be recognized or approved by the competent superiors. Therefore, any association is subject to the vigilance of the ecclesiastical authority (CCEO c. 577; CIC 305). When the canon stipulates that the competent authorities have to see to it that “the integrity of faith and morals is maintained” in the associations, it implies that the associations have the obligation not to deviate, in their apostolate, from the positions that the Church holds. Similarly they are obliged to maintain Church’s discipline and not to allow any abuses to happen.

#### **Conclusion**

We realize that the position of the laity in the church is not simply to sit under the pulpit, to kneel before the altar and put his hands into his pocket. But as a commissioned or deputed faithful through the sacrament of baptism, he is to engage actively in the mission of the Church and to be a missionary in spreading the kingdom of God. He has manifold areas of cooperation with the hierarchs and pastors in spreading the message. In a special way there are areas which cannot be penetrated and evangelized without the active participation of the laity. The clergy also have to be willing to make them real co-operators and co-builders of the church as the Vatican documents and the codes reaffirm. The expertise, experience and varied talents of the lay Christian faithful should be considered as a treasure for the missionary apostolate of the church in modern times. The clergy have to avoid, if at all there is, a kind of apartheid attitude towards the presence and service of the laity in the mission of the Church.