

The Involvement of the Catholic Laity in the Promotion of Peace

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Abstract: In accordance with their constitutional prerogatives, members of the Church engage in activities that align with their designated roles and responsibilities. A review of both the history of the Church and the documents in force reveals that the Church, in its broadest sense, is concerned with the promotion of peace. Such areas are, by definition, those which fall within the purview of laypeople. The Second Vatican Council accorded particular attention to the promotion of social justice and peace, as well as to the apostolate of lay faithful. Consequently, the two areas were brought into contact and underwent further development. This paper presents the historical trajectory that has culminated in the most comprehensive positioning of the laity in the promotion of social justice, elucidating the legal distinctions pertaining to the most prevalent methods through which they can promote peace.

Keywords: peace promotion; social justice; laity; canon law

1. Introduction

It is beyond dispute that the Catholic Church played an invaluable role in peace-building throughout the 20th century (Verosta 1972; Kobler 1985, pp. 55–66; Hehir 2012; Alva 2017). Pope Francis has expressed particular concern with regard to the issue of reconciliation. He regularly assesses regional conflicts and global security challenges. His peace mission is, in part, a continuation of those of his predecessors (Murray 1963; Rumi 1989; Curran 2004; Christiansen 2006; Justenhoven 2012; Spieker and Lutz 2018; De Franco 2020), but it also represents a shift towards a more nuanced approach to peace policy. He has employed the Church's distinctive instruments with greater frequency, including dialogue with other religions and denominations (Vukićević 2015; Genc 2021), social teaching (Gutián 2018), and poverty alleviation (Giovagnoli 2019), with the objective of fostering peace (Francis 2020a, n. 2). He has prophesied a Church that uses its abilities to promote peace, with the laity playing a pivotal role in this endeavor (Francis 2022a, n. 2). It was not Pope Francis who first recognized the importance of the laity in the Church, but his reform contributed to the fulfillment of the Council's principles. This also demonstrates that both the Council and the ensuing Church legislation have the potential to make better use of the abilities of the laity (Interlandi 2018).

The first part of this paper makes some claims in terms of the general and ideological history about the laity and the work for peace. The second part of the paper focuses on the internal law and structure of the Church. It is hypothesized that the principles formulated by the Pope and the ecclesiastical laws designed to promote the Church's role in society will only be effective if the lay faithful is going to be positioned accordingly. This research relies on the qualitative method with an analysis of primary and secondary sources, which are then compared in order to reach a conclusion.

2. The Complexity of Peace and Laity

The promotion of peace is a responsibility that falls upon the entire Church. However, the Catholic Church is a hierarchical community (LG 41; c. 204), whose current legal system makes a distinction between clerics (c. 207 § 1) and lay faithful. This paper considers the



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laity as people baptized or admitted to the Catholic Church, testifying to the Church's teaching in various areas of everyday life (LG 30–31; c. 225; Hervada 1973, pp. 163–202; Del Portillo 1999, p. 169; Navarro 2012, pp. 35–66). Bottom-up initiatives play a vital role in addressing new types of security problems in both government and international organizations (Stassen 2003, p. 178). The laity can assist the Church in combining the capabilities of the government, international organizations, and NGOs in a manner that is distinctive and advantageous (Christiansen 2006, p. 21). The laity represents those through whom the Church not only participates in peace processes as a hierarchical community headed by the Roman Pope (c. 331), but also serves as a conduit for the Church's teachings in various areas of everyday life. It is not just a sovereign subject of international law promoting peace through the structures and diplomacy of the Holy See. Furthermore, the lay faithful are a community whose members are of equal dignity to clerics, are present in various areas of society, and whose initiatives contribute to the goals of the Church.

To understand the role of the laity in peace promotion, it is vital to know that neither canon law nor theology has a clear definition of conciliation. While some church documents highlight significant aspects of peace, these are more akin to broad conceptual frameworks for promoting peace than precise, definitional statements. Of particular importance is John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on reconciliation and penance, which elucidates significant theological and practical aspects of peace, including the Christological dimension of peace (John Paul II 1984, n. 7), the aspiration for peace, the aspiration for reconciliation (n. 3), the Church's mission of peace (n. 4), and the Church's inner peace (n. 10). Additionally, the document references the conflict between classes and nations, as well as the broader concept of reconciliation (n. 12). Furthermore, the document emphasizes the importance of dialogue as a means of achieving peace (n. 25). This indicates that the concept of peace is theological and practical (n. 73). This comprehensive approach to peace indicates that peace is not merely the absence of war, a negative concept. Instead, its achievement in many areas of life presupposes the activity of the Church, in which the laity has a prominent role, as is consistent with the Church's nature.

The auxiliary sciences, particularly security policy, which can be used for definition, leave no doubt that peacebuilding is a loaded concept (Stassen 2003, p. 171; Yoder et al. 2009; Omar and Duffy 2015). The use of military force to enforce peace is anything but acceptable for the Church (Murithi and Angela 2005). The Catholic Church does not possess any armed forces, and contemporary Catholic ethical teachings place greater emphasis on the philosophy of peace as opposed to the traditional just war doctrine (Heft 2010, pp. 328–31; Van Iersel 2020). Even though the latter has not completely disappeared, it has been relegated to a secondary position in the theological thinking of the Church. In contrast, the Church is able to interpret peacekeeping, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and especially humanitarian operations, applied by the UN and international organizations. The complexity of these reveals that the knowledge required for implementation is not found in the clergy, but in the laity. The complexity of peace operations is demonstrated by distributing aid, rebuilding schools and roads, fostering a sense of security, or sector reforms (Padányi 2007; Lederach 1997, pp. 54–62).

According to Lisa Cahill, peacebuilding is becoming an umbrella term, including everything linked to eliminating injustices in the current world order: support for non-violence, the promotion of reconciliation, recognition of democracy, human rights and religious freedom, and the foundation of a just and sustainable economy (Cahill 2003, p. 197). Others believe peacebuilding encompasses nuclear disarmament, regional conflict resolution, economic injustices, fighting against civil wars and terrorism (Stassen 2003, pp. 172–73), and tackling the challenges of scarce resources and arms trafficking (Gheciu and Paris 2011, p. 75). Even specialized agencies of the international community have identified the need for a multifaceted approach to promoting peace, one that extends beyond the narrow confines of military knowledge (Dandeker and James 1997). This broad interpretation of peace promotion is also in harmony with church documents. The Catholic Church's *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* (II/III) relates peace to the

common good, solidarity, immigration, the right to resistance, international organizations, environmental protection, and many other security challenges in the broad sense. Pope Francis refers to the broad interpretation of peace in his exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*: “peace, social harmony, the land, the defense of life, human and civil rights” (Francis 2013b, n. 65, 105). Most church documents lack a direct link between lay faithful and peace promotion, but this broad interpretation of security presupposes a skill that only lay people in the Church possess (McBrady 2015, pp. 131–33). In summary, peace promotion represents a complex philosophy and a consequent set of activities that are difficult to integrate into legal categories, designed to prevent and end armed conflicts and to create fairer and more stable societies. Owing to its complexity, peacebuilding, as in military operations, goes beyond the hierarchical organization in the Church. Consequently, the role of the laity and the reconciliation of the Church are inextricably linked.

3. Historical Perspectives: The Laity in Peace Promotion

The idea of conciliation goes back to the deepest intention and personal example of Jesus of Nazareth. According to the Scriptures, Jesus ordered his disciples to be delegates of peace (John 14, 27). One of the beatitudes, called the spiritual autobiography of Jesus by Pope Benedict XVI, is: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God (Matthew 5, 9)” (Benedict XVI 2007a, pp. 76–86). It is not merely the case that scriptural quotations serve as pious proverbs; they also inform the Church’s self-reflection, theology, and mission.

However, until the 20th century, neither conciliation nor the role of the lay faithful were central elements of the Church’s teaching. On occasion, lay individuals engaged in activities to promote peace, yet the legally established framework and philosophical underpinnings of these endeavors were absent. Mary S. Skinner looked at secular peace movements in the 10th and 11th centuries (Skinner 2018, pp. 21–45) and she analyzed the significance of the local Councils or the *Pax Dei* movements from the perspective of the laity. The author points out that this was a turbulent period without a state, where it is difficult to reconstruct the real role of each participant in creating peace (Skinner 2018, pp. 27–28). But even if it is true that the lay faithful were involved in peace promotion, they did so more for their own good and the elimination of infighting, rather than for the undertaking of a conscious peace mission in the modern sense. One of the most well-known conciliators of this era is Saint Francis of Assisi, who originally started a lay movement (Powell 1983, pp. 68–77). According to Adam Hoose, the Franciscans’ involvement in Muslim territory was due more to political realities than to Saint Francis’ message of peace. The encounter between Sultan Francis Malik al-Kamil and Francis was subsequently interpreted in an idealized manner, a phenomenon that can be traced to the subsequent development of Franciscan historiography (Hoose 2010, pp. 449–69). Although the criticism is valid from a historical point of view, the story’s influence is significant in terms of the history of ideas. It sets an example to follow by representing the leading figure who started the lay movement of the era, promoting regional and inter-religious peace (Randolph 1975, pp. 37–54).

However, with the exception of a few historical examples, neither the philosophy of peace nor the role of the laity played a significant role in the Church. The dissolution of the papal state did not bring about a major change in the laity’s role in the Church, but the Holy See interpreted itself as a promoter of peace without military or political power from this point. A well-known achievement of the period was Leo XIII’s successful mediation in the conflict between Spain and Germany over the Caroline Islands in 1885 upon Bismarck’s invitation (Bihlmayer and Tüchle 1987, pp. 47–61) and the Holy See helped to avoid war and keep the peace in other delicate situations (Follo n.d.). This inevitably entails an acknowledgment of the capabilities of the laity, which were even more manifest in the two world wars.

Benedict XV’s diplomatic attempts in World War I did not yield the expected results (Benedict XV 1914; Benedict XV 1918; Pollard 1999; Garneau 2008, pp. 90–91; Methuen and Strübind 2018, pp. 8–12), but the humanitarian intervention was all the more important.¹

Even though the role of the laity was not emphasized, the initiatives assumed a staff of lay faithful. John Pollard's research has revealed that the Holy See's humanitarian programs can be compared with those of the Red Cross in many ways (Pollard 2015, pp. 147–53). Pollard notes the provision of aid convoys, food aid, and, notably, assistance to malnourished children in conflict-stricken nations. It is evident that such meticulous organization and implementation would have been unfeasible without the involvement of the laity. At the same time, the role of the laity has not been further developed from a theological perspective. Unfortunately, the leadership of the local Catholic Church was often committed to national interests and war. This has prevented the Church from exploiting the potential of internationalism and the lay faithful (Frivaldszky 2024). James E. Ward notes that until 1929 the unresolved "Roman question" was hovering over the Church, also narrowing its scope of action. (Ward 1966, pp. 47–61) The Lateran Treaty of 1929 gave a boost to peace philosophy and, hence, to the engagement of the laity. The treaty was subjected to scrutiny from a multitude of vantage points; however, it was seldom underscored that its principal virtue was the definitive conclusion of an epoch that would have precipitated a reckoning regarding the Church's geographic, military, and economic expansion on par with that of other states.² The Popes played an active role in promoting peace after World War I and during World War II (Pius XI 1931; Pius XI 1937, Pius XII 1939; Gonella 1945). Many Catholic organizations, mostly comprised of lay faithful, were involved directly or indirectly in the promotion of humanitarian aid and peace (Dalla Torre 2008). Pius XII overall recognized the lay faithful and made statements that may be interpreted as describing their role in promoting peace. After the war, the Pope was a committed supporter of European integration processes, designed to promote peace, with a notable participation of lay faithful (Pasture 2018; Di Maio 2018).

He occasionally referred to the superior moral standing of lay believers in war and the promotion of peace (Pius XII 1957b, p. 937). His encyclical by *Fidei Donum* on missions recognizes the role of the laity in pastoral work (Pius XII 1957a, n. 10, 75–76, 79). However, missionary work, particularly in African countries, was not independent of social issues and hence peace (Browne 1962, pp. 403–12). Therefore, Séamus Grace found Pius XII's approach to the lay faithful entirely novel. In his opinion, the Pope gave missionary impetus and direction to the laity in all areas of life (Grace 1957, p. 157). Nevertheless, Canobbio identifies the constraints that Pius XII and his era were unable to overcome, that the individual and organizational work of the lay faithful was still regarded as subordinate to the clergy and hierarchy. This unequal role of the laity is also apparent in the Pope's and the Holy See's significant documents of the period (Canobbio 2012, p. 21). In contrast, it is a great merit of that period that Catholic movements, mostly comprised of the lay faithful, have proved that the social teaching of the Church is capable of shaping the opinion of the broad masses, and this can easily be transformed into actions promoting peace (Delgado 2010, pp. 9–30). This is confirmed by the fact that Pius XII has also provided a legal framework for secular institutes, which combined lay apostolate and religious vows (Maclean 1947). This institution was not only shaped entirely by the new canon law (cc. 710–730), but it also already indicated the direction the lay apostolate was supposed to take (Salvatori 2008). The first such institution, Opus Dei (Herranz 1964, p. 307), later took the legal form of a personal prelature (cc. 294–297), but the organization based its evangelization work mainly on the lay faithful in the world, according to the will of its founder (Stetson and Hervada 1985). However, indeed, the philosophical foundation and the canon law framework in its totality were absent at that time.

4. A Breakthrough in Secular Empowerment and Peacebuilding

Pius XI and especially Pius XII had already alluded to the role of the lay faithful, indeed involved in promoting social justice, but whose role was strictly subordinate to the hierarchy. Theological and legal developments concerning the role of the laity and the Church's peace mission were achieved by Pope John XXIII and subsequently by the Council. The Pope recognized that the traditional means employed by the Holy See to promote

peace (mediation, papal statements and declarations, and the Holy See's diplomacy) were becoming less and less effective. His 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra* addressed his time's global and regional security challenges, and he also pointed to the importance of the lay faithful (John XXIII 1961, n. 224–225, 233) and asked them to tackle social challenges on behalf of the Church. This general call also applies to peace promotion, but John XXIII's philosophy of peace was summed up by the encyclical *Pacem in terris*. (John XXIII 1963) It does not place any special emphasis on the lay faithful, but is addressed to all Catholics, especially those who, due to their public role, are able to have a real impact on the prevention of conflicts and peace processes (Kobler 1985, pp. 55–74; Curran 2004, 17–34). After the encyclical's publication, John Courtney Murray believed its importance lay in its openness (Murray 1963, pp. 612–14) as the Pope counted on all members of the Church to build peace. Regarding the era, however, the lay faithful paid a high price for the declaration of their faith in public life in the Communist bloc (Walters 1984, pp. 2–6; Kraszewski 2012, pp. 27–46). In Western democracies, thousands of Catholics were involved in decision making, including resolving the most critical military and security policy issues. The Western Church hierarchy recognized that it was impossible to circumvent the expertise of the laity regarding matters of modern security challenges. Their demanding analysis presumed committed but professionally skilled lay faithful (Murray 1963, p. 297; McAndrews 2008; McBrady 2015, p. 133). The Pope's encyclical *Princeps pastorum* highlighted the role of the laity in promoting social peace in unstable regions (John XXIII 1959, n. 22, 28, 43, 45, 46, 49). In light of the experiences of World War II, he concluded that the Church should engage in reflection on both regional and global challenges, mobilizing the laity, who constituted the majority of the Church's members.

The documents in the period already proved that the Church assigned a pivotal role to both the social engagement of the laity and the pursuit of peace. The two fields were so firmly incorporated into the manifestations of the Church that they inevitably interacted with each other. Although the era did provide the initial impetus for lay engagement, the requisite "know-how" for implementation was either absent or, as Raftis observed in reference to the encyclical *Mater et magistra*, even the Church had to learn how to apply the new approach, especially in that it lacked a legal framework (Raftis 1963, p. 19). In my opinion, even the laity needed time to accept that there was indeed a new era in the relationship between the hierarchy and the lay faithful.

The Council's documents, which deal with the inner life of the Church or social issues, reflect on the role of the laity as well (LG 30–38; Csonta 2009). The decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* placed the laity at the center of attention, marking a pivotal moment in church history. The issues of laity and peace are not elaborated in detail in the Council documents. However, the Council's view that the Church is not only a vertically structured hierarchical organization, but also a community of equal dignity and horizontal interconnection (LG 7, 35) resulting from baptism and confirmation pervaded all matters associated with the laity, (GS 77–82) also promotes social justice and peace. So, the Council's document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* deals with a large number of security policy challenges in the broad sense and relates them to the apostolate of the lay faithful: charity, (AA 8) works of love, social work (AA 8), the promotion of the public good, participation in public affairs and holding offices (AA 14), and apostolic works of mercy and love (AA 19). The AA also refers to more specific areas related to peace: the right of association (AA 21), apostolic works (AA 22), and cooperation with non-Catholics and non-Christians (AA 27). Given their distinctive genre, the Council documents do not provide exhaustive details, but rather delineate the fundamental principles (Goyret 2017, pp. 93–100; Tollefsen 2019, pp. 300–14), but the laity actually put a lot of work into peace promotion later. It is enough to mention nuclear weapons (Christiansen 2018), migration (Sanchis 1993), and humanitarian issues (Bonet 2010).

5. Canon Law Framework for Peace Promotion

Regrettably, both Catholic moral teaching and security policy fail to acknowledge the role of canon law in the peace activities of the Church. However, papal exhortations and

conciliar principles can only be effective if accompanied by an appropriate institutional framework (Fantappiè 2023, p. 74). The Council's revolution regarding the laity, both in general and in promoting social justice, developed a lot after the Council (Astigueta 1999).

The 1983 Code of Canon Law devotes a separate title to the duties and rights of lay faithful, but this does not explicitly address peace promotion. However, a number of general rights and obligations of Christians can be interpreted in terms of peace promotion:

1. The general apostolate of the laity derived from baptism and confirmation.
2. The activities of the lay faithful through church offices.
3. The laity in the Church's diplomacy.
4. Organizations established under the general right of the association of the Christian faithful.

The delineation of these boundaries is not clear-cut, as the same individual may engage in peace promotion through a multiplicity of avenues simultaneously (Duston 1988). The general apostolate of the laity is essentially a theological issue, where canon law tends to reinforce theological principles (Congar 1965). The other areas include the offices held by the laity, including the diplomatic corps, and the right of association, which are already complex legal relationships. These areas already require more direct legislative development.

6. Peace Promotion Through the Apostolate of the Laity

The legislator considers it both a right and an obligation for the lay faithful to “imbue the affairs of the earthly city with the spirit of the gospel” (c. 227). This regulation is short since the daily apostolate of the lay faithful comes from baptism and confirmation; therefore, it does not create any new legal relationship between them and the Church hierarchy. Luis Navarro points out that the lay faithful are active in so many areas of life that it is impossible to regulate exhaustively the form of their apostolate (Navarro 2008, p. 198). In addition, the Church lives under various circumstances in different regions and countries. Accordingly, the documents of the Holy See on the position of the Church in regions never fail to make special reference to the role of the laity. This is of particularly great importance in cases such as Africa (John Paul II 1996, n. 18, 53–54, 65, 75, 101, 105; Benedict XVI 2011, n. 23, 145; Francis 2018; Ihejirika 2017, pp. 28–45), the Middle East (Benedict XVI 2012a, n. 55–56), Asia (John Paul II 1999, n. 9, 32, 45), South America (Francis 2020b, n. 89, 94; Spadaro 2020), and the Caribbean (John Paul II 2002, n. 43) where peace is threatened by a number of security challenges. Furthermore, the post-conciliar Popes and Holy See's documents mention peace promotion, referring to the lay faithful in evangelization (Paul VI 1976, n. 41, 70–71, 73, 76; Francis 2013b, n. 81) and about the security challenges: social justice, (Paul VI 1967, n. 74, 81) weapons of mass destruction, (Paul VI 1978; Holy See Mission 2015) refugee issues, (Pont. Council Migr. 2004, II/4) protection of creation, (Benedict XVI 2010b; Francis 2015) human rights, etc. Pope Paul VI initiated the practice of issuing annual messages on peace, which, despite not being legally binding, served as the foundation for the Pope's annual peace plan. The fields of peace promotion engage in research and the development of expertise on various issues, including nuclear weapons (McBrady 2015, p. 133; Wood 1983, p. 228), the arms trade, and its proliferation. (Gill 2012, pp. 192–205) In recent times, the advent of artificial intelligence has given rise to a number of questions pertaining to military and security matters (Tridente 2022). In addition, issues such as food and water security, migration, and space exploration warrant consideration. These issues are typically examined and presented to society by the lay faithful. The Pontifical Academy of Sciences has identified research as a priority area, with a particular focus on projects led by lay researchers. In this context, academic research plays a pivotal role.

For lay faithful to be able to represent the peace messages adequately in their lives, they must have a proper knowledge of the Church's teaching (Goyret 2017, pp. 99–100). The Code briefly summarizes the right of the laity to acquire the knowledge necessary to represent the teaching of the Church (c. 229 § 1). Ernst Caparros underlines that this is a fundamental right of the lay faithful, from which other rights derive, and a real obligation

on the part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to create appropriate circumstances (Caparros 2004, pp. 189–90). How can the Church expect the lay faithful to be ambassadors of social justice and peace if they do not have the opportunity to know accurately what the Church teaches? (Dosen 2000, p. 200). The legislator did not aim at a minimum rule; the lay faithful not only have the right to catechesis (cc. 773, 776), but also to receive spiritual assistance (c. 223), homily, and catechetical instruction about the whole Christian doctrine and guidance in social justice (cc. 386, 528, 756, 762). Furthermore, they are entitled to apply for admission to Catholic and ecclesiastical universities, provided that they meet the requisite criteria. An important mission of both Catholic and ecclesiastical universities is to equip the laity with the necessary training. A Catholic university must carry out research and teaching activities in all academic disciplines. However, they do so in a manner inspired by Catholic spirituality (c. 810 § 2, John Paul II 1990). It is incumbent upon each Catholic university to provide instruction in theological matters pertinent to the disciplines represented by its faculty (c. 811 § 2). In terms of promoting peace, this may be particularly relevant in fields such as international studies (Troy 2015), law (Cafardi 2001; Aldave 1995; Haney 2014), and economics (John Paul II 1990, n. 7; Burrus et al. 2023). There may also be training courses specifically related to peace studies or the social doctrine of the church. Some Catholic universities have established an institute dedicated to the study of peace promotion (Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame), while others have an institute that focuses on the social teaching of the Church in general (John Paul II Research Center, Pázmány Péter Catholic University). In both cases, a significant proportion of the research participants are lay faithful who contribute to the understanding of the security domain and the actualization of classical issues such as just war and new types of security challenges (O’Connell 2020, pp. 384–401). The role of the Catholic university for the laity is twofold: they can take advantage of the opportunity provided by the law to engage in the theoretical research of peace (c. 229 § 2–3); conversely, they are entitled to be informed of the findings of this research (c. 229 § 1), which they may then apply in various ways to their daily apostolate.

So, Catholic and ecclesiastical universities can provide an exceptional service to the peace mission of the laity. But not all of the faithful can study at a Catholic or ecclesiastical university. That is why Appendix II of the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* on ecclesiastical universities calls to establish institutes for peace and the social teaching of the Church (Francis 2017). Such institutes may engage in activities beyond the realm of education and research, including the organization of conferences and the publication of materials designed to equip laypeople with the tools necessary to promote peace and social justice.

Promoting Peace by Lay Faithful Involved in Politics

Some professions, such as involvement in the politics, state, public, and defense administrations, give the laity greater opportunities to promote peace (Bradley et al. 1988, p. 272; Clemens 2023). The current canon law is based on the council’s vision of the church (GS 43, PO 6, 9), which considers participation in political life to be the domain of the laity. The Code contains a general warning that clerics are prohibited from taking public office that involves participation in the exercise of secular power (c. 285 § 3). The legislator also introduces an explicit prohibition on the active participation in political parties and in governing labor unions (c. 287 § 2; Sorge 2008). In accordance with this principle, the Papal and Holy See documents offer general theological and moral points about the participation of the lay faithful in political life (John XXIII 1963, n. 160; John Paul II 1991, n. 25; John Paul II 2001, n. 1; Congr. Doctr. 2022, n. 1.4) and occasionally there is a brief reference to peace itself. In addition to addressing general aspects of political life, the Holy See has also commented on specific areas, including the responsibility of Catholic politicians in matters of marriage and abortion (Miller 2007), the dignity of children and women (John Paul II 1995, n. 2), and regional security. In Papua New Guinea, for instance, the Church, including the lay faithful in politics and public life, has notably enhanced the social standing of

women (Hermkens et al. 2022, pp. 310–28). Nevertheless, there are contentious issues (such as homosexuality, abortion, environmental concerns, and immigration) where social divisions are emerging along the lines of political ideologies and Catholic teachings. The question is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is indicated that it is not straightforward for lay believers involved in social life to reconcile Catholic teaching with the maintenance of social harmony.

Pope John Paul II's post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* refers in general terms to "hostility and peace" and to the security challenges of his time. The pope hoped that the lay faithful supported reconciliation and explained that there was a particular responsibility for those who are "committed to the social and political field, working in a variety of institutional forms and those of a voluntary nature in service to the least" (John Paul II 1988b, n. 6, 41). The distinction between the activities of the laity in general and in particular those who became involved in the politics is later recognized in other documents by John Paul II (John Paul II 1991a, n. 25; 1993; 2001; 2002) and the Compendium of the Catholic Church's Social Teaching. The latter document includes a distinct subsection on "The Church's contribution to peace" (n. 516–520), wherein the role of the laity is only briefly addressed. Later, however, it devotes a separate chapter to the laity involved in the exercise of political power (n. 531) and social, economic, and political responsibility (n. 534). Similarly, Benedict XVI interpreted the general responsibility of the lay faithful and the special responsibility of those involved in political life in promoting human dignity and the common good (Benedict XVI 2010a, 2012b). In his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, he highlights that a one-sided approach to politics and public life often results in social subversion, violence, and even wars (Benedict XVI 2007b, n. 19–21). To compensate for this, it is necessary to reintroduce the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love and dialogue between the Church and secular societies, which is not just an information transfer, but a real dialogue, in which those faithful who are involved in political life occupy a prominent place (Mangan 2012, p. 568). According to some approaches, Benedict XVI envisaged a hierarchical Church where the laity was only positioned after the clergy (Curran 2014). In my estimation, Benedict XVI considered the lay faithful to be of equal dignity to the hierarchy. He believed, however, that emphasizing the Council's philosophy is sufficed, in both general and political life. He also believed that "acting for the just order of society is the task of the faithful" (Benedict XVI 2005, n. 29; Cahill 2009, pp. 291–319), but his statements had no substantive shifting on the law.

So, the real change brought about by Pope Francis is not didactic, but legislative. Therefore, in addition to retaining the general exhortations, he realized that, despite the many general statements, lay people may feel like lone heralds of the Church in promoting peace and social justice (Bosch 2012, p. 130; Mahoney 2019, pp. 647–53). This significant insight is recognizable in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. He clarified: "Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political, and economic sectors" (Francis 2013b, n. 102, 111–134; Christiansen 2017, pp. 203–20; Doyle 2017, pp. 21–37). The Pope used this idea as the starting point for an unprecedented scale of legislative changes and appointments. (Werpehowski 2017, pp. 125–43) The inadequate positioning of the laity is not only a matter of theology and canon law; it is also a continuous loss of the ability to improve social justice and peace (O'Brien 2013), which is one of the main tasks of the Church (Francis 2013a, n. 51). It is impossible that the lay faithful, who make up the majority of the Church, should not be positioned in it.

7. The Laity in Church Offices

The laity may engage in humanitarian activities with the objective of promoting peace even temporarily (Del Portillo 1999, p. 185) or by holding church offices. After, the Second Vatican Council generally allowed lay people to have offices that did not require full pastoral care (c. 150, 128; Huels 2001; Amann 2008, pp. 85–86). Péter Erdő argues that the right of the laity to hold office is grounded in the substantive equality of the faithful (Erdő

1992, pp. 165–66; Boni 2004). An essential element of an ecclesiastical office is that it should be established permanently (c. 145) and that the competencies and responsibilities attached to it should be clearly defined (List and Schmitz 1999, pp. 175–76).

Social justice and peace can be promoted at the level of both the particular churches and the episcopal conferences. Of particular significance is Caritas Internationalis, which serves as an umbrella organization. The legal regulation of this entity is overseen by the highest level of the Holy See (John Paul II 2004; State Secr. 2012), which has implications for the governance and offices of the organization. The position of director is typically occupied by a layperson. It is also noteworthy that at the regional level, the staff of charitable organizations are typically the lay faithful. It is, however, essential to clarify that not all functions are ecclesiastical offices. This does not detract from the value of the work carried out by the lay faithful; however, their office is subject to a different legal assessment (Ujházi 2019, p. 152). The number of lay faithful holding office serving in national Caritas under bishops' conferences and local Caritas under the local ordinary, as well as the scope of their duties, also depends on the mentality and structure of the local church. In general, however, the lay faithful are involved in various activities across all areas of the organization.

The Roman Curia's post-council reforms allowed lay people to hold offices (Arrieta 1997, pp. 311–12). The extent to which this relates to peace promotion depends on the nature of the given dicastery. It is worth highlighting the Pontifical Council for the Laity created by Paul VI (1976) and re-regulated by John Paul II (1988a). By the nature of the office, lay people have held offices. Professor Rose Goldie was the first woman to hold the post of deputy secretary. Another distinguished lay faithful was Guzmán Carriquiry Lecour, who also served as deputy secretary from 1991 to 2011. Professor Lecour has worked intensively on regional and global security challenges in his academic work (Lecour 2007), and through his office, he has sought to put his theoretical knowledge into practice in a remarkable way. Furthermore, the council's advisers included representatives of the most prominent Catholic secular movements, including the leader of the Community of Sant'Egidio, an eminent in peacebuilding. This Council was merged into the Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life by Pope Francis (Francis 2016). In the new dicastery, it is less apparent how lay officials are involved in peace promotion. This is understandable since the Pope created the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (Francis 2022a, art. 165–188), which incorporated the Pontifical Council *Iustitia et Pax*, which dealt with security issues (John Paul II 1988a, art. 142–147) and occupied an eminent position in peace promotion. The dicastery is currently headed by Cardinal Michael Czerny, but it covers a number of offices related to peace and security that are occupied by the lay faithful.

Pope Francis's apostolic constitution, *Praedicate Euangelium*, allows, by definition, the laity to lead the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The constitution makes a legally uncertain restriction by making it dependent on the nature of the dicastery, whether it can be led by a lay person. (Francis 2022a, art. 5) Pope Francis wanted to clarify the text in a statement saying that "dicasteries of a sacramental nature should be led by a priest or bishop" (Vatican News 2022). The Pope's coinage of a sacramental nature is not an established legal term. The ad hoc papal declaration is not legally binding anyway. Perhaps the question can be approached from the side of the old dichotomous division, when the legislator made a distinction between congregations and councils. Pope Francis also abolished this division and merged the congregations and the Councils into the category of dicastery. Congregations focused on the inner life of the Church. In contrast, the Councils addressed matters pertaining to social concerns. Their leadership required an expertise that was rather possessed by the laity. Thus, in my view, the dicasteries that promote social justice and peace could be led by the lay faithful for this practical reason. However, this is only one possible, and indeed practical approach to the issue, which does not solve at all the dogmatic problem of the origins of power of governance in the Church. The latter was attempted both before and in connection with the issuing of the law (Stickler 1982, pp. 65–91; Navarro 1990, p. 165; Coriden 1999, pp. 335–47; Ghirlanda 2022, p. 53; Arrieta

2022, p. 428; Ambrose 2022, pp. 302–4). However, it would be justified to decide on this issue even at the level of the authentic interpretation of the law.

Nevertheless, practical evidence indicates that it is feasible to appoint a layperson to oversee a dicastery with responsibility for social issues. In Catholic media, the laity has worked at both the central and regional levels for the most part, but the Dicastery for Communication (Francis 2022a, art. 183–188, 436–437) is the first to have a lay leader, Paolo Ruffini, appointed by Pope Francis. The role of the media cannot be neglected in conveying the teachings of the Church and the message of peace. Indirectly, but more decisively, it is associated with peace. Issues such as terrorism, migration, cybersecurity, the dangers of nuclear war, climate change, or the expansion of global institutions are discussed on a daily basis. The appointment serves to demonstrate that the law can indeed be put into practice. However, this does not negate the necessity for further legal dogmatic clarification.

8. The Laity's Role in Peace Promotion in the Holy See's Diplomacy

The diplomatic corps of the Holy See represents a distinct category of office-holders. Indeed, it is an area that makes a distinguished contribution to peace (Ujházi 2021). After the Second Vatican Council, the idea to increase the role of the laity in this field became especially marked (Balvo 2000, p. 491; Broglio 2015; Walf 2003, p. 91). It was even suggested that the system of nuncios should be dominated by the laity as, contrary to the spiritual nature of the Church, diplomacy emphasizes its political character (Caprile 1966, p. 98). The decision *Apostolicam actuositatem* ultimately makes a general reference to the lay faithful's engagement in the Church's international relations, as it is "an immense area of apostolate" (AA 20). The *motu proprio Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* mentions, in relation to international organizations, that nuncios sent to international organizations can be lay people (Paul VI 1969, n. II/1).

The Code no longer refers specifically to the laity in relation to the envoys (cc. 330–367.). However, the international role of the Holy See inherently necessitates the unique expertise of the laity. This is also reflected in some earlier emblematic events, such as the visit of Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon to the United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing (Flynn 1996, p. 152). A significant number of lay personnel are engaged in the Holy See's diplomatic missions to UN organizations and specialized agencies, particularly in the areas of foreign and security policy (Melnyk 2009, p. 164). The document *Regolamento per le Rappresentanze Pontificie* also leaves no doubt that the laity in international organizations can help the mission (State Secr. 1994, pp. 42–51). Obviously, they are also expected to be committed to Catholic values, to a sense of vocation, to discretion, and to all the human and Catholic virtues that serve to clarify and reinforce the Catholic concept in a given ethical and security policy.

The achievements of the Holy See's diplomatic efforts have consistently relied on the contributions of the lay faithful. In addition to the conciliation of Leo XIII mentioned above, the Caroline Islands may also be mentioned, where in 1890, he was responsible for resolving the border dispute between Britain and Portugal concerning the Congo region. In 1893, the Holy See was involved in an international dispute between Ecuador and Peru over territorial claims. In 1895, he facilitated a resolution to a dispute between Britain and Venezuela regarding British Guiana, followed by a similar mediation between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is also noteworthy to mention the agreement reached between Colombia and Peru in 1909, and subsequently, the agreement concluded between Brazil and Peru in 1910 (Hertzke 2005, pp. 19–24). The Holy See was becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to utilize the expertise of the laity in church diplomacy to advance peace. As previously mentioned, the Synod explicitly requested the assistance of the laity in this regard. Subsequent to the 1984 Synod, John Paul II extended an offer to mediate the Beagle conflict between Argentina and Chile. As a consequence, the outbreak of armed conflict was averted (Lindsley 1987, pp. 435–55). In recent times, papal diplomacy has been instrumental in fostering improved relations between the United States and Cuba. Additionally, the Pope played a pivotal role in resolving the political crisis in South Sudan,

which led to the cessation of armed conflict between the tribes residing in the newly established state (Tomarro 2020). The Holy See has also extended an offer of mediation in the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, yet neither party has thus far accepted the Holy See’s involvement (Smytsnyuk 2023, p. 6). Diplomacy is, therefore, an area where the church relies on the knowledge of the lay faithful to promote peace in the long term.

9. The Right of Association for Lay Faithful and Peace Promotion

The peace mission of the Church is not only accessible to lay faithful through their personal apostolate and ecclesiastical offices. The objectives may also be pursued through joint activities. This may be done ad hoc, on a one-off basis, or regularly. A typical example is the voluntary involvement of the faithful in the activities of church charities. Some specific security challenges, such as refugee crises, have represented that the humanitarian work of church organizations can be significantly increased by the lay faithful. This form is hardly different from the general testimony of the lay faithful derived from baptism and confirmation (Lombardi 1974). In the most diverse areas of security, such as the right to access water (Peppard 2018), food security (Barrett 2019), health (USCCB 2009), education (Massaro 2011), or even Catholic cultural associations (Pontifical Council for Culture 1999), Christian believers collaborate in an organizational form.

However, the joint peace and humanitarian mission of the laity can be carried out through legally regulated organizations. The current law determines a wide scope for the right of association (c. 215). The most typical way of promoting the right of association in relation to peace is through the formation of associations that, explicitly or indirectly, serve peace and social justice. Prior to the Council, there were also community initiatives aimed at promoting peace, with the majority of members being lay faithful (Gheri 2016, pp. 593–620). A wide recognition of the right of association is, however, the result of conciliar and post-conciliar legislation (AA 19; cc. 298–329). As a general rule, associations are established to promote the Church’s goals, “for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world” or “for purposes of charity or piety” (c. 215; Aymans and Mörsdorf 1997, p. 494). This also represents a limit to the right of association, as it is not feasible to establish associations for any arbitrary purpose within the Church. Nevertheless, the diversity of associations shows that the general wording of the Code still leaves a wide margin for initiative (John Paul II 1988b, n. 29). There are also a fair number of associations whose objective is directly or indirectly to promote peace. How each association contributes to the Church’s peace mission is clear rather from the statutes of the associations (c. 304 § 1) and their activities. The name of the association may occasionally indicate (c. 304, § 2) that the objective of the association is to promote peace either by doing fieldwork or by carrying out specific humanitarian activities while others focus rather on the theology of peace in theory.

Given the considerable number of associations at the local level, it is not feasible to provide a comprehensive listing. By entering keywords on the Internet search pages, anyone will find a number of initiatives under the diocesan (c. 312 § 1.3) and episcopal conferences (c. 312 § 1. 2), which indicate their own tasks in promoting peace and social justice. Unfortunately, the exact legal character of these organizations is not always clear, as the precise activities and results are sometimes difficult to discern. The official international associations (c. 312 § 1 1) of the faithful are registered through the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life.³ The register shows that many associations were established, explicitly or indirectly, to promote peace. Looking at the short presentations, we find different interpretations of the association’s own mission to promote peace. In the interests of the greater effectiveness of official international organizations of the Christian faithful, the Holy See has re-established the principles of leadership and management, which should also apply to organizations promoting peace (Consorti 2021).

The current canon law also recognizes the Confederation of Public Associations (c. 313), which brings together organizations with a similar mission. The *Pax Christi* International Catholic Peace Movement brings together about a hundred and twenty peace initiatives. Despite its vague canonical character, *Pax Christi* is a clear example of a move-

ment promoted by the Church Authority, which aims to promote peace, in particular non-violence, disarmament, a just world order, education for peace, and the promotion of certain human rights, and among its members, the vast majority of the people are lay faithful (Jonghe 1983, pp. 323–29).

10. Conclusions

One of the primary purposes of the Catholic Church is a principle that can be traced back to the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, peace is a matter for the whole Church. However, it only later became a central part of the Church's teaching. At the same time, the philosophy of peace coincided with the reappraisal of the role of the lay faithful. The Second Vatican Council insisted on that the lay faithful have equal dignity as the clergy. Peace promotion is an umbrella term that lacks a definition in church documents or Security Studies used as an auxiliary science. It must, therefore, be interpreted in the broadest sense. The broad interpretation also demonstrates that it is unthinkable to promote peace globally and regionally without the ability of the laity. There is no doubt about this in the post-conciliar statements of the Pope and the Holy See. However, these statements also assume the role of church law setting the framework for the activities of the laity. Unfortunately, this aspect is generally neglected, even though the legal framework is essential for putting the principles into practice. In accordance with the current law of the Church, we identify three additional areas.

The first is the general apostolate of the laity, when the lay faithful, as part of their everyday apostolate derived from baptism and confirmation, implement the social doctrine of the Church and hence peace. There are excellent opportunities for the lay faithful, who work in the areas of political, economic, or state and military administration to do so. In such cases, canon law only recognizes the freedom of the lay faithful and lays down legal guarantees for the means (e.g., the right to training, catechesis, university etc.) to engage in the apostolate, but there is no separate legal relationship between the hierarchy of the Church and Christians. In the case of church offices that can be filled by lay people and associations of the Christian faithful, canon law already lays down more precise rules, and these are applicable to the peace work of the Church.

Following the Council's decision and the subsequent publication of the new Code, a considerable amount of criticism was directed towards the Council itself, as it had previously failed to fully recognize the potential of the laity, and had, therefore, not exploited it to its fullest extent. This is partly true, but it must also be recognized that it took time to put the Council's teaching into practice. Furthermore, social relations, the security situation, and the array of challenges are evolving at a rapid pace, necessitating an update to the Council's teaching. A very special way for the laity to engage in the Church's work of peace is through Church diplomacy.

The current Canon Law system has also been criticized for not giving the laity enough opportunity to engage in the Church's activities. The Council and the Code also provide ample opportunity for apostolates, including the promotion of peace. But the responsible pastors really do place little emphasis on the education of the laity. The current Pope wants to deepen the Council's teaching. His documents on laity, his appointments, and his actions regarding ecclesiastical institutions can be traced back to the Council's teaching. Nevertheless, it constitutes a notable advance that he has not merely exhorted, but has also enacted legislative amendments to enable the laity to engage in the Church's peace activities in a meaningful and effective manner.

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Abbreviation

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem Decree on the Apostolate of the laity
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
c	canon (of the Code of Canon Law, 1983)
Const. Ap.	Apostolic Constitution
Congr. Doctr.	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Decr.	Decretum
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</i>
LG	Lumen Gentium—Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
Enc.	Encyclical
Ex. Ap.	Apostolic exhortation
Mp	Motu proprio
Pont. Council Migr.	Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People
POState Secr.	Presbyterorum Ordinis Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests State Secretariat of the Holy See
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Notes

- ¹ However, Jan De Volder pointed out that in some cases (the author is dealing with Belgium in particular), the diplomacy of the Holy See was not decisive in condemning violence (Volder 2018, pp. 39–45).
- ² For the international legal personality of the Holy See and the Vatican: (Sturzo and Lograsso 1943; Kunz 1952). For a historical overview: (Crabités 1929).
- ³ Available at: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_pc_laity_doc_20051114_associazioni_en.html (accessed on 12 August 2022).

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