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## Dicastery for the laity, family and life, established "ad experimentum"

Vatican City, 4 June 2016 – Today, following a proposal made by the College of Cardinals, the Holy Father has approved *ad experimentum* the statute of the new dicastery for the laity, family and life, which will merge from 1 September 2016 the existing Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. On that date both dicasteries will cease their functions and will be suppressed, following the repeal of articles 131-134 and 139-141 of the apostolic constitution *Pastor bonus* of 28 June 1988.

The new statute establishes, among other things, that the dicastery shall have competence in those areas pertaining to the Apostolic See for the promotion of life and the apostolate of the lay faithful, for the pastoral care of the family and its mission according to God's plan and for the protection and support of human life. The aforementioned dicastery shall be presided over by a prefect, assisted by a secretary, who may be a layperson, and three lay under-secretaries, and will be granted a suitable number of officials, both clerical and lay, chosen as far as possible from different regions of the world, in accordance with the current legislation of the Roman Curia. The dicastery will be divided into three sections: for the lay faithful, for the family, and for life, each one guided by an under-secretary.

The section for the lay faithful will inspire and encourage the promotion of the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world, as individuals, married or unmarried, or as members of associations, movements and communities. It will also promote studies to contribute to the doctrinal examination of themes and issues regarding the lay faithful. It will encourage the active and responsible presence of the laity in the advisory organs of governance present in the Church at universal and particular levels; it will evaluate the initiatives of Episcopal Conferences that make requests to the Holy See, in accordance with the needs of the particular Churches, for the institution of new ministries and ecclesiastical offices, and will erect aggregations of faithful and lay movements of an international character and approve or acknowledge statutes without prejudice to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State.

The section for the family, in the light of papal teaching, will promote family pastoral ministry, protect its dignity and well-being based on the sacrament of marriage, and will promote its rights and responsibility in the Church and in civil society, so that the family institution may be increasingly able to perform its functions in both ecclesial and social contexts. It will monitor the activity of the Catholic institutes, associations, movements and organisations, both national and international, which aim to serve the good of the family. It will offer guidelines for courses preparing couples for marriage and for pastoral programmes to support families in the education of young people in faith and in ecclesial and civil life, with special attention to the poor and the marginalised. It will encourage openness of families to adoption and fostering of children and care for the elderly, with a presence also in civil institutions in support of these practices.

The section for life will support and coordinate activities to encourage responsible procreation and the protection of human life from conception to natural end, bearing in mind the needs of the person in the different phases of development. It will promote and encourage organisations and associations helping women and families to welcome and protect the gift of life, especially in the case of difficult pregnancies, and to prevent recourse to abortion. It will also support programmes and initiatives intended to help women who have terminated a pregnancy. On the basis of Catholic moral doctrine and the teaching of the Church, it will study and promote formation on the main issues of biomedicine and of the law regarding human life and the ideologies developing in relation to human life and gender identity.

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