



APOSTOLIC LETTER ISSUED “MOTU PROPIO”

**OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI**

ON THE SERVICE OF CHARITY

Purpose:

“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia) and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable” (Deus Caritas Est,25).

The service of charity is also a constitutive element of the Church’s mission and an indispensable expression of her very being; all the faithful have the right and duty to devote themselves personally to living the new commandment the Christ left us and to offering our contemporaries not only material assistance, but also refreshment and care of their souls. The Church is also called as a whole to the exercise of the diakonia of charity, whether in the small communities of particular Churches or on the level of the universal Church. This requires organizations “if it is to be an ordered service to the community”, an organization which entails a variety of institutional expressions.

Motus Proprio “Intima Ecclesia Natura” adds the legal canonical responsibility of Bishops in the promotion and animation of Charity.

Description:

Motus Propio fundamental points:

- All the faithful have the right and duty to be personally involved.
- By not offering only material assistance but also comfort and care of the soul: the many catholic organizations should not limit themselves solely to collect or distribute funds but must always show how special attention the person in need, and also perform a valuable educational function with the Christian community that promotes education to sharing, respect and love according to the logic of the Gospel of the Christ.
- The church is asked to exercise the draconian of charity from local communities to the particular churches and to the universal Church, through an organization articulated in institutional expressions.
- Caritas as an institution promoted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy is recognized and supported by the Holy Father. Other local initiatives are encouraged to be related to the Episcopal Ministry.
- Management should be in accordance with the requirements of the teachings of the Church and with the legitimate standards promulgated by the civil authority.

- The diocesan bishop has a position of authority and coordination while respecting the legitimate autonomy of each entity.

Motu Proprio develops 15 articles:

1. The statutes of the new charities of foundation who claim to be Catholic must be submitted to the competent ecclesiastical authority for approval. These organizations must respect the principles of Catholic doctrine and not accept commitments that would condition these principles.
2. These organizations must be managed according clear principles and rules and be accountable through regular information and report to the competent ecclesiastical authority. They may have a spiritual advisor. The authority must avoid duplication of initiatives within the diocese.
3. National initiatives relate to the Bishops of the places where they operate and respect their authority.
4. The diocesan Bishop is invited to fully assume his mission in the charitable field.
5. He must ensure that initiatives taken are consistent with the civil law.
6. He has the task of coordinating and ensuring the evangelical spirit of organizations working in his diocesan.
7. Employees of Catholic Charities, in addition to professional competence, must share or at least respect their Catholic identity. The Bishop should provide training “of the heart that manifests faith working in love” in connection with the leaders of those organizations, through specific courses and proposals for spiritual life.
8. The Bishop is invited to set up a diocesan coordination office if it appears to be necessary.
9. Each parish or group of parishes must have a parish Caritas to educate people to practice charity and put it into practice. The various initiatives are coordinated by the parish priest, who shall in connection with the Bishop observe that Catholic principles are respected in local initiatives.
10. The Bishop oversees the use of goods collected. He must avoid funding from institutions whose goals are contrary to those of the Church and actions contrary to the teachings of the Church being undertaken with these resources. Salaries and management fees should reflect Christian sobriety and be in line with those prevailing in the diocese. Each organization submits an annual report.
11. The Bishop may withdraw his confidence and prohibit the use of the word “Catholic” to organizations that no longer meet the requirements of the Magisterium of the Church.
12. The Bishop must foster national and international activity of charities “under his care” in connection with the Episcopal Conference.
13. The Bishop has the right to give his consent to outside Catholic organizations involved in the area of his jurisdiction.
14. The Bishop may promote ecumenical initiatives.
15. The Pontifical Council Cor Unum is responsible for promoting the application of these rules and their enforcement at all levels. It must ensure that the service of charity of Catholic institutions at the international level always unfolds in communion with the respective particular Churches.

The Motu Proprio confirms Caritas in its educational mission, in its action that takes the suffering human person in its entirety, in the community dynamics it develops from the



parish level to the international level through the diocesan level and the national level.

It confirms our responsibility as the Church of transforming this world by bringing the Good News of salvation through the testimony of love given to the poorest and smallest.