

# The Rights and Obligations of the Lay Faithful in the Church

In the 1983 Code of Canon Law

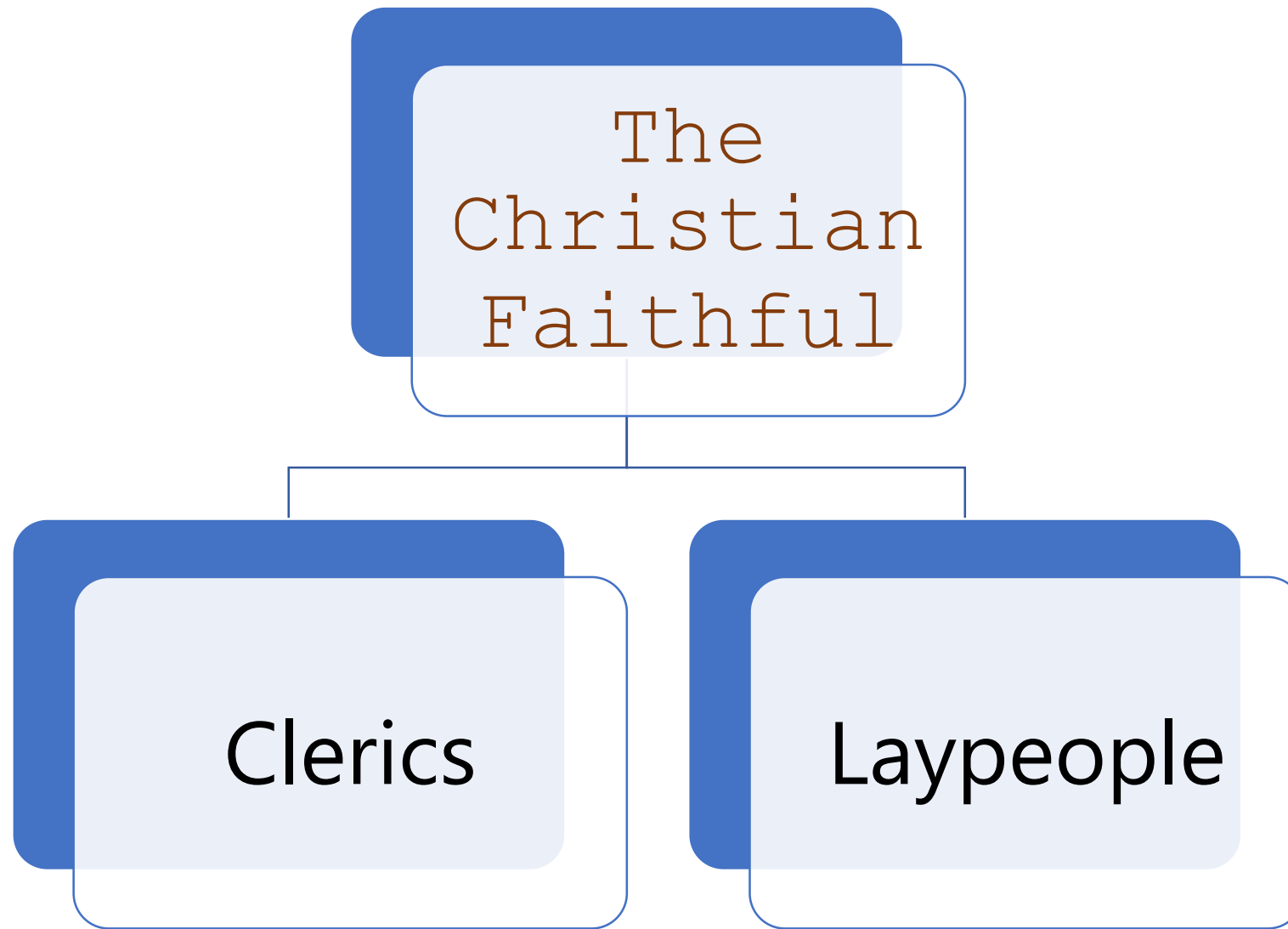
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Why do we need to know our  
rights and obligations?

# Source of Rights and Obligations

- At baptism, Christians received the rights and obligations proper to them as members of the Church.
- The baptized participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ.

Obligations and Rights  
Common to All Faithful



# 1. Communion with the Church (can. 205)

- The Christian faithful are bound to preserve at all times their communion with the Church, even in the way they act.
- 3 aspects of communion
  - Faith
  - Sacraments
  - Governance

## 2. Life of Holiness (can. 210)

- All Christian faithful must exert every effort to live a holy life in keeping with their own condition, and to promote the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification.
- Pope Francis' invitation to be a saint next-door

### 3. Apostolate (can. 211)

- All Christian faithful have the obligation and right to strive that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.
- Every baptized is a missionary.





Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples (EG 120)."

## 4. Christian Obedience to Pastors (can. 212)

- Christian faithful are bound to show Christian obedience to whatever their sacred pastors, as representatives of Christ, declare as teachers of the faith, or decree as rulers of the Church.

5. Right to make known their needs to their sacred pastors (can. 212)

Every Christian faithful are at liberty to reveal openly to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, as well as their desires.

6. Right and Duty to make known their opinion to their sacred pastors (can. 212)

They have the right and sometimes, the duty in keeping with their KNOWLEDGE, COMPETENCE AND POSITION, to express their opinion to the sacred pastors on things which concern the good of the Church.

## 7. Right to receive spiritual assistance (can. 213)

The faithful have the right to receive from the sacred Pastors assistance from the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the Word of God and the sacraments

## 8. Rite and Spirituality (can. 214)

The faithful has the right to worship God according to the prescriptions of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to follow their own form of spiritual life provided it is consonant with the teachings of the Church.

## 9. Right of Association (can. 215)

- The Christian faithful may freely establish and direct association for charitable and religious purposes which serve to promote the Christian vocation in the world.
- They are at liberty to hold meetings for the purpose of pursuing these ends in common.

## 10. Proper Initiative (can. 216)

Since they participate in the mission of the Church, all the faithful have the right to promote or support apostolic activity even with their own initiative, each one according to his own state and proper condition.



# 11. Right to Christian Education (can. 217)

Since the faithful are called through baptism to lead a life conformed to the teachings of the Gospel, they have the right to Christian education by means of which they may be properly instructed in developing maturity as human persons and at the same time for understanding and living the mystery of salvation.

## 12. Right to Research (can. 218)

Those who apply themselves to the sacred sciences enjoy a just freedom to research on matters in which they are competent and to express themselves prudently about them, with due submission to the Magisterium of the Church.

# 13. Free Choice of the State of Life (can. 219)

All the faithful enjoy the right to immunity from coercion in choosing a state of life.

# 14. Right to one's reputation and privacy (can. 220)

- No one may unlawfully harm the good name which another person enjoys, or violate the right of every person to protect his privacy
- Limitations:
  - The right to a good reputation gives way to the right enjoyed by society to get the correct information and to the duty binding a superior to denounce errors against faith and good morals.
  - The right to privacy can be curtailed in cases of danger of the common welfare, in the manner provided by law.

15. Right to defend their rights in the competent ecclesiastical forum (can.

221)

- Right to vindicate and defend their rights before the competent ecclesiastical forum according to the norms of law.
- if summoned to trial by the competent authority, they are to be judged according to the prescriptions of law, applied with equity.
- right not to be punished by canonical penalties unless they are meted out in accordance with the law

# 16. Obligation to Assist the Church (can. 222)

- obligation to provide for the needs of the Church in order to have available all those means which she needs for divine worship, for apostolic and charitable works, and for the honest sustenance of her ministers.
- obligation to promote social justice, and mindful of the teaching of the Lord, to help the poor with their own resources

Obligations and Rights  
of the Laypeople

# 1. Apostolate of the Laity (can. 225)

- to strive that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all peoples throughout the world (right and duty)
- To permeate the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel
- To render testimony to Christ in a way peculiar to them, in carrying these matters and in exercising secular duties



## 2. Spouses and Parents (can. 226)

- Those who are married are bound by special duty, in accordance with their own vocation, to work for the building up of the People of God through their marriage and their family.
- To educate their children according to the teachings of the Church

### 3. Freedom in Temporal Affairs (can. 227)

- The lay members of the faithful possess the right to see to it that their freedom in secular affairs, which is common to all citizens, is acknowledged.
- In using this freedom, they should take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and take into account the doctrine set forth by the Magisterium of the Church
- They should take care that in questions of opinion they do not propose their own view as the teaching of the Church

## 4. Capacity to assume ecclesiastical offices (can. 228)

- Lay persons who are considered suitable are capable of assuming from their sacred pastors ecclesiastical offices and duties, which in accordance with the prescriptions of law, they can discharge.
- Lay persons who are outstanding in the requisite knowledge, prudence and integrity, are capable of being experts or advisors, even in councils in accordance with the norm of law, in order to provide assistance to the Pastors of the Church

## 5. Christian Knowledge (can. 229)

- right to acquire the knowledge of Christian teaching, to proclaim it and if necessary to defend it
- right to acquire that fuller knowledge of the sacred sciences which is imparted in ecclesiastical universities or faculties or in institutes of sacred sciences, by attending lectures and obtaining academic degrees.
- If they meet the conditions required by law, lay persons, are capable of receiving from legitimate ecclesiastical authority a mandate to teach sacred sciences

## 6. Liturgical Offices (can. 230)

- laypersons whose age and qualifications meet the requirements prescribed by the decree of the local Conference of Bishops may be given, on a stable basis, the ministries of lector and acolyte, through the prescribed liturgical rite.
- Lay persons may fulfill the office of lector during liturgical actions on a temporary basis.

# 7. Formation and Remuneration (can. 231)

- Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church, are duty-bound to acquire the appropriate formation required to full their duty properly, and to carry out this duty conscientiously, zealously and diligently.
- They have the right to decent remuneration befitting their condition, whereby, they may be able to provide decently for their own needs and for those of their family with due regard to the prescriptions of civil law.

# Considerations... (can. 223)

- In the exercise of their rights, the faithful, whether individually or collectively in associations, must take into account the common good of the Church, and bring to mind the rights of others and their duties to them.
- It is the competence of ecclesiastical authority in view of the common good to moderate the exercise of rights which are proper to the faithful