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DECREE

Issued *Motu Proprio*

RESTRUCTURING OF THE  
*CONSILIUM DE LAICIS*  
IN WHICH IT TAKES THE NAME  
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR THE LAITY

*Apostolatus Peragendi*

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DEFINITIVE STRUCTURING  
OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION  
JUSTICE AND PEACE

*Iustitiam et Pacem*

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POPE PAUL VI

December 10, 1976

**Motu Proprio of Pope Paul VI**  
*Apostolatus Peragendi*

**RESTRUCTURING OF THE *CONSILIIUM DE LAICIS***  
**IN WHICH IT TAKES THE NAME**  
**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY**

Different forms of the apostolate or "varieties of service" (cf. 1 Cor 12:5) that help to build up the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, belong by full right also to the laity. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has taught this in our times, setting forth the traditional teaching on this matter in a new light. For the laity "live in the world, that is, in all and in each of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary conditions of life in the family and in society, from which the web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper role and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 31).

The present time clearly calls for a more earnest and more widespread apostolate on the part of the laity; indeed, "an indication of this manifold and pressing need is the evident work of the Holy Spirit in making the laity today ever more conscious of their own responsibility and inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church" (Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1).

In response to these circumstances and to the exhortation of the Council (cf. *ibid.*, 26) the *Consilium de Laicis* was set up in the Roman Curia by the Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* of January 6, 1967. It must be remembered however that this *Consilium* was set up experimentally and temporarily so that practice and experience might suggest suitable changes (cf. AAS 59, 1967, p. 28).

We acknowledge that this *Consilium* has diligently fulfilled the tasks confided to it, by fostering, methodically organizing and coordinating the apostolate of the laity on the national level and throughout the Church, by assisting the hierarchy and the laity with advice, by engaging in studies in this area, and by undertaking other initiatives.

The reasons for which this Council was set up have greatly increased, and the questions to be faced and resolved in this field of the Catholic apostolate have become much more serious and widespread. The experi-

ence obtained in these years has also supplied useful knowledge. We have therefore decided to give this institution of the Roman Curia, which can be counted among the outstanding fruits of the Second Vatican Council, a new, definite and higher form.

Hence, after mature consideration of the whole question and having sought the opinion of experts we decree and determine the following:

I The *Consilium de Laicis* will henceforth be called the "Pontifical Council for the Laity."

II This Council is headed and directed by a Cardinal President, who is assisted by a Presidential Committee composed of three Cardinals resident in Rome, and the Secretary of the Council.

The Presidential Committee meets every two months and as often as the Cardinal President decides, in order to deal with more important questions.

The Cardinal President is assisted by a Secretary and an Undersecretary. It is the task of all the above-mentioned, according to the norm of law, to perform everything that requires the power of Order and jurisdiction.

III The members of this Pontifical Council are mostly lay people, selected from different parts of the world, and involved in different forms of the apostolate of the laity, with a suitable proportion between men and women. Among the members are also some Bishops and priests.

Unless particular circumstances suggest otherwise, the members are convoked once a year to a meeting with the Presidential Committee, under the chairmanship of the Cardinal President, assisted by the Secretary.

IV The Council is assisted by Consultors distinguished for uprightness, knowledge and prudence. They shall be chosen so as to ensure a majority of lay people and a suitable proportion between men and women. The Secretaries of the Sacred Congregations for Bishops, for the Eastern Churches, for the Clergy, for Religious and Secular Institutes, and for the Evangelization of Peoples, and the Secretary of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace are added *ex officio*. It is recommended that one or more of the Consultors should be chosen from women bound to the consecrated life.

V The Consultors form a group which is called the *Consulta*. Its purpose is to study in depth all questions to be decided by the Members of the Council and to perform faithfully the tasks entrusted to it by the Superiors.

The Consultors can be convoked all together or in smaller groups for some specific task, or for individual consultation.

VI The competence of the Pontifical Council for the Laity covers the apostolate of the laity in the Church and the discipline of the laity as such.

In particular, the Pontifical Council has the tasks of:

1 encouraging the laity to participate in the Church's life and mission, both—and this is the principal way—as members of associations for the apostolate and as individual Christians;

2 evaluating, guiding, and, if necessary, fostering initiatives regarding the apostolate of lay people in the various spheres of society, with due regard for the competence of other bodies of the Roman Curia in this matter;

3 dealing with all questions concerning:

- international and national organizations of the lay apostolate, with due regard for the competence of the Secretariat of State or Papal Secretariat;

- Catholic societies for the promotion of the apostolate and the spiritual life and activity of the laity, without interference in the rights of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples regarding societies fostering missionary cooperation exclusively;

- pious associations (i.e., archconfraternities, confraternities, pious unions, sodalities of all kinds), in consultation with the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes whenever it is a case of an association erected by a Religious Family or a Secular Institute;

- lay Third Orders, with regard only to questions concerning the activity of their apostolate, and thus without interference in the competence of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes for other questions;

- associations of both clerics and lay people, with due regard for the competence of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy in the matter of the observance of the general laws of the Church (cf. the norms of the Apostolic Signatura);

4 fostering on its own initiative active participation by the laity in such fields as catechetics, liturgy, the sacraments, and education, in collaboration with the various Departments of the Roman Curia dealing with these matters;

5 seeing that the Church's laws regarding the laity are strictly observed, and examining by administrative means disputes involving lay people;

6 in agreement with the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, dealing with questions concerning Pastoral Councils, whether on the parish or diocesan level, in order to encourage lay people to take part in joint pastoral action.

VII The Committee for the Family is attached to the Pontifical Council for the Laity, while keeping its own form and identity.

The Cardinal President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity presides over this Committee and in this matter he is assisted in a special way by the Secretary of the same Council.

The Cardinal shall give to one of the Officials of the Council for the Laity the charge of maintaining the ordinary contacts with the Committee for the Family.

We order that all that we have decreed by this Motu Proprio shall be regarded as established and ratified, any disposition to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the tenth day of December in the year 1976, the fourteenth of our Pontificate.

PAULUS PP. VI

**Motu Proprio of Pope Paul VI**  
*Iustitiam et Pacem*

**DEFINITIVE STRUCTURING OF THE  
PONTIFICAL COMMISSION JUSTICE AND PEACE**

The promotion of justice and peace and the penetration of all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel have always been the object of the Church's efforts in fulfillment of the Lord's command. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council directed its attention to the hopes and possibilities, the trials and difficulties peculiar to our time and threw fresh light on this duty (cf. the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 90). In response to the Council's desire, a Commission was established and given its juridical structure by our Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* of January 6, 1967. It was set up for a five-year experimental period, since "practice and experience can suggest suitable modifications" (AAS 59, 1967, p. 28). This period was later extended by us for another five years.

During these ten years the Commission has studied carefully and put into practice the doctrine and precepts of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and other Church documents. It has rendered the good service of making the Church's voice heard in society as the herald of true justice and true peace.

However, since the questions the Commission has to deal with are very complex and are often linked with other problems, many people have asked for its functions to be more clearly defined, so that this body of the Apostolic See may be able to fulfill ever more effectively the duties entrusted to it.

In determining definitively the Commission's aims and structure, we intend to affirm plainly once again the great importance that the Church attaches to fostering and defending justice and peace. The members of the Commission must therefore be constantly attentive to what is happening in their field and to what people in various times and circumstances desire should happen. They must study these questions in the light of the Gospel and the Church's Magisterium. By making known the results of their reflections they are to help in giving guidance to God's people and in encouraging them to become more aware of the obligations imposed in this field by a truly Christian life.

The Commission has the following noble aims and practical principles: to carry out action-directed studies that are fitted into a pastoral evangeliz-

ing perspective; to be at the service of the Church's members and institutions, enabling them to translate into concrete commitments, valid as Christian witness, the Commission's recommendations and advice; to encourage progress and renewal while seeing in the Church's supreme authority the fundamental guideline and the guarantee of effectiveness; and to perform this work in an ecumenical perspective.

It must not be forgotten that the continuous rapid change in relations between individuals and peoples constantly gives rise to new questions and reveals new aspects of problems concerning justice, peace, the development of peoples, and human rights. The Commission needs suitable structures for dealing with this complex and changing reality.

Therefore, after long and due consideration of the whole question and having consulted experts, we decide and decree each of the following points with regard to the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace.

I The Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace is the Holy See's organization for examining and studying (from the point of view of doctrine, pastoral practice and the apostolate) problems connected with justice and peace, with the aim of awakening God's people to full understanding of these questions and awareness of the part they play and of the duties that fall to them in the fields of justice, the development of peoples, human advancement, peace, and human rights. The Commission is to examine what specifically Christian contribution can be made to solving these problems. It is also to encourage the members of God's people to Christian witness and appropriate action in the above fields.

II To achieve these aims, the Commission shall:

1) in the first place, study in depth the social doctrine of the Church's Magisterium, spread knowledge of it by appropriate means, and endeavor to ensure that it is put into practice at all levels of society;

2) collect and synthesize studies referring to the development of peoples, peace, justice, and human rights, viewed in their cultural, moral, educational, economic, and social aspects; evaluate these studies from the theological point of view, and then see how this documentation can be used as an aid for pastoral activity and for more clearly defined involvement by Christians in the various local, national, and international situations.

3) make the results of its studies, documentation research, and reflection known to all the sectors of the Church which are concerned, and gather from these latter all useful information; for this purpose, the Commission shall in particular have regular organic contacts with the Bishops' Conferences and through them or in agreement with them provide information and every other possible aid to the bodies set up for the study of these problems (national Justice and Peace Commissions and other bodies) and working in accordance with statutes decided or approved by the Bishops' Conference.

4) be in regular contact with the Departments and other bodies of the Apostolic See involved in these problems, in order to keep them informed

and remain at their disposal for assistance in drawing up appropriate action programs; these bodies can ask the Commission for advice on all questions belonging to the field of competence of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace; the Commission shall have regular links with the Secretariat of State or Papal Secretariat, which will give the Commission appropriate instructions.

5) in collaboration with these same bodies, place the results of its reflection at the disposal of other groups and institutions within the Church, such as the Religious Orders and Congregations and the International Catholic Organizations; it shall act in the same way with regard to groups and persons outside the Church with whom the bodies of the Apostolic See have regular links, such as the other Christian Churches and communities, the non-Christian religions, and the associations and agencies contributing to the attainment of the Commission's purpose;

6) endeavor to obtain information on cases of denial of justice, violation of human rights and injustices occurring in concrete situations, and to gather objective and complete information on these cases; the Commission shall express Christian solidarity with those who suffer injustice whenever the gravity of the situation or of the facts justifies it, after having come to an agreement with the Secretariat of State regarding any such declaration or initiative.

III The Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace is composed of Cardinals, Bishops, clerics and lay people, named by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year period. It is under the direction of a Cardinal President, assisted by a Secretary and an Undersecretary. Clerics and lay people who are genuinely competent in the Church's social thought and activity shall likewise be appointed by the Pope as Consultors for a five-year period.

IV The Members take part in the General Assembly, which, unless there are special circumstances, shall take place once a year, in order to contribute by their specialized knowledge and pastoral experience to the drawing up of the general lines for the Commission's work. The Consultors shall frequently be asked for written reports on questions in which they are competent, or be called upon to take part in study groups. There will be regular meetings of the "Congressus" of the Commission, as demanded by the work to be done.

V The norms of the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* and of the *Regolamento* for the Departments of the Holy See apply to the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, unless otherwise laid down.

We order that all that we have decreed by this *Motu Proprio* shall be regarded as established and ratified, any disposition to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the tenth day of December in the year 1976, the fourteenth of our Pontificate.

PAULUS PP. VI